THE

# ROUND TABLE:

A COLLECTION OF

# ESSAYS

ON

## LITERATURE, MEN, AND MANNERS,

By WILLIAM HAZLITT.

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# THE ROUND TABLE.

## No. XXVII.

### ON BEAUTY.

It is about sixty years ago that Sir Joshua Reynolds, in three papers which he wrote in the *Idler*, advanced the notion, which has prevailed very much ever since, that Beauty was entirely dependant on custom, or on the conformity of objects to a given standard. Now, we could never persuade ourselves that custom, or the association of ideas, though a very powerful, was the only principle of the preference which the mind gives to certain objects over others. Novelty is surely one source of pleasure; otherwise we cannot account for the well-known epigram, beginning—

"Two happy things in marriage are allowed," &c.

Nor can we help thinking, that, besides custom, or

the conformity of certain objects to others of the same general class, there is also a certain conformity of objects to themselves, a symmetry of parts, a principle of proportion, gradation, harmony, (call it what you will,) which makes certain things naturally pleasing or beautiful, and the want of it the contrary.

We will not pretend to define what Beauty is, after so many learned authors have failed; but we shall attempt to give some examples of what constitutes it, to shew that it is in some way inherent in the object, and that if custom is a second nature, there is another nature which ranks before it. Indeed, the idea that all pleasure and pain depend on the association of ideas is manifestly absurd: there must be something in itself pleasurable or painful, before it could become possible for the feelings of pleasure or pain to be transferred by association from one object to another.

Regular features are generally accounted handsome; but regular features are those, the outlines of which answer most nearly to each other, or undergo the fewest abrupt changes. We shall attempt to explain this idea by a reference to the Greek and African face; the first of which is beautiful, because it is made up of lines corresponding with or melting into each other: the last

is not so, because it is made up almost entirely of contradictory lines and sharp angular projections.

The general principle of the difference between the two heads is this:—The forehead of the Greek is square and upright, and, as it were, overhangs the rest of the face, except the nose, which is a continuation of it almost in an even line. In the Negro or African, the tip of the nose is the most projecting part of the face; and from that point the features retreat back, both upwards towards the forehead, and downwards to the chin. This last form is an approximation to the shape of the head of the animal, as the former bears the strongest stamp of humanity.

The Grecian nose is regular, the African irregular. In other words, the Grecian nose seen in profile forms nearly a straight line with the forehead, and falls into the upper lip by two curves, which balance one another: seen in front, the two sides are nearly parallel to each other, and the nostrils and lower part form regular curves, answering to one another, and to the contours of the mouth. On the contrary, the African pug-nose is more "like an ace of clubs." Whichever way you look at it, it presents the appearance of a triangle. It is narrow, and drawn to a point at top —broad and flat at bottom. The point is peaked,

and recedes abruptly to the level of the forehead or the mouth, and the nostrils are as if they were drawn up with hooks towards each other. All the lines cross each other at sharp angles. The forehead of the Greeks is flat and square, till it is rounded at the temples; the African forehead, like the ape's, falls back towards the top, and spreads out at the sides, so as to form an angle with the cheek-bones. The eyebrows of the Greeks are either strait, so as to sustain the lower part of the tablet of the forehead, or gently arched, so as to form the outer circle of the curves of the eyelids. The form of the eyes gives all the appearance of orbs, full, swelling, and involved within each other; the African eyes are flat, narrow at the corners, in the shape of a tortoise, and the eyebrows fly off slantwise to the sides of the forehead. The idea of the superiority of the Greek face in this respect is admirably expressed in Spenser's description of Belphœbe:

"Her ivory forehead, full of bounty brave,
Like a broad table did itself dispread,
For love therein his triumphs to engrave,
And write the battles of his great Godhead.
* * * * * * *
"Upon her eyelids many Graces sat,
Under the shadow of her even brows."

The head of the girl in the *Transfiguration* (which Raphael took from the *Niobe*) has the same correspondence and exquisite involution of the outline of the forehead, the eyebrows, and the eyes (circle within circle) which we here speak of. Every part of that delightful head is blended together, and every sharp projection moulded and softened down, with the feeling of a sculptor, or as if nothing should be left to offend the *touch* as well as eye. Again, the Greek mouth is small, and little wider than the lower part of the nose: the lips form waving lines, nearly answering to each other; the African mouth is twice as wide as the nose, projects in front, and falls back towards the ears—is sharp and triangular, and consists of one protruding and one distended lip. The chin of the Greek face is round and indented, curled in, forming a fine oval with the outline of the cheeks, which resemble the two halves of a plane parallel with the forehead, and rounded off like it. The Negro chin falls inwards like a dewlap, is nearly bisected in the middle, flat at bottom, and joined abruptly to the rest of the face, the whole contour of which is made up of jagged cross-grained lines. The African physiognomy appears, indeed, splitting in pieces, starting out in every oblique direction, and marked by the most sud-

den and violent changes throughout: the whole of the Grecian face blends with itself in a state of the utmost harmony and repose. * There is a harmony of expression as well as a symmetry of form. We sometimes see a face melting into beauty by the force of sentiment—an eye that, in its liquid mazes, forever expanding and forever retiring within itself, draws the soul after it, and tempts the rash beholder to his fate. This is, perhaps, what Werter meant, when he says of Charlotte, "Her full dark eyes are ever before me, like a sea, like a precipice." The historical in expression is the consistent and harmonious,—whatever in thought or feeling communicates the same movement, whether voluptuous or impassioned, to all the parts of the face, the mouth, the eyes, the forehead, and shews that they are all actuated by the same spirit. For this reason it has

* There is, however, in the African physiognomy a grandeur and a force, arising from this uniform character of violence and abruptness. It is consistent with itself throughout. Entire deformity can only be found where the features have not only no symmetry or softness in themselves, but have no connection with one another, presenting every variety of wretchedness, and a jumble of all sorts of defects, such as we see in Hogarth or in the streets of London; for instance, a large bottle-nose, with a small mouth twisted awry.

been observed, that all intellectual and impassioned faces are historical,—the heads of philosophers, poets, lovers, and madmen.

Motion is beautiful as it implies either continuity or gradual change. The motion of a hawk is beautiful, either returning in endless circles with suspended wings, or darting right forward in one level line upon its prey. We have, when boys, often watched the glittering down of the thistle, at first scarcely rising above the ground, and then, mingling with the gale, borne into the upper sky with varying fantastic motion. How delightful, how beautiful! All motion is beautiful that is not contradictory to itself,—that is free from sudden jerks and shocks,—that is either sustained by the same impulse, or gradually reconciles different impulses together. Swans resting on the calm bosom of a lake, in which their image is reflected, or moved up and down with the heaving of the waves, though by this the double image is disturbed, are equally beautiful. Homer describes Mercury as flinging himself from the top of Olympus, and skimming the surface of the ocean. This is lost in Pope's translation, who suspends him on the incumbent air. The beauty of the original image consists in the idea which it conveys of smooth, uninterrupted speed, of the evasion of every let or

obstacle to the progress of the God.* Awkwardness is occasioned by a difficulty in moving, or by

* The following version, communicated by a classical friend, is exact and elegant:

"He said; and strait the herald Argicide
Beneath his feet his winged sandals tied,
Immortal, golden,—that his flight could bear
O'er seas and lands, like waftage of the air.
His rod too, that can close the eyes of men,
In balmy sleep, and open them again,
He took, and holding it in hand, went flying:
Till from Pieria's top the sea descrying,
Down to it sheer he dropp'd; and scour'd away
Like the wild gull, that fishing o'er the bay,
Flaps on, with pinions dipping in the brine;—
So went on the far sea the shape divine."

*Odyssey*, Book V.

"——— That was Arion crown'd:
So went he playing on the wat'ry plain."

*Fairy Queen.*

There is a striking description in Mr Burke's Reflections of the late Queen of France, whose charms had left their poison in the heart of this Irish orator and patriot, and set the world in a ferment sixteen years afterwards. "And surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision."—The idea is in Don Quixote, where the Duenna speaks of the air with which the Duchess "treads, or rather seems to disdain the ground she walks on." We have heard the same account of the gracefulness

disjointed movements, that distract the attention and defeat each other. Grace is the absence of every thing that indicates pain or difficulty, or hesitation or incongruity. The only graceful dancer we ever saw was Deshayes, the Frenchman. He came on bounding like a stag. It was not necessary to have seen good dancing before to know that this was really fine. Whoever has seen the sea in motion, the branches of a tree waving in the air, would instantly perceive the resemblance. Flexibility and grace are to be found in nature as well as at the Opera. Mr Burke, in his Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, has very admirably described the bosom of a beautiful woman, almost entirely with reference to the ideas of motion. Those outlines are beautiful which describe pleasant motions. A fine use is made of this principle by one of the apocryphal writers, in describing the form of the rainbow. "He hath set his bow in the heavens, and his hands have bended it."

of Maria Antoinette from an artist, who saw her at Versailles much about the same time that Mr Burke did. He stood in one corner of a little antichamber, and as the doors were narrow, she was obliged to pass sideways, with her hoop. She glided by him in an instant, as if borne on a cloud.

Harmony in colour has not been denied to be a natural property of objects, consisting in the gradations of intermediate colours. The principle appears to be here the same as in some of the former instances. The effect of colour, in Titian's Bath of Diana at the Marquis of Stafford's, is perhaps the finest in the world, made up of the richest contrasts, blended together by the most masterly gradations. Harmony of sound depends apparently on the same principle as harmony of colour. Rhyme depends on the pleasure derived from a recurrence of similar sounds, as symmetry of features does on the correspondence of the different outlines. The prose style of Dr Johnson originated in the same principle. Its secret consisted in rhyming on the sense, and balancing one half of the sentence uniformly and systematically against the other. The Hebrew poetry was constructed in the same manner.

W.

## No. XXVIII.

### ON IMITATION.

OBJECTS in themselves disagreeable or indifferent, often please in the imitation. A brick-floor, a pewter-plate, an ugly cur barking, a Dutch boor smoking or playing at skittles, the inside of a shambles, a fishmonger's or a green-grocer's stall, have been made very interesting as pictures by the fidelity, skill, and spirit, with which they have been copied. One source of the pleasure thus received is undoubtedly the surprise or feeling of admiration, occasioned by the unexpected coincidence between the imitation and the object. The deception, however, not only pleases at first sight, or from mere novelty; but it continues to please upon farther acquaintance, and in proportion to the insight we acquire into the distinctions of nature and of art. By far the most numerous class of connoisseurs are the admirers of pictures of *still life*, which have nothing but the elaborateness of the execution to recommend them. One chief reason, it should seem then, why imitation pleases, is, because, by exciting curiosity, and inviting a com-

parison between the object and the representation, it opens a new field of inquiry, and leads the attention to a variety of details and distinctions not perceived before. This latter source of the pleasure derived from imitation has never been properly insisted on.

The anatomist is delighted with a coloured plate, conveying the exact appearance of the progress of certain diseases, or of the internal parts and dissections of the human body. We have known a Jennerian Professor as much enraptured with a delineation of the different stages of vaccination, as a florist with a bed of tulips, or an auctioneer with a collection of Indian shells. But in this case, we find that not only the imitation pleases, —the objects themselves give as much pleasure to the professional inquirer, as they would pain to the uninitiated. The learned amateur is struck with the beauty of the coats of the stomach laid bare, or contemplates with eager curiosity the transverse section of the brain, divided on the new Spurzheim principles. It is here then the number of the parts, their distinctions, connections, structure, uses; in short, an entire new set of ideas, which occupies the mind of the student, and overcomes the sense of pain and repugnance, which is the only feeling that the sight of a dead

and mangled body presents to ordinary men. It is the same in art as in science. The painter of still life, as it is called, takes the same pleasure in the object as the spectator does in the imitation; because by habit he is led to perceive all those distinctions in nature, to which other persons never pay any attention till they are pointed out to them in the picture. The vulgar only see nature as it is reflected to them from art; the painter sees the picture in nature, before he transfers it to the canvass. He refines, he analyzes, he remarks fifty things, which escape common eyes; and this affords a distinct source of reflection and amusement to him, independently of the beauty or grandeur of the objects themselves, or of their connection with other impressions besides those of sight. The charm of the Fine Arts then does not consist in any thing peculiar to imitation, even where only imitation is concerned, since *there*, where art exists in the highest perfection, namely, in the mind of the artist, the object excites the same or greater pleasure, before the imitation exists. Imitation renders an object displeasing in itself a source of pleasure, not by repetition of the same idea, but by suggesting new ideas, by detecting new properties, and endless shades of difference,—just as a close and continued contem-

plation of the object itself would do. Art shews us nature, divested of the medium of our prejudices. It divides and decompounds objects into a thousand curious parts, which may be full of variety, beauty, and delicacy in themselves, though the object to which they belong may be disagreeable in its general appearance, or by association with other ideas. A painted marigold is inferior to a painted rose only in form and colour: it loses nothing in point of smell. Yellow hair is perfectly beautiful in a picture. To a person lying with his face close to the ground in a summer's day, the blades of spear-grass will appear like tall forest trees, shooting up into the sky; as an insect seen through a microscope is magnified into an elephant. Art is the microscope of the mind, which sharpens the wit as the other does the sight; and converts every object into a little universe in itself. * Art may be said to draw aside the veil

* In a fruit or flower-piece by Vanhuysum, the minutest details acquire a certain grace and beauty from the delicacy with which they are finished. The eye dwells with a giddy delight on the liquid drops of dew, on the gauze wings of an insect, on the hair and feathers of a bird's nest, the streaked and speckled egg-shells, the fine legs of the little travelling caterpillar. Who will suppose that the painter had not the same pleasure in detecting these nice distinctions in nature, that the critic has in tracing them in the picture?

from nature. To those who are perfectly unskilled in the practice, unimbued with the principles of art, most objects present only a confused mass. The pursuit of art is liable to be carried to a contrary excess, as where it produces a rage for the *picturesque*. You cannot go a step with a person of this class, but he stops you to point out some choice bit of landscape, or fancied improvement, and teazes you almost to death with the frequency and insignificance of his discoveries!

It is a common opinion, (which may be worth noticing here,) that the study of physiognomy has a tendency to make people satirical, and the knowledge of art to make them fastidious in their taste. Knowledge may indeed afford a handle to ill-nature; but it takes away the principal temptation to its exercise, by supplying the mind with better resources against *ennui*. Idiots are always mischievous; and the most superficial persons are the most disposed to find fault, because they understand the fewest things. The English are more apt than any other nation to treat foreigners with contempt, because they seldom see any thing but their own dress and manners; and it is only in petty provincial towns that you meet with persons who pride themselves on being satirical. In every country place in England there are one or two

persons of this description who keep the whole neighbourhood in terror. It is not to be denied that the study of the *ideal* in art, if separated from the study of nature, may have the effect above stated, of producing dissatisfaction and contempt for every thing but itself, as all affectation must; but to the genuine artist, truth, nature, beauty, are almost different names for the same thing.

Imitation interests then by exciting a more intense perception of truth, and calling out the powers of observation and comparison: wherever this effect takes place, the interest follows of course, with or without the imitation, whether the object is real or artificial. The gardener delights in the streaks of a tulip, or "pansy freak'd with jet;" the mineralogist, in the varieties of certain strata, because he understands them. Knowledge is pleasure as well as power. A work of art has in this respect no advantage over a work of nature, except inasmuch as it furnishes an additional stimulus to curiosity. Again, natural objects please, in proportion as they are uncommon, by fixing the attention more steadily on their beauties or differences. The same principle of the effect of novelty in exciting the attention, may account perhaps for the extraordinary discoveries and lies

told by travellers, who, opening their eyes for the first time in foreign parts, are startled at every object they meet.

Why the excitement of intellectual activity pleases, is not here the question; but that it does so, is a general and acknowledged law of the human mind. We grow attached to the mathematics only from finding out their truth; and their utility chiefly consists (at present) in the contemplative pleasure they afford to the student. Lines, points, angles, squares, and circles, are not interesting in themselves; they become so by the power of mind exerted in comprehending their properties and relations. People dispute forever about Hogarth. The question has not in one respect been fairly stated. The merit of his pictures does not so much depend on the nature of the subject, as on the knowledge displayed of it, on the number of ideas they excite, on the fund of thought and observation contained in them. They are to be looked on as works of science; they gratify our love of truth; they fill up the void of the mind: they are a series of plates of natural history, and also of that most interesting part of natural history, the history of man. The superiority of high art over the common or mechanical consists in combining truth of imitation with

beauty and grandeur of subject. The historical painter is superior to the flower-painter, because he combines or ought to combine human interests and passions with the same power of imitating external nature; or, indeed, with greater, for the greatest difficulty of imitation is the power of imitating expression. The difficulty of copying increases with our knowledge of the object; and that again with the interest we take in it.—The same argument might be applied to shew that the poet and painter of imagination are superior to the mere philosopher or man of science, because they exercise the powers of reason and intellect combined with nature and passion. They treat of the highest categories of the human soul, pleasure and pain.

From the foregoing train of reasoning, we may easily account for the too great tendency of art to run into pedantry and affectation. There is "a pleasure in art which none but artists feel." They see beauty where others see nothing of the sort, in wrinkles, deformity, and old age. They see it in Titian's Schoolmaster as well as in Raphael's Galatea; in the dark shadows of Rembrandt as well as in the splendid colours of Rubens; in an angel's or in a butterfly's wings. They see with different eyes from the multitude.

But true genius, though it has new sources of pleasure opened to it, does not lose its sympathy with humanity. It combines truth of imitation with effect, the parts with the whole, the means with the end. The mechanic artist sees only that which nobody else sees, and is conversant only with the technical language and difficulties of his art. A painter, if shewn a picture, will generally dwell upon the academic skill displayed in it, and the knowledge of the received rules of composition. A musician, if asked to play a tune, will select that which is the most difficult and the least intelligible. The poet will be struck with the harmony of versification, or the elaborateness of the arrangement in a composition. The conceits in Shakspeare were his greatest delight; and improving upon this perverse method of judging, the German writers, Goethé and Schiller, look upon Werter and the Robbers as the worst of all their works, because they are the most popular. Some artists among ourselves have carried the same principle to a singular excess.* If professors

* We here allude particularly to Turner, the ablest landscape painter now living, whose pictures are, however, too much abstractions of aerial perspective, and representations not so properly of the objects of nature as of the medium through which they are seen. They are the triumph of the knowledge of the artist, and of the power of the pencil over

themselves are liable to this kind of pedantry, connoisseurs and dilettanti, who have less sensibility and more affectation, are almost wholly swayed by it. They see nothing in a picture but the execution. They are proud of their knowledge, in proportion as it is a secret. The worst judges of pictures in the United Kingdom are, first, picture-dealers; next, perhaps, the Directors of the British Institution; and after them, in all probability, the Members of the Royal Academy.

T. T.

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## No. XXIX.

### ON *GUSTO*.

GUSTO in art is power or passion defining any object.—It is not so difficult to explain this term

the barrenness of the subject. They are pictures of the elements of air, earth, and water. The artist delights to go back to the first chaos of the world, or to that state of things when the waters were separated from the dry land, and light from darkness, but as yet no living thing nor tree bearing fruit was seen upon the face of the earth. All is "without form and void." Some one said of his landscapes that they were *pictures of nothing, and very like.*

in what relates to expression (of which it may be said to be the highest degree) as in what relates to things without expression, to the natural appearances of objects, as mere colour or form. In one sense, however, there is hardly any object entirely devoid of expression, without some character of power belonging to it, some precise association with pleasure or pain: and it is in giving this truth of character from the truth of feeling, whether in the highest or the lowest degree, but always in the highest degree of which the subject is capable, that gusto consists.

There is a gusto in the colouring of Titian. Not only do his heads seem to think—his bodies seem to feel. This is what the Italians mean by the *morbidezza* of his flesh-colour. It seems sensitive and alive all over; not merely to have the look and texture of flesh, but the feeling in itself. For example, the limbs of his female figures have a luxurious softness and delicacy, which appears conscious of the pleasure of the beholder. As the objects themselves in nature would produce an impression on the sense, distinct from every other object, and having something divine in it, which the heart owns and the imagination consecrates, the objects in the picture preserve the same impression, absolute, unimpaired, stamped with all

the truth of passion, the pride of the eye, and the charm of beauty. Rubens makes his flesh-colour like flowers; Albano's is like ivory; Titian's is like flesh, and like nothing else. It is as different from that of other painters, as the skin is from a piece of white or red drapery thrown over it. The blood circulates here and there, the blue veins just appear, the rest is distinguished throughout only by that sort of tingling sensation to the eye, which the body feels within itself. This is gusto.—Vandyke's flesh-colour, though it has great truth and purity, wants gusto. It has not the internal character, the living principle in it. It is a smooth surface, not a warm, moving mass. It is painted without passion, with indifference. The hand only has been concerned. The impression slides off from the eye, and does not, like the tones of Titian's pencil, leave a sting behind it in the mind of the spectator. The eye does not acquire a taste or appetite for what it sees. In a word, gusto in painting is where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another.

Michael Angelo's forms are full of gusto. They every where obtrude the sense of power upon the eye. His limbs convey an idea of muscular strength, of moral grandeur, and even of in-

tellectual dignity: they are firm, commanding, broad, and massy, capable of executing with ease the determined purposes of the will. His faces have no other expression than his figures, conscious power and capacity. They appear only to think what they shall do, and to know that they can do it. This is what is meant by saying that his style is hard and masculine. It is the reverse of Correggio's, which is effeminate. That is, the gusto of Michael Angelo consists in expressing energy of will without proportionable sensibility, Correggio's in expressing exquisite sensibility without energy of will. In Correggio's faces as well as figures we see neither bones nor muscles, but then what a soul is there, full of sweetness and of grace—pure, playful, soft, angelical! There is sentiment enough in a hand painted by Correggio to set up a school of history painters. Whenever we look at the hands of Correggio's women or of Raphael's, we always wish to touch them.

Again, Titian's landscapes have a prodigious gusto, both in the colouring and forms. We shall never forget one that we saw many years ago in the Orleans Gallery of Acteon hunting. It had a brown, mellow, autumnal look. The sky was of the colour of stone. The winds seemed to sing through the rustling branches of the trees, and

already you might hear the twanging of bows resound through the tangled mazes of the wood. Mr West, we understand, has this landscape. He will know if this description of it is just. The landscape back-ground of the St Peter Martyr is another well known instance of the power of this great painter to give a romantic interest and an appropriate character to the objects of his pencil, where every circumstance adds to the effect of the scene,—the bold trunks of the tall forest trees, the trailing ground plants, with that cold convent spire rising in the distance, amidst the blue sapphire mountains and the golden sky.

Rubens has a great deal of gusto in his Fauns and Satyrs, and in all that expresses motion, but in nothing else. Rembrandt has it in every thing; every thing in his pictures has a tangible character. If he puts a diamond in the ear of a Burgomaster's wife, it is of the first water; and his furs and stuffs are proof against a Russian winter. Raphael's gusto was only in expression; he had no idea of the character of any thing but the human form. The dryness and poverty of his style in other respects is a phenomenon in the art. His trees are like sprigs of grass stuck in a book of botanical specimens. Was it that Raphael never had time to go beyond the walls of Rome? That

he was always in the streets, at church, or in the bath? He was not one of the Society of Arcadians.*

Claude's landscapes, perfect as they are, want gusto. This is not easy to explain. They are perfect abstractions of the visible images of things; they speak the visible language of nature truly. They resemble a mirror or a microscope. To the eye only they are more perfect than any other landscapes that ever were or will be painted; they give more of nature, as cognizable by one sense alone; but they lay an equal stress on all visible impressions; they do not interpret one sense by another; they do not distinguish the character of different objects as we are taught, and can only be taught, to distinguish them by their effect on the different senses. That is, his eye wanted imagination: it did not strongly sympathize with his

* Raphael not only could not paint a landscape; he could not paint people in a landscape. He could not have painted the heads or the figures, or even the dresses of the St Peter Martyr. His figures have always an *in-door* look, that is, a set, determined, voluntary, dramatic character, arising from their own passions, or a watchfulness of those of others, and want that wild uncertainty of expression, which is connected with the accidents of nature and the changes of the elements. He has nothing *romantic* about him.

other faculties. He saw the atmosphere, but he did not feel it. He painted the trunk of a tree or a rock in the foreground as smooth—with as complete an abstraction of the gross, tangible impression, as any other part of the picture; his trees are perfectly beautiful, but quite immoveable; they have a look of enchantment. In short, his landscapes are unequalled imitations of nature, released from its subjection to the elements,—as if all objects were become a delightful fairy vision, and the eye had rarefied and refined away the other senses.

The gusto in the Greek statues is of a very singular kind. The sense of perfect form nearly occupies the whole mind, and hardly suffers it to dwell on any other feeling. It seems enough for them *to be*, without acting or suffering. Their forms are ideal, spiritual. Their beauty is power. By their beauty they are raised above the frailties of pain or passion; by their beauty they are deified.

The infinite quantity of dramatic invention in Shakspeare takes from his gusto. The power he delights to shew is not intense, but discursive. He never insists on any thing as much as he might, except a quibble. Milton has great gusto. He repeats his blow twice; grapples with and exhausts his subject. His imagination has a double

relish of its objects, an inveterate attachment to the things he describes, and to the words describing them.

——————" Or where Chineses drive
With sails and wind their *cany* waggons *light*."

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

" Wild above rule or art, *enormous* bliss."

There is a gusto in Pope's compliments, in Dryden's satires, and Prior's tales; and among prose-writers, Boccacio and Rabelais had the most of it. We will only mention one other work which appears to us to be full of gusto, and that is the *Beggar's Opera*. If it is not, we are altogether mistaken in our notions on this delicate subject.

W. H.

## No. XXX.

### ON PEDANTRY.

THE power of attaching an interest to the most trifling or painful pursuits, in which our whole attention and faculties are engaged, is one of the greatest happinesses of our nature. The common

soldier mounts the breach with joy; the miser deliberately starves himself to death; the mathematician sets about extracting the cube-root with a feeling of enthusiasm; and the lawyer sheds tears of admiration over Coke upon Littleton. It is the same through human life. He who is not in some measure a pedant, though he may be a wise, cannot be a very happy man.

The chief charm of reading the old novels is from the picture they give of the egotism of the characters, the importance of each individual to himself, and his fancied superiority over every one else. We like, for instance, the pedantry of Parson Adams, who thought a schoolmaster the greatest character in the world, and that he was the greatest schoolmaster in it. We do not see any equivalent for the satisfaction which this conviction must have afforded him in the most nicely graduated scale of talents and accomplishments to which he was an utter stranger. When the old-fashioned Scotch pedagogue turns Roderick Random round and round, and surveys him from head to foot with such infinite surprise and laughter, at the same time breaking out himself into gestures and exclamations still more uncouth and ridiculous, who would wish to have deprived him of this burst of extravagant self-complacency?

When our follies afford equal delight to ourselves and those about us, what is there to be desired more? We cannot discover the vast advantage of "seeing ourselves as others see us." It is better to have a contempt for any one than for ourselves!

One of the most constant butts of ridicule, both in the old comedies and novels, is the professional jargon of the medical tribe. Yet it cannot be denied that this jargon, however affected it may seem, is the natural language of apothecaries and physicians, the mother-tongue of pharmacy! It is that by which their knowledge first comes to them, that with which they have the most obstinate associations, that in which they can express themselves the most readily and with the best effect upon their hearers; and though there may be some assumption of superiority in all this, yet it is only by an effort of circumlocution that they could condescend to explain themselves in ordinary language. Besides, there is a delicacy at bottom; as it is the only language in which a nauseous medicine can be decorously administered, or a limb taken off with the proper degree of secrecy. If the most blundering coxcombs affect this language most, what does it signify, while they retain the same dignified notions of themselves and their art, and are equally happy in their knowledge or their ig-

norance? The ignorant and pretending physician is a capital character in Moliere: and, indeed, throughout his whole plays, the great source of the comic interest is in the fantastic exaggeration of blind self-love, in letting loose the habitual peculiarities of each individual from all restraint of conscious observation or self-knowledge, in giving way to that specific levity of impulse which mounts at once to the height of absurdity, in spite of the obstacles that surround it, as a fluid in a barometer rises according to the pressure of the external air! His characters are almost always pedantic, and yet the most unconscious of all others. Take, for example, those two worthy gentlemen, Monsieur Jourdain and Monsieur Pourceaugnac. *

* A good-natured man will always have a smack of pedantry about him. A lawyer, who talks about law, *certioraris*, *noli prosequis*, and silk gowns, though he may be a blockhead, is by no means dangerous. It is a very bad sign (unless where it arises from singular modesty) when you cannot tell a man's profession from his conversation. Such persons either feel no interest in what concerns them most, or do not express what they feel. "Not to admire any thing" is a very unsafe rule. A London apprentice, who did not admire the Lord Mayor's coach, would stand a good chance of being hanged. We know but one person absurd enough to have formed his whole character on the

Learning and pedantry were formerly synonymous; and it was well when they were so. Can there be a higher satisfaction than for a man to understand Greek, and to believe that there is nothing else worth understanding? Learning is the knowledge of that which is not generally known. What an ease and a dignity in pretensions, founded on the ignorance of others! What a pleasure in wondering, what a pride in being wondered at! In the library of the family where we were brought up, stood the *Fratres Poloni;* and we can never forget or describe the feeling with which not only their appearance, but the names of the authors on the outside inspired us. Pripscovius, we remember, was one of the easiest to pronounce. The gravity of the contents seemed in proportion to the weight of the volumes; the importance of the subjects increased with our ignorance of them. The trivialness of the remarks, if ever we looked into them, the repetitions, the monotony, only gave a greater solemnity to the whole, as the slowness and minuteness of the evidence adds to the impressiveness of a judicial proceeding. We knew that

above maxim of Horace, and who affects a superiority over others from an uncommon degree of natural and artificial stupidity.

the authors had devoted their whole lives to the production of these works, carefully abstaining from the introduction of any thing amusing or lively or interesting. In ten folio volumes there was not one sally of wit, one striking reflection. What then must have been their sense of the importance of the subject, the profound stores of knowledge which they had to communicate! "From all this world's encumbrance they did themselves assoil." Such was the notion we then had of this learned lumber; yet we would rather have this feeling again for one half hour than be possessed of all the acuteness of Bayle or the wit of Voltaire!

It may be considered as a sign of the decay of piety and learning in modern times, that our divines no longer introduce texts of the original Scriptures into their sermons. The very sound of the original Greek or Hebrew would impress the hearer with a more lively faith in the sacred writers than any translation, however literal or correct. It may even be doubted whether the translation of the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue was any advantage to the people. The mystery in which particular points of faith were left involved, gave an awe and sacredness to religious opinions: the general purport of the truths and promises of revelation was made known by

other means; and nothing beyond this general and implicit conviction can be obtained, where all is undefined and infinite.

Again, it may be questioned whether, in matters of mere human reasoning, much has been gained by the disuse of the learned languages. Sir Isaac Newton wrote in Latin; and it is perhaps one of Bacon's fopperies that he translated his works into English. If certain follies have been exposed by being stripped of their formal disguise, others have had a greater chance of succeeding, by being presented in a more pleasing and popular shape. This has been remarkably the case in France, (the least pedantic country in the world,) where the women mingle with every thing, even with metaphysics, and where all philosophy is reduced to a set of phrases for the toilette. When books are written in the prevailing language of the country, every one becomes a critic who can read. An author is no longer tried by his peers. A species of universal suffrage is introduced in letters, which is only applicable to politics. The good old Latin style of our forefathers, if it concealed the dulness of the writer, at least was a barrier against the impertinence, flippancy, and ignorance of the reader. However, the immediate transition from the pe-

dantic to the popular style in literature was a change that must have been very delightful at the time. Our illustrious predecessors, the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, were very happily off in this respect. They wore the public favour in its newest gloss, before it had become tarnished and common—before familiarity had bred contempt. It was the honey-moon of authorship. Their Essays were among the first instances in this country of learning sacrificing to the graces, and of a mutual understanding and good-humoured equality between the writer and the reader. This new style of composition, to use the phraseology of Mr Burke, "mitigated authors into companions, and compelled wisdom to submit to the soft collar of social esteem." The original papers of the *Tatler*, printed on a half sheet of common foolscap, were regularly served up at breakfast-time with the silver tea-kettle and thin slices of bread and butter; and what the ingenious Mr Bickerstaff wrote over night in his easy chair, he might flatter himself would be read the next morning with elegant applause by the fair, the witty, the learned, and the great, in all parts of this kingdom, in which civilization had made any considerable advances. The perfection of letters is when the highest ambition of the writer is to please his readers, and the

greatest pride of the reader is to understand his author. The satisfaction on both sides ceases when the town becomes a club of authors, when each man stands with his manuscript in his hand waiting for his turn of applause, and when the claims on our admiration are so many, that, like those of common beggars, to prevent imposition, they can only be answered with general neglect. Our self-love would be quite bankrupt, if critics by profession did not come forward as beadles to keep off the crowd, and to relieve us from the importunity of these innumerable candidates for fame, by pointing out their faults, and passing over their beauties. In the more auspicious period just alluded to, an author was regarded by the better sort as a man of genius,—and by the vulgar, as a kind of prodigy; insomuch that the Spectator was obliged to shorten his residence at his friend Sir Roger de Coverley's from his being taken for a conjuror. Every state of society has its advantages and disadvantages. An author is at present in no danger of being taken for a conjuror!

## No. XXXI.

### THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

LIFE is the art of being well deceived; and in order that the deception may succeed, it must be habitual and uninterrupted. A constant examination of the value of our opinions and enjoyments, compared with those of others, may lessen our prejudices, but will leave nothing for our affections to rest upon. A multiplicity of objects unsettles the mind, and destroys not only all enthusiasm, but all sincerity of attachment, all constancy of pursuit; as persons accustomed to an itinerant mode of life never feel themselves at home in any place. It is by means of habit that our intellectual employments mix like our food with the circulation of the blood, and go on like any other part of the animal functions. To take away the force of habit and prejudice entirely, is to strike at the root of our personal existence. The book-worm, buried in the depth of his researches, may well say to the obtrusive shifting realities of the world,—"Leave me to my repose!" We have seen an instance of a poetical

enthusiast, who would have passed his life very comfortably in the contemplation of *his own idea*, if he had not been disturbed in his reverie by the Reviewers; and for our own parts, we think we could pass our lives very learnedly and classically in one of the quadrangles at Oxford, without any idea at all, vegetating merely on the air of the place. Chaucer has drawn a beautiful picture of a true scholar in his Clerk of Oxenford:—

"A Clerk ther was of Oxenforde also,
That unto logike hadde long ygo.
As lene was his horse as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But loked holwe, and thereto soberly.
Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
For he hadde geten him yet no benefice,
Ne was nought worldly to have an office.
For him was lever han at his beddes hed
A twenty bokes, clothed in black or red,
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,
Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie.
But all be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre,
But all that he might of his frendes hente,
On bokes and on lerning he it spente,
And besily gan for the soules praie
Of hem, that gave him wherwith to scolaie.
Of studie toke he moste care and hede.
Not a word spake he more then was nede;

And that was said in forme and reverence,
And short, and quike, and full of high sentence.
Sowning in moral vertue was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche."

If letters have profited little by throwing down the barrier between learned prejudice and ignorant presumption, the arts have profited still less by the universal diffusion of accomplishment and pretension. An artist is no longer looked upon as any thing, who is not at the same time "chemist, statesman, fiddler, and buffoon." It is expected of him that he should be well-dressed, and he is poor; that he should move gracefully, and he has never learned to dance; that he should converse on all subjects, and he understands but one; that he should be read in different languages, and he only knows his own. Yet there is one language, the language of Nature, in which it is enough for him to be able to read, to find everlasting employment and solace to his thoughts—

"Tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

He will find no end of his labours or of his triumphs there; yet still feel all his strength not more than equal to the task he has begun—his

whole life too short for art. Rubens complained, that just as he was beginning to understand his profession, he was forced to quit it. It was a saying of Michael Angelo, that "painting was jealous, and required the whole man to herself." Is it to be supposed that Rembrandt did not find sufficient resources against the spleen in the little cell, where mystery and silence hung upon his pencil, or the noontide ray penetrated the solemn gloom around him, without the aid of modern newspapers, novels, and reviews? Was he not more wisely employed, while devoted solely to his art—married to that immortal bride! We do not imagine Sir Joshua Reynolds was much happier for having written his lectures, nor for the learned society he kept, friendship apart; and learned society is not necessary to friendship. He was evidently, as far as conversation was concerned, little at his ease in it; and he was always glad, as he himself said, after he had been entertained at the houses of the great, to get back to his painting-room again. Any one settled pursuit, together with the ordinary alternations of leisure, exercise, amusement, and the natural feelings and relations of society, is quite enough to take up the whole of our thoughts, time, and affections; and any thing beyond this will, generally speaking, only

tend to dissipate and distract the mind. There is no end of accomplishments, of the prospect of new acquisitions of taste or skill, or of the uneasiness arising from the want of them, if we once indulge in this idle habit of vanity and affectation. The mind is never satisfied with what it is, but is always looking out for fanciful perfections, which it can neither attain nor practise. Our failure in any one object is fatal to our enjoyment of all the rest; and the chances of disappointment multiply with the number of our pursuits. In catching at the shadow, we lose the substance. No man can thoroughly master more than one art or science. The world has never seen a perfect painter. What would it have availed for Raphael to have aimed at Titian's colouring, or for Titian to have imitated Raphael's drawing, but to have diverted each from the true bent of his natural genius, and to have made each sensible of his own deficiencies, without any probability of supplying them? Pedantry in art, in learning, in every thing, is the setting an extraordinary value on that which we can do, and that which we understand best, and which it is our business to do and understand. Where is the harm of this? To possess or even understand all kinds of excellence equally, is impossible; and to pretend to admire

that to which we are indifferent, as much as that which is of the greatest use, and which gives the greatest pleasure to us, is not liberality, but affectation. Is an artist, for instance, to be required to feel the same admiration for the works of Handel as for those of Raphael? If he is sincere, he cannot: and a man, to be free from pedantry, must be either a coxcomb or a hypocrite. Vestris was so far in the right, in saying that Voltaire and he were the two greatest men in Europe. Voltaire was so in the public opinion, and he was so in his own. Authors and literary people have been unjustly accused for arrogating an exclusive preference to letters over other arts. They are justified in doing this, because words are the most natural and universal language, and because they have the sympathy of the world with them. Poets, for the same reason, have a right to be the vainest of authors. The prejudice attached to established reputation is, in like manner, perfectly well founded, because that which has longest excited our admiration and the admiration of mankind, is most entitled to admiration, on the score of habit, sympathy, and deference to public opinion. There is a sentiment attached to classical reputation, which cannot belong to new works of genius, till they become old in their turn.

There appears to be a natural division of labour in the ornamental as well as the mechanical arts of human life. We do not see why a nobleman should wish to shine as a poet, any more than to be dubbed a knight, or to be created Lord Mayor of London! If he succeeds, he gains nothing; and then if he is damned, what a ridiculous figure he makes! The great, instead of rivalling them, should keep authors, as they formerly kept fools,—a practice in itself highly laudable, and the disuse of which might be referred to as the first symptom of the degeneracy of modern times, and dissolution of the principles of social order! But of all the instances of a profession now unjustly obsolete, commend us to the alchemist. We see him sitting fortified in his prejudices, with his furnace, his diagrams, and his alembics; smiling at disappointments as proofs of the sublimity of his art, and the earnest of his future success: wondering at his own knowledge and the incredulity of others; fed with hope to the last gasp, and having all the pleasures without the pain of madness. What is there in the discoveries of modern chemistry equal to the very names of the ELIXIR VITÆ and the AURUM POTABILE!

In *Froissard's Chronicles* there is an account of

a reverend Monk, who had been a robber in the early part of his life, and who, when he grew old, used feelingly to lament that he had ever changed his profession. He said, "it was a goodly sight to sally out from his castle, and to see a troop of jolly friars coming riding that way, with their mules well laden with viands and rich stores, to advance towards them, to attack and overthrow them, returning to the castle with a noble booty." He preferred this mode of life to counting his beads and chaunting his vespers, and repented that he had ever been prevailed on to relinquish so laudable a calling. In this confession of remorse, we may be sure that there was no hypocrisy.

The difference in the character of the gentlemen of the present age, and those of the old school, has been often insisted on. The character of a gentleman is a *relative term*, which can hardly subsist where there is no marked distinction of persons. The diffusion of knowledge, of artificial and intellectual equality, tends to level this distinction, and to confound that nice perception and high sense of honour, which arises from conspicuousness of situation, and a perpetual attention to personal propriety and the claims of personal respect. The age of chivalry is gone

with the improvements in the art of war, which superseded the exercise of personal courage; and the character of a gentleman must disappear with those general refinements in manners, which render the advantages of rank and situation accessible almost to every one. The bag-wig and sword naturally followed the fate of the helmet and the spear, when these outward insignia no longer implied acknowledged superiority, and were a distinction without a difference.

The spirit of chivalrous and romantic love proceeded on the same exclusive principle. It was an enthusiastic adoration, an idolatrous worship paid to sex and beauty. This, even in its blindest excess, was better than the cold indifference and prostituted gallantry of this philosophic age. The extreme tendency of civilization is to dissipate all intellectual energy, and dissolve all moral principle. We are sometimes inclined to regret the innovations on the Catholic religion. It was a noble charter for ignorance, dulness, and prejudice of all kinds, (perhaps, after all, "the sovereign'st things on earth,") and put an effectual stop to the vanity and restlessness of opinion. "It wrapped the human understanding all round like a blanket." Since the Reformation, altars,

unsprinkled by holy oil, are no longer sacred; and thrones, unsupported by divine right, have become uneasy and insecure.

W. H.

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## No. XXXII.

### ON THE CHARACTER OF ROUSSEAU.

MADAME DE STAEL, in her Letters on the Writings and Character of Rousseau, gives it as her opinion, "that the imagination was the first faculty of his mind, and that this faculty even absorbed all the others." * And she farther adds, "Rousseau had great strength of reason on abstract questions, or with respect to objects, which have no reality but in the mind." †—Both these opinions are radically wrong. Neither imagination nor reason can properly be said to have been the original predominant faculties of his mind.

* "Je crois que l'imagination étoit la première de ses facultés, et qu'elle absorboit même toutes les autres."—p. 80.

† "Il avoit une grande puissance de raison sur les matieres abstraites, sur les objets qui n'ont de réalité que dans la pensée," &c. p. 81.

The strength both of imagination and reason, which he possessed, was borrowed from the excess of another faculty; and the weakness and poverty of reason and imagination, which are to be found in his works, may be traced to the same source, namely, that these faculties in him were artificial, secondary, and dependant, operating by a power not theirs, but lent to them. The only quality which he possessed in an eminent degree, which alone raised him above ordinary men, and which gave to his writings and opinions an influence greater, perhaps, than has been exerted by any individual in modern times, was extreme sensibility, or an acute and even morbid feeling of all that related to his own impressions, to the objects and events of his life. He had the most intense consciousness of his own existence. No object that had once made an impression on him was ever after effaced. Every feeling in his mind became a passion. His craving after excitement was an appetite and a disease. His interest in his own thoughts and feelings was always wound up to the highest pitch; and hence the enthusiasm which he excited in others. He owed the power which he exercised over the opinions of all Europe, by which he created numberless disciples, and overturned established systems, to the ty-

ranny which his feelings, in the first instance, exercised over himself. The dazzling blaze of his reputation was kindled by the same fire that fed upon his vitals. * His ideas differed from those of other men only in their force and intensity. His genius was the effect of his temperament. He created nothing, he demonstrated nothing, by a pure effort of the understanding. His fictitious characters are modifications of his own being, reflections and shadows of himself. His speculations are the obvious exaggerations of a mind, giving a loose to its habitual impulses, and moulding all nature to its own purposes. Hence his enthusiasm and his eloquence, bearing down all opposition. Hence the warmth and the luxuriance, as well as the sameness of his descriptions. Hence the frequent verboseness of his style; for passion lends force and reality to language, and makes words supply the place of imagination. Hence the tenaciousness of his logic, the acuteness of his

* He did more towards the French Revolution than any other man. Voltaire, by his wit and penetration, had rendered superstition contemptible, and tyranny odious: but it was Rousseau who brought the feeling of irreconcileable enmity to rank and privileges, *above humanity*, home to the bosom of every man,—identified it with all the pride of intellect, and with the deepest yearnings of the human heart.

observations, the refinement and the inconsistency of his reasoning. Hence his keen penetration, and his strange want of comprehension of mind: for the same intense feeling which enabled him to discern the first principles of things, and seize some one view of a subject in all its ramifications, prevented him from admitting the operation of other causes which interfered with his favourite purpose, and involved him in endless wilful contradictions. Hence his excessive egotism, which filled all objects with himself, and would have occupied the universe with his smallest interest. Hence his jealousy and suspicion of others; for no attention, no respect or sympathy, could come up to the extravagant claims of his self-love. Hence his dissatisfaction with himself and with all around him; for nothing could satisfy his ardent longings after good, his restless appetite of being. Hence his feelings, overstrained and exhausted, recoiled upon themselves, and produced his love of silence and repose, his feverish aspirations after the quiet and solitude of nature. Hence in part also his quarrel with the artificial institutions and distinctions of society, which opposed so many barriers to the unrestrained indulgence of his will, and allured his imagination to scenes of pastoral simplicity or of savage life, where the passions were

either not excited or left to follow their own impulse,—where the petty vexations and irritating disappointments of common life had no place,—and where the tormenting pursuits of arts and sciences were lost in pure animal enjoyment, or indolent repose. Thus he describes the first savage wandering for ever under the shade of magnificent forests, or by the side of mighty rivers, smit with the unquenchable love of nature!

The best of all his works is the *Confessions*, though it is that which has been least read, because it contains the fewest set paradoxes or general opinions. It relates entirely to himself; and no one was ever so much at home on this subject as he was. From the strong hold which they had taken of his mind, he makes us enter into his feelings as if they had been our own, and we seem to remember every incident and circumstance of his life as if it had happened to ourselves. We are never tired of this work, for it every where presents us with pictures which we can fancy to be counterparts of our own existence. The passages of this sort are innumerable. There is the interesting account of his childhood, the constraints and thoughtless liberty of which are so well described; of his sitting up all night reading

romances with his father, till they were forced to desist by hearing the swallows twittering in their nests; his crossing the Alps, described with all the feelings belonging to it, his pleasure in setting out, his satisfaction in coming to his journey's end, the delight of "coming and going he knew not where;" his arriving at Turin; the figure of Madame Basile, drawn with such inimitable precision and elegance; the delightful adventure of the Chateau de Toune, where he passed the day with Mademoiselle G**** and Mademoiselle Galley; the story of his Zulietta, the proud, the charming Zulietta, whose last words, *Va Zanetto, e studia la Matamatica*, were never to be forgotten; his sleeping near Lyons in a niche of the wall, after a fine summer's day, with a nightingale perched above his head; his first meeting with Madame Warens, the pomp of sound with which he has celebrated her name, beginning *Louise Eleonore de Warens etoit une demoiselle de la Tour de Pil, noble et ancienne famille de Vevai, ville du pays de Vaud*; (sounds which we still tremble to repeat;) his description of her person, her angelic smile, her mouth of the size of his own; his walking out one day while the bells were chiming to vespers, and anticipating in a sort of waking dream the life he afterwards led with her, in

which months and years, and life itself passed away in undisturbed felicity; the sudden disappointment of his hopes; his transport thirty years after at seeing the same flower which they had brought home together from one of their rambles near Chambery; his thoughts in that long interval of time; his suppers with Grimm and Diderot after he came to Paris; the first idea of his prize dissertation on the savage state; his account of writing the New Eloise, and his attachment to Madame d'Houptot; his literary projects, his fame, his misfortunes, his unhappy temper; his last solitary retirement in the lake and island of Bienne, with his dog and his boat; his reveries and delicious musings there; all these crowd into our minds with recollections which we do not chuse to express. There are no passages in the *New Eloise* of equal force and beauty with the best descriptions in the *Confessions*, if we except the excursion on the water, Julia's last letter to St Preux, and his letter to her, recalling the days of their first loves. We spent two whole years in reading these two works; and (gentle reader, it was when we were young) in shedding tears over them

——— "As fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gums."

They were the happiest years of our life. We may well say of them, sweet is the dew of their memory, and pleasant the balm of their recollection! There are, indeed, impressions which neither time nor circumstances can efface. *

* We shall here give one passage as an example, which has always appeared to us the very perfection of this kind of personal and local description. It is that where he gives an account of his being one of the choristers at the Cathedral at Chambery: "On jugera bien que la vie de la maîtrise toujours chantante et gaie, avec les Musiciens et les Enfans de chœur, me plaisoit plus que celle du Séminaire avec les Peres de S. Lazare. Cependant, cette vie, pour être plus libre, n'en étoit pas moins égale et réglée. J'etois fait pour aimer l'indépendance et pour n'en abuser jamais. Durant six mois entiers, je ne sortis pas une seule fois, que pour aller chez Maman ou à l'Eglise, et je n'en fus pas même tenté. Cette intervalle est un de ceux où j'ai vécu dans le plus grand calme, et que je me suis rappelé avec le plus de plaisir. Dans les situations diverses où je me suis trouvé, quelques uns out été marqués par un tel sentiment de bien être, qu'en les rémémorant j'en suis affecté comme si j'y étois encore. Non seulement je me rappelle les tems, les lieux, les personnes, mais tous les objets environnans, la température de l'air, son odeur, sa couleur, une certaine impression locale qui ne s'est fait sentir que la, et dont le souvenir vif m'y transporte de nouveau. Par example, tout ce qu'on répétait a la maîtrise, tout ce qu'on chantoit au chœur, tout ce qu'on y faisoit, le bel et noble habit des Chanoines, les chasubles des Prétres, les mitres des Chan-

Rousseau, in all his writings, never once lost sight of himself. He was the same individual from first to last. The spring that moved his passions never went down, the pulse that agitated his heart never ceased to beat. It was this strong feeling of interest, accumulating in his mind, which

tres, la figure des Musiciens, un vieux Charpentier boiteux qui jouoit de la contrebasse, un petit Abbé blondin qui jouoit du violon, le lambeau de soutanne qu'aprés avoir posé son épée, M. le *Maître* endossoit par-dessus son habit laïque, et le beau surplis fin dont il en couvrait les loques pour aller au chœur; l'orgueil avec lequel j'allois, tenant ma petite flûte à bec, m'établir dans l'orchestre, à la tribune, pour un petit bout de récit que M. le *Maître* avoit fait exprès pour moi: le bon dîné que nous attendoit ensuite, le bon appétit qu'on y portoit; ce concours d'objets vivement retracé m'a cent fois charmé dans ma mémoire, autant et plus que dans la réalité. J'ai gardé toujours une affection tendre pour un certain air du *Conditor alme syderum* qui marche par iambes; parce qu'un Dimanche de l'Avent j'entendis de mon lit chanter cette hymne, avant le jour, sur le perron de la Cathedrale, selon un rite de cette Eglise là. Mlle. *Merceret*, femme-de-chambre de Maman, savoit un peu de musique; je n'oublierai jamais un petit motet *afferte*, que M. le Maitre me fit chanter avec elle, et que sa maitresse écoutait avec tant de plaisir. Enfin tout, jusqu'à la bonne servante *Perrine* qui étoit si bonne fille, et que les Enfans de chœur faisoient tant endêver, tout dans les souvenirs de ces tems de bonheur et d'innocence revient souvent me ravir et m'attrister."—*Confessions*, Liv. iii. p. 283.

overpowers and absorbs the feelings of his readers. He owed all his power to sentiment. The writer who most nearly resembles him in our own times is the author of the *Lyrical Ballads*. We see no other difference between them, than that the one wrote in prose and the other in poetry; and that prose is perhaps better adapted to express those local and personal feelings, which are inveterate habits in the mind, than poetry, which embodies its imaginary creations. We conceive that Rousseau's exclamation, *Ah, voila de la pervenche*, comes more home to the mind than Mr Wordsworth's discovery of the linnet's nest "with five blue eggs," or than his address to the cuckoo, beautiful as we think it is; and we will confidently match the Citizen of Geneva's adventures on the lake of Bienne against the Cumberland Poet's floating dreams on the lake of Grasmere. Both create an interest out of nothing, or rather out of their own feelings; both weave numberless recollections into one sentiment; both wind their own being round whatever object occurs to them. But Rousseau, as a prose-writer, gives only the habitual and personal impression. Mr Wordsworth, as a poet, is forced to lend the colours of imagination to impressions which owe all their force to their identity with themselves, and tries to paint

what is only to be felt. Rousseau, in a word, interests you in certain objects by interesting you in himself: Mr Wordsworth would persuade you that the most insignificant objects are interesting in themselves, because he is interested in them. If he had met with Rousseau's favourite periwinkle, he would have *translated* it into the most beautiful of flowers. This is not imagination, but want of sense. If his jealousy of the sympathy of others makes him avoid what is beautiful and grand in nature, why does he undertake elaborately to describe other objects? *His* nature is a mere Dulcinea del Toboso, and he would make a Vashti of her. Rubens appears to have been as extravagantly attached to his three wives, as Raphael was to his Fornarina; but their faces were not so classical. The three greatest egotists that we know of, that is, the three writers who felt their own being most powerfully and exclusively, are Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Benvenuto Cellini. As Swift somewhere says, we defy the world to furnish out a fourth.

W. H.

## No. XXXIII.

### ON DIFFERENT SORTS OF FAME.

THERE is a half serious, half ironical argument in Melmoth's *Fitz-Osborn's Letters*, to shew the futility of posthumous fame, which runs thus :— "The object of any one who is inspired with this passion is to be remembered by posterity with admiration and delight, as having been possessed of certain powers and excellences which distinguished him above his contemporaries. But posterity," it is said, "can know nothing of the individual but from the memory of these qualities which he has left behind him. All that we know of Julius Cæsar, for instance, is that he was the person who performed certain actions, and wrote a book, called his *Commentaries*. When, therefore, we extol Julius Cæsar for his actions or his writings, what do we say but that the person who performed certain things did perform them ; that the author of such a work was the person who wrote it ; or, in short, that Julius Cæsar was Julius Cæsar ? Now, this is a mere truism, and the desire to be the subject of such an identical proposition must, therefore, be an evident absurdity." The sophism

is a tolerably ingenious one, but it is a sophism, nevertheless. It would go equally to prove the nullity, not only of posthumous fame, but of living reputation; for the good or the bad opinion which my next door neighbour may entertain of me is nothing more than his conviction that such and such a person having certain good or bad qualities, is possessed of them; nor is the figure, which a Lord Mayor elect, a prating demagogue, or popular preacher, makes in the eyes of the admiring multitude—*himself*, but an image of him reflected in the minds of others, in connection with certain feelings of respect and wonder. In fact, whether the admiration we seek is to last for a day or for eternity, whether we are to have it while living or after we are dead, whether it is to be expressed by our contemporaries or by future generations, the principle of it is the same—*sympathy with the feelings of others*, and the necessary tendency which the idea or consciousness of the approbation of others has to strengthen the suggestions of our self-love. * We are all inclined to think well of ourselves, of our sense and capacity in

* Burns, when about to sail for America after the first publication of his poems, consoled himself with "the delicious thought of being regarded as a clever fellow, though on the other side of the Atlantic."

whatever we undertake; but from this very desire to think well of ourselves, we are (as *Mrs Peachum* says) "*bitter* bad judges" of our own pretensions; and when our vanity flatters us most, we ought in general to suspect it most. We are, therefore, glad to get the good opinion of a friend, but that may be partial; the good word of a stranger is likely to be more sincere, but he may be a blockhead; the multitude will agree with us, if we agree with them; accident, the caprice of fashion, the prejudice of the moment, may give a fleeting reputation;—our only certain appeal, therefore, is to posterity; the voice of fame is alone the voice of truth. In proportion, however, as this award is final and secure, it is remote and uncertain. Voltaire said to some one, who had addressed an Epistle to Posterity, "I am afraid, my friend, this letter will never be delivered according to its direction." It can exist only in imagination; and we can only presume upon our claim to it, as we prefer the hope of lasting fame to every thing else. The love of fame is almost another name for the love of excellence; or it is the ambition to attain the highest excellence, sanctioned by the highest authority, that of time. Vanity, and the love of fame, are quite distinct from each other; for the one is voracious of the most obvious and doubt-

ful applause, whereas the other rejects or overlooks every kind of applause but that which is purified from every mixture of flattery, and identified with truth and nature itself. There is, therefore, something disinterested in this passion, inasmuch as it is abstracted and ideal, and only appeals to opinion as a standard of truth: it is this which "makes ambition virtue." Milton had as fine an idea as any one of true fame; and Dr Johnson has very beautifully described his patient and confident anticipations of the success of his great poem in the account of *Paradise Lost*. He has, indeed, done the same thing himself in *Lycidas*:—

> "Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
> (That last infirmity of noble mind)
> To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
> But the fair Guerdon when we hope to find,
> And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
> Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
> And slits the thin-spun life. But not the praise,
> Phœbus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears."

None but those who have sterling pretensions can afford to refer them to time; as persons who live upon their means cannot well go into Chancery. No feeling can be more at variance with the true love of fame than that impatience which we have

sometimes witnessed, to "pluck its fruits, unripe and crude," before the time, to make a little echo of popularity mimic the voice of fame, and to convert a prize-medal or a newspaper-puff into a passport to immortality.

When we hear any one complaining that he has not the same fame as some poet or painter who lived two hundred years ago, he seems to us to complain that he has not been dead these two hundred years. When his fame has undergone the same ordeal, that is, has lasted as long, it will be as good, if he really deserves it. We think it equally absurd, when we sometimes find people objecting, that such an acquaintance of theirs, who has not an idea in his head, should be so much better off in the world than they are. But it is for this very reason; they have preferred the indulgence of their ideas to the pursuit of realities It is but fair that he who has no ideas should have something in their stead. If he who has devoted his time to the study of beauty, to the pursuit of truth, whose object has been to govern opinion, to form the taste of others, to instruct or to amuse the public, succeeds in this respect, he has no more right to complain that he has not a title or a fortune, than he who has not purchased a ticket, that is, who has taken no means to the end, has a

right to complain that he has not a prize in the lottery.

In proportion as men can command the immediate and vulgar applause of others, they become indifferent to that which is remote and difficult of attainment. We take pains only when we are compelled to do it. Little men are remarked to have courage; little women to have wit; and it is seldom that a man of genius is a coxcomb in his dress. Rich men are contented not to be thought wise; and the Great often think themselves well off, if they can escape being the jest of their acquaintance. Authors were actuated by the desire of the applause of posterity, only so long as they were debarred of that of their contemporaries, just as we see the map of the gold mines of Peru hanging in the room of Hogarth's *Distressed Poet*. In the midst of the ignorance and prejudices with which they were surrounded, they had a sort of *forlorn hope* in the prospect of immortality. The spirit of universal criticism has superseded the anticipation of posthumous fame, and instead of waiting for the award of distant ages, the poet or prose-writer receives his final doom from the next number of the *Edinburgh* or *Quarterly Review*. According as the nearness of the applause increases, our impatience increases

with it. A writer in a weekly journal engages with reluctance in a monthly publication: and again, a contributor to a daily paper sets about his task with greater spirit than either of them. It is like prompt payment. The effort and the applause go together. We, indeed, have known a man of genius and eloquence, to whom, from a habit of excessive talking, the certainty of seeing what he wrote in print the next day was too remote a stimulus for his imagination, and who constantly laid aside his pen in the middle of an article, if a friend dropped in, to finish the subject more effectually aloud, so that the approbation of his hearer, and the sound of his own voice might be coinstantaneous. Members of Parliament seldom turn authors, except to print their speeches when they have not been distinctly heard or understood; and great orators are generally very indifferent writers, from want of sufficient inducement to exert themselves, when the immediate effect on others is not perceived, and the irritation of applause or opposition ceases.

There have been in the last century two singular examples of literary reputation, the one of an author without a name, and the other of a name without an author. We mean the author of *Junius's Letters*, and the translator of the mottos to

the *Rambler*, whose name was Elphinstone. The *Rambler* was published in the year 1750, and the name of Elphinstone prefixed to each paper is familiar to every literary reader, since that time, though we know nothing more of him. We saw this gentleman, since the commencement of the present century, looking over a clipped hedge in the country, with a broad flapped hat, a venerable countenance, and his dress cut out with the same formality as his ever-greens. His name had not only survived half a century in conjunction with that of Johnson, but he had survived with it, enjoying all the dignity of a classical reputation, and the ease of a literary sinecure, on the strength of his mottos. The author of *Junius's Letters* is, on the contrary, as remarkable an instance of a writer who has arrived at all the public honours of literature, without being known by name to a single individual, and who may be said to have realized all the pleasure of posthumous fame, while living, without the smallest gratification of personal vanity. An anonymous writer may feel an acute interest in what is said of his productions; and a secret satisfaction in their success, because it is not the effect of personal considerations, as the overhearing any one speak well of us is more agreeable than a direct compliment. But this very satisfac-

tion will tempt him to communicate his secret. This temptation, however, does not extend beyond the circle of his acquaintance. With respect to the public, who know an author only by his writings, it is of little consequence whether he has a real or a fictitious name, or a signature, so that they have some clue by which to associate the works with the author. In the case of *Junius*, therefore, where other personal considerations of interest or connections might immediately counteract and set aside this temptation, the triumph over the mere vanity of authorship might not have cost him so dear as we are at first inclined to imagine. Suppose it to have been the old Marquis of ———? It is quite out of the question that he should keep his places and not keep his secret. If ever the King should die, we think it not impossible that the secret may out. Certainly the *accouchement* of any Princess in Europe would not excite an equal interest. "And you, then, Sir, are the author of *Junius!*" What a recognition for the public and the author! That between Yorick and the Frenchman was a trifle to it.

We have said that we think the desire to be known by name as an author chiefly has a reference to those to whom we are known personally, and is strongest with regard to those who know

most of our persons and least of our capacities. We wish to *subpœna* the public to our characters. Those who, by great services or great meannesses, have attained titles, always take them from the place with which they have the earliest associations, and thus strive to throw a veil of importance over the insignificance of their original pretensions, or the injustice of fortune. When Lord Nelson was passing over the quay at Yarmouth, to take possession of the ship to which he had been appointed, the people exclaimed, " Why make that little fellow a captain?" He thought of this when he fought the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar. The same sense of personal insignificance which made him great in action made him a fool in love. If Bonaparte had been six inches higher, he never would have gone on that disastrous Russian expedition, nor " with that addition" would he ever have been Emperor and King. For our own parts, one object which we have in writing these Essays, is to send them in a volume to a person who took some notice of us when children, and who augured, perhaps, better of us than we deserved. In fact, the opinion of those who know us most, who are a kind of second self in our re collections, is a sort of second conscience; and

the approbation of one or two friends is all the immortality *we* pretend to!

A.

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## No. XXXIV.

### CHARACTER OF JOHN BULL.

In a late number of a respectable publication, there is the following description of the French character:—

"Extremes meet. This is the only way of accounting for that enigma, the French character. It has often been remarked, that this ingenious nation exhibits more striking contradictions than any other that ever existed. They are the gayest of the gay, and the gravest of the grave. Their very faces pass at once from an expression of the most lively animation, when they are in conversation or in action, to a melancholy blank. They are the lightest and most volatile, and, at the same time, the most plodding, mechanical, and laborious people in Europe. They are one moment the slaves of the most contemptible prejudices, and

the next launch out into all the extravagance of the most abstract speculations. In matters of taste they are as inexorable as they are lax in questions of morality: they judge of the one by rules, of the other by their inclinations. It seems at times as if nothing could shock them, and yet they are offended at the merest trifles. The smallest things make the greatest impression on them. From the facility with which they can accommodate themselves to circumstances, they have no fixed principles or real character. They are always that which gives them least pain, or costs them least trouble. They easily disentangle their thoughts from whatever causes the slightest uneasiness, and direct their sensibility to flow in any channels they think proper. Their whole existence is more theatrical than real—their sentiments put on or off like the dress of an actor. Words are with them equivalent to things. They say what is agreeable, and believe what they say. Virtue and vice, good and evil, liberty and slavery, are matters almost of indifference. Their natural self-complacency stands them in stead of all other advantages."

The foregoing account is pretty near the truth; we have nothing to say against it; but we shall here endeavour to do a like piece of justice to our

countrymen, who are too apt to mistake the vices of others for so many virtues in themselves.

If a Frenchman is pleased with every thing, John Bull is pleased with nothing, and that is a fault. He is, to be sure, fond of having his own way, till you let him have it. He is a very headstrong animal, who mistakes the spirit of contradiction for the love of independence, and proves himself to be in the right by the obstinacy with which he stickles for the wrong. You cannot put him so much out of his way, as by agreeing with him. He is never in such good humour as with what gives him the spleen, and is most satisfied when he is sulky. If you find fault with him, he is in a rage; and if you praise him, suspects you have a design upon him. He recommends himself to another by affronting him, and if that will not do, knocks him down to convince him of his sincerity. He gives himself such airs as no mortal ever did, and wonders at the rest of the world for not thinking him the most amiable person breathing. John means well too, but he has an odd way of shewing it, by a total disregard of other people's feelings and opinions. He is sincere, for he tells you at the first word he does not like you; and never deceives, for he never offers to serve you. A civil answer is too much to ex-

pect from him. A word costs him more than a blow. He is silent because he has nothing to say, and he looks stupid because he is so. He has the strangest notions of beauty. The expression he values most in the human countenance is an appearance of roast beef and plum-pudding; and if he has a red face and round belly, thinks himself a great man. He is a little purse-proud, and has a better opinion of himself for having made a full meal. But his greatest delight is in a bug-bear. This he must have, be the consequence what it may. Whoever will give him that, may lead him by the nose, and pick his pocket at the same time. An idiot in a country town, a Presbyterian parson, a dog with a cannister tied to his tail, a bull-bait, or a fox-hunt, are irresistible attractions to him. The Pope was formerly his great aversion, and latterly, a cap of liberty is a thing he cannot abide. He discarded the Pope, and defied the Inquisition, called the French a nation of slaves and beggars, and abused their *Grand Monarque* for a tyrant, cut off one king's head, and exiled another, set up a Dutch Stadtholder, and elected a Hanoverian Elector to be king over him, to shew he would have his own way, and to teach the rest of the world what they should do: but since other people took to imitating his example,

John has taken it into his head to hinder them, will have a monopoly of rebellion and regicide to himself, has become sworn brother to the Pope, and stands by the Inquisition, restores his old enemies the Bourbons, and reads *a great moral lesson* to their subjects, persuades himself that the Dutch Stadtholder and the Hanoverian Elector came to reign over him by divine right, and does all he can to prove himself a beast to make other people slaves. The truth is, John was always a surly, meddlesome, obstinate fellow, and of late years his *head* has not been quite right!—In short, John is a great blockhead and a great bully, and requires (what he has been long labouring for) a hundred years of slavery to bring him to his senses. He will have it that he is a great patriot, for he hates all other countries; that he is wise, for he thinks all other people fools; that he is honest, for he calls all other people whores and rogues. If being in an ill-humour all one's life is the perfection of human nature, then John is very near it. He beats his wife, quarrels with his neighbours, damns his servants, and gets drunk to kill the time and keep up his spirits, and firmly believes himself the only unexceptionable, accomplished, moral and religious character in Christendom. He boasts of the excellence of the

laws, and the goodness of his own disposition; and yet there are more people hanged in England than in all Europe besides: he boasts of the modesty of his countrywomen, and yet there are more prostitutes in the streets of London than in all the capitals of Europe put together. He piques himself on his comforts, because he is the most uncomfortable of mortals; and because he has no enjoyment in society, seeks it, as he says, at his fireside,—where he may be stupid as a matter of course, sullen as a matter of right, and as ridiculous as he chuses without being laughed at. His liberty is the effect of his self-will; his religion owing to the spleen; his temper to the climate. He is an industrious animal, because he has no taste for amusement, and had rather work six days in the week than be idle one. His awkward attempts at gaiety are the jest of other nations. "They," (the English,) says Froissard, speaking of the meeting of the Black Prince and the French King, "amused themselves sadly, according to the custom of their country,"—*se rejouissoient tristement, selon la coutume de leur pays.* Their patience of labour is confined to what is repugnant and disagreeable in itself, to the drudgery of the mechanic arts, and does not extend to the fine arts; that is, they are indifferent to

pain, but insensible to pleasure. They will stand in a trench, or march up to a breach, but they cannot bear to dwell long on an agreeable object. They can no more submit to regularity in art than to decency in behaviour. Their pictures are as coarse and slovenly as their address.—John boasts of his great men, without much right to do so; not that he has not had them, but because he neither knows nor cares any thing about them but to swagger over other nations. That which chiefly hits John's fancy in Shakspeare is that he was a deer-stealer in his youth; and, as for Newton's discoveries, he hardly knows to this day that the earth is round. John's oaths, which are quite characteristic, have got him the nickname of *Monsieur God damn me*. They are profane, a Frenchman's indecent. One swears by his vices, the other by their punishment. After all John's blustering, he is but a dolt. His habitual jealousy of others makes him the inevitable dupe of quacks and impostors of all sorts; he goes all lengths with one party out of spite to another; his zeal is as furious as his antipathies are unfounded; and there is nothing half so absurd or ignorant of its own intentions as an English mob.

Z.

## No. XXXV.

### ON GOOD-NATURE.

LORD SHAFTESBURY somewhere remarks, that a great many people pass for very good-natured persons, for no other reason than because they care about nobody but themselves; and, consequently, as nothing annoys them but what touches their own interest, they never irritate themselves unnecessarily about what does not concern them, and seem to be made of the very milk of human kindness.

Good-nature, or what is often considered as such, is the most selfish of all the virtues: it is nine times out of ten mere indolence of disposition. A good-natured man is, generally speaking, one who does not like to be put out of his way; and as long as he can help it, that is, till the provocation comes home to himself, he will not. He does not create fictitious uneasiness out of the distresses of others; he does not fret and fume, and make himself uncomfortable about things he cannot mend, and that no way concern him, even if he could: but then there is no one who

is more apt to be disconcerted by what puts him to any personal inconvenience, however trifling; who is more tenacious of his selfish indulgences, however unreasonable; or who resents more violently any interruption of his ease and comforts, the very trouble he is put to in resenting it being felt as an aggravation of the injury. A person of this character feels no emotions of anger or detestation, if you tell him of the devastation of a province, or the massacre of the inhabitants of a town, or the enslaving of a people; but if his dinner is spoiled by a lump of soot falling down the chimney, he is thrown into the utmost confusion, and can hardly recover a decent command of his temper for the whole day. He thinks nothing can go amiss, so long as he is at his ease, though a pain in his little finger makes him so peevish and quarrelsome, that nobody can come near him. Knavery and injustice in the abstract are things that by no means ruffle his temper, or alter the serenity of his countenance, unless he is to be the sufferer by them; nor is he ever betrayed into a passion in answering a sophism, if he does not think it immediately directed against his own interest.

On the contrary, we sometimes meet with persons who regularly heat themselves in an argu-

ment, and get out of humour on every occasion, and make themselves obnoxious to a whole company about nothing. This is not because they are ill-tempered, but because they are in earnest. Good-nature is a hypocrite: it tries to pass off its love of its own ease and indifference to every thing else for a particular softness and mildness of disposition. All people get in a passion, and lose their temper, if you offer to strike them, or cheat them of their money, that is, if you interfere with that which they are really interested in. Tread on the heel of one of these good-natured persons, who do not care if the whole world is in flames, and see how he will bear it. If the truth were known, the most disagreeable people are the most amiable. They are the only persons who feel an interest in what does not concern them. They have as much regard for others as they have for themselves. They have as many vexations and causes of complaint as there are in the world. They are general righters of wrongs, and redressers of grievances. They not only are annoyed by what they can help, by an act of inhumanity done in the next street, or in a neighbouring country by their own countrymen, they not only do not claim any share in the glory, and hate it the more, the more brilliant the success,—but a

piece of injustice done three thousand years ago touches them to the quick. They have an unfortunate attachment to a set of abstract phrases, such as *liberty*, *truth*, *justice*, *humanity*, *honour*, which are continually abused by knaves, and misunderstood by fools, and they can hardly contain themselves for spleen. They have something to keep them in perpetual hot-water. No sooner is one question set at rest than another rises up to perplex them. They wear themselves to the bone in the affairs of other people, to whom they can do no manner of service, to the neglect of their own business and pleasure. They teaze themselves to death about the morality of the Turks, or the politics of the French. There are certain words that afflict their ears, and things that lacerate their souls, and remain a plague-spot there forever after. They have a fellow-feeling with all that has been done, said, or thought in the world. They have an interest in all science and in all art. They hate a lie as much as a wrong, for truth is the foundation of all justice. Truth is the first thing in their thoughts, then mankind, then their country, last themselves. They love excellence, and bow to fame, which is the shadow of it. Above all, they are anxious to see justice done to the dead, as the best encouragement to the living,

and the lasting inheritance of future generations. They do not like to see a great principle undermined, or the fall of a great man. They would sooner forgive a blow in the face than a wanton attack on acknowledged reputation. The contempt in which the French hold Shakspeare is a serious evil to them; nor do they think the matter mended, when they hear an Englishman, who would be thought a profound one, say that Voltaire was a man without wit. They are vexed to see genius playing at Tom Fool, and honesty turned bawd. It gives them a cutting sensation to see a number of things which, as they are unpleasant to see, we shall not here repeat. In short, they have a passion for truth; they feel the same attachment to the idea of what is right, that a knave does to his interest, or that a good-natured man does to his ease; and they have as many sources of uneasiness as there are actual or supposed deviations from this standard in the sum of things, or as there is a possibility of folly and mischief in the world.

Principle is a passion for truth; an incorrigible attachment to a general proposition. Good-nature is humanity that costs nothing. No good-natured man was ever a martyr to a cause, in religion or politics. He has no idea of striving

against the stream. He may become a good courtier and a loyal subject; and it is hard if he does not, for he has nothing to do in that case but to consult his ease, interest, and outward appearances. The Vicar of Bray was a good-natured man. What a pity he was but a vicar! A good-natured man is utterly unfit for any situation or office in life that requires integrity, fortitude, or generosity,—any sacrifice, except of opinion, or any exertion, but to please. A good-natured man will debauch his friend's mistress, if he has an opportunity; and betray his friend, sooner than share disgrace or danger with him. He will not forego the smallest gratification to save the whole world. He makes his own convenience the standard of right and wrong. He avoids the feeling of pain in himself, and shuts his eyes to the sufferings of others. He will put a malefactor or an innocent person (no matter which) to the rack, and only laugh at the uncouthness of the gestures, or wonder that he is so unmannerly as to cry out. There is no villany to which he will not lend a helping hand with great coolness and cordiality, for he sees only the pleasant and profitable side of things. He will assent to a falsehood with a leer of complacency, and applaud any atrocity that comes recommended in the garb of authority.

He will betray his country to please a Minister, and sign the death-warrant of thousands of wretches, rather than forfeit the congenial smile, the well-known squeeze of the hand. The shrieks of death, the torture of mangled limbs, the last groans of despair, are things that shock his smooth humanity too much ever to make an impression on it: his good-nature sympathizes only with the smile, the bow, the gracious salutation, the fawning answer: vice loses its sting, and corruption its poison, in the oily gentleness of his disposition. He will not hear of any thing wrong in Church or State. He will defend every abuse by which any thing is to be got, every dirty job, every act of every Minister. In an extreme case, a very good-natured man indeed may try to hang twelve honester men than himself to rise at the Bar, and forge the seal of the realm to continue his colleagues a week longer in office. He is a slave to the will of others, a coward to their prejudices, a tool of their vices. A good-natured man is no more fit to be trusted in public affairs, than a coward or a woman is to lead an army. Spleen is the soul of patriotism and of public good. Lord Castlereagh is a good-natured man, Lord Eldon is a good-natured man, Charles Fox was a good-natured man. The last instance is the most deci-

sive.—The definition of a true patriot is *a good hater*.

A king, who is a good-natured man, is in a fair way of being a great tyrant. A king ought to feel concern for all to whom his power extends; but a good-natured man cares only about himself. If he has a good appetite, eats and sleeps well, nothing in the universe besides can disturb him. The destruction of the lives or liberties of his subjects will not stop him in the least of his caprices, but will concoct well with his bile, and "good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both." He will send out his mandate to kill and destroy with the same indifference or satisfaction that he performs any natural function of his body. The consequences are placed beyond the reach of his imagination, or would not affect him if they were not, for he is a fool, and good-natured. A good-natured man hates more than any one else whatever thwarts his will, or contradicts his prejudices; and if he has the power to prevent it, depend upon it, he will use it without remorse and without control.

There is a lower species of this character which is what is usually understood by a *well-meaning man*. A well-meaning man is one who often does a great deal of mischief without any kind of ma-

lice. He means no one any harm, if it is not for his interest. He is not a knave, nor perfectly honest. He does not easily resign a good place. Mr Vansittart is a well-meaning man.

The Irish are a good-natured people; they have many virtues, but their virtues are those of the heart, not of the head. In their passions and affections they are sincere, but they are hypocrites in understanding. If they once begin to calculate the consequences, self-interest prevails. An Irishman who trusts to his principles, and a Scotchman who yields to his impulses, are equally dangerous.—The Irish have wit, genius, eloquence, imagination, affections: but they want coherence of understanding, and consequently have no standard of thought or action. Their strength of mind does not keep pace with the warmth of their feelings, or the quickness of their conceptions. Their animal spirits run away with them: their reason is a jade. There is something crude, indigested, rash, and discordant, in almost all that they do or say. They have no system, no abstract ideas. They are "every thing by starts, and nothing long." They are a wild people. They hate whatever imposes a law on their understandings, or a yoke on their wills. To betray the principles

they are most bound by their own professions and the expectations of others to maintain, is with them a reclamation of their original rights, and to fly in the face of their benefactors and friends, an assertion of their natural freedom of will. They want consistency and good faith. They unite fierceness with levity. In the midst of their headlong impulses, they have an under-current of selfishness and cunning, which in the end gets the better of them. Their feelings, when no longer excited by novelty or opposition, grow cold and stagnant. Their blood, if not heated by passion, turns to poison. They have a rancour in their hatred of any object they have abandoned, proportioned to the attachment they have professed to it. Their zeal, converted against itself, is furious. The late Mr Burke was an instance of an Irish patriot and philosopher. He abused metaphysics, because he could make nothing out of them, and turned his back upon liberty, when he found he could get nothing more by her. *—See to the

* This man (Burke) who was a half poet and a half philosopher, has done more mischief than perhaps any other person in the world. His understanding was not competent to the discovery of any truth, but it was sufficient to palliate a falsehood; his reasons, of little weight in themselves, thrown into the scale of power, were dreadful. Without

same purpose the winding up of the character of *Judy* in Miss Edgeworth's *Castle Rack-rent*.

T. T.

## No. XXXVI.

### ON THE CHARACTER OF MILTON'S EVE.

THE difference between the character of *Eve* in Milton and Shakspeare's female characters is very

genius to adorn the beautiful, he had the art to throw a dazzling veil over the deformed and disgusting; and to strew the flowers of imagination over the rotten carcase of corruption, not to prevent, but to communicate the infection. His jealousy of Rousseau was one chief cause of his opposition to the French Revolution. The writings of the one had changed the institutions of a kingdom; while the speeches of the other, with the intrigues of his whole party, had changed nothing but the *turnspit of the King's kitchen*. He would have blotted out the broad pure light of Heaven, because it did not first shine in at the little Gothic windows of St Stephen's Chapel. The genius of Rousseau had levelled the towers of the Bastile with the dust; our zealous reformist, who would rather be doing mischief than nothing, tried, therefore, to patch them up again, by calling that loathsome dungeon the King's castle, and by fulsome adulation of the virtues of a Court strumpet. This man,—but enough of him here.

striking, and it appears to us to be this:—Milton describes *Eve* not only as full of love and tenderness for *Adam*, but as the constant object of admiration in herself. She is the idol of the poet's imagination, and he paints her whole person with a studied profusion of charms. She is the wife, but she is still as much as ever the mistress of *Adam*. She is represented, indeed, as devoted to her husband, as twining round him for support, "as the vine curls her tendrils," but her own grace and beauty are never lost sight of in the picture of conjugal felicity. *Adam's* attention and regard are as much turned to her as hers to him; for "in that first garden of their innocence," he had no other objects or pursuits to distract his attention; she was both his business and his pleasure. Shakspeare's females, on the contrary, seem to exist only in their attachment to others. They are pure abstractions of the affections. Their features are not painted, nor the colour of their hair. Their hearts only are laid open. We are acquainted with *Imogen*, *Miranda*, *Ophelia*, or *Desdemona*, by what they thought and felt, but we cannot tell whether they were black, brown, or fair. But Milton's *Eve* is all of ivory and gold. Shakspeare seldom tantalizes the reader with a

luxurious display of the personal charms of his heroines, with a curious inventory of particular beauties, except indirectly, and for some other purpose, as where *Jachimo* describes *Imogen* asleep, or the old men in the *Winter's Tale* vie with each other in invidious praise of *Perdita*. Even in *Juliet*, the most voluptuous and glowing of the class of characters here spoken of, we are reminded chiefly of circumstances connected with the physiognomy of passion, as in her leaning with her cheek upon her arm, or which only convey the general impression of enthusiasm made on her lover's brain. One thing may be said, that Shakspeare had not the same opportunities as Milton: for his women were clothed, and it cannot be denied that Milton took *Eve* at a considerable disadvantage in this respect. He has accordingly described her in all the loveliness of nature, tempting to sight as the fruit of the Hesperides guarded by that Dragon old, herself the fairest among the flowers of Paradise!

The figures both of *Adam* and *Eve* are very prominent in this poem. As there is little action in it, the interest is constantly kept up by the beauty and grandeur of the images. They are thus introduced:—

" Two of far nobler shape, erect and tall,
Godlike erect, with native honour clad,
In naked majesty seemed lords of all,
And worthy seemed; for in their looks divine
The image of their glorious Maker shone:
* * * * * * * * * * * *
——————————— Though both
Not equal, as their sex not equal seem'd;
For contemplation he and valour form'd,
For softness she and sweet attractive grace;
He for God only, she for God in him.
His fair large front and eye sublime declar'd
Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung
Clust'ring, but not beneath his shoulders broad;
She as a veil down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets wav'd
As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
Subjection, but required with gentle sway,
And by her yielded, by him best receiv'd,
Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay."

*Eve* is not only represented as beautiful, but with conscious beauty. Shakspeare's heroines are almost insensible of their charms, and wound without knowing it. They are not coquets. If the salvation of mankind had depended upon one of them, we don't know—but the Devil might have

been baulked. This is but a conjecture! *Eve* has a great idea of herself, and there is some difficulty in prevailing on her to quit her own image, the first time she discovers its reflection in the water. She gives the following account of herself to *Adam* :—

"That day I oft remember, when from sleep
I first awak'd, and found myself repos'd
Under a shade on flow'rs, much wond'ring where
And what I was, whence thither brought and how.
Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound
Of waters issued from a cave, and spread
Into a liquid plain, then stood unmov'd
Pure as the expanse of Heav'n; I thither went
With unexperienc'd thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me seem'd another sky:
As I bent down to look, just opposite
A shape within the watery gleam appear'd,
Bending to look on me; I started back,
It started back; but pleas'd I soon return'd,
Pleas'd it return'd as soon with answ'ring looks
Of sympathy and love." . . . . . .

The poet afterwards adds :—

" So spake our general mother, and with eyes
Of conjugal attraction unreprov'd,
And meek surrender, half-embracing lean'd
On our first father; half her swelling breast

Naked met his under the flowing gold
Of her loose tresses hid: he in delight
Both of her beauty and submissive charms
Smil'd with superior love, as Jupiter
On Juno smiles, when he impregns the clouds
That shed May flowers."

The same thought is repeated with greater simplicity, and perhaps even beauty, in the beginning of the Fifth Book:—

——————————"So much the more
His wonder was to find unwaken'd Eve
With tresses discompos'd and glowing cheek,
As through unquiet rest: he on his side
Leaning half-rais'd, with looks of cordial love
Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
Beauty, which whether waking or asleep
Shot forth peculiar graces; then with voice
Mild, as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
Her hand soft touching, whisper'd thus. Awake
My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
Heav'n's last best gift, my ever new delight,
Awake." . . . . . .

The general style, indeed, in which *Eve* is addressed by *Adam*, or described by the poet, is in the highest strain of compliment:—

"When Adam thus to Eve. Fair consort, the hour
Of night approaches." . . . . . .
"To whom thus Eve, with perfect beauty adorn'd."

" To whom our general ancestor replied,
Daughter of God and Man, accomplish'd Eve."

*Eve* is herself so well convinced that these epithets are her due, that the idea follows her in her sleep, and she dreams of herself as the paragon of nature, the wonder of the universe:—

——————— " Methought
Close at mine ear one call'd me forth to walk,
With gentle voice, I thought it thine; it said,
Why sleep'st thou Eve? now is the pleasant time,
The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
To the night-warbling bird, that now awake
Tunes sweetest his love-labour'd song; now reigns
Full-orb'd the moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things; in vain,
If none regard; Heav'n wakes with all his eyes,
Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire?
In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment
Attracted by the beauty still to gaze."

This is the very topic, too, on which the Serpent afterwards enlarges with so much artful insinuation and fatal confidence of success. " So talked the spirited sly snake."—The conclusion of the foregoing scene, in which *Eve* relates her dream and *Adam* comforts her, is such an exquisite piece of description, that, though not to

our immediate purpose, we cannot refrain from quoting it :—

" So cheer'd he his fair spouse, and she was cheer'd;
But silently a gentle tear let fall
From either eye, and wip'd them with her hair;
Two other precious drops that ready stood,
Each in their crystal sluice, he ere they fell
Kiss'd, as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
And pious awe, that fear'd to have offended."

The formal eulogy on *Eve* which *Adam* addresses to the Angel, in giving an account of his own creation and hers, is full of elaborate grace :—

" Under his forming hands a creature grew,
——————————— so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contained
And in her looks, which from that time infus'd
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspir'd
The spirit of love and amorous delight."

That which distinguishes Milton from the other poets, who have pampered the eye and fed the imagination with exuberant descriptions of female beauty, is the moral severity with which he has tempered them. There is not a line in his works which tends to licentiousness, or the

impression of which, if it has such a tendency, is not effectually checked by thought and sentiment. The following are two remarkable instances :—

——————— " In shadier bower
More secret and sequester'd, though but feign'd,
Pan or Sylvanus never slept, nor Nymph,
Nor Faunus haunted. Here in close recess,
With flowers, garlands, and sweet-smelling herbs,
Espoused Eve deck'd first her nuptial bed,
And heavenly quires the hymenœan sung,
What day the genial Angel to our sire
Brought her in naked beauty more adorn'd,
More lovely than Pandora, whom the Gods
Endow'd with all their gifts, and O too like
In sad event, when to th' unwiser son
Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnar'd
Mankind by her fair looks, to be aveng'd
On him who had stole Jove's authentic fire."

The other is a passage of extreme beauty and pathos blended. It is the one in which the Angel is described as the guest of our first ancestors :—

——————— " Meanwhile at table Eve
Minister'd naked, and their flowing cups
With pleasant liquors crown'd: O innocence
Deserving Paradise! if ever, then,
Then had the sons of God excuse to have been

Enamour'd at that sight; but in those hearts
Love unlibidinous reigned, nor jealousy
Was understood, the injur'd lover's Hell."

The character which a living poet has given of Spenser, would be much more true of Milton:—

——————— "Yet not more sweet
Than pure was he, and not more pure than wise;
High Priest of all the Muses' mysteries."

Spenser, on the contrary, is very apt to pry into mysteries which do not belong to the Muses. Milton's voluptuousness is not lascivious or sensual. He describes beautiful objects for their own sakes. Spenser has an eye to the consequences, and steeps every thing in pleasure, often not of the purest kind. The want of passion has been brought as an objection against Milton, and his *Adam* and *Eve* have been considered as rather insipid personages, wrapped up in one another, and who excite but little sympathy in any one else. We do not feel this objection ourselves: we are content to be spectators in such scenes, without any other excitement. In general, the interest in Milton is essentially epic, and not dramatic; and the difference between the epic and the dramatic

is this, that in the former the imagination produces the passion, and in the latter the passion produces the imagination. The interest of epic poetry arises from the contemplation of certain objects in themselves grand and beautiful: the interest of dramatic poetry from sympathy with the passions and pursuits of others; that is, from the practical relations of certain persons to certain objects, as depending on accident or will.

The Pyramids of Egypt are epic objects; the imagination of them is necessarily attended with passion; but they have no dramatic interest, till circumstances connect them with some human catastrophe. Now, a poem might be constructed almost entirely of such images, of the highest intellectual passion, with little dramatic interest; and it is in this way that Milton has in a great measure constructed his poem. That is not its fault, but its excellence. The fault is in those who have no idea but of one kind of interest. But this question would lead to a longer discussion than we have room for at present. We shall conclude these extracts from Milton with two passages, which have always appeared to us to be highly affecting, and to contain a fine discrimination of character:—

" O unexpected stroke, worse than of Death!
Must I thus leave thee, Paradise? thus leave
Thee, native soil, these happy walks and shades,
Fit haunt of Gods? Where I had hope to spend,
Quiet, though sad, the respite of that day
That must be mortal to us both. O flowers,
That never will in other climate grow,
My early visitation and my last
At even, which I bred up with tender hand
From the first opening bud, and gave ye names,
Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
Your tribes, and water from th' ambrosial fount?
Thee, lastly, nuptial bow'r, by me adorn'd
With what to sight or smell was sweet, from thee
How shall I part, and whither wander down
Into a lower world, to this obscure
And wild? how shall we breathe in other air
Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits?"

This is the lamentation of *Eve* on being driven out of Paradise. *Adam's* reflections are in a different strain, and still finer. After expressing his submission to the will of his Maker, he says—

" This most afflicts me, that departing hence
As from his face I shall be hid, depriv'd
His blessed countenance; here I could frequent
With worship place by place where he vouchsaf'd
Presence divine, and to my sons relate,
On this mount he appeared, under this tree
Stood visible, among these pines his voice

I heard, here with him at this fountain talk'd:
So many grateful altars I would rear
Of grassy turf, and pile up every stone
Of lustre from the brook, in memory
Or monument to ages, and thereon
Offer sweet-smelling gums and fruits and flow'rs:
In yonder nether world where shall I seek
His bright appearances or footstep trace?
For though I fled him angry, yet recall'd
To life prolong'd and promis'd race, I now
Gladly behold though but his utmost skirts
Of glory, and far off his steps adore."

W. H.

## No. XXXVII.

### OBSERVATIONS ON MR WORDSWORTH'S POEM, "THE EXCURSION."

THE poem of the *Excursion* resembles that part of the country in which the scene is laid. It has the same vastness and magnificence, with the same nakedness and confusion. It has the same overwhelming, oppressive power. It excites or recals

the same sensations which those who have traversed that wonderful scenery must have felt. We are surrounded with the constant sense and superstitious awe of the collective power of matter, of the gigantic and eternal forms of nature, on which, from the beginning of time, the hand of man has made no impression. Here are no dotted lines, no hedge-row beauties, no box-tree borders, no gravel walks, no square mechanic inclosures; all is left loose and irregular in the rude chaos of aboriginal nature. The boundaries of hill and valley are the poet's only geography, where we wander with him incessantly over deep beds of moss and waving fern, amidst the troops of red-deer and wild animals. Such is the severe simplicity of Mr Wordsworth's taste, that we doubt whether he would not reject a druidical temple, or time-hallowed ruin, as too modern and artificial for his purpose. He only familiarizes himself or his readers with a stone, covered with lichens, which has slept in the same spot of ground from the creation of the world, or with the rocky fissure between two mountains caused by thunder, or with a cavern scooped out by the sea. His mind is, as it were, coëval with the primary forms of things; his imagination holds immediately from

nature, and "owes no allegiance" but "to the elements."

The *Excursion* may be considered as a philosophical pastoral poem,—as a scholastic romance. It is less a poem on the country, than on the love of the country. It is not so much a description of natural objects, as of the feelings associated with them; not an account of the manners of rural life, but the result of the poet's reflections on it. He does not present the reader with a lively succession of images or incidents, but paints the outgoings of his own heart, the shapings of his own fancy. He may be said to create his own materials; his thoughts are his real subject. His understanding broods over that which is "without form and void," and "makes it pregnant." He sees all things in himself. He hardly ever avails himself of remarkable objects or situations, but, in general, rejects them as interfering with the workings of his own mind, as disturbing the smooth, deep, majestic current of his own feelings. Thus his descriptions of natural scenery are not brought home distinctly to the naked eye by forms and circumstances, but every object is seen through the medium of innumerable recollections, is clothed with the haze of imagination like a glittering vapour, is obscured with the excess of glory,

has the shadowy brightness of a waking dream. The image is lost in the sentiment, as sound in the multiplication of echoes.

> "And visions, as prophetic eyes avow,
> Hang on each leaf, and cling to every bough."

In describing human nature, Mr Wordsworth equally shuns the common 'vantage-grounds of popular story, of striking incident, or fatal catastrophe, as cheap and vulgar modes of producing an effect. He scans the human race as the naturalist measures the earth's zone, without attending to the picturesque points of view, the abrupt inequalities of surface. He contemplates the passions and habits of men, not in their extremes, but in their first elements; their follies and vices, not at their height, with all their embossed evils upon their heads, but as lurking in embryo,—the seeds of the disorder inwoven with our very constitution. He only sympathizes with those simple forms of feeling, which mingle at once with his own identity, or with the stream of general humanity. To him the great and the small are the same; the near and the remote; what appears, and what only is. The general and the permanent, like the Platonic ideas, are his only realities. All accidental varieties and individual

contrasts are lost in an endless continuity of feeling; like drops of water in the ocean-stream! An intense intellectual egotism swallows up every thing. Even the dialogues introduced in the present volume are soliloquies of the same character, taking different views of the subject. The recluse, the pastor, and the pedlar, are three persons in one poet. We ourselves disapprove of these "interlocutions between Lucius and Caius" as impertinent babbling, where there is no dramatic distinction of character. But the evident scope and tendency of Mr Wordsworth's mind is the reverse of dramatic. It resists all change of character, all variety of scenery, all the bustle, machinery, and pantomime of the stage, or of real life,—whatever might relieve, or relax, or change the direction of its own activity, jealous of all competition. The power of his mind preys upon itself. It is as if there were nothing but himself and the universe. He lives in the busy solitude of his own heart; in the deep silence of thought. His imagination lends life and feeling only to "the bare trees and mountains bare;" peoples the viewless tracts of air, and converses with the silent clouds!

We could have wished that our author had given to his work the form of a didactic poem al-

together, with only occasional digressions or allusions to particular instances. But he has chosen to encumber himself with a load of narrative and description, which sometimes hinders the progress and effect of the general reasoning, and which, instead of being inwoven with the text, would have come in better in plain prose as notes at the end of the volume. Mr Wordsworth, indeed, says finely, and perhaps as truly as finely :—

—— "Exchange the shepherd's frock of native grey
For robes with regal purple tinged; convert
The crook into a sceptre; give the pomp
Of circumstance; and here the tragic Muse
Shall find apt subjects for her highest art.
Amid the groves, beneath the shadowy hills,
The generations are prepared; the pangs,
The internal pangs are ready; the dread strife
Of poor humanity's afflicted will
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

But he immediately declines availing himself of these resources of the rustic moralist: for the priest, who officiates as "the sad historian of the pensive plain," says in reply :—

"Our system is not fashioned to preclude
That sympathy which you for others ask:
And I could tell, not travelling for my theme
Beyond the limits of these humble graves,

Of strange disasters; but I pass them by,
Loth to disturb what Heaven hath hushed to peace."

There is, in fact, in Mr Wordsworth's mind an evident repugnance to admit any thing that tells for itself, without the interpretation of the poet,—a fastidious antipathy to immediate effect,—a systematic unwillingness to share the palm with his subject. Where, however, he has a subject presented to him, "such as the meeting soul may pierce," and to which he does not grudge to lend the aid of his fine genius, his powers of description and fancy seem to be little inferior to those of his classical predecessor, Akenside. Among several others which we might select, we give the following passage, describing the religion of ancient Greece:—

"In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretch'd
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
With music lulled his indolent repose:
And in some fit of weariness, if he,
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetch'd
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,
A beardless youth, who touched a golden lute,
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.
The nightly hunter, lifting up his eyes
Towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart

Called on the lovely wanderer, who bestowed
That timely light, to share his joyous sport:
And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,
(Nor unaccompanied with tuneful notes
By echo multiplied from rock or cave,)
Swept in the storm of chase, as moon and stars
Glance rapidly along the clouded heavens,
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill, or gushing fount, and thanked
The Naiad.—Sun beams, upon distant hills
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed
Into fleet Oreads, sporting visibly.
The zephyrs fanning as they passed their wings,
Lacked not for love, fair objects, whom they wooed
With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,
Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth
In the low vale, or on steep mountain side:
And sometimes intermixed with stirring horns
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard;
These were the lurking satyrs, a wild brood
Of gamesome Deities! or Pan himself,
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God."

The foregoing is one of a succession of splendid passages equally enriched with philosophy and poetry, tracing the fictions of Eastern mythology to the immediate intercourse of the imagination with Nature, and to the habitual propensity of the

human mind to endow the outward forms of being with life and conscious motion. With this expansive and animating principle, Mr Wordsworth has forcibly, but somewhat severely, contrasted the cold, narrow, lifeless spirit of modern philosophy :—

"How, shall our great discoverers obtain,
From sense and reason less than these obtained,
Though far misled? Shall men for whom our age
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,
To explore the world without, and world within,
Be joyless as the blind? Ambitious souls——
Whom earth at this late season hath produced
To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh
The planets in the hollow of their hand;
And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains
Have solved the elements, or analyzed
The thinking principle—shall they in fact
Prove a degraded race? And what avails
Renown, if their presumption make them such?
Inquire of ancient wisdom; go, demand
Of mighty nature, if 'twas ever meant
That we should pry far off, yet be unraised;
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,
Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnection dead and spiritless;
And still dividing and dividing still
Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied
With the perverse attempt, while littleness
May yet become more little; waging thus

An impious warfare with the very life
Of our own souls!—And if indeed there be
An all-pervading spirit, upon whom
Our dark foundations rest, could he design,
That this magnificent effect of power,
The earth we tread, the sky which we behold
By day, and all the pomp which night reveals,
That these—and that superior mystery,
Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,
And the dread soul within it—should exist
Only to be examined, pondered, searched,
Probed, vexed, and criticised—to be prized
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud self-love her own intelligence?"

From the chemists and metaphysicians our author turns to the laughing sage of France, Voltaire. "Poor gentleman, it fares no better with him, for he's a wit." We cannot, however, agree with Mr Wordsworth, that *Candide* is *dull*. It is, if our author pleases, "the production of a scoffer's pen," or it is any thing but dull. It may not be proper in a grave, discreet, orthodox, promising young divine, who studies his opinions in the contraction or distension of his patron's brow, to allow any merit to a work like *Candide*; but we conceive that it would have been more manly in Mr Wordsworth, nor do we think it would have hurt the cause he espouses, if he had

blotted out the epithet, after it had peevishly escaped him. Whatsoever savours of a little, narrow, inquisitorial spirit, does not sit well on a poet and a man of genius. The prejudices of a philosopher are not natural. There is a frankness and sincerity of opinion, which is a paramount obligation in all questions of intellect, though it may not govern the decisions of the spiritual courts, who may, however, be safely left to take care of their own interests. There is a plain directness and simplicity of understanding, which is the only security against the evils of levity, on the one hand, or of hypocrisy, on the other. A speculative bigot is a solecism in the intellectual world. We can assure Mr Wordsworth, that we should not have bestowed so much serious consideration on a single voluntary perversion of language, but that our respect for his character makes us jealous of his smallest faults!

With regard to his general philippic against the contractedness and egotism of philosophical pursuits, we only object to its not being carried farther. We shall not affirm with Rousseau (his authority would perhaps have little weight with Mr Wordsworth)—*Tout homme reflechi est mechant;* but we conceive that the same reasoning which Mr Wordsworth applies so eloquently and

justly to the natural philosopher and metaphysician may be extended to the moralist, the divine, the politician, the orator, the artist, and even the poet. And why so? Because wherever an intense activity is given to any one faculty, it necessarily prevents the due and natural exercise of others. Hence all those professions or pursuits, where the mind is exclusively occupied with the ideas of things as they exist in the imagination or understanding, as they call for the exercise of intellectual activity, and not as they are connected with practical good or evil, must check the genial expansion of the moral sentiments and social affections; must lead to a cold and dry abstraction, as they are found to suspend the animal functions, and relax the bodily frame. Hence the complaint of the want of natural sensibility and constitutional warmth of attachment in those persons who have been devoted to the pursuit of any art or science,—of their restless morbidity of temperament, and indifference to every thing that does not furnish an occasion for the display of their mental superiority, and the gratification of their vanity. The philosophical poet himself, perhaps, owes some of his love of nature to the opportunity it affords him of analyzing his own feelings, and contemplating his own powers,—of

making every object about him a whole length mirror to reflect his favourite thoughts, and of looking down on the frailties of others in undisturbed leisure, and from a more dignified height.

One of the most interesting parts of this work is that in which the author treats of the French Revolution, and of the feelings connected with it, in ingenuous minds, in its commencement and its progress. The *solitary*,* who, by domestic calamities and disappointments, had been cut off from society, and almost from himself, gives the following account of the manner in which he was roused from his melancholy :—

" From that abstraction I was roused—and how?
Even as a thoughtful shepherd by a flash
Of lightning, startled in a gloomy cave
Of these wild hills. For, lo ! the dread Bastile,
With all the chambers in its horrid towers,
Fell to the ground : by violence o'erthrown
Of indignation ; and with shouts that drowned
The crash it made in falling ! From the wreck
A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,
The appointed seat of equitable law
And mild paternal sway. The potent shock
I felt ; the transformation I perceived,
As marvellously seized as in that moment,
When from the blind mist issuing, I beheld

* This word is not English.

Glory—beyond all glory ever seen,
Dazzling the soul! Meanwhile prophetic harps
In every grove were ringing, 'War shall cease:
Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured?
Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck
The tree of liberty!'—My heart rebounded:
My melancholy voice the chorus joined.
Thus was I reconverted to the world;
Society became my glittering bride,
And airy hopes my children. From the depths
Of natural passion seemingly escaped,
My soul diffused itself in wide embrace
Of institutions and the forms of things.
——————————— If with noise
And acclamation, crowds in open air
Expressed the tumult of their minds, my voice
There mingled, heard or not. And in still groves,
Where mild enthusiasts tuned a pensive lay
Of thanks and expectation, in accord
With their belief, I sang Saturnian rule
Returned—a progeny of golden years
Permitted to descend, and bless mankind.
* * * * * * *
Scorn and contempt forbid me to proceed!
But history, time's slavish scribe, will tell
How rapidly the zealots of the cause
Disbanded—or in hostile ranks appeared:
Some, tired of honest service; these outdone,
Disgusted, therefore, or appalled, by aims
Of fiercer zealots.—So confusion reigned,
And the more faithful were compelled to exclaim,
As Brutus did to virtue, 'Liberty,

I worshipped thee, and find thee but a shade.'
SUCH RECANTATION HAD FOR ME NO CHARM,
NOR WOULD I BEND TO IT."

The subject is afterwards resumed, with the same magnanimity and philosophical firmness :—

——————— "For that other loss,
The loss of confidence in social man,
By the unexpected transports of our age
Carried so high, that every thought—which looked
Beyond the temporal destiny of the kind—
To many seemed superfluous; as no cause
For such exalted confidence could e'er
Exist; so, none is now for such despair.
The two extremes are equally remote
From truth and reason;—do not, then, confound
One with the other, but reject them both;
And choose the middle point, whereon to build
Sound expectations. This doth he advise
Who shared at first the illusion. At this day,
When a Tartarian darkness overspreads
The groaning nations; when the impious rule,
By will or by established ordinance,
Their own dire agents, and constrain the good
To acts which they abhor; though I bewail
This triumph, yet the pity of my heart
Prevents me not from owning that the law,
By which mankind now suffers, is most just.
For by superior energies; more strict
Affiance in each other; faith more firm
In their unhallowed principles; the bad

Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,
The vacillating, inconsistent good."

In the application of these memorable lines, we should, perhaps, differ a little from Mr Wordsworth; nor can we indulge with him in the fond conclusion afterwards hinted at, that one day *our* triumph, the triumph of humanity and liberty, may be complete. For this purpose, we think several things necessary which are impossible. It is a consummation which cannot happen till the nature of things is changed, till the many become as united as the *one*, till romantic generosity shall be as common as gross selfishness, till reason shall have acquired the obstinate blindness of prejudice, till the love of power and of change shall no longer goad man on to restless action, till passion and will, hope and fear, love and hatred, and the objects proper to excite them, that is, alternate good and evil, shall no longer sway the bosoms and businesses of men. All things move, not in progress, but in a ceaseless round; our strength lies in our weakness; our virtues are built on our vices; our faculties are as limited as our being; nor can we lift man above his nature more than above the earth he treads. But though we cannot weave over again the airy, unsubstantial dream, which reason and experience have dispelled,

"What though the radiance, which was once so bright,
Be now for ever taken from our sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of glory in the grass, of splendour in the flower:"—

yet we will never cease, nor be prevented from returning on the wings of imagination to that bright dream of our youth; that glad dawn of the day-star of liberty; that spring-time of the world, in which the hopes and expectations of the human race seemed opening in the same gay career with our own; when France called her children to partake her equal blessings beneath her laughing skies; when the stranger was met in all her villages with dance and festive songs, in celebration of a new and golden era; and when, to the retired and contemplative student, the prospects of human happiness and glory were seen ascending like the steps of Jacob's ladder, in bright and never-ending succession. The dawn of that day was suddenly overcast; that season of hope is past; it is fled with the other dreams of our youth, which we cannot recal, but has left behind it traces, which are not to be effaced by Birth-day and Thanksgiving odes, or the chaunting of *Te Deums* in all the churches of Christendom. To those hopes eternal regrets are due; to those who maliciously and wilfully blasted them, in the fear that they

might be accomplished, we feel no less what we owe—hatred and scorn as lasting!

## No. XXXVIII.

### THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

MR WORDSWORTH'S writings exhibit all the internal power, without the external form of poetry. He has scarcely any of the pomp and decoration and scenic effect of poetry: no gorgeous palaces nor solemn temples awe the imagination; no cities rise "with glistering spires and pinnacles adorned;" we meet with no knights pricked forth on airy steeds; no hair-breadth 'scapes and perilous accidents by flood or field. Either from the predominant habit of his mind not requiring the stimulus of outward impressions, or from the want of an imagination teeming with various forms, he takes the common every-day events and objects of nature, or rather seeks those that are the most simple and barren of effect; but he adds to them a weight of interest from the resources of his own mind, which makes the most insignificant things

serious and even formidable. All other interests are absorbed in the deeper interest of his own thoughts, and find the same level. His mind magnifies the littleness of his subject, and raises its meanness; lends it his strength, and clothes it with borrowed grandeur. With him, a mole-hill, covered with wild thyme, assumes the importance of "the great vision of the guarded mount:" a puddle is filled with preternatural faces, and agitated with the fiercest storms of passion.

The extreme simplicity which some persons have objected to Mr Wordsworth's poetry, is to be found only in the subject and the style: the sentiments are subtle and profound. In the latter respect, his poetry is as much above the common standard or capacity, as in the other it is below it. His poems bear a distant resemblance to some of Rembrandt's landscapes, who, more than any other painter, created the medium through which he saw nature, and out of the stump of an old tree, a break in the sky, and a bit of water, could produce an effect almost miraculous.

Mr Wordsworth's poems in general are the history of a refined and contemplative mind, conversant only with itself and nature. An intense feeling of the associations of this kind is the pe-

culiar and characteristic feature of all his productions. He has described the love of nature better than any other poet. This sentiment, inly felt in all its force, and sometimes carried to an excess, is the source both of his strength and of his weakness.—However we may sympathize with Mr Wordsworth in his attachment to groves and fields, we cannot extend the same admiration to their inhabitants, or to the manners of a country life in general. We go along with him, while he is the subject of his own narrative, but we take leave of him when he makes pedlars and ploughmen his heroes and the interpreters of his sentiments. It is, we think, getting into low company, and company, besides, that we do not like. We take Mr Wordsworth himself for a great poet, a fine moralist, and a deep philosopher; but if he insists on introducing us to a friend of his, a parish clerk, or the barber of the village, who is as wise as himself, we must be excused if we draw back with some little want of cordial faith. We are satisfied with the friendship which subsisted between *Parson Adams* and *Joseph Andrews*.—The author himself lets out occasional hints that all is not as it should be among these northern Arcadians. Though, in general, he professes to soften the harsher features of rustic vice, he has

given us one picture of depraved and inveterate selfishness, which we apprehend could only be found among the inhabitants of these boasted mountain districts. The account of one of his heroines concludes as follows :—

" A sudden illness seiz'd her in the strength
Of life's autumnal season.—Shall I tell
How on her bed of death the matron lay,
To Providence submissive, so she thought;
But fretted, vexed, and wrought upon—almost
To anger, by the malady that griped
Her prostrate frame with unrelaxing power,
As the fierce eagle fastens on the lamb.
She prayed, she moaned—her husband's sister watched
Her dreary pillow, waited on her needs;
And yet the very sound of that kind foot
Was anguish to her ears!—' And must she rule
Sole mistress of this house when I am gone?
Sit by my fire—possess what I possessed—
Tend what I tended—calling it her own!'
Enough;—I fear too much.—Of nobler feeling
Take this example :—One autumnal evening,
While she was yet in prime of health and strength,
I well remember, while I passed her door,
Musing with loitering step, and upward eye
Turned tow'rds the planet Jupiter, that hung
Above the centre of the vale, a voice
Roused me, her voice;—it said, ' That glorious star
In its untroubled element will shine
As now it shines, when we are laid in earth,

And safe from all our sorrows.'—She is safe,
And her uncharitable acts, I trust,
And harsh unkindnesses, are all forgiven;
Though, in this vale, remembered with deep awe!"

We think it is pushing our love of the admiration of natural objects a good deal too far, to make it a set-off against a story like the preceding.

All country people hate each other. They have so little comfort, that they envy their neighbours the smallest pleasure or advantage, and nearly grudge themselves the necessaries of life. From not being accustomed to enjoyment, they become hardened and averse to it—stupid, for want of thought—selfish, for want of society. There is nothing good to be had in the country, or, if there is, they will not let you have it. They had rather injure themselves than oblige any one else. Their common mode of life is a system of wretchedness and self-denial, like what we read of among barbarous tribes. You live out of the world. You cannot get your tea and sugar without sending to the next town for it: you pay double, and have it of the worst quality. The small-beer is sure to be sour—the milk skimmed—the meat bad, or spoiled in the cooking. You cannot do a single thing you like; you cannot walk out or sit at home, or write or read, or think

or look as if you did, without being subject to impertinent curiosity. The apothecary annoys you with his complaisance; the parson with his superciliousness. If you are poor, you are despised; if you are rich, you are feared and hated. If you do any one a favour, the whole neighbourhood is up in arms; the clamour is like that of a rookery; and the person himself, it is ten to one, laughs at you for your pains, and takes the first opportunity of shewing you that he labours under no uneasy sense of obligation. There is a perpetual round of mischief-making and backbiting for want of any better amusement. There are no shops, no taverns, no theatres, no opera, no concerts, no pictures, no public-buildings, no crowded streets, no noise of coaches, or of courts of law, —neither courtiers nor courtesans, no literary parties, no fashionable routs, no society, no books, or knowledge of books. Vanity and luxury are the civilizers of the world, and sweeteners of human life. Without objects either of pleasure or action, it grows harsh and crabbed: the mind becomes stagnant, the affections callous, and the eye dull. Man left to himself soon degenerates into a very disagreeable person. Ignorance is always bad enough; but rustic ignorance is intolerable. Aristotle has observed, that tragedy purifies the

affections by terror and pity. If so, a company of tragedians should be established at the public expence, in every village or hundred, as a better mode of education than either Bell's or Lancaster's. The benefits of knowledge are never so well understood as from seeing the effects of ignorance, in their naked, undisguised state, upon the common country people. Their selfishness and insensibility are perhaps less owing to the hardships and privations, which make them, like people out at sea in a boat, ready to devour one another, than to their having no idea of any thing beyond themselves and their immediate sphere of action. They have no knowledge of, and consequently can take no interest in, any thing which is not an object of their senses, and of their daily pursuits. They hate all strangers, and have generally a nick-name for the inhabitants of the next village. The two young noblemen in Guzman d'Alfarache, who went to visit their mistresses only a league out of Madrid, were set upon by the peasants, who came round them calling out, "*a wolf.*" Those who have no enlarged or liberal ideas, can have no disinterested or generous sentiments. Persons who are in the habit of reading novels and romances, are compelled to take a deep interest, and to have their affections strongly

excited by fictitious characters and imaginary situations; their thoughts and feelings are constantly carried out of themselves, to persons they never saw, and things that never existed: history enlarges the mind, by familiarizing us with the great vicissitudes of human affairs, and the catastrophes of states and kingdoms; the study of morals accustoms us to refer our actions to a general standard of right and wrong; and abstract reasoning, in general, strengthens the love of truth, and produces an inflexibility of principle which cannot stoop to low trick and cunning. Books, in Lord Bacon's phrase, are "a discipline of humanity." Country people have none of these advantages, nor any others to supply the place of them. Having no circulating libraries to exhaust their love of the marvellous, they amuse themselves with fancying the disasters and disgraces of their particular acquaintance. Having no hump-backed *Richard* to excite their wonder and abhorrence, they make themselves a bug-bear of their own, out of the first obnoxious person they can lay their hands on. Not having the fictitious distresses and gigantic crimes of poetry to stimulate their imagination and their passions, they vent their whole stock of spleen, malice, and invention, on their friends and next-door neighbours. They

get up a little pastoral drama at home, with fancied events, but real characters. All their spare time is spent in manufacturing and propagating the lie for the day, which does its office, and expires. The next day is spent in the same manner. It is thus that they embellish the simplicity of rural life! The common people in civilized countries are a kind of domesticated savages. They have not the wild imagination, the passions, the fierce energies, or dreadful vicissitudes of the savage tribes, nor have they the leisure, the indolent enjoyments and romantic superstitions, which belonged to the pastoral life in milder climates, and more remote periods of society. They are taken out of a state of nature, without being put in possession of the refinements of art. The customs and institutions of society cramp their imaginations without giving them knowledge. If the inhabitants of the mountainous districts described by Mr Wordsworth, are less gross and sensual than others, they are more selfish. Their egotism becomes more concentrated, as they are more insulated, and their purposes more inveterate, as they have less competition to struggle with. The weight of matter which surrounds them, crushes the finer sympathies. Their minds become hard and cold, like the rocks which they cultivate.

The immensity of their mountains makes the human form appear little and insignificant. Men are seen crawling between Heaven and earth, like insects to their graves. Nor do they regard one another more than flies on a wall. Their physiognomy expresses the materialism of their character, which has only one principle—rigid self-will. They move on with their eyes and foreheads fixed, looking neither to the right nor to the left, with a heavy slouch in their gait, and seeming as if nothing would divert them from their path. We do not admire this plodding pertinacity, always directed to the main chance. There is nothing which excites so little sympathy in our minds, as exclusive selfishness.—If our theory is wrong, at least it is taken from pretty close observation, and is, we think, confirmed by Mr Wordsworth's own account.

Of the stories contained in the latter part of the volume, we like that of the Whig and Jacobite friends, and of the good knight, Sir Alfred Irthing, the best. The last reminded us of a fine sketch of a similar character in the beautiful poem of *Hart Leap Well*. To conclude,—If the skill with which the poet had chosen his materials had been equal to the power which he has undeniably exerted over them, if the objects (whether persons or

things) which he makes use of as the vehicle of his sentiments, had been such as to convey them in all their depth and force, then the production before us might indeed "have proved a monument," as he himself wishes it, worthy of the author, and of his country. Whether, as it is, this very original and powerful performance may not rather remain like one of those stupendous but half-finished structures, which have been suffered to moulder into decay, because the cost and labour attending them exceeded their use or beauty, we feel that it would be presumptuous in us to determine.

## No. XXXIX.

### A DAY BY THE FIRE.

I AM one of those that delight in a fireside, and can enjoy it without even the help of a cat or a tea-kettle. To cats, indeed, I have an aversion, as animals that only affect a sociality, without caring a jot for any thing but their own luxury; and my tea-kettle,—I frankly confess,—has long been displaced, or rather dismissed, by a bronze-

coloured and graceful urn; though, between ourselves, I am not sure that I have gained any thing by the exchange. Cowper, it is true, talks of the "bubbling and loud-hissing urn," which

"Throws up a steamy column;"

but there was something so primitive and unaffected,—so warm-hearted and unpresuming, in the tea-kettle,—its song was so much more cheerful and continued,—and it kept the water so hot and comfortable as long as you wanted it,—that I sometimes feel as if I had sent off a good, plain, faithful old friend, who had but one wish to serve me, for a superficial, smooth-faced upstart of a fellow, who, after a little promising and vapouring, grows cold and contemptuous, and thinks himself bound to do nothing but stand on a rug and have his person admired by the circle. To this admiration, in fact, I have been obliged to resort, in order to make myself think well of my bargain, if possible; and, accordingly, I say to myself every now and then during the tea,—"A pretty look with it—that urn;" or, "It's wonderful what a taste the Greeks had;" or, "The eye might have a great many enjoyments, if people would but look after forms and shapes." In the meanwhile, the urn leaves off its "bubbling and hissing,"—but then

there is such an air with it! My tea is made of cold water,—but then the Greeks were such a nation!

If there is any one thing that can reconcile me to the loss of my kettle, more than another, it is that my fire has been left to itself; it has full room to breathe and to blaze, and I can poke it as I please. What recollections does that idea excite!—Poke it as I please!—Think, benevolent Reader,—think of the pride and pleasure of having in your hand that awful, but, at the same time, artless weapon, a poker,—of putting it into the proper bar,—gently levering up the coals,—and seeing the instant and bustling flame above! To what can I compare that moment? That sudden, empyreal enthusiasm? That fiery expression of vivification? That ardent acknowledgment, as it were, of the care and kindliness of the operator? —Let me consider a moment:—it is very odd;—I was always reckoned a lively hand at a simile; —but language and combination absolutely fail me here. If it is like any thing, it must be something beyond every thing in beauty and life. Oh —I have it now:—think, Reader,—if you are one of those who can muster up sufficient sprightliness to engage in a game of forfeits,—on Twelfth night, for instance,—think of a blooming girl, who is condemned to "open her mouth and shut her eyes,

and see what heaven," in the shape of a mischievous young fellow, " will send her." Her mouth is opened accordingly, the fire of her eyes is dead, her face assumes a doleful air;—up walks the aforesaid heaven or mischievous young fellow, (young Ouranos,—Hesiod would have called him,) and, instead of a piece of paper, a thimble, or a cinder, claps into her mouth a peg of orange or a long slice of citron;—then her eyes above instantly light up again,—the smiles wreathe about,—the sparklings burst forth, and all is warmth, brilliancy, and delight.—I am aware that this simile is not perfect; but if it would do for an epic poem, as I think it might, after Virgil's whipping-tops and Homer's jackasses and black-puddings, the reader, perhaps, will not quarrel with it.

But to describe my feelings in an orderly manner, I must request the reader to go with me through a day's enjoyments by the fireside. It is part of my business to look about for helps to reflection; and, for this reason, among many others, I indulge myself in keeping a good fire from morning till night. I have also a reflective turn for an easy chair, and a very thinking attachment to comfort in general. But of this, as I proceed. —Imprimis, then,—the morning is clear and cold, —time, half-past seven,—scene, a breakfast-room.

Some persons, by the bye, prefer a thick and rainy morning, with a sobbing wind, and the clatter of pattens along the streets; but, I confess, for my own part, that being a sedentary person, and too apt to sin against the duties of exercise, I have somewhat too sensitive a consciousness of bad weather, and feel a heavy sky go over me like a feather-bed, or rather like a huge brush which rubs all my nap the wrong way. I am growing better in this respect, and by the help of a stout walk at noon, and getting, as it were, fairly into a favourite poet and a warm fire of an evening, begin to manage a cloud or an east wind tolerably well;—but still, for perfection's sake on the present occasion, I must insist upon my clear morning, and will add to it, if the reader pleases, a little hoar-frost upon the windows, a bird or two coming after the crumbs, and the light smoke from the neighbouring chimneys brightening up into the early sunshine. Even the dustman's bell is not unpleasant from its association; and there is something absolutely musical in the clash of the milkpails suddenly unyoked, and the ineffable, *ad libitum* note that follows.

The waking epicure rises with an elastic anticipation; enjoys the freshening cold-water which endears what is to come; and even goes placidly

through the villanous scraping process which we soften down into the level and lawny appellation of shaving. He then hurries down stairs, rubbing his hands, and sawing the sharp air through his teeth; and as he enters the breakfast-room, sees his old companion glowing through the bars,—the life of the apartment,—and wanting only his friendly hand to be lightened a little, and enabled to shoot up into dancing brilliancy. (I find I am getting into a quantity of epithets here; and must rein in my enthusiasm.)—What need I say? The poker is applied, and would be so whether required or not, for it is impossible to resist the sudden ardour inspired by that sight:—the use of the poker, on first seeing one's fire, is as natural as shaking hands with a friend. At that movement, a hundred little sparkles fly up from the coal-dust that falls within, while, from the masses themselves, a roaring flame mounts aloft with a deep and fitful sound as of a shaken carpet:—epithets again;—I must recur to poetry at once:—

> Then shine the bars, the cakes in smoke aspire,
> A sudden glory bursts from all the fire.
> The conscious wight, rejoicing in the heat,
> Rubs the blithe knees, and toasts th' alternate feet.

* Parody upon part of the well-known description of night, with which Pope has swelled out the passage in Ho-

The utility, as well as beauty, of the fire *during* breakfast, need not be pointed out to the most unphlogistic observer. A person would rather be shivering at any time of the day than at that of his first rising:—the transition would be too unnatural:—he is not prepared for it,—as Barnardine says, when he objects to being hanged. If you eat plain bread and butter with your tea, it is fit that your moderation should be rewarded with a good blaze; and if you indulge in hot rolls or toast, you will hardly keep them to their warmth without it, particularly if you read; and then,—if you take in a newspaper,—what a delightful change from the wet, raw, dabbing fold of paper, when you first touch it, to the dry, crackling, crisp superficies, which, with a skilful spat of the fingernails at its upper end, stands at once in your hand, and looks as if it said "Come read me." Nor is it the look of the newspaper only which the fire must render complete:—it is the interest of the ladies who may happen to form part of your family,—of your wife in particular, if you have one,—to avoid the niggling and pinching aspect of cold; it takes away the harmony of her features, and the graces of her behaviour; while, on the other

mer, and the faults of which have long been appreciated by general readers.

hand, there is scarcely a more interesting sight in the world than that of a neat, delicate, good-humoured female, presiding at your breakfast-table, with hands tapering out of her long sleeves, eyes with a touch of Sir Peter Lely in them, and a face set in a little oval frame of muslin tied under the chin, and retaining a certain tinge of the pillow without its cloudiness. This is, indeed, the finishing grace of a fireside, though it is impossible to have it at all times, and perhaps not always politic,—especially for the studious.

From breakfast to dinner, the quantity and quality of enjoyment depend very much on the nature of one's concerns; and occupation of any kind, if we pursue it properly, will hinder us from paying a critical attention to the fireside. It is sufficient, if our employments do not take us away from it, or at least from the genial warmth of a room which it adorns;—unless, indeed, we are enabled to have recourse to exercise; and in that case, I am not so unjust as to deny that walking or riding has its merits, and that the general glow they diffuse throughout the frame has something in it extremely pleasurable and encouraging;—nay, I must not scruple to confess, that, without some preparation of this kind, the enjoyment of

the fireside, humanly speaking, is not absolutely perfect; as I have latterly been convinced by a variety of incontestible arguments in the shape of headaches, rheumatisms, mote-haunted eyes, and other logical appeals to one's feelings which are in great use with physicians.—Supposing, therefore, the morning to be passed, and the due portion of exercise to have been taken, the Firesider fixes rather an early hour for dinner, particularly in the winter-time; for he has not only been early at breakfast, but there are two luxurious intervals to enjoy between dinner and the time of candles,—one that supposes a party round the fire with their wine and fruit,—the other, the hour of twilight, of which it has been reasonably doubted whether it is not the most luxurious point of time which a fireside can present:—but opinions will naturally be divided on this as on all other subjects, and every degree of pleasure depends upon so many contingencies, and upon such a variety of associations, induced by habit and opinion, that I should be as unwilling as I am unable to decide on the matter. This, however, is certain, that no true Firesider can dislike an hour so composing to his thoughts, and so cherishing to his whole faculties; and it is equally certain, that he will be little inclined to protract the dinner beyond what he can

help, or if ever a fireside becomes unpleasant, it is during that gross and pernicious prolongation of eating and drinking, to which this latter age has given itself up, and which threatens to make the rising generation regard a meal of repletion as the ultimatum of enjoyment.

The inconvenience to which I allude is owing to the way in which we sit at dinner, for the persons who have their backs to the fire are liable to be scorched, while, at the same time, they render the persons opposite them liable to be frozen; so that the fire becomes uncomfortable to the former, and tantalizing to the latter; and thus three evils are produced, of a most absurd and scandalous nature;—in the first place, the fireside loses a degree of its character, and awakens feelings the very reverse of what it should; secondly, the position of the back towards it is a neglect and affront, which it becomes it to resent; and finally, its beauties, its proffered kindness, and its sprightly social effect, are at once cut off from the company by the interposition of those invidious and idle surfaces, called screens. This abuse is the more ridiculous, inasmuch as the remedy is so easy; for we have nothing to do but to use semicircular dining-tables, with the base unoccupied towards the fireplace, and the whole annoyance vanishes at once;

the master or mistress might preside in the middle, as was the custom with the Romans, and thus propriety would be observed, while every body had the sight and benefit of the fire;—not to mention, that, by this fashion, the table might be brought nearer to it,—that the servants would have better access to the dishes,—and that screens, if at all necessary, might be turned to better purpose as a general enclosure instead of a separation.

But I hasten from dinner, according to notice; and cannot but observe, that if you have a small set of visitors, who enter into your feelings on this head, there is no movement so pleasant as a general one from the table to the fireside, each person taking his glass with him, and a small, slim-legged table being introduced into the circle for the purpose of holding the wine, and perhaps a poet or two, a glee-book, or a lute. If this practice should become general among those who know how to enjoy luxuries in such temperance as not to destroy conversation, it would soon gain for us another social advantage, by putting an end to the barbarous custom of sending away the ladies after dinner,—a gross violation of those chivalrous graces of life, for which modern times are so highly indebted to the persons whom they are pleased to term Gothic. And here I might di-

gress, with no great impropriety, to shew the *snug* notions that were entertained by the knights and damsels of old in all particulars relating to domestic enjoyment, especially in the article of mixed company;—but I must not quit the fireside, and will only observe, that, as the ladies formed its chief ornament, so they constituted its most familiar delight.

"The minstralcie, the service at the feste,
The grete yeftes to the most and leste,
The riche array of Theseus' paleis,
Ne who sate first, ne last upon the deis,
What ladies fairest ben, or best dancing,
Or which of hem can carole best or sing,
Ne who most felingly speketh of love;
What haukis sitten on the perch above,
What houndis liggen on the flour adoun,—
Of all this now make I no mencioun."

CHAUCER.

## No. XL.

### THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THE word *snug*, however, reminds me, that, amidst all the languages, ancient and modern, it be-

longs exclusively to our own; and that nothing but a want of ideas suggested by that soul-wrapping epithet, could have induced certain frigid connoisseurs to tax our climate with want of genius, —supposing forsooth, that because we have not the sunshine of the Southern countries, we have no other warmth for our veins, and that, because our skies are not hot enough to keep us in doors, we have no excursiveness of wit and range of imagination. It seems to me that a great deal of good argument in refutation of these calumnies has been wasted upon Monsieur du Bos and the Herrn Winckelman,—the one a narrow-minded pedantic Frenchman, to whom the freedom of our genius was incomprehensible,—the other an Italianized German, who being suddenly transported into the sunshine, began frisking about with unwieldy vivacity, and concluded that nobody could be great or bewitching out of the pale of his advantages. Milton, it is true, in his Paradise Lost, expresses an injudicious apprehension lest

> "An age too late, or cold
> Climate, or years, damp his intended wing;"

but the very complaint which foreign critics bring against him as well as Shakspeare, is, that his wing was not damped enough,—that it was too daring

and unsubdued; and he not only avenges himself nobly of his fears by a flight beyond all Italian poetry, but shews, like the rest of his countrymen, that he could turn the coldness of his climate into a new species of inspiration, as I shall presently make manifest. Not to mention, however, that the Greeks and Romans, Homer in particular, saw a great deal worse weather than these critics would have us imagine, the question is, would the Poets themselves have thought as they did? Would Tyrtæus, the singer of patriotism, have complained of being an Englishman? Would Virgil, who delighted in husbandry, and whose first wish was to be a philosopher, have complained of living in our pastures, and being the countryman of Newton? Would Homer, the observer of character, the panegyrist of freedom, the painter of storms, of landscapes, and of domestic tenderness, —aye, and the lover of snug houseroom and a good dinner,—would he have complained of our humours, of our liberty, of our shifting skies, of our ever-green fields, our conjugal happiness, our firesides, and our hospitality? I only wish the reader and I had him at this party of ours after dinner, with a lyre on his knee, and a goblet, as he says, to drink as he pleased,—

———"Piein, hote thumos anogoi."

Odyss. lib. viii. v. 70.

I am much mistaken if our blazing fire and our freedom of speech would not give him a warmer inspiration than ever he felt in the person of Demodocus, even though placed on a lofty seat, and regaled with slices of brawn from a prince's table. The ancients, in fact, were by no means deficient in enthusiasm at sight of a good fire; and it is to be presumed, that if they had enjoyed such fire-sides as ours, they would have acknowledged the advantages which our genius presents in winter, and almost been ready to conclude with old Cleveland, that the Sun himself was nothing but

> "Heaven's coalery;—
> A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame."

The ancient hearth was generally in the middle of the room, the ceiling of which let out the smoke; it was supplied with charcoal or faggots; and consisted, sometimes of a brazier or chafing-dish, (the focus of the Romans,) sometimes of a mere elevation or altar, (the εστια or εσχαρα of the Greeks.) We may easily imagine the smoke and annoyance which this custom must have occasioned,—not to mention the bad complexions which are caught by hanging over a fuming pan, as the faces of the Spanish ladies bear melancholy witness. The stoves, however, in use with the countrymen of

Mons. du Bos and Winckelman are, if possible, still worse, having a dull, suffocating effect, with nothing to recompense the eye. The abhorrence of them which Ariosto expresses in one of his satires, when, justifying his refusal to accompany Cardinal d'Este into Germany, he reckons up the miseries of its winter-time, may have led M. Winckelman to conclude that all the Northern resources against cold were equally intolerable to an Italian genius; but Count Alfieri, a poet, at least as warmly inclined as Ariosto, delighted in England; and the great Romancer himself, in another of his satires, makes a commodious fireplace the climax of his wishes with regard to lodging. In short, what did Horace say, or rather what did he not say, of the raptures of in-door sociality,—Horace, who knew how to enjoy sunshine in all its luxury, and who nevertheless appears to have snatched a finer inspiration from absolute frost and snow? I need not quote all those beautiful little invitations he sent to his acquaintances, telling one of them that a neat room and a sparkling fire were waiting for him, describing to another the smoke springing out of the roof in curling volumes, and even congratulating his friends in general on the opportunity of enjoyment afforded them by a stormy day; but to take leave at once of these

frigid connoisseurs, hear with what rapture he describes one of those friendly parties, in which he passed his winter evenings, and which only wanted the finish of our better morality and our patent fireplaces, to resemble the one I am now fancying.

" Vides ut altâ stet nive candi dum
Soracte ; nec jam sustineant onus
Silvæ laborantes ; geluque
Flumina constiterint acuto?

Dissolve frigus, ligna super foco
Largè reponens ; atque benigniûs
Deprome quadrimum Sabinâ,
O Thaliarche, merum diotâ.

Permitte Divis cætera. . . .
Donec virenti canities abest
Morosa, nunc et campus, et areæ,
Lenesque sub noctem susurri
Compositâ repetantur horâ :

Nunc et latentis proditor intimo
Gratus puellæ risus ab angulo,
Pignusque dereptum lacerto
Aut digito male pertinaci."

Lib. I. Od. 9.

" Behold yon mountain's hoary height
Made higher with new mounts of snow;
Again behold the winter's weight
Oppress the lab'ring woods below,

And streams with icy fetters bound
Benumb'd and crampt to solid ground.

With well-heap'd logs dissolve the cold,
And feed the genial hearth with fires,
Produce the wine that makes us bold,
And sprightly wit and mirth inspires.
For what hereafter shall betide,
Jove, if 'tis worth his care, provide.

. . . . . .

Th' appointed hour of promis'd bliss,
The pleasing whisper in the dark,
The half unwilling, willing kiss,
The laugh that guides thee to the mark,
When the kind nymph would coyness feign,
And hides but to be found again,
These, these are joys the Gods for youth ordain."

DRYDEN.

The Roman poet, however, though he occasionally boasts of his temperance, is too apt to lose sight of the intellectual part of his entertainment, or at least to make the sensual part predominate over the intellectual. Now, I reckon the nicety of social enjoyment to consist in the reverse; and after partaking with Homer of his plentiful boiled and roast, and with Horace of his flower-crowned wine parties, the poetical reader must come at last to us Barbarians of the North for the perfection of fireside festivity—that is to say, for the

union of practical philosophy with absolute merriment,—for light meals and unintoxicating glasses,—for refection that administers to enjoyment, instead of repletions that at once constitute and contradict it. I am speaking, of course, not of our common-place eaters and drinkers, but of our classical arbiters of pleasure, as contrasted with those of other countries: these, it is observable, have all delighted in Horace, and copied him as far as their tastes were congenial; but without relaxing a jot of their real comfort, how pleasingly does their native philosophy temper and adorn the freedom of their conviviality,—feeding the fire, as it were, with an equable fuel that hinders it alike from scorching and from going out, and, instead of the artificial enthusiasm of a heated body, enabling them to enjoy the healthful and unclouded predominance of a sparkling intelligence! It is curious, indeed, to see how distinct from all excess are their freest and heartiest notions of relaxation. Thus, our old poet Drayton, reminding his favourite companion of a fireside meeting, expressly unites freedom with moderation:—

"My dearly loved friend, how oft have we
In winter evenings, meaning to be free,
To some well-chosen place us'd to retire,
And there with moderate meat, and wine, and fire,

Have pass'd the hours contentedly in chat,
Now talk'd of this, and then discours'd of that,—
Spoke our own verses 'twixt ourselves,—if not
Other men's lines, which we by chance had got."

*Epistle to Henry Reynolds, Esq. Of Poets and Poesy.*

And Milton, in his Sonnet to Cyriack Skinner, one of the turns of which is plainly imitated from Horace, particularly qualifies a strong invitation to merriment by anticipating what Horace would always drive from your reflections,—the feelings of the day after :—

" Cyriack, whose Grandsire, on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause
Pronounc'd, and in his volumes taught, our laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench;
*To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench*
*In mirth, that, after, no repenting draws.*
Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intends, and what the French.
To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
Tow'rd solid good what leads the nearest way :
For other things mild Heav'n a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in shew,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains."

But the execution of this sonnet is not to be compared in gracefulness and a finished sociality with the one addressed to his friend Lawrence, which, as

it presents us with the acme of elegant repast, may conclude the hour which I have just been describing, and conduct us complacently to our twilight.

"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, and artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of these delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise."

But twilight comes; and the lover of the fireside, for the perfection of the moment, is now alone. He was reading a minute or two ago, and for some time was unconscious of the increasing dusk, till, on looking up, he perceived the objects out of doors deepening into massy outline, while the sides of his fireplace began to reflect the light of the flames, and the shadow of himself and his chair fidgeted with huge obscurity on the wall.

Still wishing to read, he pushed himself nearer and nearer to the window, and continued fixed on his book, till he happened to take another glance out of doors, and on returning to it, could make out nothing. He therefore lays it aside, and restoring his chair to the fireplace, seats himself right before it in a reclining posture, his feet apart upon the fender, his eyes bent down towards the grate, his arms on the chair's elbows, one hand hanging down, and the palm of the other turned up and presented to the fire,—not to keep it from him, for there is no glare or scorch about it,—but to intercept and have a more kindly feel of its genial warmth. It is thus that the greatest and wisest of mankind have sat and meditated; a homely truism perhaps, but such a one as we are apt enough to forget. We talk of going to Athens or Rome to see the precise objects which the Greeks and Romans beheld, and forget that the Moon, which may be looking upon us at the moment, is the same identical planet that enchanted Homer and Virgil, and that has been contemplated and admired by all the great men and geniuses that have existed; by Socrates and Plato in Athens, by the Antonines in Rome, by the Alfreds, the Hospitals, the Miltons, Newtons, and Shakspeares. In like manner, we are anxious to discover how

these great men and poets appeared in common, what habits they loved, in what way they talked and meditated, nay, in what postures they delighted to sit, and whether they indulged in the same tricks and little comforts that we do. Look at Nature and their works, and we shall see that they did, and that when we act naturally and think earnestly, we are reflecting their commonest habits to the life. Thus we have seen Horace talking of his blazing hearth and snug accommodations like the jolliest of our acquaintances; and thus we may safely imagine, that Milton was in some such attitude as I have described, when he sketched that enchanting little picture, which beats all the cabinet portraits that have been produced:—

> "Or if the air will not permit,
> Some still removed place will fit,
> Where glowing embers through the room
> Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
> Far from all resort of mirth,
> Save the cricket on the hearth,
> Or the bellman's drowsy charm
> To bless the doors from nightly harm."

—But to attend to our fireside. The evening is beginning to gather in. The window, which presents a large face of watery grey, intersected by strong lines, is imperceptibly becoming darker;

and as that becomes darker, the fire assumes a more glowing presence. The contemplatist keeps his easy posture, absorbed in his fancies; and every thing around him is still and serene. The stillness would even ferment in his ear, and whisper, as it were, of what the air contained: but a minute coil, just sufficient to hinder that busier silence, clicks in the baking coal, while every now and then the light ashes shed themselves below, or a stronger, but still a gentle flame flutters up with a gleam over the chimney. At length, the darker objects in the room become mingled; the gleam of the fire streaks with a restless light the edges of the furniture, and reflects itself in the blackening window; while his feet take a gentle move on the fender, and then settle again, and his face comes out of the general darkness, earnest even in indolence, and pale in the very ruddiness of what it looks upon.—This is the only time perhaps at which sheer idleness is salutary and refreshing. How observed with the smallest effort is every trick and aspect of the fire! A coal falling in,—a fluttering fume,—a miniature mockery of a flash of lightning,—nothing escapes the eye and the imagination. Sometimes a little flame appears at the corner of the grate like a quivering spangle; sometimes it swells out at top into a rest-

less and brief lambency; anon it is seen only by a light beneath the grate, or it curls around one of the bars like a tongue, or darts out with a spiral thinness and a sulphureous and continued puffing as from a reed. The glowing coals meantime exhibit the shifting forms of hills, and vales, and gulfs,—of fiery Alps, whose heat is uninhabitable even by spirit, or of black precipices, from which swart fairies seem about to spring away on sable wings;—then heat and fire are forgotten, and walled towns appear, and figures of unknown animals, and far-distant countries scarcely to be reached by human journey;—then coaches, and camels, and barking dogs as large as either, and forms that combine every shape and suggest every fancy;—till at last, the ragged coals tumbling together, reduce the vision to chaos, and the huge profile of a gaunt and grinning face seems to make a jest of all that has passed.—During these creations of the eye, the thought roves about into a hundred abstractions, some of them suggested by the fire,—some of them suggested by that suggestion,—some of them arising from the general sensation of comfort and composure, contrasted with whatever the world affords of evil, or dignified by high wrought meditation on whatsoever gives hope to benevolence and inspiration to wisdom. The

philosopher at such moments plans his Utopian schemes, and dreams of happy certainties which he cannot prove:—the lover, happier and more certain, fancies his mistress with him, unobserved and confiding, his arm round her waist, her head upon his shoulder, and earth and heaven contained in that sweet possession:—the poet, thoughtful as the one, and ardent as the other, springs off at once above the world, treads every turn of the harmonious spheres, darts up with gleaming wings through the sunshine of a thousand systems, and stops not till he has found a perfect Paradise, whose fields are of young roses, and whose air is music,—whose waters are the liquid diamond,—whose light is as radiance through crystal,—whose dwellings are laurel bowers,—whose language is poetry,—whose inhabitants are congenial souls,—and to enter the very verge of whose atmosphere strikes beauty on the face, and felicity on the heart.—Alas, that flights so lofty should ever be connected with earth by threads as slender as they are long, and that the least twitch of the most common-place hand should be able to snatch down the viewless wanderer to existing comforts!—The entrance of a single candle dissipates at once the twilight and the sunshine, and the ambitious dreamer is summoned to his tea!

## No. XLI.

### THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

NEVER was snug hour more feelingly commenced!—Cowper was not a *great* poet; his range was neither wide nor lofty; but such as it was, he had it completely to himself; he is the poet of quiet life and familiar observation.—The fire, we see, is now stirred, and becomes very different from the one we have just left; it puts on its liveliest aspect in order to welcome those to whom the tea-table is a point of meeting, and it is the business of the Firesider to cherish this aspect for the remainder of the evening. How light and easy the coals look! How ardent is the roominess within the bars! How airily do the volumes of smoke course each other up the chimney, like so many fantastic and indefinite spirits, while the eye in vain endeavours to accompany any one of them!

The flames are not so fierce as in the morning, but still they are active and powerful; and if they do not roar up the chimney, they make a constant and playful noise, that is extremely to the purpose. Here they come out at top with a leafy swirl; there they dart up spirally and at once,—there they form a lambent assemblage that shifts about on its own ground, and is continually losing and regaining its vanishing members. I confess I take particular delight in seeing a good blaze at top; and my impatience to produce it will sometimes lead me into great rashness in the article of poking,—that is to say, I use the poker at the top instead of the middle of the fire, and go probing it about in search of a flame. A lady of my acquaintance,—"near and dear," as they say in Parliament,—will tell me of this fault twenty times in a day, and every time so good-humouredly, that it is mere want of generosity in me not to amend it; but somehow or other I do not. The consequence is, that, after a momentary ebullition of blaze, the fire becomes dark and sleepy, and is in danger of going out. It is like a boy at school in the hands of a bad master, who, thinking him dull, and being impatient to render him brilliant, beats him about the head and ears, till he produces the very evil he would prevent. But, on

the present occasion, I forbear to use the poker:—there is no need of it:—every thing is comfortable; every thing snug and sufficient. How equable is the warmth around us! How cherishing this rug to one's feet! How complacent the cup at one's lip! What a fine broad light is diffused from the fire over the circle, gleaming in the urn and the polished mahogany, bringing out the white garments of the ladies, and giving a poetic warmth to their face and hair! I need not mention all the good things that are said at tea,—still less the gallant. Good-humour never has an audience more disposed to think it wit, nor gallantry an hour of service more blameless and elegant. Ever since tea has been known, its clear and gentle powers of inspiration have been acknowledged, from Waller paying his court at the circle of Catharine of Braganza, to Dr Johnson receiving homage at the parties of Mrs Thrale. The former, in his lines, upon hearing it "commended by her Majesty," ranks it at once above myrtle and laurel, and her Majesty, of course, agreed with him:—

"Venus her myrtle, Phœbus has his bays;
Tea both excels, which she vouchsafes to praise.
The *best of queens*, and best of herbs, we owe
To that bold nation, which the way did show

To the fair region, where the sun does rise,
Whose rich productions we so justly prize.
The Muse's friend, Tea, does our fancy aid,
Repress those vapours which the head invade,
And keeps that palace of the soul serene,
Fit, on her birth-day, to salute the Queen."

The eulogies pronounced on his favourite beverage by Dr Johnson, are too well known to be repeated here; and the commendatory inscription of the Emperor Kien Long,—to an European taste at least,—is somewhat too dull, unless his Majesty's tea-pot has been shamefully translated. For my own part, though I have the highest respect, as I have already shewn, for this genial drink, which is warm to the cold, and cooling to the warm, I confess, as Montaigne would have said, that I prefer coffee,—particularly in my political capacity:—

"Coffee, that makes the Politician wise
To see through all things with his half-shut eyes."

There is something in it, I think, more lively, and, at the same time, more substantial. Besides, I never see it but it reminds me of the Turks and their Arabian tales,—an association infinitely preferable to any Chinese ideas; and, like the king who put his head into the tub, I am transported

into distant lands the moment I dip into the coffee-cup,—at one minute ranging the valleys with Sinbad, at another encountering the fairies on the wing by moonlight, at a third exploring the haunts of the cursed Maugraby, or wrapt into the silence of that delicious solitude from which Prince Agib was carried by the fatal horse. Then if I wish to poeticise upon it at home, there is Belinda with her sylphs, drinking it in such state as nothing but poetry can supply:—

"For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd,
The berries crackle, and the mill turns round:
On shining altars of japan they raise
The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze;
From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,
And China's earth receives the smoking tide:
At once they gratify the scent and taste,
And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.
Straight hover round the fair her airy band;
Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd;
Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade."

It must be acknowledged, however, that the general association of ideas is at present in favour of tea, which, on that account, has the advantage of suggesting no confinement to particular ranks or modes of life. Let there be but a fireside, and any body, of any denomination, may be fancied

enjoying the luxury of a cup of tea, from the duchess in the evening drawing-room, who makes it the instrument of displaying her white hand, to the washerwoman at her early tub, who having had nothing to signify since five, sits down to it with her shining arms and corrugated fingers at six. If there is any one station of life in which it is enjoyed to most advantage, it is that of mediocrity,—that in which all comfort is reckoned to be best appreciated, because, while there is taste to enjoy, there is necessity to earn the enjoyment; and I cannot conclude the hour before us with a better climax of snugness than is presented in the following pleasing little verses. The author, I believe, is unknown, and may not have been much of a poet in matters of fiction; but who will deny his taste for matters of reality, or say that he has not handled his subject to perfection?

"The hearth was clean, the fire was clear,
The kettle on for tea,
Palemon in his elbow-chair,
As blest as man could be.

Clarinda, who his heart possess'd,
And was his new-made bride,
With head reclin'd upon his breast
Sat toying by his side.

Stretch'd at his feet, in happy state,
A fav'rite dog was laid,
By whom a little sportive cat
In wanton humour play'd.

Clarinda's hand he gently prest;
She stole an amorous kiss,
And blushing modestly confess'd
The fulness of her bliss.

Palemon, with a heart elate,
Pray'd to Almighty Jove,
That it might ever be his fate,
Just so to live and love.

Be this eternity, he cried,
And let no more be given:
Continue thus my lov'd fireside,
I ask no other heav'n."

*The Happy Fireside.—Elegant Extracts.*

There are so many modes of spending the remainder of the evening between tea-time and bed-time, (for I protest against all suppers that are not light enough to be taken on the knee,) that a general description would avail me nothing, and I cannot be expected to enter into such a variety of particulars. Suffice it to say, that where the fire is duly appreciated, and the circle good-humoured, none of them can be unpleasant, whether the party be large or small, young or old,

talkative or contemplative. If there is music, a good fire will be particularly grateful to the performers, who are often seated at the farther end of the room; for, it is really shameful, that a lady who is charming us all with her voice, or firing us, at the harp or piano, with the lightning of her fingers, should at the very moment be trembling with cold. As to cards, which were invented for the solace of a mad prince, and which are only tolerable, in my opinion, when we can be as mad as he was, that is to say, at a round game,—I cannot by any means patronize them, as a conscientious Firesider: for, not to mention all the other objections, the card-table is as awkward, in a fireside point of view, as the dinner-table, and is not to be compared with it in sociality. If it be necessary to pay so ill a compliment to the company, as to have recourse to some amusement of the kind, there is chess or draughts, which may be played upon a tablet by the fire; but nothing is like discourse, freely uttering the fancy as it comes, and varied, perhaps, with a little music, or with the perusal of some favourite passages, which excite the comments of the circle. It is then, if tastes happen to be accordant, and the social voice is frank as well as refined, that the "sweet music of speech" is heard in its best harmony, dif-

fering only for apter sweetness, and mingling but for happier participation, while the mutual sense smilingly bends in with every rising measure,

" And female stop smoothens the charm o'er all."

This is the finished evening; this the quickener at once and the calmer of tired thought; this the spot, where our better spirits await to exalt and enliven us, when the daily and vulgar ones have discharged their duty!

" Questo è il Paradiso,
Più dolce, che fra l' acque, e fra l' arene
In ciel son le Sirene."

TASSO. *Rime Amorose.*

" Here, here is found
A sweeter Paradise of sound,
Than where the Sirens take their summer stands
Among the breathing waters and glib sands."

Bright fires and joyous faces,—and it is no easy thing for philosophy to say good night. But health must be enjoyed, or nothing will be enjoyed; and the charm should be broken at a reasonable hour. Far be it, however, from a rational Firesider not to make exceptions to the rule, when friends have been long asunder, or when some domestic cele-

bration has called them together, or even when hours peculiarly congenial render it difficult to part. At all events, the departure must be a voluntary matter; and here I cannot help exclaiming against the gross and villanous trick which some people have, when they wish to get rid of their company, of letting their fires go down, and the snuffs of their candles run to seed:—it is paltry and palpable, and argues bad policy as well as breeding; for such of their friends as have a different feeling of things, may chance to be disgusted with them altogether, while the careless or unpolite may chuse to revenge themselves on the appeal, and face it out gravely till the morning. If a common visitor be inconsiderate enough, on an ordinary occasion, to sit beyond all reasonable hour, it must be reckoned as a fatality,—as an ignorance of men and things, against which you cannot possibly provide,—as a sort of visitation, which must be borne with patience, and which is not likely to occur often, if you know whom you invite, and those who are invited know you.—But with an occasional excess of the fireside, what social virtue shall quarrel? A single friend, perhaps, loiters behind the rest;—you are alone in the house;—you have just got upon a subject, delightful to you both; the fire is of a candent brightness; the wind howls out of

doors; the rain beats; the cold is piercing! Sit down.——This is a time when the most melancholy temperament may defy the clouds and storms, and even extract from them a pleasure that will take no substance by daylight. The ghost of his happiness sits by him, and puts on the likeness of former hours;—and if such a man can be made comfortable by the moment, what enjoyment may it not furnish to an unclouded spirit? If the excess belong not to vice, temperance does not forbid it when it only grows out of occasion. The great Poet, whom I have quoted so often for the fireside, and who will enjoy it with us to the last, was like the rest of our great poets, an ardent recommender of temperance in all its branches; but though he practised what he preached, he could take his night out of the hands of sleep as well as the most entrenching of us. To pass over, as foreign to our subject in point of place, his noble wish that he might "*oft* outwatch the bear," with what a wrapped-up recollection of snugness, in the elegy on his friend Diodati, does he describe the fireside enjoyment of a winter's night?

"Pectora cui credam? Quis me lenire docebit
Mordaces curas? Quis longam fallere noctem
Dulcibus alloquiis, grato cum sibilat igni

Molle pyrum, et nucibus strepitat focus, et malus Auster
Miscet cuncta foris, et desuper intonat ulmo?"

"In whom shall I confide? Whose counsel find
A balmy med'cine for my troubled mind?
Or whose discourse, with innocent delight,
Shall fill me now, and cheat the wintry night,
When hisses on my hearth the pulpy pear,
And black'ning chesnuts start and crackle there,
While storms abroad the dreary meadows whelm,
And the wind thunders through the neighb'ring elm?"

COWPER'S *Translation.*

Even when left alone, there is sometimes a charm in watching out the decaying fire,—in getting closer and closer to it with tilted chair and knees against the bars, and letting the whole multitude of fancies, that work in the night silence, come whispering about the yielding faculties. The world around is silent; and for a moment the very cares of day seem to have gone with it to sleep, leaving you to snatch a waking sense of disenthralment, and to commune with a thousand airy visitants that come to play with innocent thoughts. Then for imagination's sake, not for superstition's, are recalled the stories of the Secret World and the midnight pranks of Fairyism. The fancy roams out of doors after rustics led astray by the jack-o-lan-

tern, or minute laughings heard upon the wind, or the night-spirit on his horse that comes flouncing through the air on his way to a surfeited citizen, or the tiny morris-dance that springs up in the watery glimpses of the moon;—or keeping at home, it finds a spirit in every room peeping at it as it opens the door, while a cry is heard from up stairs announcing the azure marks inflicted by

> " The nips of fairies upon maids' white hips,"

or hearing a snoring from below, it tiptoes down into the kitchen, and beholds where

> ——" Lies him down the lubber fiend,
> And stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
> Basks at the fire his hairy strength."

Presently the whole band of fairies, ancient and modern,—the dæmons, sylphs, gnomes, sprites, elves, peries, genii, and, above all, the fairies of the fireside, the salamanders, lob-lie-by-the-fires, lars, lemures, and larvæ, come flitting between the fancy's eye and the dying coals, some with their weapons and lights, others with grave steadfastness on book or dish, others of the softer kind with their arch looks and their conscious pretence of attitude, while a minute music tinkles in the ear, and Oberon gives his gentle order :—

"Through this house in glimmering light
By the dead and drowsy fire,
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from briar;
And this ditty, after me,
Sing, and dance it trippingly."

Anon, the whole is vanished, and the dreamer, turning his eye down aside, almost looks for a laughing sprite, gazing at him from a tiny chair, and mimicking his face and attitude.—Idle fancies these, and incomprehensible to minds clogged with every-day earthliness,—but not useless, either as an exercise of the invention, or even as adding consciousness to the range and destiny of the soul. They will occupy us too, and steal us away from ourselves, when other recollections fail us or grow painful,—when friends are found selfish, or better friends can but commiserate, or when the world has nothing in it to compare with what we have missed out of it. They may even lead us to higher and more solemn meditations, till we work up our way beyond the clinging and heavy atmosphere of this earthly sojourn, and look abroad upon the light that knows neither blemish nor bound, while our ears are saluted at that egress by the harmony of the skies, and our eyes behold the lost and congenial spirits that we have loved, hastening

to welcome us with their sparkling eyes and their curls that are ripe with sunshine.

But earth recals us again;—the last flame is out;—the fading embers tinkle with a gaping dreariness; and the chill reminds us where we should be.—Another gaze on the hearth that has so cheered us, and the last lingering action is to wind up the watch for the next day.—Upon how many anxieties shall the finger of that brief chronicler strike,—and upon how many comforts too!—To-morrow our fire shall be trimmed anew; and so, gentle reader, good night:—may the weariness I have caused you make sleep the pleasanter!

"Let no lamenting cryes, nor dolefull tears,
Be heard all night within, nor yet without;
Ne let false whispers, breeding hidden fears,
Break gentle sleep with misconceived doubt.
Let no deluding dreams, nor dreadful sights,
Make sudden, sad affrights,
Ne let hobgoblins, names whose sence we see not,
Fray us with things that be not;
But let still silence true night-watches keep,
That sacred Peace may in assurance reigne,
And timely Sleep, since it is time to sleep,
May pour his limbs forth on your pleasant plaine."

SPENSER'S *Epithalamion.*

L. H.

## No. XLII.

### CHARACTER OF THE LATE MR PITT. *

THE character of Mr Pitt was, perhaps, one of the most singular that ever existed. With few talents, and fewer virtues, he acquired and preserved, in one of the most trying situations, and in spite of all opposition, the highest reputation for the possession of every moral excellence, and as having carried the attainments of eloquence and wisdom as far as human abilities could go. This he did (strange as it may appear) by a negation (together with the common virtues) of the common vices of human nature, and by the complete negation of every other talent that might interfere with the only ones which he possessed in a supreme degree, and which, indeed, may be made to include the appearance of all others,—an artful use of words, and a certain dexterity of logical arrangement. In these alone his power consisted; and the defect of all other qualities, which usually constitute greatness, contributed to the more complete success of these. Having no strong feelings, no

* Written in 1806.

distinct perceptions,—his mind having no link, as it were, to connect it with the world of external nature, every subject presented to him nothing more than a *tabula rasa*, on which he was at liberty to lay whatever colouring of language he pleased; having no general principles, no comprehensive views of things, no moral habits of thinking, no system of action, there was nothing to hinder him from pursuing any particular purpose by any means that offered; having never any plan, he could not be convicted of inconsistency, and his own pride and obstinacy were the only rules of his conduct. Without insight into human nature, without sympathy with the passions of men, or apprehension of their real designs, he seemed perfectly insensible to the consequences of things, and would believe nothing till it actually happened. The fog and haze in which he saw every thing communicated itself to others; and the total indistinctness and uncertainty of his own ideas tended to confound the perceptions of his hearers more effectually than the most ingenious misrepresentation could have done. Indeed, in defending his conduct, he never seemed to consider himself as at all responsible for the success of his measures, or to suppose that future events were in our own power; but that, as the best laid schemes might

fail, and there was no providing against all possible contingencies, this was a sufficient excuse for our plunging at once into any dangerous or absurd enterprise without the least regard to consequences. His reserved logic confined itself solely to the *possible* and the *impossible*, and he appeared to regard the *probable* and *improbable*, the only foundation of moral prudence or political wisdom, as beneath the notice of a profound statesman; as if the pride of the human intellect were concerned in never entrusting itself with subjects, where it may be compelled to acknowledge its weakness. Nothing could ever drive him out of his dull forms, and naked generalities; which, as they are susceptible neither of degree nor variation, are therefore equally applicable to every emergency that can happen: and in the most critical aspect of affairs, he saw nothing but the same flimsy web of remote possibilities and metaphysical uncertainty. In his mind, the wholesome pulp of practical wisdom and salutary advice was immediately converted into the dry chaff and husks of a miserable logic. From his manner of reasoning, he seemed not to have believed that the truth of his statements depended on the reality of the facts, but that the facts themselves depended on the order in which he arranged them in words: you would not suppose

him to be agitating a serious question, which had real grounds to go upon, but to be declaiming upon an imaginary thesis, proposed as an exercise in the schools. He never set himself to examine the force of the objections that were brought against him, or attempted to defend his measures upon clear, solid grounds of his own; but constantly contented himself with first gravely stating the logical form, or dilemma to which the question reduced itself; and then, after having declared his opinion, proceeded to amuse his hearers by a series of rhetorical common-places, connected together in grave, sonorous, and elaborately constructed periods, without ever shewing their real application to the subject in dispute. Thus, if any member of the opposition disapproved of any measure, and enforced his objections by pointing out the many evils with which it was fraught, or the difficulties attending its execution, his only answer was, "that it was true there might be inconveniences attending the measure proposed, but we were to remember, that every expedient that could be devised might be said to be nothing more than a choice of difficulties, and that all that human prudence could do, was to consider on which side the advantages lay; that, for his part, he conceived that the present measure was attended with more

advantages and fewer disadvantages than any other that could be adopted; that if we were diverted from our object by every appearance of difficulty, the wheels of government would be clogged by endless delays and imaginary grievances; that most of the objections made to the measure appeared to him to be trivial, others of them unfounded and improbable; or that, if a scheme, free from all these objections, could be proposed, it might, after all, prove inefficient; while, in the meantime, a material object remained unprovided for, or the opportunity of action was lost." This mode of reasoning is admirably described by Hobbes, in speaking of the writings of some of the schoolmen, of whom he says, that "they had learned the trick of imposing what they list upon their readers, and declining the force of true reason by verbal forks, that is, distinctions, which signify nothing, but serve only to astonish the multitude of ignorant men." That what we have here stated comprehends the whole force of his mind, which consisted solely in this evasive dexterity and perplexing formality, assisted by a copiousness of words and common-place topics, will, we think, be evident to any one who carefully looks over his speeches, undazzled by the reputation or personal influence of the speaker. It will be in vain to look in them for any of the

common proofs of human genius or wisdom. He has not left behind him a single memorable saying,—not one profound maxim,—one solid observation,—one forcible description,—one beautiful thought,—one humorous picture,—one affecting sentiment. He has made no addition whatever to the stock of human knowledge. He did not possess any one of those faculties which contribute to the instruction and delight of mankind,—depth of understanding, imagination, sensibility, wit, vivacity, clear and solid judgment. But it may be asked, If these qualities are not to be found in him, where are we to look for them? And we may be required to point out instances of them. We shall answer then, that he had none of the abstract, legislative wisdom, refined sagacity, or rich, impetuous, high-wrought imagination of Burke; the manly eloquence, exact knowledge, vehemence, and natural simplicity of Fox; the ease, brilliancy, and acuteness of Sheridan. It is not merely that he had not all these qualities in the degree that they were severally possessed by his rivals, but he had not any of them in any remarkable degree. His reasoning is a technical arrangement of unmeaning commonplaces, his eloquence rhetorical, his style monotonous and artificial. If he could pretend to any one excellence more than another, it was to taste in

composition. There is certainly nothing low, nothing puerile, nothing far-fetched or abrupt in his speeches; there is a kind of faultless regularity pervading them throughout; but in the confined, formal, passive mode of eloquence which he adopted, it seemed rather more difficult to commit errors than to avoid them. A man who is determined never to move out of the beaten road cannot lose his way. However, habit, joined to the peculiar mechanical memory which he possessed, carried this correctness to a degree which, in an extemporaneous speaker, was almost miraculous; he, perhaps, hardly ever uttered a sentence that was not perfectly regular and connected. In this respect, he not only had the advantage over his own contemporaries, but perhaps no one that ever lived equalled him in this singular faculty. But for this, he would always have passed for a common man; and to this the constant sameness, and, if we may so say, vulgarity of his ideas, must have contributed not a little, as there was nothing to distract his mind from this one object of his unintermitted attention; and as, even in his choice of words, he never aimed at any thing more than a certain general propriety and stately uniformity of style. His talents were exactly fitted for the situation in which he was placed; where it was his

business not to overcome others, but to avoid being overcome. He was able to baffle opposition, not from strength or firmness, but from the evasive ambiguity and impalpable nature of his resistance, which gave no hold to the rude grasp of his opponents: no force could bind the loose phantom, and his mind (though "not matchless, and his pride humbled by such rebuke") soon rose from defeat unhurt,

> "And in its liquid texture, mortal wound
> Receiv'd no more than can the fluid air."

## No. XLIII.

### ON RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY.

RELIGION either makes men wise and virtuous, or it makes them set up false pretences to both. In the latter case, it makes them hypocrites to themselves as well as others. Religion is, in grosser minds, an enemy to self-knowledge. The consciousness of the presence of an all-powerful Being, who is both the witness and judge of every thought, word, and action, where it does not produce its proper effect, forces the

religious man to practise every mode of deceit upon himself with respect to his real character and motives; for it is only by being wilfully blind to his own faults, that he can suppose they will escape the eye of Omniscience. Consequently, the whole business of a religious man's life, if it does not conform to the strict line of his duty, may be said to be to gloss over his errors to himself, and to invent a thousand shifts and palliations, in order to hoodwink the Almighty. While he is sensible of his own delinquency, he knows that it cannot escape the penetration of his invisible Judge; and the distant penalty annexed to every offence, though not sufficient to make him desist from the commission of it, will not suffer him to rest easy, till he has made some compromise with his own conscience as to his motives for committing it. As far as relates to this world, a cunning knave may take a pride in the imposition he practises upon others; and, instead of striving to conceal his true character from himself, may chuckle with inward satisfaction at the folly of those who are not wise enough to detect it. "But 'tis not so above." This shallow, skin-deep hypocrisy will not serve the turn of the religious devotee, who is "compelled to give in evidence against himself," and who must first become the dupe of his

own imposture, before he can flatter himself with the hope of concealment, as children hide their eyes with their hands, and fancy that no one can see them. Religious people often pray very heartily for the forgiveness of "a multitude of trespasses and sins," as a mark of their humility, but we never knew them admit any one fault in particular, or acknowledge themselves in the wrong in any instance whatever. The natural jealousy of self-love is in them heightened by the fear of damnation, and they plead *Not Guilty* to every charge brought against them, with all the conscious terrors of a criminal at the bar. It is for this reason that the greatest hypocrites in the world are religious hypocrites.

This quality, as it has been sometimes found united with the clerical character, is known by the name of *Priestcraft*. The Ministers of Religion are perhaps more liable to this vice than any other class of people. They are obliged to assume a greater degree of sanctity, though they have it not, and to screw themselves up to an unnatural pitch of severity and self-denial. They must keep a constant guard over themselves, have an eye always to their own persons, never relax in their gravity, nor give the least scope to their inclinations. A single slip, if discovered,

may be fatal to them. Their influence and superiority depend on their pretensions to virtue and piety; and they are tempted to draw liberally on the funds of credulity and ignorance allotted for their convenient support. All this cannot be very friendly to downright simplicity of character. Besides, they are so accustomed to inveigh against the vices of others, that they naturally forget that they have any of their own to correct. They see vice as an object always out of themselves, with which they have no other concern than to denounce and stigmatize it. They are only reminded of it *in the third person*. They as naturally associate sin and its consequences with their flocks as a pedagogue associates a false concord and flogging with his scholars. If we may so express it, they serve as conductors to the lightning of divine indignation, and have only to point the thunders of the law at others. They identify themselves with that perfect system of faith and morals, of which they are the professed teachers, and regard any imputation on their conduct as an indirect attack on the function to which they belong, or as compromising the authority under which they act. It is only the head of the Popish church who assumes the title of *God's Vicegerent upon earth*; but the feeling is nearly common to all

the oracular interpreters of the will of Heaven—from the successor of St Peter down to the simple, unassuming Quaker, who, disclaiming the imposing authority of title and office, yet fancies himself the immediate organ of a preternatural impulse, and affects to speak only as the spirit moves him.

There is another way in which the formal profession of religion aids hypocrisy by erecting a secret tribunal, to which those who affect a more than ordinary share of it can (in case of need) appeal from the judgments of men. The religious impostor, reduced to his last shift, and having no other way left to avoid the most "open and apparent shame," rejects the fallible decisions of the world, and thanks God that there is one who knows the heart. He is amenable to a higher jurisdiction, and while all is well with Heaven, he can pity the errors, and smile at the malice of his enemies! Whatever cuts men off from their dependence on common opinion or obvious appearances, must open a door to evasion and cunning, by setting up a standard of right and wrong in every one's own breast, of the truth of which nobody can judge but the person himself. There are some fine instances in the old plays and novels (the best commentaries on human nature) of

the effect of this principle, in giving the last finishing to the character of duplicity. Miss Harris, in Fielding's *Amelia*, is one of the most striking. Moliere's *Tartuffe* is another instance of the facility with which religion may be perverted to the purposes of the most flagrant hypocrisy. It is an impenetrable fastness, to which this worthy person, like so many others, retires without the fear of pursuit. It is an additional disguise, in which he wraps himself up like a cloak. It is a stalking-horse, which is ready on all occasions,—an invisible conscience, which goes about with him,—his good genius, that becomes surety for him in all difficulties,—swears to the purity of his motives,—extricates him out of the most desperate circumstances,—baffles detection, and furnishes a plea, to which there is no answer.

The same sort of reasoning will account for the old remark, that persons who are stigmatized as non-conformists to the established religion, Jews, Presbyterians, &c. are more disposed to this vice than their neighbours. They are inured to the contempt of the world, and steeled against its prejudices: and the same indifference which fortifies them against the unjust censures of mankind, may be converted, as occasion requires, into a screen for the most pitiful conduct. They

have no cordial sympathy with others, and, therefore, no sincerity in their intercourse with them. It is the necessity of concealment, in the first instance, that produces, and is, in some measure, an excuse for the habit of hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy, as it is connected with cowardice, seems to imply weakness of body or want of spirit. The impudence and insensibility which belong to it, ought to suppose robustness of constitution. There is certainly a very successful and formidable class of sturdy, jolly, able-bodied hypocrites, the Friar Johns of the profession. Raphael has represented Elymas the Sorcerer with a hard iron visage, and large uncouth figure, made up of bones and muscles; as one not troubled with weak nerves or idle scruples—as one who repelled all sympathy with others—who was not to be jostled out of his course by their censures or suspicions—and who could break with ease through the cobweb snares which he had laid for the credulity of others, without being once entangled in his own delusions. His outward form betrays the hard, unimaginative self-willed understanding of the sorcerer.

A.

## No. XLIV.

### ON WASHERWOMEN.

WRITERS, we think, might oftener indulge themselves in direct picture-making, that is to say, in detached sketches of men and things, which should be to *manners*, what those of Theophrastus are to *character*.

Painters do not always think it necessary to paint epics, or to fill a room with a series of pictures on one subject. They deal sometimes in single figures and groups; and often exhibit a profounder feeling in these little concentrations of their art, than in subjects of a more numerous description. Their *gusto*, perhaps, is less likely to be lost on that very account. They are no longer Sultans in a seraglio, but lovers with a favourite mistress, retired and absorbed. A Madonna of Corregio's, the Bath of Michael Angelo, the Standard of Leonardo da Vinci, Titian's Mistress, and other single subjects or groups of the great masters, are acknowledged to be among their greatest performances, some of them their greatest of all.

It is the same with music. Overtures, which

are supposed to make allusion to the whole progress of the story they precede, are not always the best productions of the master; still less are chorusses, and quintetts, and other pieces involving a multiplicity of actors. The overture to Mozart's *Magic Flute (Zauberflute)* is worthy of the title of the piece; it is truly enchanting; but what are so intense, in their way, as the duet of the two lovers, *Ah Perdona*,—or the laughing trio in *Cosi Fan Tutte*,—or that passionate serenade in Don Giovanni, *Dëh vieni alla finistra*, which breathes the very soul of refined sensuality! The gallant is before you, with his mandolin and his cap and feather, taking place of the nightingale for that amorous hour; and you feel that the sounds must inevitably draw his mistress to the window. Their intenseness even renders them pathetic; and his heart seems in earnest, because his senses are.

We do not mean to say, that, in proportion as the work is large and the subject numerous, the merit may not be the greater if all is good. Raphael's Sacrament is a greater work than his Adam and Eve; but his Transfiguration would still have been the finest picture in the world, had the second group in the foreground been away; nay, the latter is supposed, and, we think, with justice,

to injure its effect. We only say that there are times, when the numerousness may scatter the individual gusto;—that the greatest possible feeling may be proved without it;—and, above all, returning to our more immediate subject, that writers, like painters, may sometimes have leisure for excellent detached pieces, when they want it for larger productions. Here, then, is an opportunity for them. Let them, in their intervals of history, or, if they want time for it, give us portraits of humanity. People lament that Sappho did not write more: but, at any rate, her two odes are worth twenty epics like Tryphiodorus.

But, in portraits of this kind, writing will also have a great advantage; and may avoid what seems to be an inevitable stumbling-block in paintings of a similar description. Between the matter-of-fact works of the Dutch artists, and the subtle compositions of Hogarth, there seems to be a medium reserved only for the pen. The writer only can tell you all he means,—can let you into his whole mind and intention. The moral insinuations of the painter are, on the one hand, apt to be lost for want of distinctness, or tempted, on the other, by their visible nature, to put on too gross a shape. If he leaves his meanings to be imagined, he may unfortunately speak to un-

imaginate spectators, and generally does; if he wishes to explain himself so as not to be mistaken, he will paint a set of comments upon his own incidents and characters, rather than let them tell for themselves. Hogarth himself, for instance, who never does any thing without a sentiment or a moral, is too apt to perk them both in your face, and to be over-redundant in his combinations. His persons, in many instances, seem too much taken away from their proper indifference to effect, and to be made too much of conscious agents and joint contributors. He "o'er-informs his tenements." His very goods and chattels are didactic. He makes a capital remark of a cow's horn, and brings up a piece of cannon in aid of a satire on vanity.* It is the writer only who, without hurting the most delicate propriety of the representation, can leave no doubt of all his intentions,—who can insinuate his object in two or three words, to the dullest conception, and, in conversing with the most foreign minds, take away all the awkwardness of interpretation. What painting gains in universality to the eye, it loses by an

* See the cannon going off in the turbulent portrait of a General-Officer: and the cow's head coming just over that of the citizen who is walking with his wife.

infinite proportion in power of suggestion to the understanding.

There is something of the sort of sketches we are recommending in Sterne: but Sterne had a general connected object before him, of which the parts apparently detached were still connecting links: and while he also is apt to overdo his subject like Hogarth, is infinitely less various and powerful. The greatest master of detached portrait is Steele: but his pictures too form a sort of link in a chain. Perhaps the completest specimen of what we mean in the English language is Shenstone's *School-Mistress*, by far his best production, and a most natural, quiet, and touching old dame.—But what? Are we leaving out *Chaucer?* Alas, we thought to be doing something a little original, and find it all existing already, and in unrivalled perfection, in his portraits of the Canterbury Pilgrims! We can only dilate, and vary upon his principle.

But we are making a very important preface to what may turn out a very trifling subject; and must request the reader not to be startled at the homely specimen we are about to give him, after all this gravity of recommendation. Not that we would apologise for homeliness, as homeliness. The beauty of this unlimited power of suggestion

in writing is, that you may take up the driest and most common-place of all possible subjects, and strike a light out of it to warm your intellect and your heart by. The fastidious habits of polished life generally incline us to reject, as incapable of interesting us, whatever does not present itself in a graceful shape of its own, and a ready-made suit of ornaments. But some of the plainest weeds become beautiful under the microscope. It is the benevolent provision of nature, that in proportion as you feel the necessity of extracting interest from common things, you are enabled to do so;—and the very least that this familiarity with homeliness will do for us is to render our artificial delicacy less liable to annoyance, and to teach us how to grasp the nettles till they obey us.

The reader sees that we are Wordsworthians enough not to confine our tastes to the received elegancies of society; and, in one respect, we go farther than Mr Wordsworth, for, though as fond, perhaps, of the country as he, we can manage to please ourselves in the very thick of cities, and even find there as much reason to do justice to Providence, as he does in the haunts of sportsmen, and anglers, and all-devouring insects.

To think, for instance, of that laborious and inelegant class of the community,—*Washerwomen*,

and of all the hot, disagreeable, dabbing, smoaking, splashing, kitcheny, cold-dining, anti-company-receiving associations, to which they give rise.—What can be more annoying to any tasteful lady or gentleman, at their first waking in the morning, than when that dreadful thump at the door comes, announcing the tub-tumbling viragoes, with their brawny arms and brawling voices? We must confess, for our own parts, that our taste, in the abstract, is not for washerwomen; we prefer Dryads and Naiads, and the figures that resemble them;—

> "Fair forms, that glance amid the green of woods,
> Or from the waters give their sidelong shapes
> Half swelling."

Yet, we have lain awake sometimes in a street in town, after this first confounded rap, and pleased ourselves with reflecting how equally the pains and enjoyments of this world are dealt out, and what a pleasure there is in the mere contemplation of any set of one's fellow-creatures and their humours, when our knowledge has acquired humility enough to look at them steadily.

The reader knows the knock which we mean. It comes like a lump of lead, and instantly wakes the maid, whose business it is to get up, though

she pretends not to hear it. Another knock is inevitable, and it comes, and then another; but still Betty does not stir, or stirs only to put herself in a still snugger posture, knowing very well that they must knock again. "How, 'drat that Betty," says one of the washerwomen; "she hears as well as we do, but the deuce a bit will she move till we give her another;" and at the word another, down goes the knocker again. "It's very odd," says the master of the house, mumbling from under the bed-clothes, "that Betty does not get up to let the people in; I've heard that knocker three times."—"Oh," returns the mistress, "she's as lazy as she's high,"—and off goes the chamber-bell;—by which time Molly, who begins to lose her sympathy with her fellow-servant in impatience of what is going on, gives her one or two conclusive digs in the side; when the other gets up, and rubbing her eyes and mumbling, and hastening and shrugging herself down stairs, opens the door with—"Lard, Mrs Watson, I hope you haven't been standing here long?"—"Standing here long! Mrs Betty! Oh don't tell me; people might stand starving their legs off, before you'd put a finger out of bed."—"Oh don't say so, Mrs Watson; I'm sure I always rises at the first knock; and there—you'll find every thing comfortable be-

low, with a nice hock of ham, which I made John leave for you." At this the washerwomen leave their mumbling, and shuffle down stairs, hoping to see Mrs Betty early at breakfast. Here, after warming themselves at the copper, taking a mutual pinch of snuff, and getting things ready for the wash, they take a snack at the promised hock; for people of this profession have always their appetite at hand, and every interval of labour is invariably cheered by the prospect of *having something* at the end of it. "Well," says Mrs Watson, finishing the last cut, "some people thinks themselves mighty generous for leaving one what little they can't eat; but, howsomever, it's better than nothing."—"Ah," says Mrs Jones, who is a minor genius, "one must take what one can get now-a-days; but Squire Hervey's for my money."—"Squire Hervey!" rejoins Mrs Watson, "what's that the great what's-his-name as lives yonder?"—"Aye," returns Mrs Jones, "him as has a niece and nevvy, as they say eats him out of house and land;"—and here commences the history of all the last week of the whole neighbourhood round, which continues amidst the dipping of splashing fists, the rumbling of suds, and the creaking of wringings out, till an hour or two are elapsed; and then for another snack and a pinch of snuff, till

the resumption of another hour's labour or so brings round the time for first breakfast. Then, having had nothing to signify since five, they sit down at half-past six in the wash-house, to take their own meal before the servants meet at the general one. This is the chief moment of enjoyment. They have just laboured enough to make the tea and bread and butter welcome, are at an interesting point of the conversation, (for there they contrive to leave off on purpose,) and so down they sit, fatigued and happy, with their red elbows and white corrugated fingers, to a tub turned upside down, and a dish of good christian souchong, fit for a body to drink.

We could dwell a good deal upon this point of time, but we have already, we fear, ran out our limits; and shall only admonish the fastidious reader, who thinks he has all the taste and means of enjoyment to himself, how he looks with scorn upon two persons, who are perhaps at this moment the happiest couple of human beings in the street,—who have discharged their duty, have earned their enjoyment, and have health and spirits to relish it to the full. A washerwoman's cup of tea may vie with the first drawn cork at a bon-vivant's table, and the complacent opening of her snuff-box with that of the most triumphant politician over a

scheme of partition. We say nothing of the continuation of their labours, of the scandal they resume, or the complaints they pour forth, when they first set off again in the indolence of a satisfied appetite, at the quantity of work which the mistress of the house, above all other mistresses, is sure to heap upon them. Scandal and complaint, in these instances, do not hurt the complacency of our reflections; they are in their proper sphere; and are nothing but a part, as it were, of the day's work, and are so much vent to the animal spirits. Even the unpleasant day which the work causes up stairs in some houses, —the visitors which it excludes, and the leg of mutton which it hinders from roasting, are only so much enjoyment kept back and contracted, in order to be made keener the rest of the week. Beauty itself is indebted to it, and draws from that steaming out-house and splashing tub the well-fitting robe that gives out its figure, and the snowy cap that contrasts its curls and its complexion. In short, whenever we hear a washerwoman at her foaming work, or see her plodding towards us with her jolly warm face, her mob cap, her black stockings, clattering pattens, and tub at arm's length resting on her hip-joint, we look upon her as a living lesson to us to make the most both of

time and comfort, and as a sort of allegorical union of pain and pleasure, a little too much, perhaps, in the style of Rubens.

L. H.

## No. XLV.

### ON THE LITERARY CHARACTER.

THE following remarks are prefixed to the account of Baron Grimm's Correspondence in a late number of a celebrated Journal :—

" There is nothing more exactly painted in these graphical volumes, than the character of M. Grimm himself; and the beauty of it is, that, as there is nothing either natural or peculiar about it, it may stand for the character of all the wits and philosophers he frequented. He had more wit, perhaps, and more sound sense and information, than the greatest part of the society in which he lived; but the leading traits belong to the whole class, and to all classes, indeed, in similar situations, in every part of the world. Whenever there is a very large assemblage of persons who have no other occupation but to amuse themselves, there

will infallibly be generated acuteness of intellect, refinement of manners, and good taste in conversation ;—and, with the same certainty, all profound thought, and all serious affection, will be discarded from their society.

"The multitude of persons and things that force themselves on the attention in such a scene, and the rapidity with which they succeed each other, and pass away, prevent any one from making a deep or permanent impression ; and the mind, having never been tasked to any course of application, and long habituated to this lively succession and variety of objects, comes at last to require the excitement of perpetual change, and to find a multiplicity of friends as indispensable as a multiplicity of amusements. Thus the characteristics of large and polished society come almost inevitably to be, wit and heartlessness—acuteness and perpetual derision. The same impatience of uniformity, and passion for variety, which give so much grace to their conversation, by excluding all tediousness and pertinacious wrangling, make them incapable of dwelling for many minutes on the feelings and concerns of any one individual ; while the constant pursuit of little gratifications, and the weak dread of all uneasy sensations, render them equally averse from serious sympathy and deep thought.

" The whole style and tone of this publication affords the most striking illustration of these general remarks. From one end of it to the other, it is a display of the most complete heartlessness, and the most uninterrupted levity. It chronicles the deaths of half the author's acquaintance, and makes jests upon them all; and is much more serious in discussing the merits of an opera-dancer, than in considering the evidence for the being of a God, or the first foundations of morality. Nothing, indeed, can be more just or conclusive than the remark that is forced from M. Grimm himself, upon the utter carelessness, and instant oblivion, that followed the death of one of the most distinguished, active, and amiable members of his coterie :—" Tant il est vrai que ce que nous appellons *la societé*, est ce qu'il y a de plus leger, de plus ingrat, et de plus frivole au monde !"

These remarks, though shrewd and sensible in themselves, apply rather to the character of M. Grimm and his friends as men of the world, after their initiation into the refined society of Paris and the great world, than as mere men of letters. There is, however, a character which every man of letters has before he comes into society, and which he carries into the world with him, which we shall here attempt to describe.

The weaknesses and vices that arise from a constant intercourse with books, are in certain respects the same with those which arise from daily intercourse with the world; yet each has a character and operation of its own, which may either counteract or aggravate the tendency of the other. The same dissipation of mind, the same listlessness, languor, and indifference, may be produced by both, but they are produced in different ways, and exhibit very different appearances. The defects of the literary character proceed, not from frivolity and voluptuous indolence, but from the overstrained exertion of the faculties, from abstraction and refinement. A man without talents or education might mingle in the same society, might give into all the gaiety and foppery of the age, might see the same "multiplicity of persons and things," but would not become a wit and a philosopher for all that. As far as the change of actual objects, the real variety and dissipation goes, there is no difference between M. Grimm and a courtier of Francis I.—between the consummate philosopher and the giddy girl—between Paris, amidst the barbaric refinements of the middle of the eighteenth century, and any other metropolis at any other period. It is in the *ideal* change of objects, in the *intellectual* dissipation of litera-

ture and of literary society, that we are to seek for the difference. The very same languor and listlessness which, in fashionable life, are owing to the rapid "succession of persons and things," may be found, and even in a more intense degree, in the most recluse student, who has no knowledge whatever of the great world, who has never been present at the sallies of a *petit souper*, or complimented a lady on presenting her with a bouquet. It is the province of literature to anticipate the dissipation of real objects, and to increase it. It creates a fictitious restlessness and craving after variety, by creating a fictitious world around us, and by hurrying us, not only through all the mimic scenes of life, but by plunging us into the endless labyrinths of imagination. Thus the common indifference produced by the distraction of successive amusements, is superseded by a general indifference to surrounding objects, to real persons and things, occasioned by the disparity between the world of our imagination and that without us. The scenes of real life are not got up in the same style of magnificence; they want dramatic illusion and effect. The high-wrought feelings require all the concomitant and romantic circumstances which fancy can bring together to satisfy them, and cannot find them in any given object. M. Grimm

was not, by his own account, *born* a lover; but even supposing him to have been, in gallantry of temper, a very Amadis, would it have been necessary that the enthusiasm of a philosopher and a man of genius should have run the gauntlet of all the *bonnes fortunes* of Paris to evaporate into insensibility and indifference? Would not a Clarissa, a new Eloise, a Cassandra, or a Berenice, have produced the same mortifying effects on a person of his great critical acumen and virtù? Where, O where would he find the rocks of Meillerie in the precincts of the Palais Royal, or on what lips would Julia's kisses grow? Who, after wandering with Angelica, or having seen the heavenly face of Una, might not meet with impunity a whole circle of literary ladies? Cowley's mistresses reigned by turns in the poet's fancy, and the beauties of King Charles II. perplex the eye in the preference of their charms as much now as they ever did. One trifling coquet only drives out another; but Raphael's Galatea kills the whole race of pertness and vulgarity at once. After ranging in dizzy mazes, through the regions of imaginary beauty, the mind sinks down, breathless and exhausted, on the earth. In common minds, indifference is produced by mixing with the world. Authors and artists bring it into the world with them.

The disappointment of the ideal enthusiast is indeed greatest at first, and he grows reconciled to his situation by degrees; whereas the mere man of the world becomes more dissatisfied and fastidious, and more a misanthrope, the longer he lives.

It is much the same in friendships founded on literary motives. Literary men are not attached to the persons of their friends, but to their minds. They look upon them in the same light as on the books in their library, and read them till they are tired. In casual acquaintances friendship grows out of habit. Mutual kindnesses beget mutual attachment; and numberless little local occurrences in the course of a long intimacy, furnish agreeable topics of recollection, and are almost the only sources of conversation among such persons. They have an immediate pleasure in each other's company. But in literature nothing of this kind takes place. Petty and local circumstances are beneath the dignity of philosophy. Nothing will go down but wit or wisdom. The mind is kept in a perpetual state of violent exertion and expectation, and as there cannot always be a fresh supply of stimulus to excite it, as the same remarks or the same *bon mots* come to be often repeated, or others so like them, that we can easily anticipate the ef-

fect, and are no longer surprised into admiration, we begin to relax in the frequency of our visits, and the heartiness of our welcome. When we are tired of a book we can lay it down, but we cannot so easily put our friends on the shelf when we grow weary of their society. The necessity of keeping up appearances, therefore, adds to the dissatisfaction on both sides, and at length irritates indifference into contempt.

By the help of arts and science, every thing finds an ideal level. Ideas assume the place of realities, and realities sink into nothing. Actual events and objects produce little or no effect on the mind, when it has been long accustomed to draw its strongest interest from constant contemplation. It is necessary that it should, as it were, recollect itself—that it should call out its internal resources, and refine upon its own feelings—place the object at a distance, and embellish it at pleasure. —By degrees all things are made to serve as hints, and occasions for the exercise of intellectual activity. It was on this principle, that the sentimental Frenchman left his Mistress, in order that he might think of her. Cicero ceased to mourn for the loss of his daughter, when he recollected how fine an opportunity it would afford him to write an eulogy to her memory; and Mr Shandy la-

mented over the death of Master Bobby much in the same manner. The insensibility of Authors, &c. to domestic and private calamities, has been often carried to a ludicrous excess, but it is less than it appears to be. The genius of philosophy is not yet *quite* understood. For instance, a man who might seem at the moment undisturbed by the death of a wife or mistress, would perhaps never walk out in a fine evening as long as he lived, without recollecting her; and a disappointment in love that "heaves no sigh, and sheds no tear," may penetrate to the heart, and remain fixed there ever after. *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo.* The blow is only felt by reflection, the rebound is fatal. Our feelings become more ideal; the impression of the moment is less violent, but the effect is more general and permanent. Those whom we love best, take nearly the same rank in our estimation as the heroine of a favourite novel! Indeed, after all, compared with the genuine feelings of nature, "clad in flesh and blood," with real passions and affections, conversant about real objects, the life of a mere man of letters and sentiment appears to be at best but a living death; a dim twilight existence: a sort of wandering about in an Elysian fields of our own making; a refined, spiritual, disembodied state, like that of the ghosts

of Homer's heroes, who, we are told, would gladly have exchanged situations with the meanest peasant upon earth ! *

The moral character of men of letters depends very much upon the same principles. All actions are seen through that general medium which reduces them to individual insignificance. Nothing fills or engrosses the mind—nothing seems of sufficient importance to interfere with our present inclination. Prejudices, as well as attachments, lose their hold upon us, and we palter with our duties as we please. Moral obligations, by being perpetually refined upon, and discussed, lose their force and efficacy, become mere dry distinctions of the understanding,

"Play round the head, but never reach the heart."

Opposite reasons and consequences balance one another, while appetite or interest turns the scale. Hence the severe sarcasm of Rousseau, *Tout*

* Plato's cave, in which he supposes a man to be shut up all his life with his back to the light, and to see nothing of the figures of men, or other objects that pass by, but their shadows on the opposite wall of his cell, so that when he is let out and sees the real figures, he is only dazzled and confounded by them, seems an ingenious satire on the life of a bookworm.

*homme reflechi est mechant*. In fact, it must be confessed, that, as all things produce their extremes, so excessive refinement tends to produce equal grossness. The tenuity of our intellectual desires leaves a void in the mind which requires to be filled up by coarser gratification, and that of the senses is always at hand. They alone always retain their strength. There is not a greater mistake than the common supposition, that intellectual pleasures are capable of endless repetition, and physical ones not so. The one, indeed, may be spread out over a greater surface, they may be dwelt upon and kept in mind at will, and for that very reason they wear out, and pall by comparison, and require perpetual variety. Whereas the physical gratification only occupies us at the moment, is, as it were, absorbed in itself, and forgotten, as soon as it is over, and when it returns, is *as good as new*. No one could ever read the same book for any length of time without being tired of it, but a man is never tired of his meals, however little variety his table may have to boast. This reasoning is equally true of all persons who have given much of their time to study and abstracted speculations. Grossness and sensuality have been remarked with no less triumph in the religious devotee than in the professed philosopher. The perfect joys of

heaven do not satisfy the cravings of nature; and the good Canon in Gil Blas might be opposed with effect to some of the portraits in M. Grimm's Correspondence.

T. T.

## No. XLVI.

### ON COMMON-PLACE CRITICS.

"Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive."

We have already given some account of common-place people; we shall in this number attempt a description of another class of the community, who may be called (by way of distinction) common-place critics. The former are a set of people who have no opinions of their own, and do not pretend to have any; the latter are a set of people who have no opinions of their own, but who affect to have one upon every subject you can mention. The former are a very honest, good sort of people, who are contented to pass for what they are; the latter are a very pragmatical, troublesome sort of people, who would pass for what they are not, and try to put off their com-

mon-place notions in all companies and on all subjects, as something of their own. They are of both species, the grave and the gay; and it is hard to say which is the most tiresome.

A common-place critic has something to say upon every occasion, and he always tells you either what is not true, or what you knew before, or what is not worth knowing. He is a person who thinks by proxy, and talks by rote. He differs with you, not because he thinks you are in the wrong, but because he thinks somebody else will think so. Nay, it would be well if he stopped here; but he will undertake to misrepresent you by anticipation, lest others should misunderstand you, and will set you right, not only in opinions which you have, but in those which you may be supposed to have. Thus, if you say that *Bottom* the weaver is a character that has not had justice done to it, he shakes his head, is afraid you will be thought extravagant, and wonders you should think the *Midsummer Night's Dream* the finest of all Shakspeare's plays. He judges of matters of taste and reasoning as he does of dress and fashion, by the prevailing tone of good company; and you would as soon persuade him to give up any sentiment that is current there, as to wear the hind part of his coat before. By the best com-

pany, of which he is perpetually talking, he means persons who live on their own estates, and other people's ideas. By the opinion of the world, to which he pays and expects you to pay great deference, he means that of a little circle of his own, where he hears and is heard. Again, *good sense* is a phrase constantly in his mouth, by which he does not mean his own sense or that of any body else, but the opinions of a number of persons who have agreed to take their opinions on trust from others. If any one observes that there is something better than common sense, viz. *uncommon* sense, he thinks this a bad joke. If you object to the opinions of the majority, as often arising from ignorance or prejudice, he appeals from them to the sensible and well-informed; and if you say that there may be other persons as sensible and well informed as himself and his friends, he smiles at your presumption. If you attempt to prove any thing to him, it is in vain, for he is not thinking of what you say, but of what will be thought of it. The stronger your reasons, the more incorrigible he thinks you; and looks upon any attempt to expose his gratuitous assumptions as the wandering of a disordered imagination. His notions are like plaster figures cast in a mould, as brittle as they are hollow; but they will break

before you can make them give way. In fact, he is the representative of a large part of the community, the shallow, the vain, and indolent, of those who have time to talk, and are not bound to think: and he considers any deviation from the select forms of common-place, or the accredited language of conventional impertinence, as compromising the authority under which he acts in his diplomatic capacity. It is wonderful how this class of people agree with one another; how they herd together in all their opinions; what a tact they have for folly; what an instinct for absurdity; what a sympathy in sentiment; how they find one another out by infallible signs, like Freemasons! The secret of this unanimity and strict accord is, that not any one of them ever admits any opinion that can cost the least effort of mind in arriving at, or of courage in declaring it. Folly is as consistent with itself as wisdom: there is a certain level of thought and sentiment, which the weakest minds, as well as the strongest, find out as best adapted to them; and you as regularly come to the same conclusions, by looking no farther than the surface, as if you dug to the centre of the earth! You know beforehand what a critic of this class will say on almost every subject the first time he sees you, the next time, the

time after that, and so on to the end of the chapter. The following list of his opinions may be relied on :—It is pretty certain that before you have been in the room with him ten minutes, he will give you to understand that Shakspeare was a great but irregular genius. Again, he thinks it a question whether any one of his plays, if brought out now for the first time, would succeed. He thinks that *Macbeth* would be the most likely, from the music which has been since introduced into it. He has some doubts as to the superiority of the French school over us in tragedy, and observes, that Hume and Adam Smith were both of that opinion. He thinks Milton's pedantry a great blemish in his writings, and that *Paradise Lost* has many prosaic passages in it. He conceives that genius does not always imply taste, and that wit and judgment are very different faculties. He considers Dr Johnson as a great critic and moralist, and that his Dictionary was a work of prodigious erudition and vast industry; but that some of the anecdotes of him in Boswell are trifling. He conceives that Mr Locke was a very original and profound thinker. He thinks Gibbon's style vigorous but florid. He wonders that the author of *Junius* was never found out. He thinks Pope's translation of the *Iliad* an im-

provement on the simplicity of the original, which was necessary to fit it to the taste of modern readers. He thinks there is a great deal of grossness in the old comedies; and that there has been a great improvement in the morals of the higher classes since the reign of Charles II. He thinks the reign of Queen Anne the golden period of our literature; but that, upon the whole, we have no English writer equal to Voltaire. He speaks of Boccacio as a very licentious writer, and thinks the wit in Rabelais quite extravagant, though he never read either of them. He cannot get through Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, and pronounces all allegorical poetry tedious. He prefers Smollett to Fielding, and discovers more knowledge of the world in *Gil Blas* than in *Don Quixote*. Richardson he thinks very minute and tedious. He thinks the French Revolution has done a great deal of harm to the cause of liberty; and blames Buonaparte for being so ambitious. He reads the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*, and thinks as they do. He is shy of having an opinion on a new actor or a new singer; for the public do not always agree with the newspapers. He thinks that the moderns have great advantages over the ancients in many respects. He thinks Jeremy Bentham a greater man than Aristotle. He

can see no reason why artists of the present day should not paint as well as Raphael or Titian. For instance, he thinks there is something very elegant and classical in Mr Westall's drawings. He has no doubt that Sir Joshua Reynolds's Lectures were written by Burke. He considers Horne Tooke's account of the conjunction *That* very ingenious, and holds that no writer can be called elegant who uses the present for the subjunctive mood, who says, *If it is* for *If it be*. He thinks Hogarth a great master of low, comic humour; and Cobbett a coarse, vulgar writer. He often talks of men of liberal education, and men without education, as if that made much difference. He judges of people by their pretensions; and pays attention to their opinions according to their dress and rank in life. If he meets with a fool, he does not find him out; and if he meets with any one wiser than himself, he does not know what to make of him. He thinks that manners are of great consequence to the common intercourse of life. He thinks it difficult to prove the existence of any such thing as original genius, or to fix a general standard of taste. He does not think it possible to define what wit is. In religion, his opinions are liberal. He considers all enthusiasm as a degree of madness, particularly to be guard-

ed against by young minds; and believes that truth lies in the middle, between the extremes of right and wrong. He thinks that the object of poetry is to please; and that astronomy is a very pleasing and useful study. He thinks all this, and a great deal more, that amounts to nothing. We wonder we have remembered one half of it.

"For true no-meaning puzzles more than wit."

Though he has an aversion to all new ideas, he likes all new plans and matters-of-fact; the new Schools for All, the Penitentiary, the new Bedlam, the new Steam-Boats, the Gas-Lights, the new Patent Blacking; every thing of that sort, but the Bible Society. The Society for the Suppression of Vice he thinks a great nuisance, as every honest man must.

In a word, a common-place critic is the pedant of polite conversation. He refers to the opinion of Lord M. or Lady G. with the same air of significance that the learned pedant does to the authority of Cicero or Virgil; retails the wisdom of the day, as the anecdote-monger does the wit; and carries about with him the sentiments of people of a certain respectability in life, as the dancing-master does their air, or their valets their clothes.

Z.

## No. XLVII.

### ON THE CATALOGUE RAISONNE' OF THE BRITISH INSTITUTION.

THE Catalogue Raisonné of the pictures lately exhibited at the British Institution is worthy of notice, both as it is understood to be a declaration of the views of the Royal Academy, and as it contains some erroneous notions with respect to art prevalent in this country. It sets out with the following passages :—

" The first resolution ever framed by the Noblemen and Gentlemen, who met to establish the British Institution, consists of the following sentence, viz.—

" The *object* of the establishment is to facilitate, by a Public Exhibition, the *Sale* of the productions of *British* Artists."

" Now, if the Directors had not felt quite certain as to the result of the present Exhibition, (of the Flemish School,) if they had not perfectly satisfied themselves, that, instead of affording any, even the least means of promoting *unfair and invidious comparisons, it would produce abundant*

*matter for exultation to the living Artist*, can we possibly imagine they, the foster parents of British Art, would ever have suffered such a display to have taken place? Certainly not. If they had not foreseen and fully provided against *all such injurious results*, by the deep and masterly manœuvre alluded to in our former remarks, is it conceivable that the Directors would have acted in a way so counter, so diametrically in opposition to this their fundamental and leading principle? No, No! It is a position which all sense of respect for their consistency will not suffer us to admit, which all feelings of respect for their views forbid us to allow.

"Is it at all to be wondered at, that, in an Exhibition such as this, where nothing *like a patriotic desire* to uphold the Arts of their country can possibly have place in the minds of the Directors, that we should attribute to them the desire of *holding up the old Masters to derision*, inasmuch as good policy would allow? Is it to be wondered at, that, when the Directors have the three-fold prospect, by so doing, of estranging the silly and ignorant Collector from his false and senseless infatuation for *the Black Masters*, of turning his *unjust preference* from Foreign to British Art, and, by affording the living Painters a just encouragement, teach them to feel that becoming confidence

in their powers, which an acknowledgment of their merits entitles them to? Is it to be wondered at, we say, that a little duplicity should have been practised upon this occasion, that some of our ill-advised Collectors and second-rate picture Amateurs should have been singled out as sheep for the sacrifice, and *thus ingeniously* made to pay unwilling homage *to the talents of their countrymen*, through that very medium by which they had previously been induced *to depreciate them?*"—"If, in our wish to please the Directors, we should, without mercy, damn all that deserves damning, and effectually hide our admiration for those pieces and passages which are truly entitled to admiration, it must be placed entirely to that *patriotic sympathy*, which we feel in common with the Directors, of holding up to the public, as the first and great object, THE PATRONAGE OF MODERN ART."

Once more:—

"Who does not perceive (except those whose eyes are not made for seeing more than they are told by others) that Vandyke's portraits, by the brilliant colour of the velvet hangings, are made to look as if they had been newly fetched home from the clear-starcher, with a double portion of blue in their ruffs?—Who does not see, that the

angelic females in Rubens's pictures (particularly in that of the Brazen Serpent) labour under a fit of the bile, twice as severe as they would do, if they were not suffering on red velvet? Who does not see, from the same cause, the Landscapes by the same Master are converted into *brown studies*, and that Rembrandt's ladies and gentlemen of fashion look as if they had been on duty for the whole of last week in the Prince Regent's new sewer? *And who, that has any penetration, that has any gratitude, does not see, in seeing all this, the anxious and benevolent solicitude of the Directors to keep the old Masters under?*"

So, then, this Writer would think it a matter of lively gratitude, and of exultation in the breasts of living Artists, if the Directors, "in their anxious and benevolent desire to keep the old Masters under," had contrived to make Vandyke's pictures look like starch and blue: if they had converted Rubens's pictures into brown studies, or a fit of the bile; or had dragged Rembrandt's through the Prince Regent's new sewers. It would have been a great gain, a great triumph to the Academy and to the Art, to have nothing left of all the pleasure or admiration which those painters had hitherto imparted to the world, to find all the excellences which their works had been supposed

to possess, and all respect for them in the minds of the public destroyed, and converted into sudden loathing and disgust. This is, according to the Catalogue-writer and his friends, a consummation devoutly to be wished for themselves and for the Art. All that is taken from the old Masters is so much added to the moderns; the marring of Art is the making of the Academy. This is the kind of patronage and promotion of the Fine Arts on which he insists as necessary to keep up the reputation of living Artists, and to ensure the sale of their works. There is nothing then in common between the merits of the old Masters and the doubtful claims of the new: *those* are not "the scale by which we can ascend to the love" of these. The excellences of the latter are of their own making and of their own seeing; we must take their own word for them; and not only so, but we must sacrifice all established principles and all established reputation to their upstart pretensions, because, if the old pictures are not totally worthless, their own can be good for nothing. The only chance, therefore, for the moderns, if the Catalogue-writer is to be believed, is to decry all the chef-d'œuvres of the Art, and to hold up all the great names in it to derision. If the public once get to relish the style of the old Masters,

they will no longer tolerate theirs. But so long as the old Masters can be *kept under*, the coloured caricatures of the moderns, like *Mrs Peachum's* coloured handkerchiefs, "will be of sure sale at their warehouse at Redriff." The Catalogue-writer thinks it necessary, in order to raise the Art in this country, to depreciate all Art in all other times and countries. He thinks that the way to excite an enthusiastic admiration of genius in the public is by setting the example of a vulgar and malignant hatred of it in himself. He thinks to inspire a lofty spirit of emulation in the rising generation, by shutting his eyes to the excellences of all the finest models, or by pouring out upon them the overflowings of his gall and envy, to disfigure them in the eyes of others; so that they may see nothing in Raphael, in Titian, in Rubens, in Rembrandt, in Vandyke, in Claude Lorraine, in Leonardo da Vinci, but the low wit and dirty imagination of a paltry scribbler; and come away from the greatest monuments of human capacity, without one feeling of excellence in art, or of beauty or grandeur in nature. Nay, he would persuade us, that this is a great public and private benefit,—*viz.* that there is no such thing as excellence, as genius, as true fame, except what he and his anonymous associates arrogate to themselves,

with all the profit and credit of this degradation of genius, this ruin of Art, this obloquy and contempt heaped on great and unrivalled reputation. He thinks it a likely mode of producing confidence in the existence and value of Art, to prove that there never was any such thing, till the last annual Exhibition of the Royal Academy. He would encourage a disinterested love of Art, and a liberal patronage of it in the great and opulent, by shewing that the living Artists have no regard, but the most sovereign and reckless contempt for it, except as it can be made a temporary stalking-horse to their pride and avarice. The writer may have a *patriotic sympathy* with the sale of modern works of Art, but we do not see what sympathy there can be between the buyers and sellers of these works, except in the love of the Art itself. When we find that these patriotic persons would destroy the Art itself to promote the sale of their pictures, we know what to say to them. We are obliged to the zeal of our critic for having set this matter in so clear a light. The public will feel little sympathy with a body of Artists, who disclaim all sympathy with all other Artists. They will doubt their pretensions to genius who have no feeling of respect for it in others; they will consider them as bastards, not children of the Art, who

would destroy their parent. The public will hardly consent, when the proposition is put to them in this tangible shape, to give up the cause of liberal art and of every liberal sentiment connected with it, and enter, with their eyes open, into a pettifogging cabal to keep the old Masters under, or hold their names up to derision "as good sport," merely to gratify the selfish importunity of a gang of sturdy beggars, who demand public encouragement and support, with a claim of settlement in one hand, and a forged certificate of merit in the other. They can only deserve well of the public by deserving well of the Art. Have we taken these men from the plough, from the counter, from the shop-board, from the tap-room, and the stable-door, to raise them to fortune, to rank, and distinction in life, for the sake of Art, to give them a chance of doing something in Art like what had been done before them, of promoting and refining the public taste, of setting before them the great models of Art, and by a pure love of truth and beauty, and by patient and disinterested aspirations after it, of rising to the highest excellence, and of making themselves "a name great above all names;" and do they now turn round upon us, and because they have neglected these high objects of their true calling for pitiful cabals and fil-

ling their pockets, insist that we shall league with them in crushing the progress of Art, and the respect attached to all its great efforts? There is no other country in the world in which such a piece of impudent quackery could be put forward with impunity, and still less in which it could be put forward in the garb of patriotism. This is the effect of our gross island manners. The Catalogue-writer carries his bear-garden notions of this virtue into the Fine Arts; and would set about destroying Dutch or Italian pictures as he would Dutch shipping or Italian liberty. He goes up to the Rembrandts with the same swaggering Jack-tar airs as he would to a battery of nine-pounders, and snaps his fingers at Raphael as he would at the French. Yet he talks big about the Elgin Marbles, because Mr Payne Knight has made a slip on that subject; though, to be consistent, he ought to be for pounding them in a mortar, should get his friend the Incendiary to set fire to the room building for them at the British Museum, or should get Mr Soane to build it. Patriotism and the Fine Arts have nothing to do with one another—Because patriotism relates to exclusive advantages, and the advantages of the Fine Arts are not exclusive, but communicable. The physical property of one country cannot be shared without

loss by another: The physical force of one country may destroy that of another. These, therefore, are objects of national jealousy and fear of encroachment: for the interests or rights of different countries may be compromised in them. But it is not so in the Fine Arts, which depend upon taste and knowledge. We do not consume the works of Art as articles of food, of clothing, or fuel; but we brood over their *idea*, which is accessible to all, and may be multiplied without end, "with riches fineless." Patriotism is "beastly; subtle as the fox for prey; like warlike as the wolf for what it eats;" but Art is ideal, and therefore liberal. The knowledge or perfection of Art in one age or country, is the cause of its existence or perfection in another. Art is the cause of art in other men. Works of genius done by a Dutchman are the cause of genius in an Englishman—are the cause of taste in an Englishman. The patronage of foreign Art is not to prevent, but to promote Art in England. It does not prevent, but promote taste in England. Art subsists by communication, not by exclusion. The light of art, like that of nature, shines on all alike; and its benefit, like that of the sun, is in being seen and felt. The spirit of art is not the spirit of trade: it is not a question between the grower or consumer of some perish-

able and personal commodity, but it is a question between human genius and human taste, how much the one can produce for the benefit of mankind, and how much the other can enjoy. It is "the link of peaceful commerce 'twixt dividable shores." To take from it this character, is to take from it its best privilege, its humanity. Would any one, except our Catologue-virtuoso, think of destroying or concealing the monuments of Art in past ages, as inconsistent with the progress of taste and civilization in the present? Would any one find fault with the introduction of the works of Raphael into this country, as if their being done by an Italian confined the benefit to a foreign country, when all the benefit, all the great and lasting benefit, (except the purchase-money, the lasting burden of the Catalogue, and the great test of the value of Art in the opinion of the writer,) is instantly communicated to all eyes that behold, and all hearts that can feel them?—It is many years ago since we first saw the prints of the Cartoons hung round the parlour of a little inn on the great north road. We were then very young, and had not been initiated into the principles of taste and refinement of the *Catalogue Raisonné*. We had heard of the fame of the Cartoons, but this was the first time that we had ever been admitted face to face

into the presence of those divine works. "How were we then uplifted!" Prophets and Apostles stood before us, and the Saviour of the Christian world, with his attributes of faith and power; miracles were working on the walls; the hand of Raphael was there, and as his pencil traced the lines, we saw godlike spirits and lofty shapes descend and walk visibly the earth, but as if their thoughts still lifted them above the earth. There was that figure of St Paul, pointing with noble fervour to "temples not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and that finer one of Christ in the boat, whose whole figure seems sustained by meekness and love, and that of the same person, surrounded by the disciples, like a flock of sheep listening to the music of some divine shepherd. We knew not how enough to admire them. If from this transport and delight there arose in our breasts a wish, a deep aspiration of mingled hope and fear, to be able one day to do something like them, that hope has long since vanished, but not with it the love of Art, nor delight in works of Art, nor admiration of the genius which produces them, nor respect for fame which rewards and crowns them! Did we suspect that in this feeling of enthusiasm for the works of Raphael we were deficient in patriotic sympathy, or that, in spreading

it as far as we could, we did an injury to our country or to living Art? The very feeling shewed that there was no such distinction in Art, that her benefits were common, that the power of genius, like the spirit of the world, is everywhere alike present. And would the harpies of criticism try to extinguish this common benefit to their country from a pretended exclusive attachment to their countrymen? Would they rob their country of Raphael to set up the credit of their professional little-goes and E O tables—"cutpurses of the Art, that from the shelf the precious diadem stole, and put it in their pockets?" Tired of exposing such folly, we walked out the other day, and saw a bright cloud resting on the bosom of the blue expanse, which reminded us of what we had seen in some picture in the Louvre. We were suddenly roused from our reverie, by recollecting that till we had answered this catchpenny publication, we had no right, without being liable to a charge of disaffection to our country, or treachery to the Art, to look at nature, or to think of any thing like it in Art, not of British growth and manufacture!

## No. XLVIII.

### SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

THE Catalogue-writer nicknames the Flemish painters "the Black Masters." Either this means that the works of Rubens and Vandyke were originally black pictures, that is, deeply shadowed like those of Rembrandt, which is false, there being no painter who used so little shadow as Vandyke, or so much colour as Rubens; or it must mean that their pictures have turned darker with time, that is, that the art itself is a black art. Is this a triumph for the Academy? Is the defect and decay of Art a subject of exultation to the national genius? Then there is no hope (in this country at least) "that a great man's memory may outlive him half a year!" Do they calculate that the decomposition and gradual disappearance of the standard works of Art will quicken the demand, and facilitate the sale of modern pictures? Have they no hope of immortality themselves, that they are glad to see the inevitable dissolution of all that has long flourished in splendour and in honour? They are pleased to find, that at the end of near two hundred years,

the pictures of Vandyke and Rubens have suffered half as much from time as those of their late President have done in thirty or forty, or their own in the last ten or twelve years. So that the glory of painting is that it does not last for ever: it is this which puts the ancients and the moderns on a level. They hail with undisguised satisfaction the approaches of the slow mouldering hand of time in those works which have lasted longest, not anticipating the premature fate of their own. Such is their short-sighted ambition. A picture is with them like the frame it is in, *as good as new;* and the best picture, that which was last painted. They make the weak side of Art the test of its excellence; and though a modern picture of two years standing is hardly fit to be seen, from the general ignorance of the painter in the mechanical as well as other parts of the Art, yet they are sure at any time to get the start of Rubens or Vandyke, by painting a picture against the day of exhibition. We even question whether they would wish to make their own pictures last if they could, and whether they would not destroy their own works as well as those of others, (like chalk figures on the floors,) to have new ones bespoke the next day. The Flemish pictures then, except those of Rembrandt, were not originally

black; they have not faded in proportion to the length of time they have been painted. All that comes then of the nickname in the Catalogue is, that the pictures of the old Masters have lasted longer than those of the present Members of the Royal Academy, and that the latter, it is to be presumed, do not wish their works to last so long, lest they should be called the *Black Masters*.—With respect to Rembrandt, this epithet may be literally true. But, we would ask, whether the style of *chiaro-scuro*, in which Rembrandt painted, is not one fine view of nature and of art? Whether any other painter carried it to the same height of perfection as he did? Whether any other painter ever joined the same depth of shadow with the same clearness? Whether his tones were not as fine as they were true? Whether a more thorough master of his art ever lived? Whether he deserved for this to be nicknamed by the Writer of the Catalogue, or to have his works "kept under, or himself held up to derision," by the Patrons and Directors of the British Institution for the support and encouragement of the Fine Arts?

But we have heard it said by a disciple and commentator on the Catalogue, (one would think it was hardly possible to descend lower than the writer himself,) that the Directors of the British

Institution assume a consequence to themselves, hostile to the pretensions of modern professors, out of the reputation of the old Masters, whom they affect to look upon with wonder, to worship as something preternatural;—that they consider the bare possession of an old picture as a title to distinction, and the respect paid to Art as the highest pretension of the owner. And is this then a subject of complaint with the Academy, that genius is thus thought of, when its claims are once fully established? That those high qualities, which are beyond the estimate of ignorance and selfishness while living, receive their reward from distant ages? Do they not "feel the future in the instant?" Do they not know, that those qualities which appeal neither to interest nor passion can only find their level with time, and would they annihilate the only pretensions they have? Or have they no conscious affinity with true genius, no claim to the reversion of true fame, no right of succession to this lasting inheritance and final reward of great exertions, which they would therefore destroy, to prevent others from enjoying it? Does all their ambition begin and end in their *patriotic sympathy* with the sale of modern works of Art, and have they no fellow-feeling with the hopes and final destiny of human genius? What

poet ever complained of the respect paid to Homer as derogatory to himself? The envy and opposition to established fame is peculiar to the race of modern Artists; and it is to be hoped it will remain so. It is the fault of their education. It is only by a liberal education that we learn to feel respect for the past, or to take an interest in the future. The knowledge of Artists is too often confined to their art, and their views to their own interest. Even in this they are wrong:—in all respects they are wrong. As a mere matter of trade, the prejudice in favour of old pictures does not prevent but assist the sale of modern works of Art. If there was not a prejudice in favour of old pictures, there could be a prejudice in favour of none, and none would be sold. The professors seem to think, that for every old picture not sold, one of their own would be. This is a false calculation. The contrary is true. For every old picture not sold, one of their own (in proportion) would *not* be sold. The practice of buying pictures is a habit, and it must begin with those pictures which have a character and name, and not with those which have none. "Depend upon it," says Mr Burke in a letter to Barry, "whatever attracts public attention to the Arts, will in the end be for the benefit of the

Artists themselves." Again, do not the Academicians know, that it is a contradiction in terms, that a man should enjoy the advantages of posthumous fame in his lifetime? Most men cease to be of any consequence at all when they are dead; but it is the privilege of the man of genius to survive himself.—But he cannot in the nature of things anticipate this privilege—because in all that appeals to the general intellect of mankind, this appeal is strengthened, as it spreads wider and is acknowledged; because a man cannot unite in himself personally the suffrages of distant ages and nations; because popularity, a newspaper-puff, cannot have the certainty of lasting fame: because it does not carry the same weight of sympathy with it; because it cannot have the same interest, the same refinement or grandeur. If Mr West was equal to Raphael, (which he is not,) if Mr Lawrence was equal to Vandyke or Titian, (which he is not,) if Mr Turner was equal to Claude Lorraine, (which he is not,) if Mr Wilkie was equal to Teniers, (which he is not,) yet they could not, nor ought they to be thought of in the same manner, because there could not be the same proof of it, nor the same confidence in the opinion of a man and his friends, or of any one ge-

neration, as in that of successive generations and the voice of posterity. If it is said that we pass over the faults of the one, and severely scrutinize the excellences of the other; this is also right and necessary, because the one have passed their trial, and the others are upon it. If we forgive or overlook the faults of the ancients, it is because they have dearly earned it at our hands. We ought to have some objects to indulge our enthusiasm upon; and we ought to indulge it upon the highest, and those that are the surest of deserving it. Would one of our Academicians expect us to look at his new house in one of the new squares with the same veneration as at Michael Angelo's, which he built with his own hands, as at Tully's villa, or at the tomb of Virgil? We have no doubt they would, but we cannot. Besides, if it were possible to transfer our old prejudices to new candidates, the way to effect this is not by destroying them. If we have no confidence in all that has gone before us, in what has received the sanction of time and the concurring testimony of disinterested judges, are we to believe all of a sudden that excellence has started up in our own times, because it never existed before: are we to take the Artists' own word for their superiority to their predecessors? There is one other plea

made by the moderns, "that they must live," and the answer to it is, that they do live. An Academician makes his thousand a-year by portrait-painting, and complains that the encouragement given to foreign Art deprives him of the means of subsistence, and prevents him from indulging his genius in works of high history,—"playing at will his virgin fancies wild."

As to the comparative merits of the ancients and the moderns, it does not admit of a question. The odds are too much in favour of the former, because it is likely that more good pictures were painted in the last three hundred than in the last thirty years. Now, the old pictures are the best remaining out of all that period, setting aside those of living Artists. If they are bad, the Art itself is good for nothing; for they are the best that ever were. They are not good, because they are old; but they have become old, because they are good. The question is not between this and any other generation, but between the present and all preceding generations, whom the Catalogue-writer, in his misguided zeal, undertakes to vilify and "to keep under, or hold up to derision." To say that the great names which have come down to us are not worth any thing, is to say that the mountain tops which we see in the farthest hori-

zon are not so high as the intervening objects. If there had been any greater painters than Vandyke or Rubens, or Raphael or Rembrandt, or N. Poussin or Claude Lorraine, we should have heard of them, we should have seen them in the Gallery, and we should have read a patriotic and disinterested account of them in the *Catalogue Raisonné*. Waving the unfair and invidious comparison between all former excellence and the concentrated essence of it in the present age, let us ask who, in the last generation of painters, was equal to the old masters? Was it Highmore, or Hayman, or Hudson, or Kneller? Who was the English Raphael, or Rubens, or Vandyke, of that day, to whom the Catalogue-critic would have extended his patriotic sympathy and damning patronage? Kneller, we have been told, was thought superior to Vandyke by the persons of fashion whom he painted. So St Thomas Apostle seems higher than St Paul's while you are close under it; but the farther off you go, the higher the mighty dome aspires into the skies. What is become of all those great men who flourished in our own time—" like flowers in men's caps, dying or ere they sicken"—Hoppner, Opie, Shee, Loutherbourg, Rigaud, Romney, Barry, the painters of the Shakspeare Gallery? " Gone to the

vault of all the Capulets," and their pictures with them, or before them! Shall we put more faith in their successors? Shall we take the words of their friends for their taste and genius? No, we will stick to what we know will stick to us, the "heir-looms" of the Art, the Black Masters. The picture, for instance, of Charles I. on horseback, which our critic criticises with such heavy drollery, is worth all the pictures that were ever exhibited at the Royal Academy (from the time of Sir Joshua to the present time inclusive) put together. It shews more knowledge and feeling of the Art, more skill and beauty, more sense of what it is in objects that gives pleasure to the eye, with more power to communicate this pleasure to the world. If either this single picture, or all the lumber that has ever appeared at the Academy, were to be destroyed, there could not be a question which, with any Artist, or with any judge or lover of Art. So stands the account between ancient and modern Art! By this we may judge of all the rest. The Catalogue-writer makes some strictures in the second part on the Waterloo Exhibition, which he does not think what it ought to be. We wonder he had another word to say on modern Art after seeing it. He

should instantly have taken the resolution of *Iago*, "From this time forth I never will speak more."

The writer of the *Catalogue Raisonné* has fallen foul of two things which ought to be sacred to Artists and loversof Art—Genius and Fame. If they are not sacred to them, we do not know to whom they will be sacred. A work such as the present shews that the person who could write it must either have no knowledge or taste for Art, or must be actuated by a feeling of unaccountable malignity towards it. It shews that any body of men by whom it could be set on foot or encouraged are not an Academy of Art. It shews that a country in which such a publication could make its appearance, is not the country of the Fine Arts. Does the writer think to prove the genius of his countrymen for Art by proclaiming their utter insensibility and flagitious contempt for all beauty and excellence in the art, except in their own works? No; it is very true that the English are a shopkeeping nation; and the *Catalogue Raisonné* is the proof of it.

Finally, the works of the moderns are not, like those of the Old Masters, a second nature. Oh Art, true likeness of nature, "balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast," of what would our Catalogue-mongers

deprive us in depriving us of thee and of thy glories, of the lasting works of the great Painters, and of their names no less magnificent, grateful to our hearts as the sound of celestial harmony from other spheres, waking around us (whether heard or not) from youth to age, the stay, the guide and anchor of our purest thoughts; whom, having once seen, we always remember, and who teach us to see all things through them; without whom life would be to begin again, and the earth barren; of Raphael, who lifted the human form half way to Heaven; of Titian, who painted the mind in the face, and unfolded the soul of things to the eye; of Rubens, around whose pencil gorgeous shapes thronged numberless, startling us by the novel accidents of form and colour, putting the spirit of motion into the universe, and weaving a gay fantastic round and Bacchanalian dance with nature; of thee, too, Rembrandt, who didst redeem one half of nature from obloquy, from the nickname in the Catalogue, "smoothing the raven down of darkness till it smiled," and tinging it with a light like streaks of burnished ore; of these, and more of whom the world is scarce worthy; and what would they give us in return? Nothing.

W. H.

## No. XLIX.

### ON POETICAL VERSATILITY.

THE spirit of poetry is in itself favourable to humanity and liberty: but, we suspect, not when its aid is most wanted. The spirit of poetry is not the spirit of mortification or of martyrdom. Poetry dwells in a perpetual Utopia of its own, and is, for that reason, very ill calculated to make a Paradise upon earth, by encountering the shocks and disappointments of the world. Poetry, like law, is a fiction; only a more agreeable one. It does not create difficulties where they do not exist; but contrives to get rid of them, whether they exist or not. It is not entangled in cobwebs of its own making, but soars above all obstacles. It cannot be "constrained by mastery." It has the range of the universe; it traverses the empyreum, and looks down on nature from a higher sphere. When it lights upon the earth, it loses some of its dignity and its use. Its strength is in its wings; its element the air. Standing on its feet, jostling with the crowd, it is liable to be overthrown, trampled on, and defaced; for its wings are of a dazzling brightness, "heaven's

own tinct," and the least soil upon them shews to disadvantage. Sullied, degraded as we have seen it, we shall not insult over it, but leave it to Time to take out the stains, seeing it is a thing immortal as itself. "Being so majestical, we should do it wrong to offer it the shew of violence." But the best things, in their abuse, often become the worst; and so it is with poetry, when it is diverted from its proper end. Poets live in an ideal world, where they make every thing out according to their wishes and fancies. They either find things delightful, or make them so. They feign the beautiful and grand out of their own minds, and imagine all things to be, not what they are, but what they ought to be. They are naturally inventors, creators of truth, of love, and beauty: and while they speak to us from the sacred shrine of their own hearts, while they pour out the pure treasures of thought to the world, they cannot be too much admired and applauded: but when, forgetting their high calling, and becoming tools and puppets in the hands of power, they would pass off the gewgaws of corruption and love-tokens of self-interest as the gifts of the Muse, they cannot be too much despised and shunned. We do not like novels founded on facts, nor do we like poets turned courtiers. Poets, it has been said, suc-

ceed best in fiction: and they should for the most part stick to it. Invention, not upon an imaginary subject, is a lie: the varnishing over the vices or deformity of actual objects is hypocrisy. Players leave their finery at the stage-door, or they would be hooted; poets come out into the world with all their bravery on, and yet they would pass for *bona fide* persons. They lend the colours of fancy to whatever they see: whatever they touch becomes gold, though it were lead. With them every Joan is a lady; and kings and queens are human. Matters of fact they embellish at their will, and reason is the play-thing of their passions, their caprice, or interest. There is no practice so base of which they will not become the panders: no sophistry of which their understanding may not be made the voluntary dupe. Their only object is to please their fancy. Their souls are effeminate, half man and half woman:—they want fortitude, and are without principle. If things do not turn out according to their wishes, they will make their wishes turn round to things. They can easily overlook whatever they do not like, and make an idol of any thing they please. The object of poetry is to please: this art naturally gives pleasure, and excites admiration. Poets, therefore, cannot do well without sympathy and

flattery. It is accordingly very much against the grain that they remain long on the unpopular side of the question. They do not like to be shut out when laurels are to be given away at Court—or places under Government to be disposed of, in romantic situations in the country. They are happy to be reconciled on the first opportunity to prince and people, and to exchange their principles for a pension. They have not always strength of mind to think for themselves; nor courage enough to bear the unjust stigma of the opinions they have taken upon trust from others. Truth alone does not satisfy their pampered appetites, without the sauce of praise. To prefer truth to all other things, it requires that the mind should have been at some pains in finding it out, and that we should feel a severe delight in the contemplation of truth, seen by its own clear light, and not as it is reflected in the admiring eyes of the world. A philosopher may perhaps make a shift to be contented with the sober draughts of reason: a poet must have the applause of the world to intoxicate him. Milton was, however, a poet, and an honest man; he was Cromwell's secretary.

T. T.

## No. L.

### ON ACTORS AND ACTING.

PLAYERS are "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time;" the motley representatives of human nature. They are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream; a studied madness. The height of their ambition is to be *beside themselves*. To-day kings, to-morrow beggars, it is only when they are themselves, that they are nothing. Made up of mimic laughter and tears, passing from the extremes of joy or woe at the prompter's call, they wear the livery of other men's fortunes; their very thoughts are not their own. They are, as it were, train-bearers in the pageant of life, and hold a glass up to humanity, frailer than itself. We see ourselves at second-hand in them; they shew us all that we are, all that we wish to be, and all that we dread to be. The stage is an epitome, a bettered likeness of the world, with the dull part left out: and, indeed, with this omission, it is nearly big enough to hold all the rest. What brings the resemblance nearer is, that, as *they* imitate us, we, in our turn, imitate them. How many fine gentlemen do we

owe to the stage? How many romantic lovers are mere Romeos in masquerade? How many soft bosoms have heaved with Juliet's sighs? They teach us when to laugh and when to weep, when to love and when to hate, upon principle and with a good grace! Wherever there is a play-house, the world will go on not amiss. The stage not only refines the manners, but it is the best teacher of morals, for it is the truest and most intelligible picture of life. It stamps the image of virtue on the mind by first softening the rude materials of which it is composed, by a sense of pleasure. It regulates the passions by giving a loose to the imagination. It points out the selfish and depraved to our detestation; the amiable and generous to our admiration; and if it clothes the more seductive vices with the borrowed graces of wit and fancy, even those graces operate as a diversion to the coarser poison of experience and bad example, and often prevent or carry off the infection by inoculating the mind with a certain taste and elegance. To shew how little we agree with the common declamations against the immoral tendency of the stage on this score, we will hazard a conjecture, that the acting of the Beggar's Opera a certain number of nights every year since it was first brought out, has done more towards putting down

the practice of highway robbery, than all the gibbets that ever were erected. A person, after seeing this piece, is too deeply imbued with a sense of humanity, is in too good humour with himself and the rest of the world, to set about cutting throats or rifling pockets. Whatever makes a jest of vice, leaves it too much a matter of indifference for any one in his senses to rush desperately on his ruin for its sake. We suspect that just the contrary effect must be produced by the representation of George Barnwell, which is too much in the style of the Ordinary's sermon to meet with any better success. The mind, in such cases, instead of being deterred by the alarming consequences held out to it, revolts against the denunciation of them as an insult offered to its free-will, and, in a spirit of defiance, returns a practical answer to them, by daring the worst that can happen. The most striking lesson ever read to levity and licentiousness, is in the last act of the Inconstant, where young Mirabel is preserved by the fidelity of his mistress, Orinda, in the disguise of a page, from the hands of assassins, into whose power he has been allured by the temptations of vice and beauty. There never was a rake who did not become in imagination a reformed man,

during the representation of the last trying scenes of this admirable comedy.

If the stage is useful as a school of instruction, it is no less so as a source of amusement. It is the source of the greatest enjoyment at the time, and a never-failing fund of agreeable reflection afterwards. The merits of a new play, or of a new actor, are always among the first topics of polite conversation. One way in which public exhibitions contribute to refine and humanise mankind, is by supplying them with ideas and subjects of conversation and interest in common. The progress of civilization is in proportion to the number of common-places current in society. For instance, if we meet with a stranger at an inn or in a stage-coach, who knows nothing but his own affairs, his shop, his customers, his farm, his pigs, his poultry, we can carry on no conversation with him on these local and personal matters: the only way is to let him have all the talk to himself. But if he has fortunately ever seen Mr Liston act, this is an immediate topic of mutual conversation, and we agree together the rest of the evening in discussing the merits of that inimitable actor, with the same satisfaction as in talking over the affairs of the most intimate friend.

If the stage thus introduces us familiarly to our contemporaries, it also brings us acquainted with former times. It is an interesting revival of past ages, manners, opinions, dresses, persons, and actions,—whether it carries us back to the wars of York and Lancaster, or half way back to the heroic times of Greece and Rome, in some translation from the French, or quite back to the age of Charles II. in the scenes of Congreve and of Etherege, (the gay Sir George!)—happy age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives, when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no farther than the choice of a sword-knot, or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies in giddy mazes through the walks of St James's Park!

A good company of comedians, a Theatre-Royal judiciously managed, is your true Herald's College; the only Antiquarian Society, that is worth a rush. It is for this reason that there is such an air of romance about players, and that it is pleasanter to see them, even in their own persons, than any of the three learned professions. We feel more respect for John Kemble in a plain

coat, than for the Lord Chancellor on the woolsack. He is surrounded, to our eyes, with a greater number of imposing recollections: he is a more reverend piece of formality; a more complicated tissue of costume. We do not know whether to look upon this accomplished actor as Pierre or King John or Coriolanus or Cato or Leontes or the Stranger. But we see in him a stately hieroglyphic of humanity; a living monument of departed greatness; a sombre comment on the rise and fall of kings. We look after him till he is out of sight, as we listen to a story of one of Ossian's heroes, to "a tale of other times!"

One of the most affecting things we know is to see a favourite actor take leave of the stage. We were present not long ago when Mr Bannister quitted it. We do not wonder that his feelings were overpowered on the occasion: ours were nearly so too. We remembered him in the first heyday of our youthful spirits, in the *Prize*, in which he played so delightfully with that fine old croaker Suett, and Madame Storace,—in the farce of *My Grandmother*, in the *Son-in-law*, in *Autolycus*, and in *Scrub*, in which our satisfaction was at its height. At that time, King and Parsons, and Dodd, and Quick, and Edwin were in the full vigour of their reputation, who

are now all gone. We still feel the vivid delight with which we used to see their names in the play-bills, as we went along to the Theatre. Bannister was one of the last of these that remained; and we parted with him as we should with one of our oldest and best friends. The most pleasant feature in the profession of a player, and which, indeed, is peculiar to it, is that we not only admire the talents of those who adorn it, but we contract a personal intimacy with them. There is no class of society whom so many persons regard with affection as actors. We greet them on the stage; we like to meet them in the streets; they almost always recal to us pleasant associations; and we feel our gratitude excited, without the uneasiness of a sense of obligation. The very gaiety and popularity, however, which surround the life of a favourite performer, make the retiring from it a very serious business. It glances a mortifying reflection on the shortness of human life, and the vanity of human pleasures. Something reminds us, that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

## No. LI.

### ON THE SAME.

It has been considered as the misfortune of first-rate talents for the stage, that they leave no record behind them except that of vague rumour, and that the genius of a great actor perishes with him, "leaving the world no copy." This is a misfortune, or at least an unpleasant circumstance, to actors; but it is, perhaps, an advantage to the stage. It leaves an opening to originality. The stage is always beginning anew;—the candidates for theatrical reputation are always setting out afresh, unencumbered by the affectation of the faults or excellences of their predecessors. In this respect, we should imagine that the average quantity of dramatic talent remains more nearly the same than that in any other walk of art. In no other instance do the complaints of the degeneracy of the moderns seem so unfounded as in this; and Colley Cibber's account of the regular decline of the stage, from the time of Shakspeare to that of Charles II., and from the time of Charles II. to the beginning of George II. appears quite ridiculous. The stage is a place where genius is sure to come upon its legs, in a genera-

tion or two at farthest. In the other arts, (as painting and poetry,) it has been contended that what has been well done already, by giving rise to endless vapid imitations, is an obstacle to what might be done well hereafter: that the models or *chef d'œuvres* of art, where they are accumulated, choke up the path to excellence; and that the works of genius, where they can be rendered permanent and handed down from age to age, not only prevent, but render superfluous, future productions of the same kind. We have not, neither do we want, two Shakspeares, two Miltons, two Raphaels, any more than we require two suns in the same sphere. Even Miss O'Neill stands a little in the way of our recollections of Mrs Siddons. But Mr Kean is an excellent substitute for the memory of Garrick, whom we never saw. When an author dies, it is no matter, for his works remain. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up. Who does not go to see Kean? Who, if Garrick were alive, would go to see him? At least, one or the other must have quitted the stage.—We have seen what a ferment has been excited among our living artists by the exhibition of the works of the old Masters at the British Gallery. What would the actors say to it, if, by

any spell or power of necromancy, all the celebrated actors, for the last hundred years, could be made to appear again on the boards of Covent-Garden and Drury-Lane, for the last time, in all their most brilliant parts? What a rich treat to the town, what a feast for the critics, to go and see Betterton, and Booth, and Wilks, and Sandford, and Nokes, and Leigh, and Penkethman, and Bullock, and Estcourt, and Dogget, and Mrs Barry, and Mrs Montfort, and Mrs Oldfield, and Mrs Bracegirdle, and Mrs Cibber, and Cibber himself, the prince of coxcombs, and Macklin, and Quin, and Rich, and Mrs Clive, and Mrs Pritchard, and Mrs Abington, and Weston, and Shuter, and Garrick, and all the rest of those, who "gladdened life, and whose deaths eclipsed the gaiety of nations!" We should certainly be there. We should buy a ticket for the season. We should enjoy *our hundred days* again. We should not miss a single night. We would not, for a great deal, be absent from Betterton's Hamlet or his Brutus, or from Booth's Cato, as it was first acted to the contending applause of Whigs and Tories. We should be in the first row when Mrs Barry (who was kept by Lord Rochester, and with whom Otway was in love) played Monimia or Belvidera; and we sup-

pose we should go to see Mrs Bracegirdle (with whom all the world was in love) in all her parts. We should then know exactly whether Penkethman's manner of picking a chicken, and Bullock's mode of devouring asparagus, answered to the ingenious account of them in the Tatler; and whether Dogget was equal to Dowton—Whether Mrs Montfort * or Mrs Abington was the finest lady—

* The following lively description of this actress is given by Cibber in his Apology :—

" What found most employment for her whole various excellence at once, was the part of Melantha, in Marriage-a-la-Mode. Melantha is as finished an impertinent as ever fluttered in a drawing-room, and seems to contain the most complete system of female foppery that could possibly be crowded into the tortured form of a fine lady. Her language, dress, motion, manners, soul, and body, are in a continual hurry to be something more than is necessary or commendable. And, though I doubt it will be a vain labour to offer you a just likeness of Mrs Montfort's action, yet the fantastic impression is still so strong in my memory, that I cannot help saying something, though fantastically, about it. The first ridiculous airs that break from her are upon a gallant never seen before, who delivers her a letter from her father, recommending him to her good graces, as an honourable lover. Here now, one would think she might naturally shew a little of the sex's decent reserve, though never so slightly covered! No, Sir; not a tittle of it; modesty is the virtue of a poor-soul'd country gentlewoman: she is too much a court-lady, to be under so vulgar a con-

Whether Wilks or Cibber was the best Sir Harry Wildair—Whether Macklin was really "the Jew that Shakspeare drew," and whether Garrick was, upon the whole, so great an actor as the world have made him out! Many people have a strong desire to pry into the secrets of futurity: for our own parts, we should be satisfied if we had the power to recal the dead, and live the past over again, as often as we pleased!—Players, after all, have little reason to complain of their hard-

fusion: she reads the letter, therefore, with a careless, dropping lip, and an erected brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her father's commands, by making a complete conquest of him at once: and that the letter might not embarrass her attack, crack! she crumbles it at once into her palm, and pours upon him her whole artillery of airs, eyes, and motion; down goes her dainty, diving body to the ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious load of her own attractions; then launches into a flood of fine language and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water; and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit, that she will not give her lover leave to praise it: Silent assenting bows, and vain endeavours to speak, are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which at last he is relieved from, by her engagement to half a score visits, which she *swims* from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling."
*The Life of Colley Cibber*, p. 138.

earned, short-lived popularity. One thunder of applause from pit, boxes, and gallery, is equal to a whole immortality of posthumous fame: and when we hear an actor, whose modesty is equal to his merit, declare, that he would like to see a dog wag his tail in approbation, what must he feel when he sets the whole house in a roar! Besides, Fame, as if their reputation had been entrusted to her alone, has been particularly careful of the renown of her theatrical favourites: she forgets one by one, and year by year, those who have been great lawyers, great statesmen, and great warriors in their day; but the name of Garrick still survives with the works of Reynolds and of Johnson.

Actors have been accused, as a profession, of being extravagant and dissipated. While they are said to be so as a piece of common cant, they are likely to continue so. But there is a sentence in Shakspeare which should be stuck as a label in the mouths of our beadles and whippers-in of morality. "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not: and our vices would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues." With respect to the extravagance of actors, as a traditional character, it is not to be

wondered at. They live from hand to mouth: they plunge from want into luxury; they have no means of making money *breed*, and all professions that do not live by turning money into money, or have not a certainty of accumulating it in the end by parsimony, spend it. Uncertain of the future, they make sure of the present moment. This is not unwise. Chilled with poverty, steeped in contempt, they sometimes pass into the sunshine of fortune, and are lifted to the very pinnacle of public favour; yet even there cannot calculate on the continuance of success; but are, "like the giddy sailor on the mast, ready with every blast to topple down into the fatal bowels of the deep!" Besides, if the young enthusiast, who is smitten with the stage, and with the public as a mistress, were naturally a close *hunks*, he would become or remain a city clerk, instead of turning player. Again, with respect to the habit of convivial indulgence, an actor, to be a good one, must have a great spirit of enjoyment in himself, strong impulses, strong passions, and a strong sense of pleasure: for it is his business to imitate the passions, and to communicate pleasure to others. A man of genius is not a machine. The neglected actor may be excused if he drinks oblivion of his disappointments; the successful one if he quaffs the ap-

plause of the world, and enjoys the friendship of those who are the friends of the favourites of fortune, in draughts of nectar. There is no path so steep as that of fame: no labour so hard as the pursuit of excellence. The intellectual excitement, inseparable from those professions which call forth all our sensibility to pleasure and pain, requires some corresponding physical excitement to support our failure, and not a little to allay the ferment of the spirits attendant on success. If there is any tendency to dissipation beyond this in the profession of a player, it is owing to the prejudices entertained against them, to that spirit of bigotry which in a neighbouring country would deny actors Christian burial after their death, and to that cant of criticism, which, in our own, slurs over their characters, while living, with a half-witted jest.

A London engagement is generally considered by actors as the *ne plus ultra* of their ambition, as "a consummation devoutly to be wished," as the great prize in the lottery of their professional life. But this appears to us, who are not in the secret, to be rather the prose termination of their adventurous career: it is the provincial commencement that is the poetical and truly enviable part of it. After that, they have comparatively little to hope

or fear. " The wine of life is drunk, and but the lees remain." In London, they become gentlemen, and the King's servants: but it is the romantic mixture of the hero and the vagabond that constitutes the essence of the player's life. It is the transition from their real to their assumed characters, from the contempt of the world to the applause of the multitude, that gives its zest to the latter, and raises them as much above common humanity at night, as in the day-time they are depressed below it. " Hurried from fierce extremes, by contrast made more fierce,"—it is rags and a flock-bed which give their splendour to a plume of feathers and a throne. We should suppose, that if the most admired actor on the London stage were brought to confession on this point, he would acknowledge that all the applause he had received from " brilliant and overflowing audiences," was nothing to the light-headed intoxication of unlooked-for success in a barn. In town, actors are criticised: in country-places, they are wondered at, or hooted at: it is of little consequence which, so that the interval is not too long between. For ourselves, we own that the description of the strolling-player in Gil Blas, soaking his dry crusts in the well by the road-side, presents to us a perfect picture of human felicity.

W. H.

## No. LII.

### WHY THE ARTS ARE NOT PROGRESSIVE?—A FRAGMENT.

It is often made a subject of complaint and surprise, that the arts in this country, and in modern times, have not kept pace with the general progress of society and civilization in other respects, and it has been proposed to remedy the deficiency by more carefully availing ourselves of the advantages which time and circumstances have placed within our reach, but which we have hitherto neglected, the study of the antique, the formation of academies, and the distribution of prizes.

First, the complaint itself, that the arts do not attain that progressive degree of perfection which might reasonably be expected from them, proceeds on a false notion, for the analogy appealed to in support of the regular advances of art to higher degrees of excellence, totally fails; it applies to science, not to art.—Secondly, the expedients proposed to remedy the evil by adventitious means are only calculated to confirm it. The arts hold immediate communication with nature, and are only derived from that source. When that origi-

nal impulse no longer exists, when the inspiration of genius is fled, all the attempts to recal it are no better than the tricks of galvanism to restore the dead to life. The arts may be said to resemble Antæus in his struggle with Hercules, who was strangled when he was raised above the ground, and only revived and recovered his strength when he touched his mother earth.

Nothing is more contrary to the fact than the supposition that in what we understand by the *fine arts*, as painting and poetry, relative perfection is only the result of repeated efforts, and that what has been once well done constantly leads to something better. What is mechanical, reducible to rule, or capable of demonstration, is progressive, and admits of gradual improvement: what is not mechanical or definite, but depends on genius, taste, and feeling, very soon becomes stationary, or retrograde, and loses more than it gains by transfusion. The contrary opinion is, indeed, a common error, which has grown up, like many others, from transferring an analogy of one kind to something quite distinct, without thinking of the difference in the nature of the things, or attending to the difference of the results. For most persons, finding what wonderful advances have been made in biblical criticism, in chemistry, in

mechanics, in geometry, astronomy, &c. *i. e.* in things depending on mere inquiry and experiment, or on absolute demonstration, have been led hastily to conclude, that there was a general tendency in the efforts of the human intellect to improve by repetition, and in all other arts and institutions to grow perfect and mature by time. We look back upon the theological creed of our ancestors, and their discoveries in natural philosophy, with a smile of pity; science, and the arts connected with it, have all had their infancy, their youth, and manhood, and seem to have in them no principle of limitation or decay; and, inquiring no farther about the matter, we infer, in the height of our self-congratulation, and in the intoxication of our pride, that the same progress has been, and will continue to be, made in all other things which are the work of man. The fact, however, stares us so plainly in the face, that one would think the smallest reflection must suggest the truth, and overturn our sanguine theories. The greatest poets, the ablest orators, the best painters, and the finest sculptors that the world ever saw, appeared soon after the birth of these arts, and lived in a state of society, which was, in other respects, comparatively barbarous. Those arts, which depend on individual genius and incommunicable

power, have always leaped at once from infancy to manhood, from the first rude dawn of invention to their meridian height and dazzling lustre, and have in general declined ever after. This is the peculiar distinction and privilege of each, of science and of art; of the one, never to attain its utmost summit of perfection, and of the other, to arrive at it almost at once. Homer, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Dante, and Ariosto, (Milton alone was of a later age, and not the worse for it,) Raphael, Titian, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Cervantes, and Boccacio—all lived near the beginning of their arts—perfected, and all but created them. These giant sons of genius stand, indeed, upon the earth, but they tower above their fellows, and the long line of their successors does not interpose any thing to obstruct their view, or lessen their brightness. In strength and stature they are unrivalled, in grace and beauty they have never been surpassed. In after-ages, and more refined periods, (as they are called,) great men have arisen one by one, as it were by throes and at intervals: though in general the best of these cultivated and artificial minds were of an inferior order, as Tasso and Pope among poets, Guido and Vandyke among painters. But in the earliest stages of the arts, when the first mechanical diffi-

culties had been got over, and the language as it were acquired, they rose by clusters and in constellations, never to rise again.

The arts of painting and poetry are conversant with the world of thought within us, and with the world of sense without us—with what we know, and see, and feel intimately. They flow from the sacred shrine of our own breasts, and are kindled at the living lamp of nature. The pulse of the passions assuredly beat as high, the depths and soundings of the human heart were as well understood three thousand years ago, as they are at present; the face of nature, and "the human face divine," shone as bright then as they have ever done. It is this light, reflected by true genius on art, that marks out its path before it, and sheds a glory round the Muses' feet, like that which "circled Una's angel face,

"And made a sunshine in the shady place."

Nature is the soul of art. There is a strength in the imagination that reposes entirely on nature, which nothing else can supply. There is in the old poets and painters a vigour and grasp of mind, a full possession of their subject, a confidence and firm faith, a sublime simplicity, an elevation of thought, proportioned to their depth of

feeling, an increasing force and impetus, which moves, penetrates, and kindles all that comes in contact with it, which seems not theirs, but given to them. It is this reliance on the power of nature which has produced those masterpieces by the Prince of Painters, in which expression is all in all, where one spirit—that of truth—pervades every part, brings down heaven to earth, mingles cardinals and popes with angels and apostles, and yet blends and harmonizes the whole by the true touches and intense feeling of what is beautiful and grand in nature. It was the same trust in nature that enabled Chaucer to describe the patient sorrow of Griselda; or the delight of that young beauty, in the Flower and the Leaf, shrouded in her bower, and listening, in the morning of the year, to the singing of the nightingale, while her joy rises with the rising song, and gushes out afresh at every pause, and is borne along with the full tide of pleasure, and still increases and repeats and prolongs itself, and knows no ebb. It is thus that Boccacio, in the divine story of the Hawk, has represented Frederigo Alberigi steadily contemplating his favourite Falcon, (the wreck and remnant of his fortune,) and glad to see how fat and fair a bird she is, thinking what a dainty repast she would make for his Mistress, who had

deigned to visit him in his low cell. So Isabella mourns over her pot of Basile, and never asks for any thing but that. So Lear calls out for his poor fool, and invokes the heavens, for they are old like him. So Titian impressed on the countenance of that young Neapolitan nobleman in the Louvre, a look that never passed away. So Nicolas Poussin describes some shepherds wandering out in a morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription, "I ALSO WAS AN ARCADIAN."

In general, it must happen in the first stages of the Arts, that as none but those who had a natural genius for them would attempt to practise them, so none but those who had a natural taste for them would pretend to judge of or criticise them. This must be an incalculable advantage to the man of true genius, for it is no other than the privilege of being tried by his peers. In an age when connoisseurship had not become a fashion; when religion, war, and intrigue, occupied the time and thoughts of the great, only those minds of superior refinement would be led to notice the works of art, who had a real sense of their excellence; and in giving way to the powerful bent of his own genius, the painter was most likely to consult the taste of his judges. He had not to

deal with pretenders to taste, through vanity, affectation, and idleness. He had to appeal to the higher faculties of the soul; to that deep and innate sensibility to truth and beauty, which required only a proper object to have its enthusiasm excited; and to that independent strength of mind, which, in the midst of ignorance and barbarism, hailed and fostered genius, wherever it met with it. Titian was patronised by Charles V. Count Castiglione was the friend of Raphael. These were true patrons, and true critics; and as there were no others, (for the world, in general, merely looked on and wondered,) there can be little doubt, that such a period of dearth of factitious patronage would be the most favourable to the full developement of the greatest talents, and the attainment of the highest excellence.

The diffusion of taste is not the same thing as the improvement of taste; but it is only the former of these objects that is promoted by public institutions and other artificial means. The number of candidates for fame, and of pretenders to criticism, is thus increased beyond all proportion, while the quantity of genius and feeling remains the same; with this difference, that the man of genius is lost in the crowd of competitors, who would never have become such but from encou-

ragement and example; and that the opinion of those few persons whom nature intended for judges, is drowned in the noisy suffrages of shallow smatterers in taste. The principle of universal suffrage, however applicable to matters of government, which concern the common feelings and common interests of society, is by no means applicable to matters of taste, which can only be decided upon by the most refined understandings. The highest efforts of genius, in every walk of art, can never be properly understood by the generality of mankind: There are numberless beauties and truths which lie far beyond their comprehension. It is only as refinement and sublimity are blended with other qualities of a more obvious and grosser nature, that they pass current with the world. Taste is the highest degree of sensibility, or the impression made on the most cultivated and sensible minds, as genius is the result of the highest powers both of feeling and invention. It may be objected, that the public taste is capable of gradual improvement, because, in the end, the public do justice to works of the greatest merit. This is a mistake. The reputation ultimately, and often slowly affixed to works of genius, is stamped upon them by authority, not by popular consent or the common sense of

the world. We imagine that the admiration of the works of celebrated men has become common, because the admiration of their names has become so. But does not every ignorant connoisseur pretend the same veneration, and talk with the same vapid assurance of Michael Angelo, though he has never seen even a copy of any of his pictures, as if he had studied them accurately,—merely because Sir Joshua Reynolds has praised him? Is Milton more popular now than when the Paradise Lost was first published? Or does he not rather owe his reputation to the judgment of a few persons in every successive period, accumulating in his favour, and overpowering by its weight the public indifference? Why is Shakspeare popular? Not from his refinement of character or sentiment, so much as from his power of telling a story,—the variety and invention,—the tragic catastrophe and broad farce of his plays? Spenser is not yet understood. Does not Boccacio pass to this day for a writer of ribaldry, because his jests and lascivious tales were all that caught the vulgar ear, while the story of the Falcon is forgotten! W. H.

THE END.

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