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COMMON-SENSE AND THE MUSES

COMMON-SENSE

AND

THE MUSES

BY

DAVID GRAHAM

OF GRAY'S INN, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

AUTHOR OF
'THE GRAMMAR OF PHILOSOPHY,' 'RELIGION AND INTELLECT'
ETC.

"Hail Poesie! thou nymph reserved!
In chase o' thee, what crowds have swerved
Frae common sense, or sunk ennerved
'Mang heaps o' clavers!"
—BURNS

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PREFACE.

THE general purpose of my former book, 'The Grammar of Philosophy,' was to show that in the Human Mind we possess a sound basis of Knowledge; that our faculties, faithfully used, are trustworthy and adequate to execute their legitimate work; that the special task of the Philosopher is to collate and interpret the reports of his faculties to the best of his ability; and that a consistent and satisfactory theory of Knowledge and of Life can only be found in, established on, and illuminated by, the dictates and the sanctions of the Common Sense.

My other book, 'Religion and Intellect,' was a Theological development of 'The Grammar of Philosophy'; whilst the present work, 'Commonsense and the Muses,' is an application of the same scientific method to the problems of esthetics and literary criticism.

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and humour—except with clodpates. (15-21*a*) Some instances. (22) A Carlylean error touching the first impressions made on us by great works. All the great writers are lucid for the most part, and most lucid in their best moments. (22*a*) The poet must be able (1) to feel deeply, and (2) to communicate his emotions. (23) We rejoice in the light of an author, never in his darkness. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths" is the highest praise bestowed on what is deemed the "Divine Word." Even Prophets and Apostles degenerate into nuisances when they write or speak obscurely. Tremendous tragedies can be told in a few words—*e.g.*, "Fair Ellen of Kirkconnell Lea." (24) And the injunction *Festina ad eventum* should not be neglected. Thousands of books, even good ones, are about twenty times too long.

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SINCERITY IN LIFE AND LITERATURE . . . 269-315

(1) Sincerity in general. (2) This great virtue is sometimes credited to fanatics, which is a great evil. (3) Sincerity must be rooted in the intellect, not in the passions. (4) The great evil of conventionality in Theology. Thousands of men engaged constantly in teaching only what they themselves have been taught, not what they in sincerity of Soul have themselves found out to be true—*e.g.*, (5) the dogma of human worthlessness and of hereditary damnation. (6) No man should dare to teach any doctrine which he does not hold by heart-conviction. (7) Ludicrous situations created by clergymen insincere in their Theology. Priests and people bludgeoned into stupidity by foolish dogmas. (8-9) Squalid socialistic wretches credited with sincerity: by such usage the moral vocabulary is debased. Mr MacCarthy's account of the "patriot" Mitchell, who, crossing from Ireland to Virginia, became an "ardent advocate" of slavery. (10) And Literature is of no account unless it be steeped in sincerity. (11) The Literature of Volition and the Literature of Spontaneity. (12) A criterion of literary fitness. Do you sincerely think that what you say is worth noting and remembering? (13) Some able men on the subject—Montaigne, Milton, Swift, Johnson, Goethe, Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin. (14) Mediocrity in the

arts is not permissible. (15) No utterance but that of strong sincerity is worth attention. (16) The insincere in Literature are mere Simoniacs: the very sight of him must be offensive to the Muses. (17) The right author is at war with the evil powers. (18) Feigned Inspirations. (19-24) Instances. (25) The weak man is at his weakest when he writes poetry. (26-36) Examples from Collins, Dyer, Christopher Pitt, Ambrose Phillips, Edward Young, Cowley, Roscommon, Otway, Waller, Dryden, Bacon. With the adulators, compare, *e.g.*, Sir David Lyndsay's fearless and noble advice to James the Fifth. (37) It was adulation of monarchs as much as monarchs themselves that brought on the civil wars. (38) Nor is good intention a sufficient warranty for authorship. (39) How sincerity manifests itself in Literature: (40) *e.g.*, the Hebrew Scriptures. (41) Sincerity is creative and life-giving. (42) It is exemplified by all great authors, (43) though they are but human. (44) No army can fight without a commissariat of some kind; no man can operate without one. (45) But there is no great work done unless the heart be in it. (46-48) Instances from Dante. (49) Archdeacon Barbour on freedom and thraldom. (50) Dunbar's meditation on Death. (51-53) Instances from Shakespeare; (54) Michael Bruce's "Ode to the Cuckoo"; (55) from Burns; (56) from Keats; and (57) Wordsworth. (58) No great work done without sincerity. (59) Even laughter to be genuine must be sincere, otherwise it may degenerate into a mere display of teeth. (60) All Nature is inspired and glorified by sincerity. (61) So all the works of sterling men: a disagreement with Professor Saintsbury.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CROWNING GLORY 316-330

(1) What is the quality which lifts a composition into indubitable poetry? (2) Man and Nature in their relationships are complementary to each other. (3) The prime characteristics of the virtue which constitutes Poetry and (4) Art. (5) The poet and his emotions must be taken to be part of Nature: exemplified in a Miltonic night-scene. (6) Poetic interpretation. (7) Deep feeling must precede noble expression. (8) The Ideal, in its poetical sense, is

Nature as seen through man. (9) Truth to Nature includes pure Ideality: the noblest poem will set forth Nature as she is seen and felt by the healthiest and most fully endowed mind. (10) Analysis of a Miltonic night-scene. (11) An uninspired piece from Cowper compared with the foregoing Miltonic night-scene. The primary task of the man of science as such is to expound the meaning of Nature; the primary task of the poet and the literary artist is to give voice to her emotions. (12) An inspired scene from Cowper analysed. (13) A stanza from Keats. (14) An old ballad —"Bonnie George Campbell." (15) Lady Nairne's "Lass of Livingstane." (16) A few lines from Whitman. (17) The Crowning Glory. Poetry is sincere thought suffused with emotion and melodiously expressed. The poet makes you participate with him in his thoughts and feelings; you become as one with him in his sorrows and joys and raptures according to the measure of their intensity. To this desired end the Muses are in constant alliance with COMMON SENSE.

APPENDIX 331

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Common-Sense and the Muses.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICS AND THEIR ART.

1. In a review of any book we are entitled to expect some more or less intelligible and definite appraisement of its value; but instead of this reasonable expectation being fulfilled, we frequently find that the critic is only spinning around it a vague tissue of words from which we can derive no enlightenment.

2. This frequent vagueness and uncertainty of criticism is a common subject of complaint, and it is abundantly justified. Going back to the old Greek days, we find Plato making Socrates express himself in these words: "I soon discovered this, with regard to the poets, that they do not effect their object by wisdom but by a certain natural inspiration and under the influence of enthusiasm, like prophets and seers: for these also say many fine things, but they understand nothing what they say"; [1] whilst in another Dialogue he says: "There is a third possession and madness proceeding from the Muses, which, seizing upon a tender and chaste soul, and rousing and inspiring it to the composition of odes and other species of poetry, by adorning the countless

[1] 'The Apology of Socrates,' 7 (Bohn Tr.)

deeds of antiquity, instructs posterity. But he who, without the madness of the Muses, approaches the gates of poesy under the persuasion that by means of art he can become an efficient poet, both himself fails in his purpose, and his poetry being that of a sane man, is thrown into the shade by the poetry of such as are mad." [1] Now if this doctrine were freed from the metaphor by which it is pervaded, and reduced to plain language, I doubt not that we should find a large measure of truth in it; but even when we discount the metaphor, it still leaves us in some state of mystification as to the real nature of poets and poetry, and rather under the impression that Parnassus should be sought within the grounds of Bedlam.

3. *The Doctrine of Sidney and Shakespeare.*—Sir Philip Sidney gravely tells us that true poets "borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be, but range only rayned with learned discretion into the divine consideration of what may and should be," [2] than which I can scarcely imagine a more hopeless doctrine; whilst Shakespeare, in 'As You Like It,' makes the casual remark: "The truest poesy is the most feigning." [3] I venture to say that he could not have thrown wider of the mark. I think we shall find, and I hope to prove, that the truest poesy is the *least* feigning,—that indeed there is no poetry at all if it be not aglow with heart conviction and with heart purpose.

4. *Of Fielding.*—Trying to lay down a principle in the Novelist's art, Fielding says in his 'Joseph

[1] 'Phædrus.'

[2] 'Apologie for Poetry,' pp. 28, 52.

[3] Parallel with Dorante's doctrine in 'La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes': "Lorsque vous peignez des heros, vous faites ce que vous voulez," &c. (Sc. vii.)—a prodigious mistake to do so, and one, probably, which accounts for the presence of so much rodomontade in so many plays.

Andrews': "I describe not men but manners; not an individual, but a species." From this principle, again, I am afraid we shall not derive much enlightenment. Take, for example, Parson Adams in that very novel. It seems to me that he lives and breathes in its pages—how? By virtue of his *individual* vitality alone. In reading of his exploits our thoughts dwell not on "the species" at all; they are wholly absorbed by the individual, Parson Adams. He stands alone in the Universe like Don Quixote, or Sir John Falstaff, or Baron Bradwardine. The problem for the novelist and the dramatist is, I should say, to produce vital and interesting *individuals.*

5. *Of 'The Spectator.'*—But even when we consult the professional critics and writers on esthetics, they often leave us in a state of great perplexity as to the principles of their science. Thus in 'The Spectator,' No. 409, Addison speaks of discovering new beauties and of "receiving stronger impressions from the masterly strokes of the great authors every time he peruses them." All very well; but he completely fails to show wherein this mastership consists, or how it may be analysed and exhibited. He is equally vague and unhelpful throughout Nos. 412 and 417. It should, however, be mentioned that he is quite cognisant of the crude state of criticism as a science, and that he expresses a wish that there were authors "who, besides the mechanical rules which a man of very little taste may discourse upon, would enter into the very spirit and soul of fine writing and show us the several sources of that pleasure which rises in the mind upon the perusal of a noble work."

6. *Of Dr Johnson.*—With all his scholarship, Dr Johnson also fails to impress one as a critic. He spoke common-sense on many subjects, but

was sometimes apt to relapse into mere jargon when he engaged in literary criticism. Thus, what are we to make of his remarks on Akenside's 'Pleasures of the Imagination'? That work, he gravely informs us, "includes all images that can strike or please, and thus comprises every species of poetical delight."[1] In this appraisement it seems to me that there is no more criticism than in the loud and soulless beating of a drum. In another place the learned author says oracularly that "contemplative piety cannot be poetical."[2] For my part I don't think it would be difficult to show that some of the noblest passages in the whole range of poetry, from the Psalms of David downwards, have been written in the spirit of contemplative piety, and that they mainly give expression to that very spirit.[3] After such deliverances we need scarcely wonder when he speaks of the old ballad of "Chevy Chase"—which certainly contains some vital and stirring stanzas—as a piece of "chill and lifeless imbecility."[4] It may well be granted, however, that many of the Ballads have but little intrinsic worth beyond that which they possess as the literary fare of uncritical and unlettered folk.

7. *Aristotle on Art.*—We are no less perplexed with the doctrines and criticisms of some of the art critics. "Art," says Aristotle, "imitates the

[1] 'Lives of the Poets,' Works, Vol. iv. p. 389. But otherwise in Boswell: *Boswell.* "For my part I never could admire it [Akenside's famous work] as most people do." *Johnson.* "Sir, I could not read it through."—'Life of Johnson,' Vol. iii. p. 8.

[2] With further balderdash on the same subject. 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 350. A good many of the Doctor's own poems are but rather dreary exercises in verse.

[3] *E.g.*, Psalms lxiv. 5-13, c., ci., cii., ciii., civ., all of them poems of high splendour both of thought and diction. See also, for instance, Nahum i. 3-6. "Many of the Psalms touch perfection as lyrical strains."—Quiller-Couch, 'Art of Reading,' p. 172.

[4] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 592.

universal element in things, their paradeigma, their idealic essence." [1] I am bound to confess that I do not carry away much instruction from this pronouncement. "The *Vacuum*," said a student in answer to an examination question, "is a large empty space in which the Pope resides."

8. *Doctrine of Sir Joshua Reynolds.*—Sir Joshua Reynolds, remarking quite truly, probably, that the practice of caricaturing will almost certainly corrupt the taste of a portrait painter, adds that it is the duty of the artist "to aim at discovering the perfections of those whom he is to represent." [2] Thus broadly stated, this doctrine, I suppose, would fall in with the views of most sitters; but, critically, I fear it is very vague, if not positively false. In the same spirit he says that whoever wishes to make his picture what pictures should be, must show as "nature elevated and improved." [3] Such a doctrine must needs call for great qualification and modification, to say the least of it. Literally interpreted, it would mean that whoever would paint mountains must, in order to produce a fine picture, "elevate and improve" the mountains; that whoever would paint a grand Sea-piece must elevate and improve the Ocean; that whoever would paint a great Sunset must elevate and improve the Setting Sun! It puts us in mind of the anecdote of the critic and the artist. Quoth the critic, gazing at the picture: "I never saw a sunset like that." "Perhaps not," replied the modest artist, "but if ever you see a *perfect* Sunset, it will be like that."

[1] Quoted by Erdmann, 'History of Philosophy,' Vol. i. p. 175. Had Oscar Wilde this Aristotelian pronouncement in mind when he wrote, "Truth in Art is the unity of a thing with itself; the outward rendered expressive of the inward; the Soul made incarnate; the body instinct with spirit"?—'De Profundis,' p. 55.

[2] Queechy, 'Memoir of Sir Joshua Reynolds,' p. 100.

[3] Ib., p. 215.

And, indeed, in all soberness, this story seems to enshrine Sir Joshua's real meaning, for he deliberately says in his Third Discourse: "A mere copier of nature can never produce anything great; can never raise and enlarge the conceptions or warm the heart of the Spectator. The wish of the genuine Painter must be more extensive. Instead of endeavouring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavour to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas; instead of seeking praise by deceiving the superficial sense of the Spectator, he must strive for fame by capturing his imagination." I do not at present attempt to criticise these doctrines further than to remark that they still leave us in the densest of fogs as to what may really be the principles and objects of the Painters' Art; but we shall see by-and-by that in the Drama and the Novel it is constantly advisable, and, indeed, necessary, to "elevate and improve" the utterance of the *dramatis personæ*.[1]

9. *The Art of "the Abstract."*—Sir Joshua's biographer, Queechy, is apparently in agreement with the Aristotelian doctrine just quoted. Thus he emphatically declares: "In poetic and historic compositions, we repeat, nature must be represented in the abstract, and all that tends to give identity to minutiæ detracts from the grandeur of the whole." [2] If this be the case, what on earth

[1] See *infra*, chap. vi. sect. 3, but be very careful in handling character. If, for instance, you try to improve and adorn the heroic, it is not unlikely that you will only distort and disfigure it. We have a case in point, I should say, in 'The Lord of the Isles,' where Sir Walter represents King Robert making excuses for and praising Edward I. (canto iv. st. 4). On the other hand, Edward Bruce sounds the natural and right note of scorn and hatred.

[2] 'Memoir,' p. 9. I should be delighted to have a palaver, say, with Baron Bradwardine or Parson Adams; but with an *abstract* gentleman——!

is an abstract man, or an abstract horse—on canvas!

10. Mr Addington Symonds writes much more sensibly on this subject. Speaking of later artists, such as the Caracci and Guercino, he remarks: "The purfled silks of Titian's Lilac Lady in the Pitti; the embroidered hems of Boccaccini da Cremona; the crimson velvet of Raphael's Joanna of Aragon; Veronese's cloth of silver and shot taffety, are replaced by one monotonous nondescript stuff, differently dyed in dull or glaring colours but always shoddy. Characteristic costumes have disappeared. After the same fashion, furniture, utensils, houses, animals, birds, weapons are idealised—stripped, that is to say, of what in these things is specific and vital." He properly speaks, I think, of "idealised" robes as that "empty lie called drapery." [1]

11. *Of Winckelmann.*—Another genius, Winckelmann, is reported to hold that "perfect beauty is like pure water; it has no particular savour." [2] Thus in order to be beautiful, a thing would have to be nothing in particular! Apply the saying to a lily, or a rose, or a cowslip, or a violet, or anything generally allowed to be beautiful, and its fatuity will become apparent immediately.

12. *Of Goethe.*—In speaking of Weenix, the animal painter, Goethe declares that "in the delineation of their widely varying coats, the bristles, hair, or feathers, with the antlers and claws, he had equalled nature, while in the effect produced *he had excelled her!*" [3]

13. *Of Coleridge.*—Nor are we much helped in our efforts to obtain a clear knowledge of the foundation of art or of the principles of criticism, either literary

[1] 'Renaissance in Italy,' Vol. vii. pp. 233-4.
[2] Veron, 'Æsthetics,' p. 133.
[3] 'Autobiography,' Vol. ii. p. 27.

or artistic, when we return to some famous British critics. Thus Coleridge says that "Shakespeare's characters are all *genera* intensely individualised." [1] What does he mean by that exactly ?

14. *Of Macaulay.*—Or take Macaulay. "In a barbarous age," says he in his essay on Dryden, "the imagination exercises a despotic power. So strong is the perception of what is unreal, that it often overpowers all the passions of the mind, and all the sensations of the body" ; and having made this very extravagant, if not quite senseless assertion, he proceeds to argue from it that "the critical and poetical faculties are not only distinct but almost incompatible" ; "that as knowledge is extended and as the reason develops itself, the imitative arts decay" ; that "we should therefore expect that the corruption of poetry would commence in the educated classes of society" ; that this, in fact, "is almost constantly the case," and that "the few great works of imagination which appear in a critical age are, almost without exception, the works of uneducated men." [2] In all this doctrinising, it is apparent, I should say at a glance, that there is less than no enlightenment. Consider for a moment the doctrine that "the few great works of imagination which appear in a critical age are, almost without exception, the works of uneducated men." Facts are completely opposed to it. The girl at the boarding-school who sometimes points his moral and adorns his tale, could scarcely wander farther from the truth. Let the ghost of the critic reflect on Æschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Horace, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Tennyson,—all of them, in the *right and great sense of the word,* amongst the most learned men of their respective ages, and he will see that the doctrine under considera-

[1] 'Essays,' Shakespeare, &c., p. 91.
[2] 'Works,' Vol. vii. pp. 127-135.

tion will not bear examination. Great works, indeed, with few, very few exceptions, are the works of educated men; and if self-education be taken into account, self-education (that, for example, of Shakespeare or Burns) which is the very highest kind of education,[1] it will appear that, in complete contradiction of Macaulay's theory, *great works are produced by educated men only—i.e.*, by alumni of what might be called the University of Man.

15. *Want of Education in the conventional sense may be the very occasion and cause of Education in the great sense.*—Indeed, a man's want of education in the conventional sense may be the very occasion and cause of his education in the real and great sense. A genius, say, like Burns would learn more of life from his father's conversation, and more from Jenny Wilson (who lived with his father's family) concerning "devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, deadlights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons," and the other denizens of the human imagination, and would insensibly imbibe more of the true spirit of poetry from such sources than he could have derived from fifty ordinary academic teachers.

16. It is not hard to understand why Carlyle was disposed to regard Macaulay, in his earlier days, as "a sophistical, rhetorical, young man

[1] "As may be said with perfect truth, I believe, of every great man, Scott was self-educated in every branch of knowledge which he has ever turned to account in the works of his genius."—Lockhart, 'Life of Scott,' Vol. i. p. 177. "Scott having had the benefit of a totally neglected education [education, that was, in the conventional and routine sense], was able early to follow most of his noble instincts; but Turner, having *suffered* under the instruction of the Royal Academy, had to pass nearly thirty years of his life in recovering from its consequences," &c.—Ruskin, 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. pp. 327-8. So deadly may academic education be to its poor pupils; but never let a word be said against education in truth and fact, which is at all times the crying need of Humanity.

of talent." In this same essay he lays down the amazing proposition that "magnificent versification and ingenious combinations rarely harmonise with the expression of deep feeling." [1] Again the simple reply is that the facts of the case are utterly opposed to the Babingtonian doctrine. The truth of the matter is that grand harmony of thought and expression will be found in all very great poetry; that it is, indeed, an essential of all great poetry. It will be found without fail, I should say, that the more deep and genuine the poet's feeling for nature, the more musically will he express that feeling. Take an instance from Burns:—

"The wintry Wast extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or the stormy North sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw;
While tumbling brown the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

"'The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,'
The joyless winter day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than a' the pride o' May.
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul:
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please;
Their fate resembles mine." [2]

Here, obviously, we have not only magnificent versification, but perfect pictorial representation combined with the deepest and tenderest feeling. And all the great works of all the great poets will bear witness to a similar combination. Amongst them all it will be difficult to find a sweet, or great, or noble thought that is not sweetly, or greatly, or nobly expressed. Indeed,

[1] 'Works,' Vol. vii. p. 163. [2] "Winter: A Dirge."

it may be accepted as a law that great utterance is inspired by great feeling, or, conversely, that great feeling is necessary to great utterance.[1]

Thus, whereas Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, is regarded by many as a real slashing sure-footed warrior, he is sometimes to be seen floating through Space to the realms of Nowhere on a rhetorical gas-balloon. I have a strong suspicion that his favourite victim, Mr Robert Montgomery, was almost as competent in poetry as his Lordship was in poetical criticism when he wrote some of his celebrated essays.[2]

17. *Of Wordsworth.*—The difficulties and perplexities to be found in the field of criticism are indeed astonishing. Wordsworth, sometimes as laborious and heavy in his critical dissertations as he too frequently was in his poetical effusions, declares that "the appropriate business of poetry —her privilege and her duty—is to treat of things not as they are, but as they appear; not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exist in the senses and passions." Here is a hint to a poet searching for the Castalian Springs! A Key to the critic about to criticise a poem! Just ponder it. You are a poet. Your business, your duty, your privilege, is to treat of things "not as they are but as they appear," &c., which is to say that you, the poet, are to write of Spring, or Summer, or Autumn, or Winter; of Joy or Sorrow; of Life or Death, *not as it is, but as it seems to be.* Talk of this kind may acquire and enjoy a reputation for profundity, but I am perfectly certain that it cannot possibly yield any enlightenment to the Human Head. Having

[1] Cf. *infra,* chap. vi. par. 6.

[2] In his essay on Moore's 'Byron' he shows a better apprehension of the nature of poetry; and it should be noticed that in his preface to his 'Essays' he apologises for their imperfections.

delivered himself of these oracles—as hopeless as any that were ever delivered at Delphi,—he goes on to exclaim: "What temptations to go astray are here held forth to those whose *thoughts* have been little disciplined by the *Understanding*": a phrasing sprung, probably, I should say, from some study in German metaphysics. Some parts of his essay appear to me to point in the direction of elemental chaos.

18. *Moir.*—Another poet, David Macbeth Moir, speaks thus of the poet in action:—

> "A frenzy fine his fancy seizes;
> He sees unreal shapes and hears
> The wail of spirits in the breezes"—

which, like Shakespeare's rhapsody touching the eyes "in a fine frenzy rolling," [1] conveys no information to the inquirer at all, but rather leaves him in a state of dazed bewilderment, or conjures up within his imagination some vision of a gentleman in a fit.

19. *Carlyle.*—Carlyle declares that "All right poems are [songs]; that whatsoever is not *sung* is properly no Poem, but a piece of Prose cramped into jingling lines." [2] I think it is a great mistake; for it seems to me that the Lyrical is only a branch of poetry; Poetry is the genus, whereof the Lyrical is but a species.

20. *Ruskin.*—Ruskin says: "I come, after some embarrassment, to the conclusion that 'poetry is the suggestion by the imagination of noble grounds for the noble emotions.' I mean by the noble emotions those four principal sacred passions: Love, Veneration, Admiration, and Joy (this latter especially if unselfish), and their oppo-

[1] Though it forms part of the splendid passage on the Creative Imagination.—'Midsummer Night's Dream,' v. 1.

[2] 'Heroes and Hero Worship.' The Hero as a Poet, p. 90.

sites—Hatred, Indignation (or Scorn), Horror, and Grief—this last when unselfish becomes compassion." Further, he says it is the power of assembling by the *help of the Imagination* such images as will excite these feelings, "that constitutes the power of the poet, or, literally, of the 'Maker.'"[1] Again, there is much vagueness in this theory. It cannot, I am afraid, be of much service to us in our endeavours to arrive at an articulate judgment or appreciation of a poem or of a work of art.

21. *Emerson.*—Emerson says that "the Poet conforms things to his thoughts"; that he "invests dust and stones with humanity, and makes them the words of Reason." "The Imagination," he adds, "may be defined to be the use which Reason makes of the natural world." Some vague striving after truth in this doctrine, I daresay, but it is not expressed in such a way as to give us any help in criticising or appreciating a poem, or of understanding what poetry really means.

22. *Swinburne.*—It must be a most elusive subject. Swinburne records that he would rather preserve 'Kubla Khan' and 'Christabel' than any other of Coleridge's poems,[2] whilst Charles Lamb says of the former: "I am almost afraid that 'Kubla Khan' is an owl that won't bear daylight. I fear lest it should be discovered by the lantern of typography and clear reducting to letters, no better than nonsense or no sense. When I was young I used to chant with ecstasy 'Mild Arcadians ever blooming,' till somebody told me it was meant to be nonsense."[3] In this case of 'Kubla Khan,' I think there can be no doubt that Lamb was the better critic.

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. ii. pp. 12-13.
[2] 'Essays and Studies,' p. 265.
[3] 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 129.

23. *His Hugonic Raptures.*—I should say generally that no one treats us to more curious things in the way of criticism and critical doctrine than Swinburne. Speaking of 'L'Année Terrible' of Victor Hugo, he says it is a book "written in tears and blood and characters of flame." Symbolising the book as a child, he declares: "It is visibly of divine birth, and has the blood of the immortals, but he was brought forth with heartbreak," and so on.[1] Now what on earth is anybody in his sober senses to ascertain from such an outburst? Yet it is but the Keynote of the Hugo Essays—in which he ranges from a welter of incoherent panegyric and rhapsody over Hugo down to an abusive agony of rancour against other persons.[2] As a critical maledictor Mr Swinburne might walk arm-in-arm with the Right Reverend Bishop Ernulphus, or with the ecclesiastic in 'The Jackdaw of Rheims.'

24. Dante Gabriel Rossetti is one of his great favourites. In that poet he discovers "white flames of delight," "seeming effusions of an instant, insuppressible sense of memory," and other extraordinary qualities. Well, that kind of language may be very fine, but what does it mean? The sane man cannot but wish to find a meaning both in the written and in the spoken word. What, then, is a "white flame of delight" in an author? What is the "seeming effusion of an instant, insuppressible sense of memory"? I am foiled in my efforts to extract a meaning out of this phrasing; and, indeed, I find myself forced to the conclusion that it is nothing better than a welter of muddled metaphorical panegyric, ex-

[1] 'Essays and Studies,' pp. 17-18.

[2] Some pages of these 'Essays' are simply filled with turgid denunciations of men whom he regards in an unfriendly manner—*e.g.*, pp. 38-39. Let dogs delight to bark and bite, but gentlemen shouldn't.

pressive of nothing sane. In the same essay he rapturously quotes one of the most cumbrous lines in Rossetti—descriptive of a lady's charms—

"Large lovely arms, and a neck like a tower,"

almost droll in its elephantine awkwardness, as an exquisite stroke of poetic art.[1]

25. *His eulogiums on Shelley and Keats.*—Listen, further, to his eulogiums on Shelley and Keats. Shelley, he declares, "outsang all poets on record but some two or three throughout all time"; that "his depths and heights of inner and outer music are as divine as nature's, and not sooner exhaustible"; that "he was alone the perfect singing god"; that "his thoughts, words, and deeds all sang together"; that "he was born a son and soldier of light"; an "archangel winged and weaponed for angels' work," and so on. It suggests, I should say, a mere fit of rhapsodical hysterics in the writer; but apart from its intrinsic fatuity, which must be evident at a glance to any sober-minded reader of Shelley, collate and contrast this passage with the following on Keats. The latter, he assures us, "has indeed a divine magic of language applied to nature"; that "here he is unapproachable"; that "this is his throne, and he may bid all the Kings of song come bow to it"; and that the "Ode to Autumn" "renders nature as no man but Keats ever could."[2] Thus we find him engaged not only in the hottest of warfare with Common-sense, but also in the hottest of critical warfare with himself; for if Shelley "was *alone* the perfect singing god"—a very funny kind of god

[1] 'Essays and Studies,' p. 69.

[2] Ib., p. 216. It is the foolish language of panegyric, but the ode is a fine one—not the artificial utterance of volition, but the spontaneous expression of true and warm emotion.

certainly,—how was it possible that Keats, at the same moment, should sit on a throne and "bid all the Kings of song come bow to him"? Even if a critic finds reason to worship those whom he regards as true "bards," he ought not to grovel before them. Mr Swinburne's "bardic" devotions lead him to assume this attitude too frequently. It is not a delectable sight. He should keep his breath and preserve his dignity. Even in discussing Dryden's "Hind and Panther," he falls into his rhapsodic attitude, and speaks of that poem as being "opulent and superb in august eloquence and passionate humour."[1] Such a posture is unsatisfactory at any time, but it is surely nothing less than ridiculous in the presence of that particular work. There is much wind-blown rhetoric in these essays.

26. *His Art Criticisms.*—In a well-known work Alexander Pope spoke of the effusions of some of the poets of his own day as the offspring of Folly and Frenzy. What would he have said, I wonder, if he had lived to read in Mr Swinburne of Raphael's "perfect grace and godhead of heavenly humanity"? It might pass as an attempt to chaff a deceased painter. In his note on designs of the old Masters at Florence, he propounds the conundrum: "What, indeed, is lovelier, or more luxuriously loving, than a strong and graceful snake of the nobler kind?" In the words of Carlyle about some other person, he seems to utter the palpably absurd as if it were a mere truism.

27. *His strange doctrine that Art takes no care of Fact.*—Indeed, I do not know any writer who cuts a more singular figure in the general field of criticism than Mr Swinburne. Art, he tells us, "is very life itself, and knows nothing of death. She is absolute truth, and *takes no care of fact.*"

[1] 'Miscellanea.'

The astonishing thing is that a human being should be found to indite such doctrine. Just mark the words "absolute truth" that "takes no care of fact." I will not ask anybody to think of a witness in a witness-box being told that he must tell the absolute truth, taking no care of fact, but I will ask him to think of an artist sitting down to paint a tree determined to produce the "absolute truth" of the tree without any regard to the facts of the tree; or the "absolute truth" of a snowstorm without any regard to the facts of snowstorms. Think of one proceeding to write a poem, say, of a mouse without any regard to the facts of mouse life! That had been an excellent exercise for Robert Burns! But yet this appears to be what Mr Swinburne demands of the poet and of the artist. "Art sees," he declares, "that Achilles and Ulysses are *even now* more actual by far than Wellington and Talleyrand," that they are actually "more positive and real." [1] The imaginary blockhead, Achilles,[2] actually, according to our essayist, a more substantial personage than the man who, as the leader of British valour, saved Europe from the scourge of despotic conquest! And yet Mr Swinburne is accepted by some people as a critic! [3] It is very confusing.

28. *His doctrine of Poetry, in conflict with Commonsense.*—On the subject of poetical principles he writes: "The two primary and essential qualities of poetry are imagination and harmony. Where these qualities are wanting there can be no poetry properly so called," which, so far, is quite true;

[1] 'Essays and Studies,' p. 47.

[2] Lord Chesterfield regarded Achilles as "both a brute and a scoundrel."

[3] There is a review of Swinburne's "Midsummer Holiday" in 'The Athenæum,' 1884, Vol. ii. pp. 651-3, wherein it appears to me that the critic vies with the poet in his feats of vagueness and self-obfuscation.

but he continues: "When these qualities are perceptible in the highest degree, *there, even though they should be unaccompanied and unsupported by any other great quality whatever, even though the ethical or critical faculty should be conspicuous by its absence,* there and there only is the best and highest poetry," [1] from which it would appear that a composition bearing no evidence whatever that it had been written by a responsible person; no evidence even that it had been written by one possessed of secular Common-sense, might yet be the greatest of poems! This notion of his must be the key to the fact that there is frequently so little trace of common-sense visible in his own volumes. It also enables us to understand his boundless admiration of Shelley, who, possessed of imagination, language, and metrical facility, but abundantly lacking at times in common-sense, was too prone to relapse from his high calling of poet into that of versifying desperado.[2] Mr Swinburne has failed to notice that *common-sense must govern imagination as well as pure thought —that there can be incongruous and absurd imaginations as well as incongruous and absurd thoughts.* The works of all rhapsodic writers, perhaps, yield manifold exemplifications of the truth of this doctrine. Of such it was written:—

> "Twice twenty asses when they all begin
> Their hideous concert raise not such a din."

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[1] 'Miscellanea,' pp. 69-70.

[2] Lamb wrote to Bernard Barton: "I can no more understand Shelley than you can. His poetry is 'thin sown with profit or delight.' Hazlitt said well of it, 'Many are wiser or better for reading Shakespeare, but nobody was ever wiser or better for reading Shelley.' "—'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 310. He greatly objected to Shelley's voice: "Shelley I once saw. His voice was the most obnoxious squeak I was ever tormented with, ten thousand times worse than the Laureate's, whose voice is the worst part about him, except his Laureateship."—Ib., p. 280.

I think it will be found that the ethical and the critical faculties are amongst the most essential endowments of the poets as well as of other geniuses; and we may cordially exclaim with Burns :—

> " Hail Poesie ! thou nymph reserved !
> In chase o' thee, what crowds hae swerved
> Frae common-sense, or sunk ennerved
> 'Mang heaps o' clavers ! " [1]

Common-sense demands all the beauty that can be achieved—consonant with nature. Ruskin insisted upon " consummate and accumulated truth." He declares : " I have always said, he who is closest to nature is best. All rules are useless, all genius is useless, all labour is useless, if you do not give facts. The more facts you give the greater you are ; and there is no fact so unimportant as to be prudently despised if it be profitable to represent it." [2] Nothing opposed to Reason can be right. Above and beyond all other purposes, the Human Head is as a House made for Reason to dwell in and to govern. I think it will be found, and that we shall be able to show, that the highest products of poetical genius are essentially strong in common-sense and moral outlook. In respect of prose fiction, Mr Swinburne allows that these qualities must be present ; for in his essay on Charles Reade he rightly speaks of moral truth as being " that condition of reality, the want of which deprives fiction of all right to exist and all reason for existence." [3] Truer word

[1] " On Pastoral Poetry."

[2] Ruskin, ' Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. pp. 130-136. Turner " was entirely ignorant of all the laws we have been developing—*i.e.*, he only knew them instinctively." He had merely accustomed himself to see impartially, intensely, and fearlessly.—Ib., Vol. v. p. 53.

[3] ' Miscellanea,' p. 290. Also, in speaking of Ford's ' Love Sacrifice,' he says, " The conception is essentially foul because it is essentially false, and in the sight of art, nothing is so foul as falsehood."—Ib., p. 287.

could not be spoken. By everything outside Bedlam, why, then, deny the necessity of the intelligent and ethical faculties in poetry! Mr Swinburne and all his school should reflect that the very Sun in its glory is a manifestation not only of Divine Power but of Divine Intelligence; for I take it that, in its manifestations, Divine Intelligence is nothing else than the adaptation of magnificent means to magnificent ends, from which source springs our rapture over the glories of the universe.

29. *What is implied in the Psychology of Common-sense?*—The Psychology of Common-sense implies that you have not raised a stable structure of any kind until you can rest assured that it has been founded in Nature. Until your structure is founded firmly in Nature, it is no better than a drunkard's dream. This doctrine applies no less to Theology than to Philosophy, no less to Fixed Stars than to Bricks, no less to Poetry than to Prose—a simple truth which has yet to be learned by a great many people.

30. *Mr Swinburne's droll theory concerning Poets and Common-sense.*—We must have understanding in all things and at all times—even when we are called upon to understand that something cannot be understood. We cannot praise God nobly without understanding; we cannot laugh in a healthy manner without full concurrence of heart and brain. What is emptier than the brainless laugh or drunken ribaldry? What is more false than the miscreant's snigger? What is more objectionable than the hard cackling laugh that has no mirth, no heart in it? Depend upon it that you are of no account as a poet unless you are possessed of a substantially sound understanding. But upon this subject Mr Swinburne is terribly fog-bound. It is a fact, he says, beyond disproof, from the days of Plato to our own,

"that the nature of poets is essentially and incurably incompetent to apprehend or to estimate aright the simplest practical matters of public life or polity." [1] David Hume in his time caustically adverted to this ridiculous notion as "an ancient prejudice industriously propagated by the dunces in all countries that a man of genius is unfit for business." [2] If Mr Swinburne's doctrine were true, the old German notion would inevitably hold good—namely, that the poet is, in the main, "only a droll fellow, a kind of buffoon." If it were true, save us from all the poets!

30*a*. *In absolute opposition to Swinburne, I hold that the sanest of Common-sense is necessary for the equipment of the great poet.*—But fortunately it is not true; fortunately there is not a spark of truth in it—except as to the poets of the feebler kind, of whom the fewer the better. David of Israel, Isaiah, Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, Horace, Dante, Shakespeare, Burns, Scott, Goethe—is it creditable that any one of them was "incurably incompetent to apprehend or to estimate aright the simplest practical matters of public life or polity"? Just think of the absurdity of the contention. Not Mr Swinburne himself in his calm senses would venture to maintain such a doctrine. Nor, on the other hand, would he be bold enough to maintain that either one or other of this group was not a great poet. Charles Lamb takes the right view of the case. So far, says he, "from the position holding true that great wit (or genius in our modern way of speaking) has a necessary alliance with insanity, the greatest wits, on the contrary, will ever be found to be the sanest writers. . . . The greatness of wit, by which the poetic talent is here chiefly to be understood, manifests itself in

[1] 'Miscellanea,' p. 303.
[2] 'Essays, Moral, Political,' &c., Vol. i., note, p. 171.

the admirable balance of all the faculties." [1] So Addington Symonds: "Poetry cannot be estimated apart from intellectual and moral contents." [2] In absolute opposition to Mr Swinburne, I think it will be found that *all the great poets of the world, without exception, have been men of the finest understanding; or, conversely, that the finest understanding, the sanest of Common-sense, is necessary for the equipment of the great poet.* I would remind him that even his favourite poet, Keats, is utterly opposed to him on this point. Distressed with apprehensions of failure, he comforted himself in a poetical Epistle to his brother George in these splendid lines:—

> "What though I leave this dull and earthly mould,
> Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold
> With after times. The patriot shall feel
> My stern alarum and unsheathe his steel;
> Or in the Senate thunder out my numbers
> To startle princes from their easy slumbers.
> The Sage will mingle with his moral theme
> My happy thoughts sententious: he will teem
> With lofty periods when my verses fire him,
> And then I'll stoop from Heaven to inspire him."

Swinburne's ideal poet recalls Carlyle's Marquis Saint Huruge in 'The French Revolution': "Cracked or half-cracked was the tall Marquis's head; uncracked were his lungs." For the love of God, let us insist on having poets sound

[1] 'Sanity of True Genius: the Last Essays of Elia,' p. 62.

[2] 'Renaissance in Italy,' Vol. vii. p. 161. To the same effect Ruskin: "The marvellous stupidity of this age of lecturers is that they do not see that what they call 'principles of composition' are mere principles of common-sense in everything as well as in pictures and buildings."—'On the Old Road,' Vol. i. pp. 301-2. So Byron: "In my mind the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth." "He who can reconcile poetry with truth and wisdom is the only true *poet* in its real sense."—Moore's 'Byron,' Vol. vii. pp. 369, 376.

in the head, however defective they may be in power of lungs!

31. *But Swinburne is partly right as to the elusiveness of Poetry.*—But when he tells us that "the test of the highest poetry is that it eludes all test"; that there "must be something in the mere progress and resonance of the words; some secret in the very cadence and motion of the lines, inexplicable by the most sympathetic acuteness of criticism,"[1] there is a large measure of truth in the doctrine. Carlyle says something to the same effect: "Poetry is inspiration: has in it a certain spirituality and divinity which no dissecting knife will discover; arises in the most secret and most sacred region of a Man's Soul," and so forth.[2] Yet I think there may be some exaggeration in these sayings; and I hope we shall be able to find that whilst there are doubtlessly some subtleties present in high poetry which lie beyond the power of analysis both in word and thought, there are yet certain principles discoverable in it which may be perceived and appreciated even by the ordinary well-balanced intellect.

32. *His Partialities and Hostilities.*—Another word about Mr Swinburne and we shall pass on. In his critical pronouncements he very properly desires "above all things, to preserve in all things the golden mean of scrupulous moderation"—a very just sentiment, but unhappily he forgets to practise it; and generally he speaks in the language either of rhapsody or vituperation. In phrasing about Shelley, or Keats, or Rossetti, or Hugo, or any other, indeed, of his prime favourites, rhapsodical panegyric is the vein in which he usually indulges. (Cervantes tells us that

[1] 'Miscellanea,' pp. 126-7. See review of this book, 'Athenæum,' 1886, Vol. i. p. 803.

[2] 'Essays,' Vol. ii. p. 279.

"Dulcinea was a subject that would merit all the praises that hyperbolical eloquence could bestow." [1] Mr Swinburne should write about Dulcinea.) When, on the other hand, he turns upon one whom he regards with disfavour—Byron, for example,—he metamorphoses his pen into a very dagger, and makes most inky stabs at his reputation. Most people, I fancy, see something to admire in 'Childe Harold.' Not so Mr Swinburne. "It is impossible to express," says he, "how much 'Childe Harold' gains by being done out of wretchedly bad metre into decently good prose." [2] Nor do his strictures extend only to 'Childe Harold.' In *all* the compositions of his highly composite nature, he declares that there was "neither a note of real music, nor a gleam of real imagination"—mark, neither a note nor a gleam; that he was "of all remembered poets the most wanting in distinction of any kind; the most dependent for his effects upon the most vulgar and violent resources of rant and cant and glare and splash and splutter." It is no part of my present purpose to enter into any defence of Byron or his works. I speak of Mr Swinburne's comments upon him as I have spoken of his comments on other writers—mainly to show with what difficulties and uncertainties criticism is

[1] 'Don Quixote,' Part ii. chap. 73.

[2] 'Miscellanea,' p. 76. Contrast with his panegyric on Hugo in 'A Study of Victor Hugo.' He thinks that, as a dramatist, Voltaire stands nearer to Corneille, and Dryden nearer to Shakespeare than Byron to Voltaire or to Dryden.—'Miscellanea,' p. 86. Nichol's work he looks upon as "the most brilliant and searching estimate ever given of Byron's character, his work and his career."—Ib., p. 80. With Swinburne's opinion of 'Childe Harold' contrast that of Sir E. Brydges, who, speaking of the 4th canto, says: "Whoever reads it, and is not impressed with the many grand virtues as well as gigantic powers of the mind that wrote it, seems to me to afford a proof both of insensibility of heart and great stupidity of intellect."—Moore's 'Byron,' Vol. viii., note, p. 268.

hedged about; but in passing I would just remark on the injudicial character of his expressions regarding Byron. It is probably a happy thing for the critic that he or his works were not before the public when Byron was busy with his tomahawk,[1] or when Pope was out scalping certain persons.

33. *Mr Churton Collins on Mr Swinburne.*—Mr Churton Collins, I think, estimates Mr Swinburne at his right value. He wrote of him in 1886: "One of the kindest friends I have ever had has been Mr Swinburne. But I believe, rightly or wrongly, that his critical opinions are often wild, unsound, and even absurd; that his prose style is still oftener intolerably involved, florid, and diffuse; and that he has, in consequence, exercised a most pernicious influence on contemporary style and contemporary literature." If Mr Swinburne had been occupying a professional chair, Mr Collins declares that, in the interests of education, he would have protested against his election.[2]

34. *Vernon Lee.*—Another somewhat oracular critic of Literature and Art, Vernon Lee, declares that the artist "can think, imagine, and feel only in a given manner"; that "his religious conceptions have taken the place of his artistic creations"; that "art has destroyed the supernatural"; and that "the artist has swallowed up the believer."[3] The Delphic Oracle is understood to have had a great talent in obscurity and ambiguity; but it appears that some of our critics could compete with the Oracle in that particular kind of utterance. In the sentences

[1] Far too busy with his tomahawk! "No more Keats, I entreat—flay him alive; if some of you don't, I must skin him myself. There is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the manikin."—Moore's 'Byron,' Vol. iv. pp. 353-4. All very deplorable.

[2] 'Athenæum,' 1886, Vol. ii. p. 569.

[3] 'Belcaro,' p. 87.

quoted, the author seems to have achieved a veritable triumph in self-obfuscation. In the same book she asserts that "no symphony, no picture, no poem, can give us that delight, that delusory imaginative pleasure which we receive as children from a tawdry engraving or a hideous doll," [1] surely a most inapposite and extravagant comparison; but in commenting upon musical art, she remarks very sensibly that "we try to force music to talk a language which it does not speak and which we do not understand, obtaining nothing but unintelligible and incoherent forms in an anxiety to obtain intelligible and logical thoughts." [2]

35. *Eugène Véron on Artists.*—A French critic, Eugène Véron, declares that "the artist cares very little indeed about the essence of things"; that he "simply interprets his personal impression without troubling himself about anything else"; that "in place of applying himself to the manifestation of the essence or dominant characteristic of things," he expresses "spontaneously and unconsciously the essence or characteristic of *his own personality*"; and that "the greater his genius, the greater energy and individuality will such a manifestation display"; [3] so that in looking, say, at a portrait by Reynolds or Raeburn, you are not to expect to find a representation of the appearance and of the vital characteristics of the subject of the portrait, but rather "the essence or characteristic" of Reynolds or Raeburn! Error, I think, is fairly evident on the face of the doctrine.

36. *His view of poets and poetry.*—He is equally

[1] 'Belcaro,' p. 96.

[2] Ib., p. 128.

[3] 'Æsthetics,' p. 74. A critic in the 'Athenæum' teaches a doctrine exactly contrary to that of M. Véron: "This is the merit and distinction of Art; to be more real than reality, to be not Nature, but Nature's essence."—March 1885, p. 339.

unsatisfactory on the subject of poets and poetry. Taken in its widest sense, says he, the word poetry means "that combination of natural aptitudes which gives birth to artistic creations. It consists in a peculiar excitability of the senses and in a particular turn of the imagination, predisposing to that kind of half-conscious and half-voluntary hallucination, without which genius in art would be incomprehensible. The effect of this hallucination is to add to real and elementary sensations an indefinite train of wonderful imaginings. It places a poet before certain aspects of life as if he were looking at them through a magnifying glass, with this ever-present and grand difference that the magnifying-glass would be external to the man, and would magnify equally everything to which it might be applied; while partial hallucination only transforms those facts which happen to be *en rapport* with the peculiar humour of the poet, and the measure of this transformation is in accord with his varying excitability. This is the cause why, in the comparison of one set of things with another, modifications arise that contrast will render all the more perceptible," [1] in which disquisition I am bound to say that I can scarcely find any sense at all. Let me try to impress upon critics that excitability and hallucinations belong to Bedlam and that doleful neighbourhood—not in any wise to Parnassus and the fair territory sloping around. We would fain avoid an encounter with excited and hallucinated gentlemen in any part of our pilgrimage. Society suffers much from its contact with such persons. But elsewhere in the same book M. Véron makes some more lucid remarks which may be useful to us further on.

37. *Walt Whitman.*—Whitman properly asks:

[1] 'Æsthetics,' p. 330.

"Has not the time arrived when, for highest current and future aims, there must imperatively come a readjustment of the whole theory and nature of poetry?" But with astounding *niaiserie* he proceeds to query thus: "Of the great poems received from abroad and from the Ages, and to-day enveloping and penetrating America, is there one that is consistent with these United States, or essentially applicable to them as they are, and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and an insult to democracy?" [1] So that if Whitman could have had his way, he would apparently have introduced the limitations of the Stars and Stripes, and the very spirit of the demagogue even, into the sacred regions of Poesy! He had some hazy notion apparently that Poesy is dependant upon political considerations!

38. *Press Critics.*—When Robert Browning died, the critic of one of our leading journals attributed the deep obscurity of some of his work to the varied and remote character of the books which he had read, whilst the critic of another leading journal attributed his characteristic obscurity to the vastness of his genius—just as if he had tried to impress upon us that the fogs of London are very entrancing, and that they are especially due to the heat of the sun. I am afraid that triumphs of self-obfuscation are sometimes accepted by the unwary as triumphs of genius. That cannot be great poetry, or great philosophy, or great painting, or great music that can only be enjoyed by coteries of esoteric or "precious" persons. Critics should be doubly on their guard against the recondite and obscure either in verse or in any other kind of composition, and should take great care not to accept pure balderdash for pure poetry.

39. *Criticism as tested by the record of opinions.*—

[1] 'Democratic Vistas,' pp. 92-3.

From these cryptic, hazy, and contradictory expressions abounding in books upon the subject of poets and artists and their works, it clearly appears that criticism is not yet in the happy position of an exact science. "After some twenty-three centuries of æsthetic speculation, we are still without any accepted body of æsthetic doctrine." [1] The painful history of authors affords ample evidence of the fact. Turn over any old publisher's or bookseller's catalogue setting forth the contemporary Press notices of his publications, and, almost needless to say, you will probably find glowing eulogiums upon books which have been long dead and justly forgotten—probably upon books which ought never to have been printed. This same vice is raging and rampant in our own day—never more violently. As Mr Andrew Lang remarks, our ears are deafened with the praises of novelists whose works are said to "combine the insight of Thackeray with the brilliant colouring of Scott"; and of poets whose verses possess what they call "the natural charm of Wordsworth and the versatility of Byron." Indeed, we might conclude from the Press notices and reviews that tremendous geniuses are as plentiful as puddings—which is far from being the case. The same writer well observes that the confusion of notoriety with fame becomes more bewildering every day, and suggests that in the apprehension of some people, these two words, fame and notoriety, would appear to have become synonymous.

40. *Greene and Nashe on Shakespeare.*—On the other hand, turn up the early reviews of some works which still live, and are likely to live, and to exercise, probably, in some cases, a happy influence as long as the world endures—turn up

[1] Lord Balfour, 'Essays Speculative and Political,' p. 54.

the early reviews of such works, and you will sometimes find them derided and set at naught. "There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tyger's heart in a player's hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you, and being an absolute Johannes Factotum is, in his own conceit, the only Shakescene in a country." [1] Such were Robert Greene's views of Shakespeare; and Nashe, in his address to "The Gentlemen Students of both Universities," prefixed to Greene's 'Menaphon,' writes: "It is a common practice nowadays amongst a sort of shifting companions, that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of *Noverint* whereto they were born, and busy themselves with the endeavours of Art that could scarcely Latinise their neck-verse if they should have need; yet English Seneca read by candlelight yields many good sentences, as 'Blood is a Beggar,' and so forth; and if you entreat him fair on a frosty morning he will afford you whole 'Hamlets,' I should say, handfuls, of tragical speeches." [2] Thus apparently was Shakespeare estimated by some of his contemporaries. Carlyle, with what was in some respects one of the greatest manuscripts of the nineteenth century in his hands, could scarcely

[1] Greene, 'Groatsworth of Wit,' Works, Vol. xii. p. 144. The common charge of plagiarism; but quoth Goethe, "Of a thoroughly crazy and defective artist, we may indeed say he has everything from himself, but of an excellent one, never."—'Conversations with Eckermann,' p. 547. Molière boldly and rightly declares, "Il est permis de reprendre son bien partout ou on le trouve."—'Works,' Vol. iv., note, p. 201.

[2] Greene, 'Works,' Vol. vi. p. 15. Storojenko thinks it not improbable that this passage has reference to Shakespeare, but Grosart thinks otherwise.—Ib., Vol. i. p. 105. Niccolo Niccoli, though he was a Florentine, called Danto "a poet for bakers and cobblers."—J. A. Symonds, 'The Renaissance in Italy,' Vol. iv. p. 204. At the same place see other instances of besotted prejudices against the moderns.

break through the cordon of British critics into public notice. At a later day Edgar Allan Poe frankly called the writer of that manuscript an ass. If, says he, a man "wrote a book which he means to be understood, and in this book be at all possible pains to prevent us from understanding it, we can only say that he is an ass; *and this, to be brief, is our private opinion of Mr Carlyle, which we now take the liberty of making public.*" [1] Most of these gentlemen proved themselves at first to be as uncritical in Carlylean manuscript as the most stolid type of policeman could have been. "Get a good name," says Sir Walter Scott, "and you may write trash; get a bad one, and you may write like Homer without pleasing a single reader." [2] The saying is not flattering to readers, but, alas! there is a great deal of truth in it. Almost overwhelming for a time is the prestige of name and fame in the appraisement of authors and all kinds of people.

41. *The Critic as Caliban.*—Unfortunately, too, the critic appears sometimes not merely as an undiscerning person, not merely as a dead mass of inertia and obstruction in the path of a great Author, but sometimes also as a veritable Caliban, grinning and snapping at and trying to close his teeth in the breeches of Prospero. Witness the case of Greene and Nashe *v.* Shakespeare just quoted. Swift, indeed, was of opinion that "when a true genius appears in the world, you may

[1] 'Works,' Vol. iv. p. 258. With which compare Froude's estimate: "Carlyle will stand among his contemporaries as Socrates among the Athenians, the one pre-eminently wise man to whom all the rest are as nothing" ('Life of Lord Beaconsfield,' p. 253), which sentence itself, however, as we may see further on, probably needs a good deal of trimming.

[2] 'Journal,' Vol. ii. p. 276. A great many people like to know the name of the author before delivering their judgment as to the author of the book!

know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him." [1] If this be true it will follow that there is nothing for it but that the genius should boldly discover himself and stand on his own feet. If the genius does not know that he is a genius, how on earth are the dunces to know it!

42. *Ruskin on the Critic's perplexities.*—Ruskin makes the following remarks on the critic's perplexities. "They who would maintain the cause of contemporary excellence against that of elder times must have almost every class of men arrayed against them: the generous [?], because they would not find matter of accusation against established dignities; the anxious, because they do not like the sound of a living man's praise; the wise [?], because they prefer the opinion of centuries to that of days; and the foolish, because they are incapable of forming an opinion of their own." And at the same place he quotes a fine passage from Hooker to the same effect: "To the best and wisest while they live the world is continually a froward opposite; and a curious observer of their defects and imperfections, these virtues afterwards, it as much admireth. And for this cause many times that which deserveth admiration would hardly be able to find favour if they which propose it were not content to profess themselves therein scholars and followers of the ancients. For the world will not endure to hear that we are wiser than any have been which went before." [2]

43. *The true object of Criticism.*—But to conclude these preliminary remarks: Great and confusing as the difficulties in the way of sound criticism seem to be, there must surely be some

[1] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 395. See also Appendix, Note A.
[2] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i., Preface, pp. xiv, xv.

palpable qualities in great literary works which should at once appeal to, and make themselves felt by, any critic of competency. Conversely, when Homer nods, when Shakespeare writes tumidly, when Milton's Pegasus treads the Opaque Terrene very lamely, when Burns writes commonplace, or Scott is prosy, the competent critic, if there be any science of criticism at all, should be able to discover the fact; and, to some extent at least, should be able to say explicitly where and in what manner the Homeric nutation or the Pegasean lameness manifests itself. In order to justify itself, criticism must be able to do this in a more or less satisfactory manner where established reputations are concerned, just as, on the other hand, it must be able to give, and will find its chief glory in giving, articulate expression and rational warranty to the excellencies of merit without a name.

CHAPTER II.

FACT AND FICTION.

1. *Truth is more interesting than Fiction.*—By way of further introduction to our study of critical principles, I invite the reader to consider and balance the interest of Fact against the interest of Fiction. Without hesitation I should say that, *cæteris paribus*, Truth is more interesting than Fiction.

2. The first requisite of any History is, of course, that it shall contain, as nearly as possible, a true statement of facts. The pure historic excellence of any professed account of events is, *cæteris paribus*, in proportion to its conformity with truth of fact. The pure historic worth of any account of events declines in proportion to the degree in which it deviates from the truth of fact. If the alleged facts are groundless or distorted, the story recounting them, whatever its other merits may be, is bad History—its badness being in proportion to the distortion or to the groundlessness of the alleged facts. All this will be readily admitted by everybody; but I ask everybody to admit something more—namely, that whilst historic truth is necessary to historic excellence, there is at the same time no reason why it should not be more *interesting* than historic fiction.

3. *Some Greek and Roman stories: the story of*

Arion.—Take a story from Herodotus—*e.g.*, that of Arion. This Arion was a Greek bard, and a famous player on the cithara. He is also said to have been the "inventor" of dithyrambic poetry. He lived in the seventh century B.C., and spent a great part of his life at the Court of Periander, tyrant of Corinth. Having visited Italy and Sicily, he there acquired great wealth, with which he determined to return to Corinth, choosing to voyage in a Corinthian ship, because he put more confidence in the men of Corinth than in those of any other nation. His confidence turned out, unhappily, to have been misplaced; for those Corinthians, when they were out at sea, conspired to throw him overboard, in order, of course, to seize his property. Becoming aware of the conspiracy, Arion offered them money, and entreated them to spare his life. His offers and entreaties were in vain. The sailors ordered him either to kill himself or to throw himself into the sea. In these straits he entreated them to permit him, as a preliminary, to stand on the poop in his full dress and sing, promising that he would then make away with himself. To this proposal the sailors agreed. Thereupon Arion took up his cithara, and, standing on the rowing benches, went through the Orthian strain, which being ended he leaped into the sea, when lo! a dolphin appeared, received Arion on his back, and carried him safely to Tænarus.[1] Obviously the story is without historic credibility—that is to say, in its main features,—just as in its main features the story of the jettison of Jonah and its sequel are without historic credibility. But the principal point to which I would ask attention is that this Arion story, decorated with all its dolphinian fiction, is probably not half as *interesting* as the

[1] 'Herodotus,' i. 23, 24.

true biography of Arion would be if it could be brought to light. Who would not rather learn the actual truth about this ancient sweet player on the cithara,—what man of sense and feeling would not rather become acquainted with his real character and circumstances and struggles and achievements than listen to the poor fish story with which his name is associated?

4. *Of Xerxes and the invasion of Greece.*—"Xerxes, son of Darius," says Herodotus, "led 5,283,220 men to Sepias and Thermopylæ." [1] So entirely childish in the question of numbers was the "father-of-History." After all those thousands and millions, notice the amusing balance of 220! The father-of-History would have been much more valuable and interesting not only as a historian but in other important respects if he had shown even some little recognition of the claims of veracity. He declares that their "beasts of burden alone," on being watered at a lake of about thirty stadia in circumference, "dried this up." [2] Inventive and amusing, no doubt, but in point of real interest how inferior to what even a dry, historic, arithmetical account of the simple facts of the case would have been! Or take the ridiculous story of Xerxes scourging and branding the Hellespont.[3] Twenty times rather would we have a real glimpse of the real Xerxes in his authentic tragical fury than whole volumes of fictitious stories about him.

5. *Of the slaughter of Lacedæmonians and Argians.*—In the same author we read that 300 Lacedæmonians encountered 300 Argians in battle, and that only three of the combatants survived to tell the tale.[4] Clearly, this is a very large draft even upon credulity. At all events, it takes a strong

[1] 'Herodotus,' vii. 186.
[2] Ib., vii. 109.
[3] Ib., vii. 35.
[4] Ib., i. 82.

effort to think of it otherwise; and thus, failing to gratify our historic sense in its natural demand for authenticity, it evokes less interest than any authentic episode that is recorded, say, of the Field of Waterloo.

6. *Rather know one authentic deed of Hercules than all the fables about him.*—"I have been in several actions," says Philip de Comines, "where for one man that was really slain, they have reported a hundred." [1] There's the mischief: so many witnesses have so small a passion for the truth. Rather let us know one authentic deed of Hercules than all the fables about him; tell us of some fact, of some notable battle, rather than fable of "streams of blood able to turn mills"—as in some monkish historians.

7. *Of the dream of Crœsus*, &c.—Nor do we derive much historic pabulum from such stories as that of the dream of Crœsus about his son Atys and its involuntary fulfilment at the hands of Adrastus, or of the descent of Rhampsinitus into Hades, or of the twenty-nine years' siege of Azotus by Psammetichus, or of the miracle which happened at the temple of Minerva Pronæa.[2] *In the main they do but raise our curiosity as to what might be the historic basis of those stories.*

8. *Suetonian Stories.*—Suetonius tells us that when Claudius in his first consulship was entering the Forum with the fasces for the first time, an eagle alighted upon his right shoulder, and that this prodigy was prophetic of the dignity to which he was to rise.[3] Mere flimflam, I should say, without doubt; and far less interesting, in my opinion, than a common, true, official account

[1] 'Memoirs,' p. 130. The Duke of Burgundy lost at Granson "not above seven men-at-arms. The rest fled, and the Duke with them."—Ib., p. 400.

[2] 'Herodotus,' i. 34-45; ii. 122; ii. 157; viii. 37.

[3] 'Lives of the Cæsars: Claudius,' chap. vii.

of what actually took place would have been. Touching the race of the Cæsars, he gravely writes: "The race of the Cæsars became extinct in Nero, an event prognosticated by various signs, two of which were particularly significant. Formerly, when Livia, after her marriage with Augustus, was making a visit to her villa at Veii, an eagle flying by let drop upon her lap a hen with a sprig of laurel in her mouth, just as she had seized it. Livia gave orders to have the hen taken care of"—no wonder, I should think!—"and the sprig of laurel set; and the hen reared such a numerous brood of chickens that the villa to this day is called the Villa of the Hens. The laurel grove," he continues, "flourished so much that the Cæsars procured thence the boughs and crowns they wore at their triumphs. It was also their constant custom to plant others on the same spot immediately after a triumph; and it was observed a little before the death of each prince the tree which had been set by him died away. But in the last year of Nero the whole plantation of laurels perished to the very roots, and the hens all died"; and about the same time "the temple of the Cæsars, being struck with lightning, the heads of all the statues in it fell off at once, and the sceptre of Augustus was dashed from his hands."[1] He declares that while Galba, during his pro-consulship in Hispania Tarraconensis, was sacrificing in a temple, "a boy who attended with a censer became, all of a sudden, grey-headed"; that this incident "was regarded by some as a token of an approaching revolution in the Government; and that an old man should succeed a young one"; and that not long after "a thunderbolt falling into a lake in Cantabria, twelve axes were found in it, a manifest sign of the supreme

[1] 'Lives of the Cæsars: Galba,' chap. i.

power." [1] Now I do not contend that these stories have no interest. On the contrary, they are very interesting to the student of Humanity as showing the astounding credulity and superstition of the Ages which produced them, and the extreme feebleness of their understanding of the nature and demands of historic evidence—*a fact which should always be of the utmost significance to our theologians and Biblical critics especially;* but however inventive and amusing such stories may be—particularly that of the boy suddenly becoming grey-headed,—it seems to me that it would have been far preferable to have known the fabric of fact, if any, upon which they rested, even on the score of general interest.

9. *Julius Cæsar frequently seems to trifle with the truth.*—The great Julius himself seems to trifle with truth in the most extravagant manner, especially as to the numbers of the foes he encountered and overcame—*e.g.*, the Nervii.[2] So Hirtius, in his account, say, of the battle of Munda.[3] Such stories should only be told to simple people if the teller desires a receptive audience—to such people, for instance, as the Mariners of England.

10. *Vitality is the Soul of narrative.*—Similar remarks would apply to the early histories of all countries—exemplified, for instance, in Ethelward's 'Chronicle,' Asser's 'Life of Alfred,' Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'British History.' In any case, we require life or the life-like in a narrative. Fictitious narrative, of course, may be so well conceived and so well written as to render it undistinguishable almost from historic narrative, in which case the fictitious will vie with the historic in general interest—*e.g.*, Sir Walter's super-excel-

[1] 'Lives of the Cæsars: Galba,' chap. viii.
[2] 'Commentaries: The Gallic War,' ii. 28.
[3] 'The Spanish War,' chap. xxxi.

lent 'Waverley.' Vitality is the soul of narrative. *Cæteris paribus*, the most interesting of fictitious narratives will be that which is least distinguishable from the true. Glance, for instance, at some Bible stories.

11. *The Story of Ruth and Naomi.*—Naomi said to Ruth: "Behold thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people and unto her gods; return thou after thy sister-in-law." And Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave thee, for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Whether this story be essentially true or essentially fictitious, nobody can positively say; but for literary purposes it matters not. It is a beautiful story of beautiful friendship. True or fictitious, it is full of vitality. It is a tender little poem as it stands. Let a painter be attracted to the subject and succeed in bringing out the fulness of its beauty upon his canvas, and he will be a great artist.[1] The value of the canvas so covered will scarcely be expressible in mere guineas. *If the story be fiction only, its surpassing merit lies in the fact that it reads like essential truth.*

12. *Of Eli's death.*—Or take the story of Eli's death. "The Ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the Army, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat watching, for his heart trembled for the Ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told

[1] Blake's rendering of the story in the Tate Gallery seems to me to be but a barren effort.

it, all the city cried out. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said: What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. And the man said unto Eli: I am he that came out of the Army, and I fled to-day out of the Army. And he said, What is there done, my son? And the messenger answered and said: Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there also hath been a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God is taken. And it came to pass that when he made mention of the Ark of God, Eli fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died." The facts of this narrative contain the essence of splendid tragedy. *Supposing that a dramatist were to choose the story of Eli as the subject of a drama, the happiest thing he could do would be to develop his drama from the simple facts set forth in this simple narrative.*

13. *Of Samuel and Agag.*—Again, note that scene from the life of Samuel. "Then said Samuel, bring ye hither to me Agag the King of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." There is no grimmer passage in all the pages of fictional literature. It vibrates with the life of a stern fanatical nation in its sternest and most fanatical mood.

14. *Of David and Jonathan.*—In another vein the history of the friendship between Jonathan and David is probably as noble and beautiful and

inspiring as anything that could be found in the billion-fold pages of fiction. "Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse, rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die." The considerations urged upon him by his father are nothing to the royal soul of Jonathan. To so great a man an earthly kingdom is not of first-class importance. "And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? What has he done? And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him; whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month; for he was grieved for David because his father had done him shame." *Every line of the history palpitates with life.* Just notice also the meeting in the wilderness of Ziph, when Jonathan, having sought out David, "strengthened his hands in God." Such scenes must have been, and must continue to be, of profound interest to the nine choirs of angels. Fiction can add nothing to them except, it may be, to develop and organise them into a dramatic sequence and unity.

15. *Of David and Nabal.*—No less interesting, though in a very different way, is the passage between David and the churl, Nabal. David and his followers are still fugitives from Saul. As such they might have been excused if they had levied supplies by force from the people amongst whom they were wandering. But David had no such thoughts. He was much more willing to

give than to take, like all true men ; and it appears that he had actually conferred benefits upon Nabal by protecting his sheep-shearers in the fields. Being, however, in want of food for his men, he sends a gracious message to Nabal: "Peace be to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast." We have refrained from hurting thee in any way, "wherefore let the young men (my messengers) find favour in thine eyes, for we come in a good day; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David." A more reasonable and modest, yet, withal, princely message could not have been sent; but listen to Nabal's reply: "Who is David and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days who break away, every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" How complete the contrast between David and him—a noble person, on the whole, in contact with the basest of churls. The historic Nabal is perhaps a more interesting picture than the fictional Thersites. *If Nabal himself be fictional, a great merit of the composition would be that it so strongly gives the impression of authentic history.* And one might go through the whole history of the great Hebrew hero, and bring out fact after fact which would vie with the best fiction in interest.

16. *Of Elijah.*—Think again of the natural interest which pervades the story of Elijah, even if we eliminate the miraculous element. Take, for example, that meeting of his with Ahab. "It came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but

thou and thy father's house in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and have followed Baalim." Except, perhaps, in the way of expanding it a little, what can fiction of any kind, either in rhyme or paint, do to improve upon the scene? Or take that incident: "Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a message unto Elijah, saying: So let the gods do unto me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." What concentrated hatred, what intensity of dramatic force, in this brief passage, although the writer was, apparently, only trying to set down the simple facts of the case. Or take this tremendous passage: "The word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab, King of Israel: behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he has gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, hast thou killed and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab saith unto Elijah, hast thou found me, O mine enemy! And he answered, I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." Think of the dramatic living force of a scene like this. Beside it, I think that Iliads and Odysseys must take an inferior place. Or take the parting between Elijah and Elisha: "And it came to pass when they still went on and talked"—what Epic or Dramatic Poet may write a dialogue suitable for the occasion?—"that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into

Heaven.[1] And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof; and he saw him no more, and he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces." Taking this passage to be fictional, *the imagination which it displays is so vital and magnificent that it impresses us with all the strength of fact. There is no more vital passage in Homer.* I don't think that Dante saw anything so sublime even in his Ninth Heaven.

17. *Fiction is most emotive when it graphically renders great fact.* Or, turning to the New Testament, take the Baptist in the presence of Herod, and listen to his unflinching declaration of the marriage law; or think of him in the lonely mountain prison; or read the brief account of the Herodias banquet; or behold the majestic man summoned to secret execution; and I think we shall find ourselves forced to the conclusion that fact is, on the whole, more impressive than fiction; and that fiction consequently will be most powerful —*i.e.*, most emotive—when it very graphically renders great fact, or gives us inventions and imaginations which are strictly true to the spirit of nature. Yet we have Swinburne telling us in print that "Art takes no care of fact," and Reynolds declaring that whoever would paint a picture as a picture should be, must show us Nature "elevated and improved." How is a poet or a painter to work upon a scene with any chance of success at all unless he regard the facts primarily?

18. *Aristotle errs on this subject.*—Aristotle, I think, is not equal to himself when he writes on this subject. It is evident, says he, "that it is not the province of a poet to relate *things which have happened*, but such things as are possible

[1] How poor, again, is Blake's representation of this scene!

according to probability, or which would necessarily have happened" (perhaps there is a false rendering here?); "for an historian and a poet do not differ from each other because the one writes in verse and the other in prose; for the History of Herodotus might be written in verse, and yet it would be no less a history with metre than without metre. But they differ in this, that the one speaks of things that have happened, and the other of such things as might have happened." [1] The distinction drawn is, I think, quite arbitrary, and falls to pieces in view of the instances quoted. *And it might be added that "what might have happened" is only valid as poetry in the degree of its probability or truth to nature, unless the subject be one within the realm of pure imagination, which has canons of its own.*

19. *Incident in the life of St Peter.*—Glance also at an incident in the life of the Apostle Peter. In his great love to his Master, he thinks and says that he is prepared to go forth with him to prison and to death. Then comes the sequel—the Denial; Christ looking at him in the high priest's house; then the shame, the tears, and the great after-life. Fiction cannot possibly excel fact in noble interest; and yet, quoth Mr Swinburne, "Art takes no care of fact!"

20. *Incidents in the life of Christ.*—And if it be almost impossible for poetry or art to create greater scenes than may be found in the lives I have mentioned, it is scarcely probable that they will ever succeed in giving an adequate rendering to scenes in the life of Christ. Great pictures of some of them have doubtlessly been painted. Holman Hunt's "Finding of Christ in the Temple," for instance, is a noble and delightful picture; but shall we be rash enough to say that this picture,

[1] 'Poetics,' chap. ix.

fine though it be, "elevates and improves" nature? Or that, to use Mr Swinburne's phrasing, it "takes no care of fact"? Surely not. The essential merit of the picture, if I mistake not, is that, through the medium of line and colour, it represents to some extent what might actually have taken place on that supposed occasion: Mary bending over her young Son with a countenance expressive of deep maternal tenderness, whilst He, in youthful beauty, looks up with ineffable sweetness and serenity in his eyes, graphically significant of his perfect innocence. Over such a scene let not any artist or poet try to swell up into "elevation and improvement," or he will make a prodigious mistake. In waxing magniloquent he is almost sure to become stultiloquent. Rather let him render the historic, or the supposed, fact as clearly as he can imagine it; and after he has done his best, I apprehend that his picture, however noble it may be, will fall far short of the reality. With respect to the essential facts of the case, I think it will be found that to speak of "elevating and improving" them is absurd. So with the Gethsemane agonies, so with the tragedy of the Universe on Calvary. In all such cases I contend that the facts will be found to be far more impressive than any fiction that may be spun around them. "Jesus said unto the chief priests and captains of the Temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?" Mark you, *the very Church* did this bloody and preposterous thing! *Fiction is really nowhere beside fact unless when it has the cunning to clothe itself, as it were, in the garments of Fact.*

21. *The Trial and Death of Socrates.*—And I believe that the same principle will be found to hold good with respect to historic actuality in

general. Any one well read in History will be able to recall many instances illustrative of this truth. Take, for example, the trial, condemnation, and judicial murder of Socrates—the greatest man, probably, of classical antiquity. Note that this crime was not the work of some single, paltry, orgulous tyrant, but that of the sovereign people of Athens—the devil-bewitched democracy of that much-extolled city of light! Why this deed of shame? The ostensible charges were that he disbelieved in the national Gods, and by his teaching corrupted the youth of Athens. It seems quite clear that the Athenians themselves did not believe in these, their own, accusations. The life of Socrates was, in the best sense, transparently Godly; his teaching highly moral. The real reason of his accusation and condemnation seems to have been that the man was too noble for them to tolerate. This is Schwegler's view of the case. Socrates, as he says, was no aristocrat, "but he was too firm of character ever to lend himself to an accommodation with the humours of the sovereign masses, and too truly convinced of the necessity of a lawful and intelligent control of political affairs to be able to make friends with the Athenian democracy as it was. Only once, as chief president of the Prytanes, had he filled a public office, and then only to fall into opposition with the will of the people and of those who held power. There was added to this that *he allowed only men of knowledge and discrimination to be entitled to administer state affairs; that on every occasion he spoke against democratic institutions, especially election by ballot.*" (How gloriously different, say, from the late Mr W. E. Gladstone, or the late Sir William Harcourt, or the present Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman![1]) Further, "the

[1] Written during the Campbell-Bannerman supremacy.

would not condescend in any way to flatter the people, and in the proud confidence of his innocence he bade defiance to his judges." [1] Penalty —the Hemlock Cup! What a triumph of popular devilry! A triumph, of course, all to the confusion and damnation of the people themselves. Let modern democracies reflect upon it. But just think of the actuality of the scene—the greatest man of classical antiquity presented by the sovereign people of Athens with a cup of Hemlock for his virtuous labours! So discerning and humane were that sovereign people! Fiction can devise no grimmer scene.

22. *The best material of Poetry and Art is to be found in real Life.*—On this point, then, observe how we stand. *It is a common error to regard matter of fact as prosy.* There are lettered but ignorant people who rail at those who insist on fact and truth to Nature in Literature and Art. Nay, there are some who even try to rail at those who insist on fact and truth in Theology and Philosophy! They could not make a worse blunder. *They fail to notice that Fact embraces the whole Universe, and all the Divinity of thought and power as well as the Devilry which it manifests:* To rail at fact is to rail at the Divine, and to ignore the resources of the devilish. The bravest material of Poetry and Art is to be found in real life, as also the most astonishing instances of human baseness. Matter-of-fact deeds greater, probably, than have been invented or imagined, and fouler, perhaps, than could be anticipated, have been enacted. It is matter of fact that is most beautiful and sublime on the one side, and most horrific and revolting on the other, from Calvary downwards. "I wonder," says Montaigne, "that they who are addicted to the com-

[1] 'History of Philosophy,' pp. 44-5.

position of fictitious tales, do not rather cull out ten thousand very fine stories which are to be found in very good authors, that would save them the trouble of invention, and be more useful and entertaining." [1]

23. *Nature furnishes us with models in every field of Life.*—In a word, it may be taken that Nature furnishes us with models in every field of Life—in the true and the false, the kind and the cruel, the beautiful and the ugly, the serious and the trivial, the magnanimous and the base, the sublime and the ridiculous. Literature and Art can only attain to a noble development as growing out of a deep life-interest.

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. ii. p. 561. Mr Gosse writes: "When Malherbe arrived at Paris, he found the world tired of literary nonsense, 'and that what was wanted after such a glut of ornament and exuberance was an arbiter and tyrant of taste who should bring poetry rigidly into line with decency, plainness, and common-sense, qualities which had long been thought unnecessary to, and even ridiculously incompatible with, literature of a high order.'"—'Aspects and Impressions,' p. 134.

CHAPTER III.

THE SOURCES OF POETRY.

1. *The Science of Esthetics, like all other sciences, must be founded in Consciousness.*—"It is the perfection of a rational being," says that great philosopher Thomas Reid, "to have no belief but what is founded on intuitive evidence or just reasoning" [1]—a perfection which is, of course, only to be slowly acquired. "Never give an entire assent to any proposition," advises Malebranche, "except those which are so evidently true that we cannot refuse to admit them without an internal uneasiness and reproach of our reason." [2] Now, however little such precepts may be observed in practice, they ought to be observed not only in one or two, but in all departments of intellectual activity. The Science of Mathematics, as everybody knows, derives its impregnable strength from the intuition of First Principles; the Science of the Laws of Thought derives its unassailable validity from our mental constitution; the Moral Law derives its majesty from the same source. In the language of Metaphor, it is said to be written on the tablets of the Heart. In this sense it is

[1] 'Works,' p. 332 (Hamilton's Edition). No philosopher, no theologian, has truly begun to know his business until he has accepted this aphorism as the criterion of the true.

[2] Quoted by Hallam, 'Introduction to the Literature,' &c., Vol. iv. p. 217.

there written so legibly that even a poor creature like Rousseau, in laying down the sanctions for moral principles, was constrained to say: *Rentrez dans votre cœur et vous les y trouveriez.*

2. In order to find a sound basis for literary and artistic criticism, it will also be necessary, having placed ourselves, as it were, in the presence of Nature, to look into our own hearts for the object of our quest. Therefore, before attempting to lay down any definite critical principles, I ask the student's close attention to some very interesting psychological manifestations which are of constant occurrence.

3. *Exemplifications: a hedge by the roadside.*—Go along a country road on a spring morning. Look at the hedge on the roadside. You see a complex mass of stems and tangled twigs with buds opening and leaves expanding upon them. You can tell the scent, the shape, the taste, the colour of those buds and leaves. You will probably be able to say what kind of hedge it is: whether it is well or ill kept; whether it is suitable or not suitable for the place it occupies, and so forth. Indeed, a very ordinary and poorly endowed person may very easily be able to note all these facts regarding it—facts of kind, shape, quality, of sensation, and perception; but now notice another fact of your mental consciousness in presence of the hedge, another fact totally different in its kind from any I have yet mentioned—namely, a pleasurable emotion or feeling of delight (not a mere sensation, not a mere perception, nor any mere combination of such, but *an actual consciousness of delight*) arising from the contemplation of the object in front of you. Notice now particularly that this last mental manifestation or psychological result arising from the contemplation of the hedge is, in thought, quite

separable in its nature from the other psychological results. As a botanist, you may be concerned mainly about its kind, its parts, its habitat, its manner of growth, its general life-history; as a farmer, you may regard it from its qualities as a cattle fence; as a sportsman or a pedestrian desirous of striking a short passage to some place, you may be much concerned about its thorns in particular; but as a fairly well-endowed *Man*, whether sportsman, farmer, pedestrian, or botanist, you will, in addition to those interests, experience within your own consciousness that emotion of delight to which I have alluded. This and kindred emotions are the foundation of Esthetics, or the sense of the beautiful.[1]

4. *The Primroses under it.*—From the hedge itself cast your eyes downwards about the hedge roots. The primroses are in all their beauty. You may take cognizance of their shape, their scent, their number; you may relegate them in thought to the botanical genus or species to which they belong; you may consider them from the herbalist's point of view; but these same primroses, above and beyond the possibility or the probability of their giving rise to organic pleasure, or to a purely intellectual activity—these same

[1] Which doctrine seems to harmonise exactly with that of Ruskin, who thus wrote in his Swiss Diary: "I had a hot march among the vines and between their dead stone walls; once or twice I flagged a little, and began to think it tiresome; then I put my *mind* into the scene, instead of suffering the body only to make report of it; and looked at it with the possession-taking grasp of the imagination—the true one; it gilded all the dead walls, and I felt a charm in every vine tendril that hung over them. It required an effort to maintain the feeling: it was poetry while it lasted, and I felt that it was only while under it that one could draw, or invent, or give glory to, any part of such a landscape. I have not insisted enough on this source of all great contemplative Art. *The whole scene without it was but sticks and stones and steep dusty road.*"—E. T. Cook, 'Life of Ruskin,' Vol. i. p. 246.

primroses will, almost of a certainty, give rise within the mind of the well-endowed spectator to an emotion of delicate spiritual delight. This for our present purpose is the main fact to be noticed from our association with primrose life, the fact upon which the poets build—perhaps in the following simple manner :—

" The wee yellow primrose, sweet child o' the Spring,
Looks up to the sky when the lark's on the wing ;
And keeks frae its grassy bower cosy and green,
And nods to the daisy, its bonnie wee frien'.

" It grows on the bank and it grows on the brae,
And blooms by the streamlet that sings on its way ;
It shines on the grave where wee loved bairnies lie,
And mithers come there whiles to weep and to sigh.

" It grows near the palace and springs near the cot,
Its face is fu' bonnie, though lowly its lot ;
It smiles to the rich and it smiles to the puir ;
But dull prosy folk for its smiles dinna care.

" It shines like a star in the woodlands sae green,
And cheers lonely spots where it seldom is seen ;
But saft breezes kiss it and over it play,
And wee linties sing till't, the lang summer day.

" The silvery dews fa' on't on calm summer eves,
And dream a' the nicht on its pure silken leaves,
Such beauty its Maker the primrose has given,
O, surely an Angel cam' doon wi't frae Heaven."

5. *The birds chirping and twittering in the hedges.* —The birds, too, are darting about the hedges, chirping and twittering. They do not merely possess an ornithological interest. No mere treatise on sound, however able, is going to exhaust the interest of their chirping and twittering and warbling. The pleasure you receive from it does not end in the tickling of the auricular organ. No comparative anatomist, nor physiologist, nor biologist, no combination of such, however able, can by any treatise exhaust the interest and the sig-

nificance of the birds' lives to the well-endowed man. Much great intellectual interest is doubtlessly to be found in the anatomy, the physiology, and the biology of the birds; but higher perhaps, and more sacred than all, there remains the esthetical interest. How delicate the delight, how sweet the emotions of freshness and freedom and gladness inspired by the spring warblings of the lark, the mavis, or the blackbird! This is esthetic fact and ground of poesy. Such emotions are exquisitely expressed by Michael Bruce, for instance, in his "Ode to the Cuckoo"; by Burns in his addresses "To a Mouse" and "To a Daisy"; by Hogg, "To a Skylark"; by Shelley and Wordsworth on the same subject.

6. *The azure Dome overhead.*—Now look up into the azure Dome overhead. You experience a sensation of colour and a perception of wide-canopied space. You may begin to speculate on the composition of the atmosphere, or, being mathematically disposed, you may find yourself trying to follow an imaginary perpendicular line up into the blue vault—straining, perhaps, to arrive in thought at some point which might necessarily terminate your imaginary straight line.[1] In connection with this subject, there need be no end to the questions which might engage your intellectual energies. But those spacial, atmospherical, mathematical, or any other purely intellectual questions, do not exhaust the implications of the mighty Dome. Beyond, and, it may be, above them all, are the emotional activities inspired by the view, the emotions of gladness and freedom, of wonder or worship, or other

[1] According to Professor Einstein and his disciples, we ought to be able to achieve this feat, which shows that they have not yet apprehended the nature of Necessary Truth and its implications. This subject is discussed in my 'Grammar of Philosophy,' chap. vi.

esthetical activity, corresponding to the character and mood of the beholder; high spiritual experiences, the authentic fact and substance of poesy.

7. *A Mountain Top.*—Or take your way up into a mountain. A geologist may furnish you with a very good hypothesis as to how the mountain came to be reared up. Turn your attention to the rent and torn crags. A physicist can immediately give you a very good and probably a true theory of the ways and means by which they were torn and rended. But the scientific or purely physical aspect of the case is far from exhausting the interest of those mighty crags. Your esthetic faculty is aroused. They raise within you a profound consciousness of loneliness, silence, desolation, majesty, awe, wonder, solemnity. If every crack and fissure visible in the riven peak could be scientifically explained, the esthetical implications and effects of the whole scene would remain to charm the emotional spectator as long as the peak endured. From such considerations it will appear how utterly silly is the notion which has gained some currency, that the advance of science will destroy poetry![1] Or that there is any hostility or incompatibility between the claims of science and poetry at all. On the contrary, I submit that in all our poetry and fiction there should be a strong substratum of truth, of credible invention, and imaginative veracity.

8. *The Seaside.*—Now let us betake ourselves

[1] Dr Dowden makes a mistake on the opposite side. Poetry, he declares, "must be truer than History, or it has no right to exist."—'The French Revolution and English Literature,' p. 165. It will not do. But elsewhere he finely says, "Shakespeare had become assured that the facts of the World are worthy to command our highest ardour; that the more we penetrate into fact, the more will our nature be quickened, enriched, and exalted."—'Shakespeare: his Mind and Art,' p. 107.

to the seaside. Here again we shall find magnificent fact and ground for noblest poetry. Far away to the edge of the horizon, where sky and ocean meet, rolls the tumbling and tossing waste of waters. It possesses a thousand purely intellectual interests: interests for the chemist; interests for the geologist and the hydrographer, the biologist, the physicist; interests, indeed, for everybody of any intellectual endowment. How interesting, for instance, is Tait's calculation that the depression in the sea-level, due to the compressibility of water, is about 116 feet, and that but for this compression the sea would submerge a farther 2,000,000 square miles of land.[1] It is also interesting to read that "sea water (if the statement be true) is the only menstruum capable of dissolving gold."[2] But get all possible information on as many of those subjects as you like: ascertain the dynamical equation of the waves exhausting their energies at your feet, obtain a catalogue of the fishes which find a living in the waters before you, analyse those waters to their last discoverable constituents, follow out to the end your geological or your hydrographical speculations; and after you have done all this you are as yet possessed of no more than what we might call the physical views of the matter. But the interests of the Ocean do not die down into mere physics—are not to be embraced by mere physical analysis and speculation. If you are a well-endowed *man* as well as a physical analyst and speculator, you will find the scene before you rich in esthetic effects. You will find the best part of your being vibrating with delightful emotions of wonder, solemnity, sublimity—the vastness, the loneliness, the breezy freshness,

[1] 'Athenæum,' 1890, Vol. ii. p. 229.
[2] Goldsmith, 'Animated Nature,' Vol. i. p. 110.

the power of the Ocean, conducing to such effects. In a word, you will find your spiritual being thrilling, as it were, with a voiceless melody, which, for want of a better name, we will call Ocean Music :—

> " There is a pleasure in the pathless woods ;
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore ;
> There is Society where none intrudes,
> By the wild sea, and music in its roar." [1]

9. *The esthetical result and its nature.*—In passing I would request the student to notice very carefully the prodigious importance of those esthetical facts. Your mere chemist—*i.e.*, chemist and nothing but chemist (if there could be such a monster)—would regard our seaside scene with no more emotion than if he were gazing upon a pot of treacle ; your mere hydrographer would take its soundings and mark its depths and shallows, its shoals and reefs and channels, with no more emotion than a tailor would experience in measuring you for a suit of clothes. To him there might be nothing more divine than tape in all the world. Your mere biologist need show no more feeling in his business than a herring-curer in salting herrings. Your mere geologist might be as secular and profane in his speculations as any gambler at the Board of Green Cloth. Not so with the highly endowed person—the *Man*. He is, of course, open to recognise the scene in all its parts,

[1] ' Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,' canto ix. " No poetry of shipwreck and the Sea," says Swinburne, " has ever equalled the great scene of Pericles."—' Essays and Studies,' p. 244. Surely a Swinburnian extravagance. Does he really think, I wonder, that Byron's stanzas on the Ocean are " all rant and cant and glare and splash and splutter " ? (*vide supra*, chap. i. par. 32.) Ruskin thinks that " there is nothing in sea-description detailed like Dickens's storm at the death of Ham in ' David Copperfield.' " —' Modern Painters,' Vol. i. p. 456. The sea-scene at Sumburgh Head in Scott's ' Pirate ' is finely described (chap. vii.)

and to appreciate all their physical implications; but at the same time he is chiefly impressed with it as a whole. He is awakened by it in the more Divine part of his nature, and thrilled by its spiritual melodies. He recognises and rejoices in the glory of the object he beholds, and enters into a kind of spiritual communion with it, as in the verses quoted.

10. *The "Metaphysical Poets."*—"About the beginning of the seventeenth century," wrote Dr Johnson, "there appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets. . . . They were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour; but unluckily, resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote verses."[1] No hope of poetry from men who approach Nature in that poor spirit.

11. *By a brook-side.*—To return. Corresponding experiences ensue if we betake ourselves from the shores of the Ocean to the side of some clear brook rippling over the stones. Here are not only facts of stone, and facts of water and facts of gravitational force, and so on, but in addition thereto, and arising from them, we have esthetical implications of highest worth. It may be remembered what Sir Walter Scott says of the prototype of the "Black Dwarf" in the introduction to his rather abortive novel of that name: "The soft sweep of the green hills, the bubbling of a clear fountain, or the complexities of a wild thicket, were scenes on which he often gazed with inexpressible delight." There is a world of suggestion in this brief note. It is a key to the understanding of poetry and the poetic temperament. To go back to the side of our brook, we may perceive in the first place what may be called the physical

[1] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 160.

and secular facts of the case—such as the potentiality of driving a mill with, or obtaining electric light from, its waters; the possibility of obtaining gravel from its bed for your garden walks, or of hooking a trout out of it for your breakfast: very important facts, let it be admitted. But whilst all this is true, let it not be forgotten that the brook possesses a higher and nobler significance —namely, the power of entrancing the greatest of minds with its beauty; the power, it may be, of holding you for hours together in sweet contemplation even as it could hold the prototype of the Black Dwarf. Briefly, our clear brook is not only a fountain of liquid which may be expressed in chemical formulæ. In the mind of the enlightened and endowed spectator it may bubble up into purest poesy, as in Tennyson's delightful poem on the subject; or in the magic verses of Robert Burns in "Hallowe'en":—

"Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glittered in the nightly rays
Wi' bickerin', dancin' dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night";

or Shakespeare's delightful lines in the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona':—

"The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopped, impatiently doth rage;
But when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage;
And so by many winding nooks he strays,
With willing sport, to the wild ocean."

12. *Summary of results in the realms of material Nature.*—Thus in the realms of material Nature

we are able to make out the sources of Poetry quite clearly. In viewing any scene of external nature we discriminate various kinds of conscious activities, subjective as well as objective. We are conscious of certain perceptions and sensations in presence of the scene; and we can proceed to build up a systematic knowledge of it out of those perceptions and sensations. But there is also a third kind of consciousness aroused within us in the presence of a beautiful scene—namely, that priceless joyance or pleasure or emotion arising from the contemplation of it as a whole. Within this third kind of consciousness lie the sources of Poetry, in the exploration of which there is a probability of greatly extending the domain of science.

13. *In Human Relationships.* — But this emotional consciousness does not arise from the contemplation of material nature only. It is probably still more vivid and more active in the contemplation of what we may call spiritual nature.

14. *Between a mother and her son.*—Take some cases. Here is a good mother who has come to see her son receive a prize at a school of the humbler sort. After the prize-giving is over, see the loving admiration with which she regards him, pressing into his hands her gift of oranges and apples, dowered with as much wealth of affection as if they were precious jewels. No true man can look upon the incident in a spirit of poor and dry and cold intellection only. In addition to perceiving the maternal act and marking the relationship between the parties, the witness of worth experiences over the scene, the thrilling of a tender and beautiful emotion. The dry cold act of intellection arising out of it is indeed a fact, but the concomitant emotion is a greater

fact, containing in it the raw material of Poetry, which is to say that if the emotional beholder have the gift of poetical composition, he may make a poem out of the scene, whilst the non-emotional beholder could make nothing out of it if he continued his attempts till Doomsday. A silk purse, it is well known, is not obtainable from the porcine ear, nor is there any possibility of Poetry being composed by any person destitute of feeling. Feeling is of the very essence of Poetry.

15. *The departure of emigrants.*—Or take the departure of an emigrant from his home. Such a scene, either to the principals themselves or to the well-endowed observer, is very different from going through the Multiplication Table, or demonstrating some Euclidian proposition. It is much more than a cold intellectual process. It gives rise to an emotional stirring of Human Nature to its very depths, and sometimes rouses the feelings to a painful pitch of intensity. Scottish Literature furnishes fine examples of poetry derived from this source, particularly in exquisite songs such as "Lochaber no more," "Gae bring to me a pint o' Wine," "The Sun rises bright in France," and their like. In every long "good-bye" there is this stirring of emotion, as well as the mere cognition of leave-taking. More, the stirring of the emotion is the sacred part of the leave-taking. Therein lies the possibility of the potentiality of overt Poetry.

16. *The supposed parting between Brutus and Cassius.*—Take the parting between Brutus and Cassius on the field of Philippi, as supposed and depicted by Shakespeare :—

> "*Cassius.* If we do lose this battle, then is this
> The very last time we shall speak together :
> What are you then determined to do ?

Brutus. Even by the rule of that philosophy
By which I did blame Cato for the death
Which he did give himself.
Cassius. Then, if we lose this battle,
You are contented to be led in triumph
Through the streets of Rome ?
Brutus. No, Cassius, no : think not, thou noble Roman,
That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome ;
He bears too great a mind. But this same day
Must end that work the Ides of March began ;
And whether we shall meet again I know not.
Therefore our everlasting farewell take :
For ever and for ever, farewell, Cassius !
If we do meet again, why, we shall smile ;
If not, why then, this parting was well made.
Cassius. For ever and for ever, farewell, Brutus !
If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed ;
If not, 'tis true this parting was well made."

It would take one fortified with a wooden head against all the Muses not to be touched by this scene : " Lively feelings of situations and power to express them," says Goethe, these " make the poet." [1] " To describe any scene well, the poet must make the bosom of a man his *camera obscura*, and look at it through this, then would he see poetically," says Richter.[2] We may depend upon it, I think, that in the dramatic passage just quoted, the heart of the great dramatist himself thrilled with real emotion as he wrote this living scene, although it was only figured in his own imagination. Without such emotion the Fountains of Helicon would cease to flow.

17. *A poor urchin at a confectioner's shop window.*—Life is full of emotional influences. Here is a poor tattered urchin gazing wistfully and hungrily upon the viands set forth in a con-

[1] ' Conversations with Eckermann,' p. 159.

[2] Carlyle, ' Essays,' Vol. iv. p. 96. See also Véron, ' Æsthetics,' pp. 89-90 and note. And a critic in ' The Times Literary Supplement ' aptly says, " The great artist is one who can charge a figure with all the passions, who can make people or things expressive by his very manner of representing them."—5th January 1922.

fectioner's shop window. What shall happen to the observer with whom the matter ends in cold observation? Unless he feel a glow of compassion over the scene, we beg leave to regard such observer as the merest fraction of a man. His head might be unwrongfully drafted for service into the window of a wig-shop. Observation, indeed, must precede feeling, but it would be better almost not to observe certain things at all than to observe them and not feel. Poetry remains a dead letter to any person until he not only knows but feels. All high things probably remain a dead letter to him until he not only knows but feels. Feeling, capability of profound emotion, is perhaps the very soul not only of all poetry but of all greatness. It is *par excellence* the work of the poet to address himself to the emotional part of our nature.

18. *Poetical and prose statements.* — Here is Shakespeare's way of describing a harsh and niggardly person :—

> "My master is of churlish disposition,
> And little recks to find the way to Heaven
> By doing deeds of hospitality."
> —'As You Like It,' ii. 4.

The mere prose statement would be : "My master is unkind and churlish," carrying with it a minimum infusion of the feeling of contemplative reprobation.

Henry the Fifth says to Grey and Scroop :—

> "You must not dare for shame to talk of mercy :
> For your own reasons turn into your bosoms
> As dogs upon their masters worrying them."
> —'King Henry Fifth,' ii. 2.

A bald prose remonstrance might have run : "You are but contradicting and condemning yourselves." By rhetorising his argument a little, he infuses that glow of feeling into it which lifts it above

the level of prose, and renders it dramatic and poetical.

Welcoming the approach of war, the fiery Hotspur thus expresses himself :—

> " The mailéd Mars shall on his altar sit
> Up to the ears in blood."
> —1 ' Henry Fourth,' iv. 1.

Worcester considers it impossible to patch up a successful reconciliation with Henry :—

> " For treason is but trusted like the fox,
> Who ne'er so tame, so cherish'd and lock'd up,
> Will have a wild trick of his ancestors."
> —Ib., v. 2.

Buckingham, in ' Richard the Third,' describes a lady past her prime as—

> " A beauty-waning and distressed widow
> Even in the afternoon of her best days."
> —iii. 7.

A toiler in prose could not do it so happily. In ' Hero and Leander,' Marlowe says :—

> " Where both deliberate the love is slight,
> Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight ? "

In ' The Queen of Corinth ' Beaumont and Fletcher obtest :—

> " Joys as winged dreams fly past :
> Why should sadness longer last ? "

In these verses we can scarcely fail to perceive a genuine infusion of feeling. Or take a ballad couplet from ' Thomas the Rhymer ' :—

> " And see not ye that bonnie road
> That winds about the fernie brae ? "

Contrast with a prose statement—" the road over the hill." There are those, of course, who are

stone-deaf to the music and charm of beautiful thought—who would scarcely detect the difference between the strains of Amphion's lyre and a policeman's rattle.

19. *All poetry originates in the affections of the poet.*—Notice again, for instance, how Wordsworth, in "The Excursion," thinks of the ruined cottage which has been the home of the gentle-hearted Margaret :—

> "Oh, Sir, the good die first,
> And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
> Burn to the socket. Many a passenger
> Hath blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks,
> When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn
> From that forsaken spring ; and no one came
> But he was welcome ; no one went away
> But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,
> The light extinguished of her lonely hut,
> The hut itself abandoned to decay,
> And she forgotten in the quiet grave." [1]

The external facts are there, of course, but they are rendered rich and beautiful by the gently reminiscent and mournful spirit in which they are presented by the poet ; and thus presented they can scarcely fail to make us participate in the poet's emotions. *Thus it may be taken that all poetry originates in the affections of the poet, in the profound interest with which he looks upon nature, in the awe which he feels concerning the Divine, in the sympathy by which he is animated towards his fellow-creatures. Always take care that your "flowers of eloquence" grow out of a living stem.*

20. *Scene at a street fire.*—Take another kind of scene. A fire has broken out at night in a poor street house. Excitement arises ; people gather. In the confusion it is not apprehended at first that anybody is in danger, but shortly it is realised that there is a poor family in the house. For a

[1] 'The Wanderer.'

terrible moment everybody is paralysed; but an instant later a man advances from amongst the gathering spectators, vigorously applies himself to the door, and forces it in. Thereupon fierce flames dart out upon him, and he starts back irresolute. A moment's pause, and he is among the flames on a mission as heroic as was ever undertaken by a Knight of the Round Table. He returns no more. When the fire burns out, his ashes are discovered where he fell. Such an event took place in the Cowgate of Edinburgh (if I remember rightly) many years ago. The hero was a man of humble calling—a shoemaker, I think. When the event recurs to our memories it passes not away in a mere mental vision of a burning house, and an excited crowd, and sparks flying, and a man bursting open the door; but with all this we are at the same time filled with a feeling or emotion of the morally sublime. The terror of the scene is softened by the grandeur of it. We thrill with high joy over our shoemaker hero. The feeling of horror over his earthly fate is overwhelmed by that of exultation over his heroism, and out of this again we would argue a great future for him. In short, there is an immortal significance in this moral emotion. I am strongly disposed to think that the universe itself would be all wrong, utterly out of joint, if for him that blazing doorway were nothing more than a tragical entrance to death and eternal oblivion. This, however, is beside the main question under consideration. The present point is that we not only survey the case intellectually, but that we are also deeply thrilled and moved by it. In this soul-thrilling or emotion lies the source of Poetry. The person who might not be deeply moved in the contemplation of such a scene would be for ever incapable of saying or writing anything moving about it,

and would, of course, remain for ever unmoved by anything that might be said or written about it. One of the kind is lacking in the noblest elements of Human Nature; he is allied to the Clod, and might say with the pigs:—

> "Have we not found out how pleasant
> 'Tis to eat and grunt untrammelled!" [1]

which, by the way, would be an excellent motto for the Hedonist. If such a person could get to Heaven, his interests there would probably be exhausted in the Celestial Pantry.

21. *In a country Churchyard.*—Continuing our investigation into the sources of Poetry, let us stroll into an old country churchyard. Probably it is an ill-kept one, but for our present purposes that does not matter. We see the grey old church, the moss-grown gravestones, the world-old symbols of mortality sculptured upon them, the rank grass growing high round about them. To the philosophic mind those objects suggest thought, meditation, contemplation, out of which grows emotion, tender or sorrowful or solemn as the case may be, all attuned to the strain and character of the thought. In this connection study, for instance, Gray's glorious Elegy, or take just a couplet from Wordsworth. When, looking round the mural tablets in a country church, he speaks of certain of them as commemorative of—

> "Youth or maiden gone before their time,
> And matrons and unwedded sisters old," [2]

he is speaking of them with emotion—that is, affectionately and poetically. Let them be spoken of as married women and spinsters merely, and you have heartless and unfeeling prose, although it would be quite intelligible. *The heart is the fountain*

[1] Calderon, 'The Sources of Sin,' p. 183.
[2] 'The Excursion: The Pastor.'

of Poetry, and indeed it has no existence but as springing from the heart. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth and addeth learning to his lips." [1]

22. But this I also apprehend: the greater and nobler the thinking power exercised, the greater and nobler will be the emotions awakened in the situation suggested. Noble thoughts will always be accompanied by emotions of a corresponding kind, whilst small thoughts about small things will be accompanied by meagre emotions, or perhaps by no emotions at all. Small persons dote upon small things, and are almost incapable of emotion; great persons glory in great things, and are in full emotional accordance with them.

23. *In a great Cathedral.*—Enter now a great Cathedral. We all know that it implies far more than a large building built for ecclesiastical purposes after a certain model, or upon certain architectural principles. The Cathedral, though it be but the work of man, has great esthetical as well as intellectual implications. "Oh, but the building was a grand and overpowering sight," says one in 'Mansie Waugh,' "making man dree the sense of his own insignificance even in the midst of his own handiwork." This strikes the right note. The great Cathedral fills the healthy soul with the emotions of solemnity, awe, worship—with such emotions as in the case of a Milton can scarcely rest in the emotion, but will seek for utterance in sweet Poetry. Notice the same feeling expressed by Shakespeare in viewing a heathen sacrifice:—

> "O, the sacrifice,
> How ceremonious, solemn and unearthly
> It was i' the offering." [2]

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[1] Emotion will correspond to the quality of thinking, and *vice versa*.

[2] 'Winter's Tale,' iii. 1.

Thus also Racine :—

" Tout respire ici, Dieu, la paix, la verité." [1]

24. *The Cathedral Music.*—Whilst you are in the Cathedral an organist gives voice to the organ, pealing forth some great religious piece. You may be the equal of a Tyndall, competent to discuss and expound the laws of acoustics ; but this is of comparatively small account. The music of the organ has far nobler implications than are to be found in those laws. It does not end in making a pleasant noise in your ears merely, but it also thrills you through and through with delightful emotions—perhaps such as those expressed by Milton :—

" But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale,
And love the high embowered roof
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight
Casting a dim religious light ;
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full voiced quire below,
In service high and anthem clear,
As may with sweetness through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes."

25. *The Cathedral Bells.*—Then listen to the Cathedral Bells on a calm evening. As the sound floats to you over hill and dale and stream, you hear much more, I hope, than the clashing together by human agency of certain pieces of cold metal. It suggests much more than a series of aerial waves breaking upon the drum of your ear and giving rise to certain neural vibrations. Many professors may furnish you with much ingenious information—at least they may give you some ingenious speculations on such vibra-

[1] 'Esther,' Prologue.

tions and their exciting causes ; [1] but these vibrations, though indispensable, are only a comparatively small part of the effect resulting from the ringing of the bells. In its noblest mood the Human Mind will scarcely concern itself at all about the aerial waves or the neural vibrations, or about the bare clashing together of the pieces of cold metal. Far beyond all such effects are the beautiful feelings to which they give rise—the emotions, it may be, of solemnity, or of sacred tranquillity, or of worship, raising the thoughts of the listener from Earth to Heaven. It is out of such emotions, so real and splendid are they, that Tennyson and Edgar Allen Poe have created their glorious Poetry of Bells.

26. *The Esthetics of Historic Scenes—the Storming of Bezier.*—When we turn to the consideration of historic scenes we have analogous results. Take an incident in the Albigensian War, which was kindled by Pope Innocent III. against the Albigeois because they disagreed with his Holiness over certain theological and sacerdotal questions. It began with the storming of Bezier, which was followed by a massacre of the populace of that unhappy place. Some witnesses declare, it appears, that not a person escaped, which I take to be an exaggeration ; but whether so or not, enough must have been done in the way of massacre to make all Hell jubilant. One less superstitious and less savage soul amongst the fanatical horde of murderers who were about to be let loose on the place, inquired very reasonably how the Catholics were to be distinguished from the Heretics ; and in answer to this inquiry a Cistercian monk, one of the Popish leaders, is declared to have

[1] See, for instance, Véron, 'Æsthetics,' note, p. 91. The materialising philosophers have written infinite quantities of jargon on this and kindred subjects, without knowing it, of course.

replied, "Kill them all; God will know his own." [1] Now in reading of such proceedings our psychological experiences embrace not only a mental apprehension of the incidents narrated, but a whole combination as well, of passions and emotions—of wrath and disgust and horror against Pope Innocent himself, against the dreadful monk who was so well acquainted with the mind of God, and against the priest-ridden horde of murderers who executed the bloody crime.

27. *The last days of Louis the Eleventh.*—In sober history it is recorded of the last days of Louis the Eleventh that "as he felt his disorder increasing he shut himself up in a palace near Tours to hide from the world the knowledge of his decline. His solitude was like that of Tiberius at Capreæ, full of terror and suspicion and deep consciousness of universal hatred. The palace, fenced with portcullises and spikes of iron, was guarded by archers and crossbowsmen, who shot at any that approached by night. Few entered this den; but to them he showed himself in magnificent apparel, contrary to his former custom, hoping thus to disguise the change in his meagre body. He distrusted his friends and kindred, his daughter and his son, the last of whom he had not suffered even to read and write, lest he should too soon become his rival. No man ever so much feared death, to arrest which he stooped to every meanness and sought every remedy. His physician had sworn that if he were dismissed, the King would not survive a week; and Louis, enfeebled by sickness and terror, bore the rudest usage from this man, and endeavoured to secure his services by vast rewards. Always credulous in relics, though seldom restrained by superstition from any crime, he eagerly bought up treasures

[1] Hallam, 'Middle Ages,' Vol. i., note, p. 29.

of this sort, and even procured a Calabrian hermit to journey as far as Tours in order to restore his health." [1] This appears to be a perfectly sober account of the last days of that terrible creature. Notice again that the bare reading of it need not end in a cold, bare, dry, intellectual interest. We are also profoundly impressed by it. The diseased body clad in magnificent robes; the despotic King dreaded by, yet dreading, everybody, and trembling at the approach even of his physician; hating and yet fawning upon him; jealous, actually, of his own son; his castle of Plessis bristling with defences, and yet wholly defenceless against the foe whom he most feared; the wretch quaking at the thought of Omnipotence, and yet vilely trying to circumvent Omnipotence through relics and leaden saints! This bare historic narration contains within it all kinds of horrific elements. It shows villainy—even prosperous villainy—sinking deeper and deeper into perdition at every footstep. It is filled with the deadly sarcasm of Nature against scoundrelism—emphasising that "the great God who formed all things, both rewardeth the fool and rewardeth transgressors." It is a farce-tragedy of the most appalling kind. Dunbar and Holbein, in their different arts, might profitably have turned their attention to this subject—this grim Dance-Royal of Devilry and Death.

28. *The Story of the Lambertazzi.*—Or take the following dark Italian story of the Middle Ages. A noble young lady at Bologna, Imalda de Lambertazzi, was surprised by her brother in a secret interview with Boniface Gieremei, whose family had long been at deadly enmity with her own. She had just time to escape whilst the Lambertazzi, her brothers, dispatched Gieremei with poisoned

[1] Hallam, 'Middle Ages,' Vol. i. pp. 26-7.

daggers. Almost immediately afterwards she returned, it appears, to the scene, and, finding the body of the murdered man still warm, fondly hoped to restore him by sucking the poison from his wounds. The result was that she poisoned herself in the attempt, and she and Boniface Gieremei were found stretched lifeless side by side by her attendants.[1] Here again is the very drama of life, of feud and faction, of love and hate: such drama as can scarcely fail to arouse the appropriate emotions of sympathy and horror in the heart of the attentive listener.

29. *The execution of Louis the Sixteenth.*—In life and history, again, we find many cases which yield the emotion of moral sublimity—perhaps, in its finest phases, the noblest of all emotions. Take what appears to be a more or less authentic account of incidents which occurred at the execution of Louis the Sixteenth. When the procession arrived, says Alison, at the place of execution, near the centre of the Place Louis Fifteenth, which was lined by cannon and crowded by spectators, the carriage stopped, and the King whispered to the Abbé Edgeworth, the priest who attended him, "This is the place, is it not?" He then descended from the carriage, and undressed himself without the aid of the executioners, exhibiting only a momentary indignation when they began to bind his hands. "No," said he, "I will never submit to that." Hereupon the executioners called for aid, and the King looking to the Abbé as if for counsel, the latter exclaimed, "Submit to that outrage as the last resemblance to the Saviour, Who is about to recompense your sufferings." To which the King replied, "Nothing but such an example would make me submit to such an affront. Now, do as you please; I will

[1] Hallam, 'Middle Ages,' Vol. i. p. 402.

drink the cup to the dregs." Thus resigned, he walked to the foot of the scaffold, the Abbé saying to him, "Son of Saint Louis, ascend to Heaven." Having mounted the scaffold, he advanced to the front of it with a firm step, silenced the drummers with a look, and tried to say a few words to the wild crowd in front of him. His purpose was prevented. At a word from Santerre the drums sounded, the executioner seized the King, and the accursed deed was done.[1] The narrative awakens not only a bare apprehension of the facts, but also arouses within us a profound emotion, or rather set of emotions—indignation, sorrow, awe, admiration—all mingled harmoniously together, as, even in thought, we behold the spectacle of a man nobly contending against overwhelming powers of evil. Virtue militant is not merely correct and satisfactory, but it also gives rise to the glorious emotion of the morally sublime; so that, within the region of the emotions, the horror of such a scene as the execution of Louis the Sixteenth is actually effaced to some extent by its moral grandeur.[2]

30. *The execution of Philippe Egalité.*—How different in some respects are the emotions aroused by the accounts of the execution of Philippe Egalité. On the scaffold, says Carlyle, the executioner was for drawing off his boots. "Tush!" said Philippe, "they will come better off after; *depêchons-nous.*"[3] As our great original his-

[1] Alison, 'History of Europe,' Vol. iii. p. 73-4. Since the above was written I have learned that this episode is not to be found in the Abbé's own account of the execution, and that it was probably invented by Lacretelle. See 'Athenæum,' 7th June 1913, p. 615, reviewing 'The Abbé Edgeworth and his Friends,' by V. M. Montague.

[2] Compare with the fictitious incident in 'The Dead Heart,' subsequently discussed, chap. ix. sect. 13.

[3] 'French Revolution,' Vol. iii. p. 209.

torian remarks in another place: "Miserablest of mortals doomed for picking pockets have a whole five-act tragedy within them in their dumb pain. As they go to the gallows unregarded, they consume the cup of trembling down to the lees"; and as we survey such scenes even in the undemonstrative pages of History, we do not merely apprehend them intellectually, but we also respond to them emotionally. In the case of Philippe Egalité, the man was a *roué*, a ruffian, a general scoundrel, a real son of Belial. He would have made an ideal citizen of Sodom or Gomorrah; but there was a potentiality of virtue (which is very instructive) even in this disastrous soul. There were actually to be found in him the virtues of promptitude and resolution in action, and fortitude in suffering. "My boots will come better off after; *depêchons-nous.*" Wretch though he was, there was no whining in his composition. With steady front he trudged manfully to his doom. So far Virtue was militant; and Virtue militant, I repeat, gains not only our intellectual appreciation, but, of necessity, arouses noble emotions in the noble heart; and as we, in mental vision, witness poor Philippe manfully departing into darkness, that vision awakens within us a real sympathy for his woes—a sympathy which for the time being hangs a veil over his wicked and foolish life, and leads us to grieve over the wasted possibilities of his existence. We see that even a ruffian may die greatly, and by the manner of his dying give rise to high emotions. Such emotions belong to what we might conveniently call the Esthetics of Ethics.

31. *Lord Balmerino's last words to Lord Kilmarnock.*—In another vein, take an episode of the Rebellion of '45. At their execution on Tower Hill, Lord Balmerino took leave of Lord Kilmarnock with these words: "I am only sorry

that I cannot pay all this reckoning alone. Once more, my dear lord, farewell for ever." [1]

32. *Adam Ferguson at Fontenoy.*—Adam Ferguson, the Historian, when he was chaplain to the Black Watch, appeared in the fighting line at Fontenoy, whereupon his commanding officer reminded him that his commission did not warrant his presence there. "Then," said Adam gently, "damn my commission!" and threw it at his Colonel.[2] A council of Dramatists and Poets could scarcely have furnished him with a more pithy rejoinder. The Dramatist who might try to "improve" upon it, might *not* improve upon it.

33. *A Waterloo Anecdote.*—Colonel Blair told Walter Scott that at the beginning of the Battle of Waterloo it was necessary to prevent our men from breaking their ranks. He expostulated with one man: "Why, my good fellow, you cannot propose to beat the French alone; better keep your ranks." Whereupon the man (one of the 71st), returning to the ranks, replied: "I believe you, sir, but I'm a man of a very hot temper." [3] While in itself the episode is a potential source of poetry, no fictionist in creation could add anything to the unconscious humour, or give us a more vivid impression, of the heroic battle-straining eagerness of the man. It is as good as anything in Homer.

34. *Some episodes of our own time.*—Familiar episodes of our own time also are completely opposed to the conclusions of Macaulay and Swinburne that facts are the dross of History. David Livingstone, solitary in the heart of Africa, writing brave letters to his son—letters glowing with apostolic fervour; General Gordon at Khar-

[1] Sir Henry Craik, 'A Century of Scottish History,' Vol. i. p. 315.
[2] Ib., Vol. ii. p. 211.
[3] Scott, 'Journal,' Vol. ii. p. 238.

toum scanning the desert horizon in vain for deliverance—deliverance not so much for himself as for his poor followers; and then the hero dying under the knives of cut-throats. Poetry or art can scarcely get hold of greater or more tragical material.

35. *Great memories are a great national asset.*—Some of these episodes belong to the glorious moments in the history of our country and of man. We should all rejoice in such stories—stories which tend to exalt Humanity—more than over a division of spoil. Our youth should be nourished in the frequent contemplation of heroic deeds. In the interests of the highest education and of true civilisation, I would, if I could, try to fortify our Youth with the spirit of such stories. All material wealth piled in a heap is of no account beside the worth of the spirit. Great memories are a great national asset—the very greatest; and the more they are known and cherished, the more valuable do they become to the Nation possessing them.

36. *The esthetics of the Supernatural.*—And to return, not only do we experience varied emotions in the presence of Nature and as witnesses of actual human episodes and incidents, but we also experience emotions of yet another kind in the presence of what may be deemed the Supernatural, or even in the apprehension of, or hearing about, the Supernatural. It is highly probable, I believe, that if we could experience the visions of a Hamlet or a Brutus, we should be profoundly moved by them, since they are impressive even in a good stage representation. Who is there, again, so purely and impassively intellectual as not to experience the emotion of what the Scots call "eeriness" as he listens to a good ghost story? This feeling is manifested throughout

Literature, ancient and modern.[1] And again, very few, I daresay, would be found so proof against this kind of feeling as to be quite willing, though provided with physical comforts, to spend, say, a night alone in a lonely churchyard. Now in such a case the feeling of dread would scarcely arise from any apprehension of bodily danger. Physical fear, I think, would not—at all events it need not—be the source of the feeling at all; but it would actually arise probably from the involuntary apprehension of supernatural presences, or even of the possibility of such. Why we should experience an emotion of the kind in such circumstances it may be impossible to say; but this does not alter the fact that we do experience it—a psychological manifestation wholly different in its kind from any movement of sensation or of pure intellection which may be concomitant with it.

37. *The Esthetic or Emotional Faculty is as distinct and authentic as any other.*—Thus analysing our psychical experiences in presence of such scenes, we find that they all contain a strong emotional element. The roadside hedge, the mountain, the ocean, the brook, the cathedral, the pealing anthem, domestic and historic scenes, the scaffold, the battlefield—all give rise not only to sensations and intellectual activities, but also

[1] *E.g.*, in Sophocles :—

> "My thin locks of hair,
> Stiff with fear, upward stare."
> —'Œdipus at Colonus,' 1463-4 (Campbell).

In 'The Cid' we read that "while they were thus communing, every hair upon King Alfonso's head stood up erect, and Alimaymon laid his hand upon them to press them down again; but so soon as his hand was taken off, they rose again."—Bk. ii. chap. 21. We have similar imagery in Calderon, 'Purgatory of St Patrick,' i. 2; in Shakespeare, Scott, Burns, and many more—*e.g.*, Dante :—

> "Already I perceived my hair stand all
> On end with terror."
> —'Hell,' c. xxiii.

to certain emotions proper to each. It clearly appears that amongst all the combined and complex properties of the Human Mind, the emotional faculty exists as surely and incontestably as the calculating or any other faculty. As certainly as we possess organs of seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting; as certainly as we are furnished with an apparatus of sapid, tactile, olfactory, visual, and auditory nerves, and have an appetite for food; as indubitably as we have a faculty of following a geometrical demonstration, and of comprehending the Multiplication Table, and another by which we are convinced of the propriety of the command, "Thou shalt not steal"—so surely and incontestably are we convinced that we have yet another faculty which in the presence of Nature yields emotions of joy or sorrow, of gladness or woe, of mirth or melancholy, of gaiety or solemnity, of rage or placidity, of admiration or contempt, of pettiness or sublimity; each emotion exactly corresponding to the exciting cause, just as in a well-tuned instrument the striking of a certain note gives rise to a certain sound. As expressed by Akenside in his "Pleasures of the Imagination," we find that the observant Soul—

> "discloses every tuneful spring
> To that harmonious movement from without
> Responsive."

In other words, Nature plays upon us, so to speak, as if we were musical instruments. As certainly as our organs of sense respond to external influences, as certainly as our minds perceive and reason upon the things of the inner and outer worlds, so certainly do we experience corresponding emotions in the presence of Nature. These emotions I take to be the Sources of Poetry.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESTHETICAL AUTHORITY.

1. *The Emotional Faculty is common to Men.*—Now with regard to all those emotional manifestations of which we have been speaking, it might be queried by some inquirer: What is your authority for asserting the existence of such manifestations? To such a question I should have no hesitation in replying that my authority is my own consciousness. But our questioner might rejoin: "What is your consciousness to *me?*" To which objection I should immediately reply: "Honestly and earnestly consulted, your consciousness will substantially agree with my consciousness, mine with yours; and there is no prosperous going behind, or below, or above consciousness." To every sane man Nature has given faculties by which he may know, to some extent at least: (1) what is true; (2) what is not true; (3) what is uncertain.[1]

2. *Psychological and universal scepticism.*—Let us try to make this very important point as clear as possible. Some people profess to doubt of everything. They take their scepticism to be a strong mark of cleverness and general superiority of intellect. They could scarcely make a greater mistake. One is under the painful

[1] As shown forth at large in 'The Grammar of Philosophy.'

necessity of telling them that their universal scepticism is only a mark—a very strong mark—of their deficiency in the chief of all senses—namely, common-sense; that, in short, it is only a very bold and disastrous mark of stupidity. A man *professionally* staggering about amid uncertainties cannot do anything worth speaking about either for this World or for the World which we hope is to come. It is the common-sense alone which holds Mankind together and prevents them from becoming a mere fortuitous concourse of lawless atoms. Even the blockhead who ignorantly rails at common-sense will be found yielding an unquestioned obedience to the more pronounced commands of common-sense in the very whirl of his own folly. Society, I repeat, is held together by common-sense—that sense by which your faculties and mine come to harmonious conclusions concerning elementary facts and truths, and with the facts and truths which they logically imply.

3. *Rational Scepticism is not only lawful but serviceable.*—Be it carefully noted that I am only complaining of unlawful doubting—of doubting, as it were, for the sake of doubting, or with any other questionable motive. To doubt with a view to inquiry and proof or satisfaction regarding any doctrine, this is a truly philosophic attitude of mind. As Aristotle says: "It will contribute towards one's object, who wishes to acquire a facility in the gaining of knowledge, to doubt judiciously, for a subsequent acquisition in the way of knowledge is the solution of previous doubts." [1] No less clearly did Bacon see the advantage of rational doubt. "If a man begin with certainties," says he, "he shall end in doubts; but if he be content to begin with doubts, he

[1] 'Metaphysics,' Bk. ii. chap. i.

shall end in certainties." [1] There is a great difference, remarks Malebranche, "between doubting and doubting. We doubt through passion and brutality, through blindness and malice, and finally, through fancy and the very wish to doubt; but we doubt also through prudence and distrust, from wisdom, and through penetration of mind. The former doubt is a doubt of darkness which never issues to the light, but leads us always farther from it; the latter is a doubt which is born of the light, and which aids in a certain sort to produce light in its turn." [2] On this question Sir William Hamilton writes: "Philosophical doubt is not an end but a mean. We doubt in order that we may believe; we begin that we may not end with doubt. We doubt once that we may believe always; we renounce authority that we may follow reason; we surrender opinion that we may obtain knowledge. We must be Protestants, not Infidels in Philosophy." [3] As to anything doubtful, even though it be commonly received as truth, always press home your inquiry and learn what bottom can be found for it. If no bottom for it can be found, you will be entitled to regard it more or less disrespectfully.

4. *Irrational Scepticism involves Self-Stultification — Arithmetical Certainty.* — Whilst rational doubting is thus the very beginning of Philosophy and the very life of it, irrational doubting (as I have elsewhere shown [4]) would lead to mental

[1] 'Advancement of Learning,' Bk. i.

[2] Quoted by Sir William Hamilton, 'Lectures,' Vol. i. p. 91.

[3] Ib., Vol. i. p. 91.

[4] In 'The Grammar of Philosophy,' chap. vi. 2. Consider, *e.g.*, Carlyle's theory of an "Eternal Present." Suppose Thomas trying to catch an express train for the North on the theory of an "Eternal Present." Train *starts* at twelve by clock time. Thomas, trusting to the omnipotence of his theory, does not

paralysis and self-stultification. Some sceptics, for instance, go the length of declaring that there is no certainty that two times two make four. Now in saying this they do but dishonour their faculties and themselves, since, in practice at all events, we find that their convictions as to the truth of the Multiplication Table appear to be as indubitable as our own. When a man's practice consistently and constantly swears against his theory, conclude that his theory is false, and that even he himself does not believe it. Nineteen shillings in the pound and elevenpence in the shilling are, I undertake to say, as unacceptable to the most determined sceptic alive as to the most consistent exponent of Common-sense; nor does one ever hear of a sceptic who, as a matter of business, is prepared to give you thirteenpence for your shilling, or one-and-twenty shillings for your pound sterling. Thus in practice he shows that he has no belief in his sceptical theory; and thus it becomes our unhappy duty to regard him as a humbug and to turn him out of our Philosophic court.

5. *Ethical Certainty.*—Still worse: other sceptics even go to the length of declaring that the Moral Law is a mere growth, or a human fabrication or convention produced by circumstances—a Law of no intrinsic validity. I fancy that those who say so either misunderstand themselves or do but indulge in mendacity against their own better knowledge. Again, the test lies in their practice. We are forced to judge of their alleged belief by their visible conduct. No *compos mentis* person that ever lived would choose a well-known liar

arrive at King's Cross until 12.10 by clock time. The problem for him will now be to catch the train on the "Eternal Present" theory. Nature laughs without remorse at all professional doubters —whether sceptical or idealistic, or plainly muddle-headed.

or thief for his bosom friend; no one, I should say, can commit a robbery with a happy conscience; none, probably, but must, in secret at least, actually admire a deed of heroism. All the actions of the more honest sceptic himself wholly belie his words, and reduce his scepticism to wreckage. He knows that honour, love, obedience, troops of friends are eternally denied to the scoundrel. Excellent to have something eternal to stand upon. You may depend upon it that the Moral Imperative was not devised by men, and could not be devised by men. As Sir William Hamilton expresses it, "we become aware in the facts of intelligence" (no getting over these facts) "of an order of existence diametrically in contrast to that displayed to us in the facts of the material Universe." There is made known to us an order of things in which intelligence, "by recognising the unconditional law of duty and an absolute obligation to fulfil it, recognises its own possession of a liberty incompatible with a dependence upon fate, and of a power capable of resisting and conquering the counteraction of our animal nature." [1] *There are no conditions attached to these deliverances of our consciousness. There they stand—inexpugnable and unassailable facts.* "Were the effect of philosophy the establishment of doubt, the remedy," as Sir William says, "would be worse than the disease. Doubt as a permanent state of mind would be, in fact, little better than an intellectual death. The mind lives as it believes —it lives in the affirmation of itself, of Nature, and of God. A doubt upon any of these (heads) would be a diminution of its life; a doubt upon the three, were it possible, would be tantamount to a mental annihilation." [2] The great Law of Duty is probably written, however blurred the

[1] 'Lectures,' Vol. i. p. 29. [2] Ib., p. 92.

writing may be, upon the most assertive sceptic's heart. Potentially, at least, the Moral Law exists in the Soul of Man, just like the laws of numeration and mensuration. By the faithful study and practice of its precepts it can be evoked into full consciousness. I have not the slightest doubt that David Hume himself would have been indignant if he had been taken for anything less than an honourable man.[1] He doubtlessly knew, as well as we know, that a man may be intrinsically—not conventionally only, but intrinsically—honourable or intrinsically dishonourable; intrinsically noble or intrinsically base. A true man will be as careful of his honour as he would be of a shipload of Braganza Diamonds—if he happened to possess such a cargo, each jewel weighing 1680 carats, like the Portuguese Gem described by Mr Streeter, and valued at £58,350,000![2] Nay, we all know that persons of very high worth prefer death to dishonour; know that it is actually open to every man to cultivate the glorious.

6. *It is silly to call in question the validity of the Moral Law.*—Candidly consider it. No man can honestly say that he is *bound* to be a liar, or a thief, or a card-sharper, or a thimble-rigger, or a politician. In a word, it is really silly to call in question the validity of the Moral Law. Even any sane savage knows that there is an up-road and a down-road in conduct.

7. *There is a common agreement concerning Neces-*

[1] But it is vexing to read, on the authority of Dr Johnson, that "Hume owned to a clergyman in the bishoprick of Durham that he had never read the New Testament with attention."—Boswell, 'Life,' Vol. ii. p. 93.

[2] I doubt if it would find a purchaser at this price! In his 'Memoirs' Sir James Melvil writes, Queen Elizabeth "showed me also a fair ruby as great as a tennis-ball" (p. 97). What became of this ruby?

sary Truth.—In Arithmetic and Morals, therefore, it very clearly appears that when we have earnestly consulted our own individual consciousnesses upon those subjects, you will substantially say what I say, and that I will emphatically say what you emphatically say. So absolutely unquestionable are these principles that all the Governments and Legislatures of the Earth assume the truth of them, and postulate them as the foundations of their laws; whilst all human vocabularies and all Literature bear witness to the same doctrine. In one of his novels Disraeli remarks: "Let men doubt of unicorns, but of one thing there can be no doubt, that God never spoke except to an Arab." That saying might be very successfully criticised, but of two things there can be no doubt whatever—namely, that "two and two make four," and that "lying is not a virtuous exercise." I say this, and you say this. I do not say it because you say it, nor do you say it because I say it. You and I in giving utterance to such propositions are but the mouthpieces of Nature, and do but give utterance, jointly and severally, to a Dogma of Nature—a Dogma of whose authenticity and absolute propriety we are jointly and severally absolutely convinced. What better sanctions for honesty and decency and general integrity of conduct would you like to have? It is impossible to conceive higher sanctions, since those you possess are the Dogmas of Nature herself. Let not such Dogmas be neglected. Neglect of them is the main origin of the confusion and folly which are rampant in the domains of Philosophy and Theology. It is at the peril of our souls and our bodies if we try to despise or neglect these supreme Dogmas.

8. *Mr Balfour on the Authority of the Individual.*—Mr Balfour has correctly expressed this doctrine

of the authority of the Individual with reference to Contingent Truth. "There is no theoretical escape for any of us from the ultimate 'I.' What 'I' believe as conclusive must be drawn by some process which I accept as cogent, from something which 'I' am obliged to regard as intrinsically self-sufficient, beyond the reach of criticism or the need of proof." [1] What pot, what pan are you acquainted with that could be more *real* than it really is? How much more *real* would you like it to be? Or, discarding pots and pans, does not the psychological idealist or dubitationist himself know perfectly well that he cannot walk about, say, on the surface of the Sea?

9. *Men should possess, and not be possessed by, their opinions.*—I hold with those who say that "Knowledge is for the sake of man, and not man for the sake of knowledge." But beyond this I hold, let me repeat, that knowledge is not merely for man collectively, but for man individually. No man should allow any opinion to *possess* him; he should always insist upon being himself *the intelligent possessor of the opinion.* I hold that our Maker has no stepsons and stepdaughters, as Sacerdotalism and certain kinds of Theologism would lead us to infer. If your priest or your parson be your intellectual dictator, you are no better than if you had been furnished with the brains of a bug. As far as human endowment for apprehending and realising truth is concerned, the Creator appears to have shown no preference, generally speaking, for priest over layman, nor for one kind of layman over another kind of layman. The organ-blower is as sacred as the organist; the minister's man, as the minister. To every earnest and devout soul, priest or layman —to every soul genuinely trying to be earnest

[1] 'Foundations of Belief,' p. 105.

and devout,—I believe He has given the glorious faculty (in potentiality at least) of apprehending, understanding, and being personally convinced of the most illustrious of truths; that is to say, that He appears to have set up in the mind of every adult and sane person the criterion of the validity of the great truths which most concern him.

10. *We are all in Holy Orders and ordained by the Archbishop of the Universe.*—In other words, we are all in Holy Orders if we choose—all ordained to high possibilities of service by the Archbishop of the Universe. To such service I hold that the Archbishop of the Universe has laid His hands on us and ordained us. Under Him each head of a family should be the best of bishops over it. My father's blessing should be better to me than any episcopal laying-on of hands. All merely sacerdotal impositions of hands seem to be mere impositions. A bishop might as well take to table-turning as a means of advancing civilisation as try to promote Christianity by the imposition of hands, *except as a natural and visible expression of fatherly affection for the neophyte;* and no sensible bishop will attach any further importance to the ceremony. Mirthful nonsense is good sometimes. I am fond of seasonable hilarity myself; so are all sensible persons. But let all men abjure serious or grave nonsense.[1] Serious or grave nonsense keeps mankind in a state of babbling imbecility.

11. *Nothing intellectual or spiritual should be*

[1] A sage gentleman was playing antics with his children one day when he saw a pedant approaching; whereupon he said to the youngsters, "Let us be grave, my sons: here comes a fool." I think it is Johnson who tells the story, but I have lost the reference. Don't you think that even Christ himself must have been having a playful sally with James and John when he nicknamed them Boanerges?

received on trust.—Again, let it be very clearly observed that your knowledge, *in so far as it is only yours*, can be of no intellectual or spiritual worth to me—can be of no benefit to me at all. I can receive nothing intellectual or spiritual from you *on trust.* To do so would be to abdicate my functions as a man. You, though you may be a priest, must make your knowledge mine; that is to say, you must convince my understanding of its truth before it can be of any intellectual or spiritual service to me—before it can possibly add anything to my personal endowment and dignity. The religious man must have real understanding of his calling; and Christ apparently was of this opinion, for we read that He "expounded all things to His disciples." This, *in essentials*, every person calling himself a Christian should be qualified to do. Hence the utter and necessary worthlessness of all vicarious interference with our spiritual interests and accounts. No spiritual truth is of any good consequence to you or me until it is yours or mine by conscious—that is, by rational—conviction. If you wish to consult the Highest about any great question of Faith or conduct, tap the Oracle within. Each free being must in himself be the pivot of his own intellectual and spiritual activity. Dogmatic assertions of the occult, esoteric or transcendental kind, can be of no intellectual or spiritual worth either to the speaker or to the hearer. It is delusion or deception—all. Let it be clearly understood, then, that no doctrine touching the mental or spiritual state of the individual can be of any use to him until he has intellectually grasped it; that no knowledge can enlighten and strengthen and exalt him until it is intellectually and by conviction his own—just as no food can be of any consequence to him until it is masti-

cated, digested, and assimilated by his very own body.[1]

12. *But in things material you may avail yourself of the knowledge and labours of others.*—Notice carefully that I have been speaking of doctrines pertaining mainly to mental and spiritual science. In every-day material affairs you may, to a large extent, avail yourself of, and profit by, the knowledge possessed and the labours executed by others. Although I, personally, know very little about steam or steam-engines, I can very easily avail myself of your knowledge and industry in respect of such things. It may easily be that I, who know almost nothing about steam and steam-engines, can travel as easily and profitably per rail to London as you who know all about them.

13. *The Individual must be to himself the chief witness and judge of all high things.*—But it is quite otherwise in everything touching the science of Mind or Soul. In terrestrial navigation you may well avail yourself of the services of a good sea-captain, but in celestial navigation you should be your own pilot. As Cardaillac says: "The phenomena of the external world are so palpable and so easily described that the experiences of one observer suffice to render the facts he has witnessed, intelligible and probable to all. The phenomena of the internal world, on the contrary, are not capable of being thus described. All that the prior observer can do is to enable others to repeat his experiences. In the science of mind we can neither understand nor be convinced of anything at second hand. Here testimony can impose no belief; and instruction is

[1] Similarly as to books. "It is to be lamented that we judge of books by books, instead of referring what we read to our own experience."—Coleridge, 'Essays, Shakespeare,' &c., p. 36.

only instruction as it enables us to teach ourselves. A fact of consciousness, however accurately observed, however clearly described, and however great may be our confidence in the observer, is for us as zero until we have observed and recognised it for ourselves. Till that be done we cannot realise its possibility, far less admit its truth. Thus it is that, in the philosophy of mind, instruction can do little more than point out the position in which the pupil ought to place himself in order to verify by his own experiences the facts which his instructor proposes to him as true. The instructor, therefore, proclaims *oû philosophia állá philosophêin ;* he does not profess to teach philosophy but to philosophise." [1] Briefly, in mental and spiritual science especially, nothing can be done even by the greatest teacher without the most earnest co-operation of the pupil—a Law which seems also to mark the relationship existing between God and Man.

14. *This is not only a Rule but a Law.*—This is not merely a rule, but it is a Law which necessarily operates in our intellectual and spiritual life. Every man's self is, and must be to himself, the chief witness and judge of the truth in all high things. Browning recognises this when he says that Truth—meaning, I suppose, the criterion of Truth—

> " is within ourselves, it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an inmost centre in us all
> Where truth abides in fullness . . .
> This perfect clear perception which is truth." [2]

And, indeed, if men would but open their hearts to receive this doctrine frankly, they would have reason to rejoice over the possession of it ; for it is quite clear that without such a possession,

[1] Quoted by Hamilton, ' Lectures,' Vol. i. pp. 16, 378.
[2] ' Paracelsus,' Sc. i.

they must, in their highest interests, be completely at the mercy of a thousand eager disputants, whose contending claims will be to them a source of sheer distraction. Do what he will—wriggle as he may,—the Final Court of Appeal touching every question of intellectual and spiritual conviction must be to the individual, even to his insuppressible and imperious self. In no ultimate question can the individual Human Mind demit its sovereignty and responsibility without committing a kind of intellectual suicide.

15. *Philosophy must be founded upon principles apprehensible and appreciable, to some extent, by ordinary men.*—There is a population of some fourteen or fifteen hundred millions of more or less muddled Human Heads inhabiting the Terrestrial Ball. Philosophy must be founded upon principles which, potentially, are common (explicitly or by implication) to all those fourteen or fifteen hundred millions of more or less muddled Human Heads—so great, so dignified, apparently, does our Maker wish the individual man to be. The Task of civilisation is to induce these fourteen or fifteen hundred millions of Human Beings to agree with one another.

16. *This Law reigns in Esthetics, which might be defined as the Science of the Emotions.*—Now this Law of which I have been speaking holds good, bears absolute sway, in the region of Esthetics or of Human Emotion. As Dugald Stewart says: "In the constitution of Man there is an inexplicable adaptation of the mind to the objects with which its faculties are conversant, in consequence of which these objects are fitted to produce agreeable or disagreeable emotions." [1] Thus also Carlyle:

[1] 'Collected Works,' Vol. ii. p. 322. Baumgarten first applied the term *æsthetic* to the theory of the fine arts.—Hamilton, 'Lectures,' Vol. i. p. 124. Ruskin, I think, is somewhat inaccurate

"Poetry is no separate faculty; no organ which can be superadded to the rest or disjoined from them, but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. *The feelings, the gifts that exist in the Poet, are those that exist with more or less development* in every human soul. The imagination which shudders at the Hell of Dante is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does the Poet speak to men with power but by being still more a man than they?" "There is an inward and essential truth in art—a truth far deeper than the dictates of mere mode, and which, could we pierce through these dictates, would be true for all nations and for all men." Poetry incorporates "the everlasting Reason of Man in forms visible to his sense, and suitable to it." [1] And Professor Bain takes it for granted that "beauty is not arbitrary—that there are effects which please the generality of men when once produced." [2] In

on this subject. He construes "esthetic" as "sensual," and says, "I wholly deny that the impressions of beauty are in any way sensual: they are neither sensual nor intellectual, but *moral*."—'Modern Painters,' Vol. ii. p. 13. I should say that they are neither sensual, nor intellectual, nor moral, but *emotional*. I take Esthetics to be the science of the Emotions, and, as such, a very valuable and almost indispensable word.

[1] 'Miscellaneous Essays,' Vol. i. pp. 277-8, 230, 255.

[2] 'The Senses and the Intellect,' p. 441. That there are axioms in the matter of Taste—see Reid, 'Works,' p. 453 (Hamilton's edition). That all have at least the rudiments of Taste—Campbell, 'Rhetoric,' p. 6. So Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. i. p. 201. That esthetical principles are "drawn from human nature, the true source of criticism"—Ib., Intro., pp. 12-13. That proportion is founded in Nature, not in custom—Ib., Vol. ii. p. 465. That there is a common standard in Morals and Taste—an excellent passage—pp. 492-4. That Taste is "a faculty common in some degree to all men"—Blair, 'Lectures,' Vol. i. p. 19. So Dr Johnson, "By the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours"—'Works,' Vol. iv. pp. 402-3. "He is the best critic who knows best the phenomena of thought

other words, every man must experience the emotion (whatever kind it be) and judge of it for himself before he can say anything sensible about it. In Esthetics all that one can do for another is to point out the sources of emotion. Take a case. It is a wintry morning. The South-Eastern Sky is barred with dark clouds. The rising Sun is illuminating their edges and shining between them in golden glory. I can but direct you to look at it; I cannot *reason* you into a feeling of its glory. I cannot *compel* you to feel its glory any more than I can compel you to weep bitterly, or laugh hilariously, or sneeze obstreperously. If gazing upon that rising Sun you do not there and then spontaneously feel that it is a glorious object —if it does not come home to your own consciousness that it is a magnificent spectacle, my assertion that it is such must be to you as zero. Even if the assertion be made by the sweet singer of Israel, or by Isaiah, or Homer, or Dante, or, for that matter, by a full convocation of all the Bards, it must be as zero to you personally until your own consciousness consciously thrills with the splendour of the morning, and responds with silent music to its influence; so true is it, as already contended, that *every man's self must be to himself the chief witness and judge of the truth of all high things.* The "Soul that hath not music in itself" might be considered under Zoology—or worse.

and feeling"—Thomas Brown, 'Philosophy of the Human Mind,' Vol. i. pp. 53-5. That "artistic activity" is the same in all epochs—Baldwin Brown, 'The Fine Arts,' p. 5. Hume, as might be anticipated from his psychological eccentricities, is much confused as to the nature of the Beautiful. He thinks that "beauty is no quality in things themselves"—'Essays Moral,' &c., Vol. i. pp. 268-9. But in self-contradiction he allows that there are certain qualities in objects fitted to produce particular feelings—Ib., p. 273, in which remark we may discover a vague perception of the true theory that esthetical principles are drawn from Human Nature.

17. *The teacher of psychological doctrine must address himself to the consciousness of his pupil. Nothing great can be achieved by proxy.*—This being the case, every teacher of psychological doctrine of any kind, if he be a teacher of worth, must address himself to the actual consciousness of his pupil. As a teacher of psychological doctrine in any one of its branches—sensation, perception, judgment, volition, appetancy, passion, morals, emotion,—I must call up my pupils as the chief witnesses, as far as they are individually concerned, of the truth of whatever psychological doctrine I may wish to teach, or of the falsehood of any psychological doctrine I may wish to refute. Fully cognisant that this principle should govern all our attempts to instruct or enlighten, we must never say to any one: "Believe this or that doctrine on my authority or on any other person's authority"; but rather: "*Believe it because you yourself, if you will carefully study the intuitions of your own consciousness, will know it upon your own authority.*" And so with regard to any refutation, the final refuting authority, the last Court of Appeal in matters psychological, is necessarily yourself. "He who hath ears to hear, let *him* hear"; so taught the great Teacher. The doctrine is as divine as the Teacher. He himself —the person possessed of ears, let *him* hear,—not another for him. You cannot hear by proxy; you cannot see by proxy; you cannot understand by proxy; you cannot experience any emotion by proxy; you cannot do anything worth speaking about by proxy. The chief doer in all high things concerning yourself in particular must be yourself, just as your chief authority for believing anything to be true must be yourself. Thus Goethe: "In Art I must bring my affairs to such a point that all becomes personal knowledge,

and nothing remains tradition and name." [1] Is it not so? Think of it. If Man would but rise to this dignity which his Maker has designed for him and placed within his reach, it would immediately put an end to innumerable schemes of folly and imposture, sacred and secular.

18. *The Individual must be his own Pope in Poetry and the Arts of the Soul, or remain unenfranchised of them.*—Therefore with regard to any doctrine which I may advance in these essays, let it be as zero, I repeat, to every student until he has personally confirmed it or refuted it within the sacred circumference or territory of his own consciousness. Rightly speaking, the true man's heart is the only consecrated dwelling or territory in the whole world. If you want external authorities for this doctrine, take the author of the Book of Job. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding"—not one man here and another there, but every man if he will but consent to avail himself of the great privileges conferred upon him. The Apostle Paul is equally emphatic: "Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" [2] St Chrysostom is reported to say: "The true Shekinah is man." Carlyle and Richter follow the doctrine; so that the leading historic authorities also are on my side when I speak of the sacred circumference of your own consciousness—when I assert the moral freedom and dignity and the esthetical potentiality of the individual man.

[1] 'Travels in Italy,' p. 401. See an instructive passage in Ruskin on "the unaccountable and happy instincts of the careless time."—'Modern Painters,' Vol. ii. p. 42.

[2] 1 Cor. iii. 16. The thought again occurs.—Ib., vi. 19; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 21-2; Heb. iii. 6. Much more like the truth than his theory of man as a potter's vessel!

Thus, happily, it needs no great pundit to introduce us to God and show us the way to Heaven. Let each man, then, be his own Pope in Poetry and Literature as in all other high things. I believe it will be found to be an infinitely better method of arriving at uniformity of conviction regarding such things than by trying to square our opinions with school doctrines and charging dissentients with heresy. Speaking for myself, I am firmly convinced that there is no heresy in the World, either secular or sacred, except the deadly heresy of neglecting one's own soul and being false to one's own heart convictions. This I hold to be the real rebellion against God; this I hold to be heresy worse than that of Dathan and Abiram. Probably most of my readers will at once agree with the doctrine. Those who do not, I request them to ponder over it earnestly, sacredly, as in the sight of God and regardless of passionate prepossessions and conventional opinions. If they consent to follow this line of action, they will probably agree with our doctrine ultimately.

19. *Whilst all Human Souls are built upon the same principles, they are neither all geniuses nor all dunces.*—There are, however, one or two cautions to offer in connection with it. Obviously it contains the conclusion that all Human Souls are built upon the same principles. All my own experiences, together with all my reading of ancient and modern authors—poets, philosophers, historians, travellers, and the rest,—bring me to the conclusion that Mankind are homogeneous through and through, ancient and modern, and one race with another. "He hath disgraced and hindered me half a million," says Shylock; "he has laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled

my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapon, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter as a Christian is! If you prick us, do we not bleed! If you tickle us, do we not laugh! If you poison us, do we not die! And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge!" And I think it is the same all over. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." There is an essential oneness and conformity between Jew and Gentile, Christian and Heathen—always remembering, of course, that men are neither all geniuses nor all dunces, nor arrived at an equal pitch of self-realisation. The most civilised nations and the most barbarous tribes seem to participate essentially in a common humanity. The rudiments and common principles of humanity are, I apprehend, essentially the same in Timbuctoo as they are in London. Touching moral feeling, "I have seen the negroes," said Winwoode Reade, "start with horror at our pictures of battlefields covered with the wounded and the dead, and cry, 'Oh, white man, too cruel, too cruel!' Such," he comments, "are the anomalies of human nature. The gay light-hearted Parisian, the mild peace-loving negroes, are transformed to monsters when their passions are roused." [1] So, too, with regard to the feeling of Honour. There is an Ashantee proverb: "Death is better than shame"—a sentiment up to which they have sometimes gloriously lived, as in the case of one of their captains, who, after the loss of the Battle of Volta against the Accras, committed suicide as heroically as a Cassius or a

[1] 'The African Sketch-Book,' Vol. i. p. 55.

Brutus.[1] Nor in the matter of tenderness do they seem to be much behind Europeans. Mr Reade instances the case of a child with six fingers giving rise to some derision amongst certain of the natives; whereupon, says he, "the father drew the child gently towards him, and said a few words in a tone of inexpressible tenderness and pity." What more could the most humane parent among ourselves have done? Mr Reade comes to the conclusion that the more he saw of those Africans, the more he was inclined to believe that Europeans had underrated their parental affection.[2] Speaking generally,. he remarks in another place: "My long and varied experience of the African race has brought me to believe that they can be made white men in all that is more than skin-deep."[3] Nor is their regard for gewgaws and fetishes in Religion one whit more degrading than the corresponding superstitions which are to be found among Sacerdotal "Christians." True, Mr Reade writes that when a trading ship arrives, "the whole town breaks out into dance and song. 'Now,' they cry, 'we shall have beads! Now we shall have tobacco! Now we shall have rum.'"[4] But even in those demon-

[1] See also about the heroism of the Ashantee boy recorded in 'The African Sketch-Book,' Vol. ii. pp. 174-5.

[2] 'The African Sketch-Book,' Vol. ii. p. 8.

[3] Ib., p. 326. Livingstone's opinion was that the West Coast African had been debased by the unhealthy land in which he lived.—Ib., Vol. i., note, p. 108. It should be noticed incidentally that all such facts are utterly opposed to Darwinism. The Darwinian might be defined as one who has a great appetite for fish stories.

[4] Ib., Vol. i. p. 24. "I suppose the ordinary European looks down on such men as these native black men. I do not, for they are the finest type of humanity, and it is a pleasure to record the valuable help they were always ready to give, and the singularly delightful type of courtesy that was present in every village even so far from what we call civilisation."—C. S. Craven in "The Niger Route" in 'The Morning Post,' 27th December 1921.

strations there is nothing very astonishing. Consider how Europeans even dote upon beads, tobacco, and rum—yes, and upon indulgences and profligacies of still greater depravity. Consider the foul garments that are sometimes discovered under the flimsy fineries of European drabs!

20. *There are great differences of detail in our intellectual and spiritual circumstances, training and equipment, but complete homogeneity in respect of the elementary characters of our constitution.*—There is no doubt, of course, that differences—large differences—of detail abound in our intellectual and spiritual circumstances, training, and equipment; but I think that there will be found among mankind at large a substantial sameness of faculties and general endowment—a complete homogeneity in respect of the elementary characters of our constitution. The Bond Street man, whose soul delights itself in clothes, would, if brought up in a savage country, manifest his particular passion, in all probability, by wearing great quantities of paint, feathers, and wampum. In civilised as in savage countries, ornaments are the first things almost that barbarians put on. Amongst women, the papilionaceous species is shockingly common even in civilised countries. On the other hand, any sane adult individual of any savage tribe under the sun would probably, after some tuition, be capable of becoming a decent citizen in any civilised country; and in becoming such a citizen he would certainly be regarded as amenable to the laws of that country. So within a civilised community the Right Hon. Nathaniel Balderdash, say, and even his most ignorant followers, are deemed to be equally responsible before the Law. His most ignorant follower is taken to know the Law, "Thou shalt not steal," just as the right hon. gentleman himself is taken to know it. The great

legal maxim, *Ignorantia legis neminèm excusat*, is as much binding upon the one as upon the other. In short, there is a complete homogeneity of endowment between the popular politician—the politician of "the masses"—and his most ignorant adherent, in all the essentials of Human Nature. But whilst all this is most indubitably true, it is at the same time to be admitted as equally cogent that we should be justified in expecting that the Right Hon. Nathaniel, by reason of the great advantages, natural and acquired, which he enjoys, would furnish a much better example of virtuous citizenship than his less-favoured followers. They are the same in kind; Nathaniel should be vastly better in quality.

21. *Negro appreciation of landscape and of Human beauty.*—So should we expect it to be, and so shall we find it, in the region of the emotions. All men, says Emerson, "are in some degree impressed by the face of the world, some even to delight." This I believe to be the case. Mr Winwoode Reade, whom I have already quoted, gives evidence upon this esthetical part of our subject as well as upon the ethical. He tells of an African native (one of the Krus), who, seeing him gazing upon an African landscape, exclaimed: "Massa, that fine, eh?"[1] He testifies that he has always found that the native women whom he admired were also admired by the natives themselves, that the chiefs always chose the prettiest wives, and that they know a good-looking European when they see one. In short, it would appear that no person can ever mistake Caliban for Antinous.

22. *Poetical feeling behind almost inarticulate criticism.*—Coming back to our own country and our own experiences, we have the lesson of Mr Reade's testimonies confirmed. A peasant, for

[1] 'The African Sketch-Book,' Vol. ii. p. 7.

instance, with open eye and ear, is impressed by the same *kind* of influences as Tennyson. I well remember a remark which was made to me on the banks of the Forth by an unlettered admirer of Nature touching the melodious piping of some curlews and plovers haunting the water's edge: "It's bonnie to hear thae birds whustlin' oot there." In giving voice to such words, I doubt not that he was but giving expression to the same kind of emotion as Tennyson expresses when he writes:—

"Down by the poplar tall, rivulets babble and fall;
Barketh the shepherd's dog cheerly; the grasshopper carolleth clearly;
Deeply the wood-dove coos; shrilly the owlet haloos." [1]

In other words, a pent-up appreciation of natural beauty or sublimity may easily exist, and does frequently exist, behind the crudest and merest of interjectional criticism. Byron actually declares:—

"Many are poets who have never penned
Their inspirations; and perhaps the best." [2]

So that what I have said appears to be true—namely, that our open-eyed and open-eared peasant and Tennyson are, even esthetically, built upon the same principles and responsive to the same kind of natural influences.[3]

23. *Lord Balfour on the esthetic judgment.*—With deference to Lord Balfour, I think he errs on this

[1] 'Leonine Elegiacs.'

[2] 'The Prophecy of Dante,' chap. iv. 'Works,' Vol. xi. p. 293.

[3] The same in religion: "It does not necessarily follow that because a man is inarticulate, he has therefore no religion. . . . Actions and objects of admiration, these are the things that we must most watch if we would discover the true religion of the inarticulate."—Donald Hankey, 'A Student in Arms,' p. 108. Excellently observed.

subject. He rightly says: "We cannot describe the higher beauties of beautiful objects except in terms of esthetic feeling, and, *ex vi termini*, such descriptions are subjective"; but I cannot agree with him when he says: "The same work of art which moves one man to admiration moves another to disgust; and what rouses the enthusiasm of one generation leaves another hostile and indifferent."—"As we approach the level where the sentiment of beauty becomes intense, and the passion of admiration incommunicable, *there is not—and I believe cannot be—any real unanimity of personal valuation.*"—"We cannot define the doctrines of esthetic orthodoxy. *We can appeal neither to reason nor experience nor authority. Ideals of beauty change from generation to generation.*"[1] I hope not. Take the Sun and the Moon and the Hosts of Heaven: is not *the whole world of Intelligence,* ancient as well as modern, profoundly impressed by them? The Sunrise and the Sunset; the Ocean in its various moods; the Seasons and their changes; Seed-time, Harvests, and Vintages; fruits and flowers and birds. Do they not call forth a considerable *unanimity* of admiration and joy among the poets, at least, of all lettered Ages and Nations? If Lord Balfour will inquire into the matter, I doubt if he will find a single intelligent individual who regards any one of those natural objects with any other feeling than that of pleasure; and as to poetry and works of art, I fancy there is a fair consensus of opinion amongst lettered people, ancient and modern, that the 'Odyssey' for instance, is, on the whole, a delightful poem; and that the Parthenon, say, is a very beautiful temple. It may be safely assumed, at least, that neither of these objects was ever known to move any intelligent person "to disgust." To this

[1] 'Essays Speculative and Political,' pp. 67, 70, 92.

extent, in any case, I think we may enjoy esthetic certainty.

24. *But in some persons the esthetic faculty is extremely blunt.*—It must, however, be allowed that the esthetic, like other, faculties are in some persons wonderfully blunt. John Locke, for example, seriously wrote thus: "If a boy has a poetic vein, 'tis to me the strangest thing in the world that the father should desire or suffer it to be cherished or improved. Methinks the parents should labour to have it stifled and suppressed as much as may be. *Poetry and gaming, which usually go together*" (notice the conjunction !), "are alike in this too, that they seldom bring any advantage but to those who have never anything else to live on." Here we have Poetry and Gaming linked together as twin evils, and this in the otherwise admirable treatise on Education.[1] In its way it is one of the most appalling passages in Literature. It is fitting that he who wrote it should have been the eulogist of Sir Richard Blackmore.[2] Locke's head must have been positively stone-deaf to the Music of the Spheres. It is no less surprising to read in Pennant's 'Tours' that the southern extremity of Derwentwater "is a composition of all that is horrible,"[3] or to be informed by the traveller Burt that the Scottish mountains are of "a dismal gloomy brown, drawing upon a dirty purple, and most of all disagreeable when the heather is in bloom."[4] So dead to enchanting beauty may a wooden head be. Speaking of Mull, Dr Johnson wrote to Mrs Thrale: "Going forward in our boat, we came to a cluster

[1] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 80.

[2] Ib., p. 568. "All our English poets except Milton," says he, "have been mere ballad-makers in comparison to him !"

[3] 'A Tour in Scotland,' Pt. ii. p. 45. He speaks, however, of the grandeur of the rocks round Lunan Bay, p. 139.

[4] Craik, 'A Century of Scottish History,' Vol. i. p. 134.

of rocks, black and horrid." [1] In the 'Western Tour' Boswell does not see "much either of elegance to charm our imagination, or of rude novelty to astonish." [2] The Doctor unwittingly exposes his esthetical barrenness in the witty words: "Seeing Scotland is only seeing a worse England. It is seeing a flower gradually fading away to a naked stalk." [3] It would appear, indeed, that as far as any sensibility to landscape beauty is concerned, a pair of the thickest-skulled London pickpockets might as well have toured in Scotland as Boswell and Dr Johnson. The Music of the Spheres and the rattling of a tin can must have been much the same thing to them.

25. *Analogy between the Human Head and a musical instrument.*—From all these considerations we might start a suggestive analogy between the Human Head, in its esthetical and moral endowments, and a musical instrument. The musical instrument itself (say an organ) may be of any degree of range and richness. The grandest organ is built upon the same principles as a common instrument—precisely the same. Analogously the Human Head, in its emotional faculties and capacities, may be, either by nature or by cultivation or both, of almost any degree of compass and richness. Nature is to the Human Head, in some measure, what the player is to the organ. The finer the organ, the richer will be the music which the accomplished player will strike out of it; the nobler the head, the loftier will be the spiritual music which Nature evokes within it. (In the same vein Montanus is reported to

[1] 'Works,' Vol. vi. p. 512.

[2] 'Life of Dr Johnson,' Vol. iv. p. 153.

[3] Equally enchanting his commentary on Wales: "Except the woods of Bachycraigh, what is there in Wales that can fill the hunger of ignorance, or quench the thirst of curiosity?"—Boswell, 'Life of Johnson,' Vol. iv. p. 154, note.

say: the Prophet is a Lyre played upon by the Divine Plectrum.) [1] Thus the seasons of the year, with their ever-varying and splendid pageants—the sky and the ocean, calm and storm, lakes and rivers, vales and mountains, meetings and partings, life and death,—will play upon the mind and heart of the peasant just as they play upon the mind and the heart of a great Poet. The difference between the peasant's emotional response to Nature and the emotional response of a great Poet will be that of quality and degree—not of kind. Even our fashionable young man of Bond Street, who, depending mainly on his grand alliance with tailors and bootmakers, sets out to conquer the World—the young man who actually appears to have come to the conclusion that the tailor maketh the man,—even he, in his superlative insignificance, possesses, I believe, an emotional faculty in his soul which would be capable of yielding spiritual music to himself if he would only give it a fair chance of making the acquaintance of Nature. To the merely cartilaginous ear, of course, the piping of Pan will for ever remain inaudible. That organ is better fitted to appreciate the strains of the Barrel-Organ.

26. *To make the most of it, the esthetic faculty must be carefully cultivated.*—Another point: we have concluded that the generality of men are more or less richly or poorly endowed with the esthetical faculty, just as they are more or less richly or poorly endowed with the other mental and moral faculties, and just as they are all, more or less, furnished with bodily organs and potentialities. Query: How do you make the best of your corporeal organs? By steadily training and exercising them, of course, and by constant and

[1] 'Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,' Vol. viii. p. 828. Perhaps he meant Prophet to include Poet?

careful treatment of them. How, on the other hand, do you weaken or destroy them? By neglect, undoubtedly, and by abuse or intemperance of any kind. So is it with your management of the higher faculties. As expressed by Aristotle: "We get the virtues by having first performed the energies, as is the case also in all the other arts; for those things which we must do after having learned them, we learn to do by doing them; as, for example, by building houses men become builders, and by playing on the harp, harpers; thus also, by doing just actions we become just; by performing temperate actions, temperate; and by performing brave actions, we become brave." [1] On the reverse view of the case the poet Cowper moralises most admirably:—

> "Pleasure admitted in undue degree
> Enslaves the will, nor leaves the judgment free.
> The heart surrendered to the ruling power
> Of some ungoverned passion every hour,
> Finds by degrees the truths that once bore sway
> And all their deep impressions wear away.
> So coin grows smooth in traffic current passed,
> Till Cæsar's image is effaced at last." [2]

We all know, sadly know, that there are millions of wooden heads in the world, and millions of

[1] 'Nic. Ethics,' ii. 1, 4. How mind and heart act and react on each other, see Carlyle, 'Essays,' Vol. iii. p. 57 (Cent. Edition). How practice improves taste, see Hume, 'Essays Moral,' &c., Vol. i. pp. 275, 278. Here also, in contradiction of what he has previously said (see above, note, p. 95), he allows that "the general principles of taste are uniform in Human Nature; that where men vary in their judgments, some perversion or defect in the faculties may commonly be remarked, proceeding either from prejudice, from want of practice, or want of delicacy; and there is just reason for approving one taste and condemning another" (Ib., p. 280)—a passage worthy of a philosopher. Notice that in this fine passage he happily forgets his helpless theory of "impressions" and "ideas," and wisely accepts the Common-Sense as the proper basis of esthetic theory.

[2] 'The Progress of Error.'

very stony hearts. But why? Through bad management of heart and head. Treat a piano or an organ very badly, knock a fiddle about or drive nails with it, crack a flute, and I need scarcely say that you will at least impair, if not wholly destroy, their musical potentialities; and surely it will be similar with the Human Heart and the Human Head. Let a man or a woman's Heart be given to trifles, and it will become more and more wooden every day. Let a man's heart be given to avarice or gambling, and it will probably become almost incapable of responding to any generous or tender or gracious influence. If the great Vulgar continue their demand for "penny merriments," how can they become wise and noble? But tune the Heart and the Head carefully; guard them sacredly — seeing that they are deserving of nothing less than the most sacred guardianship; cherish Heart and Head as faculties committed to your care by Heaven; cultivate them, listen to them, and do not doubt that you will hear the sacred melodies.

27. These are the cautions, then, which I wish to offer—namely, that whilst our emotional capacities and faculties are all the same in kind, they may yet vary very widely in quality and degree of responsiveness in each person: firstly, through their original strength or weakness in the individual to whom they belong; and secondly, through the good or bad treatment which they may have received from him.

28. *Ethics and Esthetics are independent of common utilitarian and extrinsic considerations.*—Finally, notice also the native and intrinsic value and significance of the esthetic judgment—that, like the ethical judgment, it distinguishes truth and falsehood, qualities and defects in its objects,

independently of, and apart from, all merely utilitarian and extrinsic considerations.

29. *The greatest teachers of Philosophy and Religion.*—The greatest teachers of Philosophy and Religion are those who best analyse, expound, synthesise, and balance our various faculties (corporeal and mental), and set forth the needs and wants of Human Nature as a whole. The intuitional or noetic deliverances of these faculties are the Data and the First Principles of all rational application and illustration. Let me repeat Reid's great dictum—a dictum which should be emblazoned on the walls of all the colleges: "It is the perfection of a rational being to have no belief but what is founded on intuitive evidence or just reasoning."

CHAPTER V.

TRUTH TO NATURE IN LITERATURE AND ART.

1. *Recapitulation.*—We have now, I hope, cleared the ground to some extent, and laid a kind of foundation for the discussion of esthetical principles in their application to the works both of Literature and Art. We have seen what confusion and contrariety of opinion reign among the critics even as to what Poetry actually means; we have, as it were, paid a visit to the natural sources of Poetry, and tried to indicate the current of its waters; we have vindicated and assigned to every adult and sane person the right and privilege of analysing these waters for himself and of testing their purity by his own esthetic palate, nothing doubting that when he has honestly exercised those rights and privileges, the esthetic judgment which he forms will be found to harmonise with those of other men who have duly exercised the same rights and privileges.

2. *The Source of Articulate Poetry.*—In support of the doctrine that the esthetical or emotional faculties are common to men, I quoted Emerson's saying that "All men are in some degree impressed by the face of the world even to delight." To these words he makes the expansive addition "Others have the same love in such excess that *not content with admiring, they seek to embody* i

in new forms." [1] Now notice the great significance of these distinctions. "All men are in some degree impressed by the face of the world even to delight." That is simply another way of saying that every one of us—in potentiality at least—is in some degree responsive to the *unsyllabled or inarticulate* Poetry of Nature—some of us even to delight. But now pay very particular attention to the expansion of the saying: "Others have the same love in such excess that, not content with admiring, they seek to embody it in new forms." *Herein we have the legitimate rise of articulate Poetry.* Those who are not content with admiring Nature—those who have such excess of genuine love for Nature that they are constrained to express it through letters—those are the Poets. This embodiment or expression of their esthetic enthusiasm is articulate Poetry—the voiced Poetry of human utterance as distinguished from the voiceless Poetry of Nature herself. It will now be our task to determine, if possible, and discuss some of the elements or principles of this articulate Poetry. In my first chapter I tried to show to what an alarming extent esthetic criticism is vitiated by uncertainty, vagueness, and even contrariety of doctrine. I now wish to make out that, notwithstanding the appalling confusions and contradictions to be found in

[1] See also 'The Natural History of Intellect and other Papers,' p. 118. Much as I wish to think well of Human endowments at large, I have some doubts of Emerson's "*all* men," except in potentiality. The higher faculties of some persons may almost have perished through sheer lack of nurture, just as the most valuable denizens of the botanical kingdom tend to die out unless they be cultivated. In the fine words of Plutarch, they may be said to "suffer the holy Lamp of Minerva to go out for lack of oil." I have noted some such cases in the preceding chapter, pars. 23, 24. It is unpleasant but not surprising to read that Darwin lost his interest in poetry and the arts. We must cherish our faculties, or they may go to ruin.

present and past criticism and theories of criticism, it is yet possible to lay down some more or less definite criteria by which the esthetic quality of any work may be more or less accurately judged.

3. *A more or less accurate science of criticism is possible.*—On this question, the possibility of a science of esthetics, Sir Joshua Reynolds thus expresses himself in one of his Discourses: "The main scope and principle of this Discourse is to demonstrate the reality of a standard in Taste as well as in corporeal beauty; that a false or depraved taste is as well known, as easily discovered as anything that is deformed, misshapen, or wrong in our form or outward make; and that this Knowledge is derived from the uniformity of sentiments among mankind, from whence proceeds the knowledge of what are the general habits of Nature, the result of which is an idea of perfect beauty." He also notes that besides this beauty of truth, which is formed on the uniform, immutable, and eternal laws of Nature, and which of necessity can be but one, "there are likewise apparent or secondary truths proceeding from local or temporary prejudices, fancies, passions, or accidental connection of ideas." [1] Herein we have a strong pronouncement of Sir Joshua's belief that there is a science of Art. I think that he is right in his views, and I am also convinced that, within certain limits, there is a science of poetical and literary criticism. If there be no science of criticism, criticism has no right to exist. If you wish any enterprise (whether secular or sacred) to be of solid worth you must

[1] 'Discourses,' Vol. i. p. 435. Dugald Stewart records a curious instance of this kind in the case of Burns, who continued to read certain mediocre verses with which he had been familiar in his youth "with a degree of rapture beyond expression." Burns took notice of the fact himself. See Blackie's edition of Burns, Vol. i. p. 165.

import science into it. (It is especially incumbent upon all theologians and preachers to pay devout attention to this doctrine.) [1]

4. *But certain refinements in Poetry and Art are beyond the scalpel of criticism.*—At the very outset, however, I wish to speak a word of caution. I believe that certain poetic elements—the fine witchery of poesy—may be quite beyond the scalpel of articulate criticism; that certain refinements of poetical movement and accent and rhyme, and even of thought and imagination, may be found to lie beyond the possibility of scientific appraisement; that whilst capable of being felt, such qualities may scarcely admit of being communicated. In connection with sculpture, John Ruskin writes a finely discriminating passage very applicable to our present subject. "The difference in accuracy," runs the passage, "between the lines of the Torso of the Vatican (the 'Master' of M. Angelo) and those in one of M. Angelo's finest works could perhaps scarcely be appreciated by any eye or feeling undisciplined by the most perfect and practical anatomical knowledge. It rests on parts of so traceless and refined delicacy that, though we feel them in the result, we cannot follow them in the details. Yet they are such and so great as to place the Torso alone in art, solitary and supreme; while the

[1] Generally speaking, the clergyman has yet to learn that he is an ass *in so far as he is not trying to be scientific.* He no longer consults the stars about scurvy in the body; he knows that scurvy in the body is best assailed by scientific methods; but he still hugs the delusion that scurvy in the Soul can only be remedied by super-scientific or preter-scientific expedients! He has yet to learn that the Common Sense—that is, the Scientific Sense, is *the most sacred witness available* in the tremendous Cause of the Divine *versus* the Diabolic. Let it be understood that the Common Sense is simply that sense in which all responsible persons are agreed as soon as they understand each other. This doctrine should be remembered in dealing even with children. With fine discernment Juvenal wrote:—

"Reverence to children as to Heaven is due."—Sat. xiv.

finest of M. Angelo's works, considered with respect to truth alone, are said to be only on a level with antiques of the second class, under the Apollo and Venus—that is, two classes and gradations below the Torso. But suppose the best sculptor in the world, possessing the most entire appreciation of the excellences of the Torso, were to sit down, pen in hand, to try and tell us wherein the precious truth of each line consisted, could any words that he could use make us feel the hair's-breadth of depth and curve on which all depends? Or end in anything more than bare assertions of the inferiority of this line to that, which, if we did not perceive for ourselves, no explanation could ever illustrate to us; and so it is with all truths of the highest order. They are separated from those of average precision by points of extreme delicacy, which none but the cultivated eye can in the least feel, and to express which all words are absolutely meaningless and useless." He then adds: "But it stands to reason that the men who in broad, simple, demonstrable matters are perpetually violating truth will not be particularly accurate or careful in carrying out delicate and refined and undemonstrable matters; and it stands equally to reason that the man who, as far as argument or demonstration can go, is found invariably truthful, will in all probability be truthful to the last line and shadow of a line." [1] Now the case of Poetry and

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i. pp. 434-5, also p. 322 (1897). In the same spirit as Ruskin, Goethe writes: "Only a portion of Art can be taught, but the artist needs the whole. He who is only half-instructed ever errs and talks much. He who knows it all is content with performing, and speaks little or late. . . . The best is not to be explained by words. The spirit in which we act is the highest matter."—'Meister's Apprenticeship,' Bk. vii. chap. 9. Needless to say, almost, "Rules will never make either a work or a discourse eloquent. They can seldom produce a single beauty, but *they may banish a thousand faults.*"—Goldsmith, 'Works,' Vol. vi. pp. 57-60.

Literature at large is, in respect of refinements and subtleties, analogous, I believe, to that of Statuary; therefore all I contend for in the criticism of Poetry is the possibility of establishing certain more or less definite canons or principles by which any poetical work may be more or less accurately appraised; by which Shakespeare may be more or less definitely shown to be Shakespearian, and Phillips more or less definitely Phillipian. If this cannot be done, it is quite obvious that there is nothing approaching a science of literary criticism. Nay, it would show that such a science is impossible; and consequently that all talk about Poetry as Poetry is mere gabble and fatuity. Heaven forbid that this should necessarily be the case! Poetry, I repeat, must conform to laws, or there can be no science of Poetry.[1]

5. *The first requirement of any poem is that it shall depict Nature, make it clear to our apprehension, and arouse such emotions within us as might*

[1] Professor Saintsbury writes: "There is what is most delightful of all to the true lover of poetry and literature, the delight of finding out how much it is impossible to account for. For to this we always come; and in this, I believe, consists the greatest and most lasting enjoyment of every kind of beauty. If you ever could find out exactly why it is beautiful, *the thing would become scientific and would cease to be interesting.* But you cannot, and so there is at once the joy of possession and the ardour of the unattained."—'Corrected Impressions.' According to this view the main delight of noble poetry and literature is to find in it an eternal conundrum! But I fancy he might not be indisposed to correct this impression. See his remarks on Carlyle's 'French Revolution' cited below, par. 24. Aristotle says: "Scientific Knowledge is possessed when we know the necessary connection between a thing and its causes."—'Posterior Analytics,' Bk. i. chap. ii. Hamilton defines it as a knowledge of effects in their causes and of causes in their effects. Such a knowledge of anything should rather add to than detract from its interest. I hope that the Solar System did not become less interesting after Newton's great discovery, and that the human body is not less interesting since Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood!

be aroused by the actual view of Nature.—To begin with, I would broadly state that the first requirement of a poem is that in relation to its subject it shall depict Nature, make it clear to our apprehension, and arouse such emotions within us as might be aroused by the actual view of Nature. (By Nature I mean, let it be premised, the whole sum of things, material and spiritual, visible and invisible, with which man is acquainted, including himself and his fellow-men). I would broadly say that, in my opinion, a poem is to some extent proved to have merit when it fulfils those requirements; and that in so far as it fails to fulfil those requirements it is to that extent worthless, and probably less than worthless.

6. *Historic view of this subject in relation to painting and sculpture—the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius.*—In the first place, let us note what has generally been thought and accepted on this subject. Going back to the old days, take the legend in relation to painting and sculpture, of the contest between the painters Zeuxis and Parrhasius. In this competition the picture of Zeuxis represented a bunch of grapes, and the story goes that it was so naturally—that is, so realistically—painted that, on the picture being placed in the open air, the birds flew at it and began to peck the fruit. Elated and confident of success by so flattering a proof of his merit, the artist went off to see the work of his rival, when, entering the studio and seeing what he took to be a curtain drawn over it, he called upon him to withdraw the hanging, when, behold! what he took to be a real curtain turned out to be only a painted one.[1] Zeuxis had merely deceived the birds,

[1] This kind of power would, I suppose, be called "deceptive imitation," and deals with truths which, according to Ruskin, "are not only few, but of the very lowest order."—'Modern

whereas Parrhasius had deceived Zeuxis. Accordingly there was nothing for it but that the palm should be yielded to Parrhasius. Now though this story must be but a fable, it seems to show that Antiquity required of artists that they should be about as graphic in their works as Nature herself. In any case, it clearly suggests that the Greeks took realistic achievement to be a high merit in works of Art.

7. *Homer's view of artistic excellence.*—Here is Homer's view of artistic excellence. Thetis has gone to Vulcan to ask him to forge arms for her son Achilles, to replace those which had been lost by Patroclus. Arrived at the divine smithy, she finds Vulcan, who is thus attended :—

> "Beside the King of fire two golden forms
> Majestic moved and served him in the place
> Of handmaids ; young they seemed, and seemed alive ; "

and so forth.[1] Those golden forms were Vulcan's handiwork. They were so well designed and executed that they *seemed* to be alive and young. From this it would appear that, in the opinion of Homer, the divinest of art was that which "seemed alive "—that which was completely realistic. So in the account of the shield which Vulcan forged for Achilles. He thus describes one of the battle scenes depicted upon it :—

> "There discord rages ; there tumult and the face
> Of ruthless Destiny. She now a chief

Painters,' Vol. i. pp. 24, 26, 27, 78, 81. He actually declares that "pictures which imitate to deceive are never true ; that deceptive chiaroscuro is the lowest of all truths."—Ib., pp. 77-79. "Aerial perspective is the expression of space by any means whatsoever, sharpness of edge, vividness of colouring, &c., assisted by greater pitch of shadow, and requires only that objects be detached from each other by degrees of intensity in proportion to their distance."—Ib., p. 150.

[1] Cowper's Homer, 'Iliad,' Bk. xviii. 667-674.

Seized, newly wounded, and now captive held
Another yet unhurt, and now a third
Dragged breathless through the battle by his feet;
And all her garb was dappled thick with blood,
Like living men they traversed and they strove;"

and so on. When the Myrmidons of Achilles beheld the shield, "a tremor shook" them; "none dared look on it, but all fled." [1] In Homer's eyes the mighty worth of Vulcan's Art lay in its truth to life. He is ruled by the same convictions in his descriptions of the various scenes represented on the wondrous shield. The ploughed field, for example, appeared like "a glebe new-turned"; the oxen seemed "to low in gold." All through, in fact, it is quite obvious that Homer took the perfection of Art to lie in representing things to the life.

8. *The view of Dante.*—This was also Dante's view of the matter. In ascending the mountain of Purgatory he records that he

"discovered that the bank around
Whose proud uprising all ascent denied,
Was marble white; and so exactly wrought
With quaintest sculpture, that not there alone
Had Polycletus but e'en Nature's self
Been shamed." [2]

He declares that the Angel of the Annunciation which he saw sculptured in that marble rock,

"before us seemed
In a sweet act so sculptured to the life,
He looked no silent image. One had sworn
He had said 'Hail'!"

Again:—

"There in the self-same marble were engraved
The cart and kine drawing the sacred ark,
That from unbidden office awes mankind.
Before it came much people, and the whole
Parted in seven quires. One sense cried 'Nay!'
Another, 'Yes, they sing.' Like doubt arose
Betwixt the eye and ear from the curled flame
Of incense breathing up the well-wrought toil."

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[1] 'Iliad,' Bk. xix. 16-17. [2] "Purgatory," c. x. (Cary).

Once more, Virgil directs Dante's attention to the imagery worked upon the ground which they are traversing, and the following is Dante's reflection upon it :—

> "What master of the pencil or the style
> Had traced the shades and lines that might have made
> The subtlest workman wonder ? Dead, the dead ;
> The living seemed alive : with clearer view
> His eye beheld not who beheld the truth
> Than mine what I did tread on, while I went
> Low bending." [1]

So that there appears to be no doubt whatever as to what were Dante's views as to what constituted the utmost perfection in Art—namely, that it implied absolute truth to life.

9. *Ruskin on the subject.*—Commenting on this passage, Ruskin says : "Dante has here clearly no other idea of the highest art than that it should bring back, as a mirror or vision, the aspect of things past or absent. The scenes of which he speaks are, on the pavement, for ever represented by angelic power, so that the souls which traverse this circle of the rock may see them as if the years of the world had been rolled back, and they again stood beside the actors in the moment of action. Nor do I think that Dante's authority is absolutely necessary to compel us to admit that such art as this *might*, indeed, be the highest possible. Whatever delight we may have been in the habit of taking in pictures, if it were to be truly offered to us to remove at our will the canvas from the frame, and in lieu of it to behold fixed for ever the image of some of those mighty scenes which it has been our way to make mere themes for the artist's fancy ; if, for instance, we could again behold the Magdalene receiving her pardon at Christ's feet, or the disciples sitting with Him

[1] "Purgatory," c. xii.

at the table of Emmaus; and this not feebly nor fancifully, but as if some silver mirror that had leaned against the wall of the chamber had been miraculously commanded to retain for ever the colours that had flashed upon it for an instant, would we not part with our picture—Titian's or Veronese's though it might be?"[1] In other words, supposing that you could have, say, a life-size photograph perfectly reproducing the perfect form, colour, tone, and chiaroscura of some fine scene in Nature, or of the figures, features, and actions of the actors in some great historic episode, what would be the esthetic effect and value of it? Indubitably, I should surmise that such a reproduction would be of the very highest value; and, indeed, that if we had the power of conjuring up visions of that kind at will, it would go far to supersede the call for pictorial art. But as no one possesses such power, it remains to the artist to make good the deficiency by depicting the scene or the episode which has engaged his fancy, and through whatever medium he may select, as veraciously, graphically, and impressively as he can. To the artist and the poet I would say: See as vividly as you can, and present your vision to us as vividly as you can.

10. *A suggested solution of the differences between the Realist and the Impressionist.*—This account of the matter, it seems to me, offers a solution of the differences between the Realist and the Impressionist. To be *impressive*, a work must be pervaded by realism; whilst, on the other hand, *the proof of its realism will lie in the fact that it is truly impressive.* If it is not impressive there will be a failure in realism; if there be a failure in realism, the work, to the judicious at least, will not be impressive. To the judicious a work will

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. p. 21. See also pp. 22-3 (1897).

be impressive (for what it is) in proportion to its realism, and will be found real in proportion to its impressiveness; so that, in truth, I would suggest that there seems to be no conflict at all between true realism and true impressionism. The most impressive will be the most real of its kind; the most real, the most impressive.[1]

11. *Shakespeare's view of artistic excellence.*—Nor does there seem to be any doubt as to what was Shakespeare's view of artistic excellence. Thus, in the Induction to 'The Taming of the Shrew,' they say to poor Sly :—

> "Dost thou love pictures? We will fetch thee straight
> Adonis painted by a running brook,
> And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
> Which seem to move and wanton with her breath,
> Even as the waving sedges play with wind.
> We'll show thee Io as she was a maid,
> And how she was beguiléd and surprised,
> As lively painted as the deed was done;
> Or Daphne roaming through a thorny wood,
> Scratching her legs that one shall swear she bleeds;
> And at that sight shall sad Apollo weep,
> So workmanly the blood and tears are drawn."

In the 'Winter's Tale' a gentleman is made to say that, in Julio Romano's statue of Hermione, the sculptor "So near Hermione hath done

[1] Thus, for example, go to the National Gallery and look at "A Franciscan Monk in Prayer," by Francisco Zurbaran. It seems to me to be "real," and therefore impressive. So as to the portrait, say, of Dr Peral by Francisco Goya. On the other hand, look at "Christ at the Column—Vision of St Bridget," by Velasquez. Is it either real or impressive? Or take Murillo's "Holy Family." There are three charming figures in it splendidly painted, but they seem to me to be expressive of nothing; consequently it fails to impress me, or to suggest any note of reality. Or take Valdez Leal's "Assumption of the Virgin"; one or two well-painted figures may be seen in it, attended by what strikes me as a foolish chaos of infants, destitute either of reality or impressiveness. For something very real and impressive in ancient sculpture, go to the British Museum and look, for instance, at the colossal head of the Ram-headed Sphinx from the Avenue leading to the Pylon of Heru-em-hab, King of Egypt, B.C. 1400.

Hermione that they say one would speak to her and stand in hope of an answer"; whilst with regard to the Histrionic art, the purpose of playing, he declares, "both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature; to show virtue her own feature; scorn, her own image; and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," which obviously means—Be true to Nature to the last fibre if possible.

12. *The view of Goethe and others.*—In his poem on Liberty, James Thomson speaks incidentally of "the live features of one breathing stone," which indicates that he also took the realistic view of Art. Goethe thinks that "we cannot *see* like the Greeks," and that, because we cannot see like them, we "shall never become such poets, sculptors, and physicians as they were," [1] which conclusion, of course, is only to be taken for what it is worth; whilst the inference to be drawn from it is that Goethe was a strict realist.

13. *Nature is the true centre of gravity in Art.*—Goethe's friend, the Duke of Weimar, said: "I have sometimes remarked in the presence of great works of Art . . . how much a certain property contributes to the effect which gives life to the figures, and to the life an irresistible truth. This property is the hitting, in all the figures we draw, the right centre of gravity. I mean the placing of figures firmly upon their feet, making the hands grasp, and fastening the eyes on the spot where they should look. Even eyeless figures, as vessels and stools—let them be drawn ever so correctly,—lose all effect so soon as they lack the

[1] 'Autobiography,' Bk. xv. Napoleon, says Goethe, "deeply felt the deviation of the French Theatre from Nature and Truth." —Ib., Vol. ii. p. 384. Again, "Nature is the only book which presents important matter in all its pages."—'Travels in Italy,' p. 186. See also his severe criticism of Hugo's 'Notre Dame de Paris.'—'Letters to Zelter,' p. 458.

resting on their centre of gravity, and have a certain swimming and oscillating appearance." [1]

14. *Ruskin on the subject.*—But in our day the chief exponent of Realism, or Truth to Nature, in art, is John Ruskin. Let us glance at a few of his more striking remarks on the subject—*e.g.*: "In mediæval art truth is first; beauty, second; in modern art, beauty first and truth second. . . . The mediæval principles lead up to Raphael; the modern, lead down from him." [2] In the same book he says with complete approval: "Pre-Raphaelitism has one principle—uncompromising truth in all it does, obtained by working everything down to the most minute detail, from Nature and from Nature only." [3] He even goes the length of saying: "Select nothing and reject nothing." [4] Wherein I think he makes a great mistake; and elsewhere, indeed, he himself greatly modifies the doctrine. At present I only quote these passages to show his determined Realism.

15. *Some of his pronouncements.*—His famous work, 'Modern Painters,' is full of the Gospel of Realism. Take the following passage: "Although it is possible to reach what I have stated to be the first end of Art, the representation of facts, without reaching the second, the representation of thoughts, yet it is altogether impossible to reach the second without having previously reached the first. I do not say that a man cannot think, having false basis and material for thought, but that a false thought is worse than the want of thought,

[1] Emerson, 'Essays' (First Series), Works, Vol. ii. pp. 216-7.
[2] 'Lectures on Architecture and Painting,' p. 215.
[3] Ib., p. 227.
[4] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i. p. 448. "In a monkish drama of the Twelfth Century, King Herod was put on the stage with the worms eating him. Many of the German dramas of the Seventeenth Century offer parallel instances."—Burckhardt, 'The Renaissance in Italy,' note, p. 413. So mediæval sculpture. There is an instance, I think, in Tewkesbury Abbey.

and therefore is not art. And this is the reason why, though I consider the second as the real and only important end of all art, I call the representation of facts the first end, because it is necessary to the other, and must be attained before it. It is the foundation of all art; like real foundations it may be little thought of when a brilliant fabric is raised on it, but it must be there." [1] This doctrine and language of Realism he also introduces into the discussion of architectural painting. Contrasting the architectural paintings of the Flemings with those of Prout, he says of the former that the ruins they drew "looked as if broken down on purpose. What weeds they put on seemed put on for ornament. Their domestic buildings never had any domesticity; the people looked out of the windows evidently to be drawn, or came into the street only to stand there for ever. A peculiar studiousness affected all accident: bricks fell out methodically, windows opened and shut by rule, stones were chipped at regular intervals, everything that happened seemed to have been expected before; and, above all, the street had been washed and the houses dusted expressly to be painted in their best." It is a very different story with Prout. We owe him, he says, "the first perception, and certainly the only existing expression, of precisely the characters which were wanting to old art, of that feeling which results from the influence among the noble lines of architecture, of the rent and the rust, the fissure, the lichen and the weed, and from the writing upon the pages of ancient walls of the confused hieroglyphics of human history." He declares that as yet there has appeared "nothing at all to equal him" in that line; that "there is no stone drawing, no vitality of architecture, like Prout's." [2] Or

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i. p. 50. [2] Ib., Vol. i. p. 119.

take the following very explicit passage on Mulready and Stanfield: "Mulready himself is not always free from affectation of some kind; mannerism there is in his treatment of tree-trunks. There is a ghastliness about his laboured anatomies of them as well as a want of specific character. Why need they be always flayed? The hide of a beech-tree, or of a birch or fir, is nearly as fair a thing as an animal's. Why not paint these as he paints other things, *as they are?* That simplest and deepest of all secrets, which gives such majesty to the ragged leaves about the edges of the pond in the gravel-pit, and imparts a strange interest to the grey ragged urchins disappearing behind the bank—that bank so low, so familiar, so sublime![1] What a contrast between the deep sentiment of that commonest of all common, homeliest of all homely, subjects, and the lost sentiment of Stanfield's Amalfi, the chief landscape of the year (1848), full of exalted material and mighty crags, and massy sea-grottoes, precipices and convents, fortress towers and cloud-capped mountains, and all in vain *merely because that same simple secret has been despised, because nothing there is painted as it is.*"[2] Whilst in the chapter on "Finish" he boldly declares that Finish is but "consummate and accumulated truth"; that it simply means "telling more truth."[3]

16. *Truth to Nature in Poetry—the view of Aristotle.*—It is the same with Poetry. Thus Aristotle:

[1] But surely it was a great misuse of words to speak of ragged leaves as "majestic," or of a low bank as "sublime"!

[2] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. ii. pp. 243-4. See also his admirable remarks on the exaggerated overhanging of rocks in some pictures (Vol. iv. pp. 269-70), so exaggerated that we refuse to believe in them.

[3] Ib., Vol. iii. p. 132. Elsewhere he remarks, "In foreground work Titian and Leonardo could not be excelled, but thoroughly conventional in all but foregrounds."—'Architecture and Painting,' p. 179.

"When we hear poetry or music, our very soul is altered; and he who is affected with joy or grief by the imitation of any objects is in very nearly the same situation as if he was affected by the objects themselves." [1] "It is necessary that the poet should form the plots and elaborate his diction in such a manner that he may as much as possible place the thing before his own eyes." [2]

17. *The view of Horace.*—So Horace: "It is not enough," says he, "that poems be beautiful; let them be tender and affecting, and bear away the soul of the auditor whithersoever they please. As the human countenance smiles on those that smile, so does it sympathise with those that weep. If you would have me weep, you must first express the passion of grief yourself," [3] and so on.

18. *The view of Cervantes.*—Cervantes explicitly teaches the same doctrine. To the story-teller he declares: "Nothing but pure nature is your business; her you must consult, and the closer you can imitate, your picture is the better." [4]

19. *Of Dr Johnson.*—Dr Johnson wrote: "We first discard absurdity and impossibility; then exact greater and greater degrees of probability; but at last become cold and insensible to the charms of falsehood, however specious; and from the imitations of truth, which are never perfect, transfer our attention to truth itself." [5] "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature." [6] By most dramatists "probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language is depraved." [7]

20. *Of Cowley.*—Cowley says that "Truth is

[1] 'Politics,' Bk. viii. chap. 5. [2] 'Poetics,' chap. xvii.
[3] 'Art of Poetry.' See also Aristotle, 'Poetics,' chap. xiv. 1.
[4] Preface to 'Don Quixote.' [5] 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 140.
[6] Ib., Vol. v. p. 99. [7] Ib., pp. 100-1.

truest poesy" [1]; in other words, there is more poetry in fact than in fiction.

21. *Of Pope.*—Pope, paraphrasing Horace, gives expression to the same doctrine in a very vigorous manner :—

> "Let me for once presume to instruct the times,
> To know the poet from the man of rhymes.
> 'Tis he who gives my heart a thousand pains,
> Can make me feel each passion that he feigns;
> Enrage, compose, with more than magic art;
> With pity and with terror tear my heart;
> Or snatch me o'er the earth or through the air,
> To Thebes, to Athens, when he will, and where." [2]

Thus Pope, too, was a realist. As I hope to show later on, it is only the author essentially true to Nature who can produce the effects which the passage demands.

22. *Of James Thomson.*—In his fine poem of Spring, James Thomson, without having any theory in view, sets forth the same doctrine as Pope. Where shall I find words, he exclaims—

> "Tinged with so many colours, and whose power
> To life approaching, may perfume my lays
> With that fine oil, those aromatic gales
> Which, unexhaustive, flow continual round."

Here is the doctrine of Realism in Poetry clearly, if undesignedly, taught a long hundred years before all the Nineteenth Century din and babble about it. And not only is this Realism implicitly taught, but, as I shall have occasion to show, nobly exemplified long before the days of Scott, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

23. *Of Coleridge.*—Coleridge himself said : "The great source of bad writing is a desire in the writers to be thought something more than men of sense. Language is made a sort of leap-frog.

[1] 'Davideis,' Bk. i.

[2] Cf. Horace, 'Epistles,' Bk. ii. 1, and 'The Art of Poetry.'

Our poetry runs after something more than human, and prose runs after our poetry, and even our conversation follows in the pursuit. Metaphors are used not to illustrate but as substitutes for plain speaking. Sound sense and sound feeling are necessary to a good writer." [1] Admirable remarks; but alas! some of our poets and critics (*e.g.*, Macaulay and Swinburne, as we have seen) appear to have a kind of notion that poetry consists in not being sensible!

From the quotations given it would appear to be unquestionable that many of the great masters, at least, are convinced that Realism is the right thing both in Poetry and Art. We have the more reason to come to this conclusion, because in the passages quoted some of them are expressing themselves without reference to any preconceived theory, and, consequently, unperverted, unbiassed by preconceptions or by prejudices of any kind. Generally speaking, the great Poets are the best Philosophers, having no theory to support.

24. *There is a general conviction that truth to Nature is requisite.*—Coming down to our own time, there is now a general, though not very well defined, conviction that truth to Nature is desirable in Literature and Art. Critical literature abounds with such words and phrases as necessarily involve this conclusion—such words as vitality, actuality, verisimilitude, passion, inwardness, and so forth; such phrases as "palpitating with actuality," "drawn to the life," "throbbing with vitality," "inconsistencies so harmonised as to make the character seem real and possible," "convincing natural vigour," "instinct with truth," "so near to life and so convincing that the artist himself is never in view," "thrilling sense of reality," and the like. An able critic in 'The

[1] See 'Athenæum,' 1889, Vol. i. p. 386.

Athenæum' holds that "the final distinctior between poets of the first and poets of the second class is this: that while the poetry whose air is the highest Heaven of the imagination seems no longer to be literature at all, but the very voice of Nature herself, the poetry that dwells in the lower spheres may give us perhaps the voice of Nature, but gives it as through a telephone."[1] And Professor Saintsbury thus expresses himself on Carlyle's 'French Revolution': "The 'French Revolution' of Carlyle is the French Revolution as it happened, as it was; the French Revolution of the others is the French Revolution dug up in lifeless fragments by excellent persons with the newest pickaxes."[2] In short, an essential Realism seems to be the implicit creed of man, woman and child (notice how children insist upon it in their play) as long as they remain unconscious of creed and unsophisticated; as long as they keep themselves outside the influence of schools and coteries and esoteric societies; as long, indeed, as they themselves are frank and true to Nature.

24*a*. *Nor does there seem to be any sound distinction between the Romantic and the Classic.*—Again there is a great deal of vague talk about "the romantic" and "the classic," but I am bound to confess that I do not clearly apprehend what is meant by those terms. Collier says: "It is the disregard of the trammels of the unities that constitutes the 'romantic' drama, whether the story be real or fictitious; and that from the earliest period to the time of Shakespeare, there is not a play in our language in which they are strictly observed. The words 'romantic drama' have reference to form and construction merely, and do not in any respect relate to sentiment and

[1] 'Athenæum,' February 1887, p. 247.
[2] 'Corrected Impressions.' Cf. note above, p. 116.

language." [1] On the other hand, Goethe says: "I call the classic *healthy;* the romantic, *sickly.* In this respect the 'Nibelungenlied' is as classic as 'The Iliad,' for both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are romantic, not because they are new, but because they are weak, morbid, and sickly; and the antique is classic not because it is old but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy. If we distinguish 'classic' and 'romantic' by these qualities, it will be easy to see our way clearly." [2] It seems to me that there is much vagueness in these distinctions. I would suggest that any story of adventures and experiences calculated to arouse our interest and play upon our sympathies might properly be taken to be a Romance; and that if such Romance succeeds in obtaining a place in the catalogue of the world's great stories, it, by that fact, becomes a classic. All the great classic stories of the world may be regarded as romances, and all the great romances as classics—Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Italian, French, Spanish, English, Scottish,—as the case may be. It would further follow that while all the classic stories are romantic, it would by no means follow that all romances are classic!

25. *Sound Sense is the necessary basis of all great Literature and Art.*—In other words, sound sense is the necessary basis of all great Art and of all great Literature. No Genius even is of any account but when he is grounded either on the actual or on the imaginative truth of things. The first demand which we make upon the Muses is that they shall speak to us in the sacred language of Common-sense. The Genius that draws its inspiration from Nature need never run dry; the Genius that does *not* draw its inspiration from

[1] Keltie, 'British Dramatists,' p. 36.
[2] 'Conversations with Eckermann,' p. 380.

Nature will never be anything but dry. You may as well try to disregard Nature and Common-sense in Literature as in Chemistry, which is to say that the thing cannot be done at all with success.

25*a*. *All great literature is rooted in life and experience.*—In the meantime, then, I offer these very explicit and very emphatic considerations and testimonies in favour of the first critical doctrine for which I contend—namely, that an essential requisite of a poem or of any other literary or artistic work is that it shall exhibit a general and essential conformity with the truth of Nature; or to repeat the doctrine in the form already stated: *The first requirement of a poem is that it shall depict Nature, make it clear to our apprehension, and arouse such emotions within us as might be aroused by the actual view of Nature.* A poem is, to some extent at least, proved to have merit when it conforms with this requirement; whilst in so far as it fails to achieve such conformity, it will be to that extent at least worthless or worse than worthless. To be of worth any book of any kind must be grounded and rooted in life and experience.

26. *But neither in literature nor in Art should any attempt be made to confound representation with reality.*—But whilst it is the object of literature and art to arouse our emotions, it should be understood that in trying to arouse such emotions no attempt is to be made to *confound* representation with reality. "It is false that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramatic fable in its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever credited. . . . Imitations produce pain or pleasure, *not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind.*" [1] It is probably

[1] Johnson, 'Works,' Vol. v. pp. 112-4 (Lynam's Edition).

more satisfactory to see a young man acting Lear than one of eighty. "As you look upon a picture you do not see something that is real, but something that draws upon the imagination." [1] In requiring a work of literature or art to be true to Nature, I do not mean such truth as might be *mistaken* for Nature, but only such qualities as shall report Nature vividly.

27. *Summary of the Chapter.*—Summarising this chapter, I should say—

(1) That in all descriptions of persons, places, scenes, or things, we should expect to find essential truth to Nature.

(2) That in all kinds of narrative and representation we should expect to find essential truth to Nature, or, what one might call, historic credibility.[2] In such works, for instance, as 'Waverley,' 'Guy Mannering,' 'The Antiquary,' we have superlative truth to Nature. Or take Stevenson's 'Treasure Island.' Part I. of this story is excellent. The Old Sea Dog, Black Dog, and the Blind Man—all seem to be vital and first-rate; but, it seems to me, the story degenerates into a yarn of adventures, both conventional and incredible. 'The Master of Ballantrae' manifests similar defects, in the latter part of which, as noted by Sir George Douglas, a great *écroulement* takes place.[3] In 'The Treasure of Franchard' we have in Desprez and

[1] Sir Henry Irving, quoted by Hutton, 'Impressions of America,' Vol. i. p. 224. So Louis Calvert: The actor succeeds best "when he attempts not to copy life but to suggest it."—'Problems of the Actor,' p. 177. "There are no bounds to illusion, while realism is limited by the dimensions of the stage."—Ib., p. 178.

[2] See Horace, 'De Arte Poetica,' 1-30.

[3] 'Life of James Hogg,' p. 103.

Madame Desprez and in their adopted boy, Jean Marie, clever character sketches, but the story is weak, and does not carry conviction: only a story, one would say. 'Weir of Hermiston' is an unfinished masterpiece, reporting Nature in every paragraph; and, to take a living writer, so do some of Thomas Hardy's great novels.

(3) That in every kind of plot we should expect to find historic credibility—credibility sufficient to force upon us the conviction that (*a*) the thing asserted or represented (epic or dramatic) either happened or might have happened; (*b*) that the assigned epic or dramatic cause was adequate to the alleged epic or dramatic effect; or, conversely, that the alleged effect arose naturally from the assigned cause. Dramatic cause and effect should be as closely related, as convincing and incontestable, as historic cause and effect. It is this closeness or inevitability in the sequences of a story or a drama that gives it the real grip and interest of a life-history. Refer again for illustration to the Scott Novels and the others just named.

(4) That in the epic or dramatic pourtrayal of persons we should expect each one to be historically conceivable and credible, and to talk and act from beginning to end in clear consistency with his character. As Horace says: "It will make a wide difference whether it be Davus who speaks or a hero; a man well-stricken in years, or a hot young fellow in his bloom; a matron of distinction, or an officious nurse; a roaming merchant, or the cultivator of a

verdant little farm; a Colchian or an Assyrian; one educated at Thebes or one at Argos." [1] When, for example, in 'The School for Scandal' the serving-man Trip says to the money-lender, "I could give you a mortgage on some of his winter-clothes, with equity of redemption before November, or you shall have the reversion of the French velvet, or a post-obit on the blue and silver," and so on, he is not speaking in character; we find it wellnigh incredible that any serving-man ever spoke in this fashion. We put it down as wholly factitious.

[1] See also Lord Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. i. p. 451.

CHAPTER VI.

TRUTH TO NATURE: HOW LIMITED AND EXPANDED.

1. I have been strongly urging the necessity of Truth to Nature in Literature. It might be said in reply: "Very good, but probably no play or story ever written is quite true to Nature. The events of 'Hamlet,'" it might be said, "never took place in three hours; that they were indeed wholly impossible both by Time and Space measurements; that no man ever had such interviews with his father's ghost as Hamlet is represented to have had; nor spoke such soliloquies; nor conversed in blank verse." Our objector might then continue: "But yet though thus obviously not contained within the four quarters of Nature, the play is, by universal consent perhaps, a very good play. How are you going to deal with the discrepancy apparent between these facts and your theory?" To this I answer that, by his constructive faculty, the literary artist may sometimes modify and contract, sometimes expand, Nature. This may be done in three ways: firstly, by Idealisation; secondly, by Invention; and thirdly, by what might be called Creative Phantasy.

A.—By Idealisation.

2. *The Literary Artist sometimes demands a licence to condense Time and Space.*—Let us consider Idealisation. In the first place the literary artist—*e.g.*, the Dramatist, demands a licence to condense Time and Space. In real life you cannot—

> " Shut old Time into a den
> And stay his motion " ;

neither can you, in any wise, contract Space ; but in representations of Nature and Life it is very frequently necessary to do so—to stenographise, so to speak, or symbolise Time and Space. Deny such a licence, and the Drama immediately becomes an impossibility. Briefly—as the painter has to compose miles of landscape within a few square feet of canvas, so it generally falls out that the dramatist has to focus the story of years, it may be, into the brief compass of an hour or two. Thus, in the Prologue to 'Henry the Fifth,' Shakespeare says to his audience, you are to suppose that

> " Within the girdle of these walls
> Are now confined two mighty monarchies.
> . . . . . .
> For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
> Carry them here and there ; jumping o'ertimes ;
> Turning the accomplishment of many years
> Into an hour-glass."

To the same effect, Sir Philip Sidney : " What child is there that coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, doth believe that it is Thebes ? " [1] There is no

[1] 'Apologia for Poetry,' pp. 52-3. This is how a scene was indicated in the old days. " The scene is perpetually changed in our old drama, precisely because it was not changed at all."—Hallam, Introduction, &c., Vol. iii. p. 559.

escape from it: the dramatic author must be allowed to make slaves of Time and Space, or, as already said, to condense Time and Space. Thus far he must take liberties with Nature; but whilst so doing he must, at the same time, maintain a living organic connection with Nature—a genuine sequence of Cause and Effect, consistent with Time and Space, between all the events, incidents, and episodes of his drama. Under this licence to condense Time and Space, we immediately get rid of the ancient and silly doctrine of the Unities of Time and Place.[1]

3. *He must improve the natural utterance of the persons of his drama.*—Secondly, under Idealisation, the literary artist must, generally speaking, improve the natural utterance of the persons of his drama. However strong and true and noble the characters, thoughts, passions, and emotions of the persons of the drama or of the epic may be, there is no probability that in real life they could severally give *adequate* expression to their thoughts, passions, and emotions. In general it may be taken that, in the heat of action, men are not ready with, say, such trenchant remarks as might be suitable to the occasion.

Power of repartee is not a common gift. Perhaps the inspiration which would have made a crushing

[1] On the old superstition touching the unities of time and place, see Lord Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. pp. 415-7. "The observance of Unity of time must either confine the drama to as few subjects as may be counted on the fingers, or involve gross improbabilities far more striking than the violation would have caused. . . . What play of the ancients, with reference to their ideal, does not hold out more glaring absurdities than any in Shakespeare?"—Coleridge, 'Essays, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists,' p. 30. Mr Boas remarks that the Athenian drama "deals, as a rule, with a definite crisis or entanglement rather than the gradual development of a character or intrigue; hence its action is usually confined within narrow limits both of time and space."—'Shakespeare and his Predecessors,' p. 22.

retort does not come until the following year, when it is too late for delivery. And it is with the evil as with the good. In real life, an evil person is rarely capable of giving oral expression to all his wickedness. Just as the noble person can rarely, on the spur of the moment, infuse all his nobility and grace into his speech (generally, of course, his manner will be all right), so the wicked person will probably be unable to infuse as much poison into his words as he would wish to do. A noble person may, on high occasions, be rendered almost dumb with emotion, whilst the scoundrel, on the other hand, may, in certain circumstances, be rendered inarticulate and well-nigh choked with evil rage. Similarly, even an able man on the stage of Life is rarely, on the spur of the moment, able to give full expression to his thoughts; nor a stupid fellow to all his stupidity. Indeed I think it may safely be taken as a general rule that, in real life, whether it be virtuous or wicked, clever or stupid, human thought and power of *oral* expression are not equal to the demands of human passion and emotion. Many persons, indeed, have very great difficulty in saying anything at all that is worth saying, or reasonably to the point. Now the dramatist or the story-teller cannot put a company of dumb, gasping, gesticulating persons upon the stage or within the boards of his book: he cannot exhibit human Life upon the stage, or give an account of it in all its phases *verbatim et literatim*. The thing is impossible, or, rather, absurd. What then is to be done? The dramatist must simply assist the persons of the drama: he must give them utterance. That is to say, he must not only put into their heads such thoughts, and into their hearts such emotions, as those persons would conceivably and credibly experience in

the situations assigned to them, wherein he should always remain perfectly true to Nature, but he must also give them thoughts and utterance harmoniously expressive of their natural passions and emotions. To make this clear by an example: Shakespeare, say, is depicting Banquo, a man of rectitude and right feeling, in certain painful and exciting circumstances. He may divine almost exactly how that noble person would, probably, think and feel amid such circumstances. *Thus far he must remain perfectly true to Nature.* But now, mark: in real Life, Banquo might be tongue-tied and largely unable to explain or express himself. In the drama, obviously, this would not do. The dramatist must give him thoughts and utterance harmoniously expressive of the passions and emotions which he would presumably experience amid the circumstances in which he is placed. For further example, take Duke Humphrey's speech to the Peers in the 'Second Part of King Henry VI.':—

"Brave Peers of England, pillars of the State,
To you Duke Humphrey must unload his grief,
Your grief, the common grief of all the land.
What! Did my brother Henry spend his youth,
His valour, coin, and people in the wars?
Did he so often lodge in open field,
In winter's cold and summer's parching heat
To conquer France, his true inheritance?
And did my brother Bedford toil his wits
To keep by policy what Henry got?
Have you yourselves, Somerset, Buckingham,
Brave York, Salisbury, and victorious Warwick
Received deep scars in France and Normandy?
Or hath my uncle Beaufort and myself,
With all the learned Council of the Realm,
Studied so long, sat in the Council-house
Early and late, debating to and fro
How France and Frenchmen might be kept in awe?
And hath his Highness in his infancy
Been crowned in Paris in despite of foes?
And shall these labours and these honours die?
Shall Henry's conquest, Bedford's vigilance,

Your deeds of war, and all our counsel die ?
O, Peers of England, shameful is this league !
Fatal this marriage, cancelling your fame ;
Blotting your names from books of memory ;
Razing the characters of your renown ;
Defacing monuments of conquered France ;
Undoing all, as all had never been ! "

Needless to say, Duke Humphrey could never have made a speech like this ; yet it is dramatically first-rate, for the simple reason that it gives him thoughts and utterance harmoniously expressive of the passions and emotions which he would probably experience amid the circumstances in which he was placed. In short, the dramatist is authorised to take a second liberty with the stern facts of Nature : he must, I repeat, generally improve the utterance of the persons of his drama.[1] " The gushing fullness of speech belongs to the poet, and it flows from the lips of each of his magic beings in the thoughts and words peculiar to its nature." [2]

4. *He must be permitted to make the persons of his drama soliloquise audibly when necessary.*— Again, the literary artist must be permitted to make the persons of his drama soliloquise audibly when necessary. In real life a Macbeth or a Hamlet, when alone, would not give oral utterance, or, at highest, would only give fragmentary oral utterance, to the thoughts, feelings, or passions which might be oppressing him ; but in the drama he must sometimes be permitted to speak out when alone, in order to interpret himself more fully to the reader or spectator. With reference to the soliloquy, all that we can demand of the dramatist is that he will not abuse his

[1] Cf. with Sir Joshua Reynolds' theory criticised above (chap. i. par. 8) that the artist must " elevate and improve " his subjects.

[2] Niebuhr, quoted by Emerson, ' Letters and Social Aims,' Works, Vol. viii. p. 46.

licence, and that he will make it credibly expressive of the thoughts, passions, and feelings of the soliloquist in the given circumstances. It should also be considered that we probably think most deeply and clearly when alone. Lord Kames justifies soliloquies on the ground that "some passions, when at a certain height, impel us so strongly to vent them in words that we speak with an audible voice even when there is none to listen." [1] Here, then, is a third modification of the stern facts of Nature—the dramatist takes a licence to make the persons of his drama soliloquise audibly when necessary.

5. *He carries a licence to improve the mechanism of expression.*—In the fourth place, the literary artist must be licensed to improve the mechanism of expression. In real life a Hamlet or a Macbeth is not going to talk in blank verse, nor in any other kind of verse. We can scarcely conceive him doing so, as no man is born to use that kind of utterance. Still, even in real life, let it be observed that thoughts, passions, and feelings have a tendency to throw themselves into different runs and pauses—into measures, rhythms, accents, and modulations; allegros and allegrettos; andantes and andantinos of expression; that, in short, they have a strong tendency to seek for utterance in appropriate sound. For example, in the trial of the Overbury murderers in the days of James the First, evidence was led that Weston, one of the persons charged, had, before the death of the victim, asked his reward from Mrs Turner, a principal accessory in the crime, and that her

[1] 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. i. pp. 431-2. But the soliloquy is frightfully abused, many dramatists making of it a mere vehicle to help them out with their story. Notice, for instance, the extreme artificiality of the plot of Terence's 'Andrea,' far too much of it being unravelled in soliloquy. *E.g.*, see Act i. Sc. 3, 4, and 5.

reply had been, "The man is not yet dead; perfect your work and you shall have the hire," [1] which is good blank verse—

> "The man is not yet dead;
> Perfect your work, and you shall have the hire."

Founding upon this tendency in able speech to adorn itself with appropriate sound, the literary artist is entitled to improve upon the ordinary forms of expression—to choose, say, the vehicle of blank verse; and all we demand of him is that his verse shall be in bright and noble harmony with the thought, passion, or emotion which he wishes to express. In the words of Pope—

> "The sound must seem an echo to the sense";

the truth of which aphorism might be abundantly illustrated from any first-rate author. Take Antony's great speech in 'Julius Cæsar.' Read it very carefully, and you will find that every line of it seems to be in perfect harmony with the thought and the cunning as well as with the feeling and the passion which it breathes. It is a superlative demagogic appeal. Except in the exquisite music of the expression, the whole speech might conceivably have been the carefully prepared work of a great demagogic orator, acquainted with all the springs of human passion and emotion, capable of rising to the highest oratorical possibilities of a tragic occasion, and turning them all to his own purposes. Indeed it might almost be looked upon as the actual speech of such an orator, carefully thought out, worked up, polished, idealised into perfection.

6. *It is not the form, obviously, but the content of a composition that determines its poetical or prose character. Great thoughts and emotions inspire*

[1] Cobbett, 'State Trials,' Vol. ii. p. 917.

the music of their own expression.—On the other hand, the truth of the same aphorism, that the sound should be an echo of the sense, might be abundantly proved also from great prose works. Take the Prophet Jeremiah's description of the Sea: "Will ye not tremble at my presence which have placed the sand for the bound of the Sea by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it." Think of the splendid utterance of some of the Messianic passages, say, in the Book of Isaiah and in some other parts of the sacred writings. The Apostle Paul, for example, in discussing Immortality, falls into the noblest music of utterance by virtue of the very strength and majesty of his thoughts and emotions: "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in Victory." So, in the great passage to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith." And, almost needless to say, great passages could be cited from the works of any great author, from which it would be seen that the splendour of his utterance had simply been inspired by the richness and glory of the thoughts and emotions underlying it. In a word,

great thoughts and emotions largely inspire the music of their own expression. It is not the form but the *content* of a composition that determines its poetic or prose character.[1]

7. *The Music of the heroic couplet is artificial and poor compared with that of blank verse.*—As further illustration of the principle that sound should echo the sense, how weak and artificial is the sound of the heroic couplet in comparison with the music of vital blank verse. Why? Because the former mode of utterance is too far removed from dialogue—has, indeed, almost no kinship with natural utterance, whereas we have seen that natural utterance sometimes approaches very closely to blank verse; that in some instances blank verse becomes almost the natural vehicle of sweet and noble thought. Dialogue being adopted, says Aristotle, "Nature herself discovered a suitable metre, for the iambic measure is most of all adapted to conversation," and, as evidence of this, he considers that we "most frequently speak in iambics in familiar dialogue with each other."[2]

[1] Cf. *supra*, chap. i. par. 16. "Music, properly so called, is analysed into melody and harmony. A succession of sounds, so as to be agreeable to the ear, constitutes melody: harmony arises from co-existing sounds. Verse, therefore, can only reach melody and not harmony."—Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii., note, p. 101. Just so; but verse may be in harmony or discord with the sentiments which it expresses. Another writer has happily said that "in every living poem the metrical form is the natural and inevitable expression of the spirit as distinguished from the intellectual substance. Metrical form, indeed, has no other right of existence than this, that it shall be the expression, the natural embodiment of the spirit of the poem apart from its mere intellectual substance, which prose can render."—'Athenæum,' 1890, Vol. ii. p. 850. And yet another writer speaks of poetry as "the creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal in words that move in metrical array."—R. W. Griswold, quoted with approval by E. A. Poe, 'Works,' Vol. iv. p. 315.

[2] 'Poetics,' chap. iv. To the same purpose, Horace in 'The Art of Poetry.' John Selden shows a most amusing ignorance of the nature of verse, 'Table-Talk,' chap. vi. 2.

For the same reason I venture to say that blank verse, even in Epic poetry, is wholly superior to the heroic couplet as a vehicle of expression, which I think would be obvious to most people of judgment on comparing, say, Cowper's Homer with Pope's, or Cowper's blank verse fragments of Virgil with Dryden's rhymed translation of the same.[1] Reverting to the question of dramatic expression, Mr Boas writes: The drama's organ of expression "must be stately enough for the highest uses, and yet sufficiently simple and nervous to render articulate the cry of the human heart in passionate extremes. Rhyming metres, with their necessary element of antithesis and artificiality, are unequal to the service; they throw emotion into leading strings, they distort its lineaments, dwarf its nature, emasculate its virility"[2]; which remarks, I think,

[1] Although Boswell writes, "Mr Cowper, a man of real genius, has miserably failed in his translation."—'Life of Johnson,' Vol. v. p. 19. And Byron, "I have tried to read Cowper's version, and I found it impossible."—'Works,' Vol. vi. p. 373. It is astonishing to me that Ruskin should have had a preference for rhyme.—'On the Old Road,' Vol. ii. p. 93.

[2] 'Shakespeare and his Predecessors,' p. 39. (Notice how feeble and artificial Antony's great oration would become if it were reduced to rhyme.) Mr Boas thinks that our blank verse was invented, in the first place, in order to reproduce the unrhymed measures of Greece and Rome.—Ib., pp. 24-5. How clumsy their earlier efforts were may be seen, *e.g.*, in the play of 'Gorboduc.' Dr Johnson was apparently quite ignorant of the powers of blank verse. See 'Life of Milton,' Works, Vol. iii. pp. 281-2; but otherwise, Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. p. 163, and an admirable passage, p. 403; whilst he discusses the inferiority of French heroic verse, p. 166. Mr W. L. Courtney rightly speaks, I think, of blank verse as "an unparalleled vehicle for majestic thoughts and soaring eloquence"; and Mr Quiller-Couch says, "I maintain that the larger, the sublimer, your subject is, the more impertinent rhyme becomes to it; and that this impertinence increases in a sort of geometrical progression as you advance from monosyllabic to dissyllabic to trisyllabic rhyme."—'On the Art of Reading,' p. 174. These remarks strike me, however, as too sweeping. We all know many glorious poems in rhyme. But, frankly, I am unable to excogitate a satisfactory theory of this very perplexing subject.

are entirely to the point. In the same spirit Miss G. Lathom, in an able paper which she read to the New Shakespearean Society, admirably observed that Shakespeare, "writing not to be read but to be heard, constructed his verse with all its irregularities, with a view to the expression by sound, of the ideas and passions of the *dramatis personæ*." Many of his peculiarities of style, she showed, were shared by other dramatists of the Elizabethan school, and she quoted from Peele and Greene to show how their choice of words, arrangement of pauses, &c., were made to express their meaning by sound as well as the sense of the words. She showed also how Shakespeare "had gradually ceased to use those means of expression which, like the rhymed couplet, were conventional, employing in preference those which did not produce an unnatural effect, like the extra syllable and run-on line, which by obliging the whole or part of a line to be read more or less rapidly, and by creating effective and natural pauses in the middle of a sentence, bring the blank verse nearer to the speech of daily life"[1]; which excellent expedients for the improvement of his art he adopted more probably through a growing and half-conscious instinct than by a reasoned theory.

8. *Idealisation.*—But notwithstanding anything here advanced, blank verse, or verse of any kind,[2] must also be regarded as a departure from, or a modification of, the forms of ordinary utterance. Yet in this modification, as in all the others to which I have referred, the true author

[1] 'Athenæum,' 1885, Vol. i. p. 254. See also 'Athenæum,' 1887, Vol. i. p. 247.

[2] Orthoepists make out over thirty metrical feet (Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. p. 178), but I don't think the subject worthy of much study. In fact, it should only be taken up, like a great many other studies, by a man qualifying for Bedlam.

in any department of Literature will be found to be loyal to that *essential* representation or truth of Nature for which I am contending. Though one dramatist be found condensing Time and Space, the events which he has chosen to represent must be credible, well connected, and true to Nature. Though he be found causing the solitary person to speak out his thoughts, or making the tongue-tied eloquent in noble verse, the thoughts, passions, and emotions thus expressed must be true to Nature. To put it briefly: in substance and fundamental principle he must remain absolutely true to Nature—must accept his material from Nature; whilst in composition and detail, he is forced by the very conditions of his task to give thoughts to the persons of his drama at one place, to improve their utterance at another, to compress here, to expand there, to build up a whole out of detached parts, to compose a noble harmony out of confused elements. This process might be called Idealisation.

B.—By Invention or Historic Imagination.

9. *The literary artist carries a licence to invent plots, episodes, and incidents.*[1]—Let us advance a step farther. A dramatist, say, is engaged on the subject of Julius Cæsar. The character of Julius is historic—well known. Almost every person of any education knows something of fact about him—his military genius, his eloquence,

[1] Ruskin, I fancy, makes a somewhat arbitrary use of the word "invention" when he says, "False things may be imagined, and false things may be composed; but only truth can be invented." —'Modern Painters,' Vol. v. p. 215.

his great ambition, his want of principle, his clemency, and so forth. The assassins—Brutus, Cassius, and the others—are notorious; the time and place of his murder have been duly recorded. With regard to all such facts, the dramatist may simply accept them from History. History, however, does not record all the prior meetings which the conspirators held, nor their various meeting-places, nor what they said and did at their various meetings; but in order to construct an artistic literary work, in order to create a vital dramatic story, it will be necessary for the dramatist to have a theory of the whole and a general plan of its details. What then is to be done? Obviously, the dramatist must simply *invent* or fabricate meetings, circumstances, speeches, colloquies, incidents not supplied by History.[1] In short, he must supplement the matters of fact, of which he is possessed, with matter of invention, in order to achieve "organic cohesion," an artistic whole, a storied unity, a well-rounded plot, which may be taken to be the rise, growth, and culmination—the whole story of an intrigue or trouble of any kind. Every speech, says Plato, "ought to be put together like a living creature, with a body of its own, so as to be neither without head nor without feet, but to have both middle and extremities described proportionately to each other and to the whole."[2] If this be true, even with regard to a speech, how necessary must it be that every narrative and every drama should

[1] Lord Kames thinks that "history may be supplied, but must not be contradicted."—'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. i. p. 382.

[2] 'Phædrus,' 105. So in Art: "Composition involves the relation of the parts in an artistic unity to each other and to the whole. If this relation be pleasing, then the artistic unity is beautiful."—Baldwin Brown, 'The Fine Arts,' pp. 239-40. According to Ruskin, Claude's 'Il Malino' illustrates discordancy, want of unity in plan.—'Modern Painters,' Preface to second edition, p. 41.

manifest constructive skill, should possess a feasible and credible plot or story, an organic living unity. Dowden notices this vital unity in the best plays of Shakespeare.[1] It is manifest in all the greatest of works. Mr Boas properly speaks of "the *inexorable* demand of the theatre" (meaning, no doubt, the enlightened theatre) "for a carefully articulated plot."[2] Without such, indeed, the worth and interest of your epic or drama will, at least, be greatly impaired. The only burden laid upon the literary artist is that those invented meetings, speeches, and general circumstances shall be credible and conformable to the general truth of Nature, fused into an organic whole. In pure fiction the whole story, of course, is an invention, which should also be credible and conformable to the general truth of Nature, always impressing us with a conviction of its inventive authenticity and veracity. A story should (1) either be historically true, (2) conceivably true, or (3) symbolically true. If it is neither historically true, nor conceivably true, nor symbolically true, it has no right to exist: it is a contribution

[1] "In the early plays structure determines function; in the later plays organisation is *preceded by life*."—Shakespeare, 'His Mind and Art,' p. 61. A most vital distinction.

[2] 'Shakespeare and his Predecessors,' p. 238. Pity but this demand were much more "inexorable." If it were really inexorable in practice, it would rid the stage of an infinitude of rubbish. See Carlyle on 'Unity of Interest,' organic completeness.—'Essays,' Vol. ii. p. 234 (Cent. Edition). Lord Kames shows the want of organic unity in some of the poems of Horace. —'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. pp. 27-8. In such a work, for instance, as that attributed to Ossian there is no unity, no anatomy, no constructive skill manifested at all. In plot and character alike, all is vague, nebulous, ineffective; but in his diction the author sometimes expresses a fine sentiment in impressive phrasing—*e.g.*, "I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate," &c. *Carthon.* "The narrow house is pleasant to me and the grey stone of the dead." *Orthona.* "The King alone beheld the sight: he foresaw the death of the people."—'Carthon.'

to fatuity. In other words, it should be pervaded by the great and healthy spirit of common-sense, which is always loyal to Nature. Never yet did man rise up in a permanently successful rebellion against Nature. Never yet did man rise up in a permanently successful mutiny against common-sense.

C.—By Creative Imagination.

10. *The literary artist carries a licence to deal with the supernatural and the preternatural.*—We now come to another fine question. A hearer might further object to the doctrine for which I am contending: "You demand truth to Nature, Common-sense in the poet and the artist. What about ghosts, goblins, brownies, fairies, griffins, unicorns, fauns, satyrs, and so forth? A great many poets and artists deal with such creatures, although there may be some reason to suppose that not one of them, living or dead, ever had a glimpse even of that kind of population. How does your theory of truth to Nature cover this fact?" I now propose to offer a reply to this objection.

11. *The whole man, inclusive of his dreams and fantasies, is part of Nature.*—At the very outset let it be noted and borne in mind that, as already indicated in my chapter on "The Sources of Poetry," the whole man is part of Nature: that, therefore, all man's natural fancies and dreams and superstitions are part of Nature—sometimes a very potent part. In a word, the great field of Imagination is but a human extension of the field of Nature. As Sir Joshua Reynolds says, "The beginning, the middle, and the end of everything valuable in taste is comprised in the knowledge of what is truly Nature; for whatever notions

are not conformable to those of Nature or universal opinion, must be considered as more or less capricious. My notion of Nature comprehends," he continues—and this is the part of the quotation to which I wish to draw particular attention—"not only the forms which Nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric and organisation, as I may call it, of the human mind and imagination." [1] This faculty Ruskin happily defines as "the power of perceiving or conceiving with the mind, things which cannot be perceived by the senses." [2]

12. *The criteria of imaginative truth and falsehood.*—Accepting this conclusion, then, that man's dreams and fantasies are an authentic part of Nature as well as the Sun and the Moon and the Stars, or the solid Globe upon which we tread, we are in the way of arriving at some practical criterion of the fitness or quality of such dreams and fantasies in so far as they may be exhibited in any work of Literature or Art. That criterion, I surmise, will lie in the answer to such questions as these: Does the work to be criticised manifest actuality, vitality, energy? Does it carry home to the beholder a conviction of its *imaginative* fitness, authenticity, genuineness? Does it seem to be inspired by sincerity, love of truth, beauty, or sublimity in the Author? Or, on the other hand, is it lacking in actuality, life, energy? Does it raise serious doubts in the mind of the beholder as to the creative or imaginative *bona fides* of the author or the artist? Or does it

[1] 'Discourses,' Vol. i. p. 415.

[2] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. p. 49. For different views of the imagination, see Appendix, Note C. "If one is to come before us as an artist, he must do so as a poet or creator of that which is not, as well as a mirror of that which is."—Samuel Butler, 'Notebooks,' p. 143. "The artist is a sub-creator."—W. M. Rossetti, 'Memoir to Keats's Poems,' p. 103.

appear to be the outcome of mere craziness or imbecility, or perhaps the pinchbeck ware of some cash-loving, or conceited, or ambitious person? Place yourself in front of any work (literary or artistic) purporting to be imaginative, and ask yourself some such questions as are here suggested, and your honest answer to such questions will probably be decisive of the quality of the work. If you can yourself honestly decide—if you are convinced in your own feelings and judgment that the work manifests actuality, vitality, energy; if it brings to you the conviction that it seems to be as imaginatively genuine and authentic as sunlight or the song of the lark; if it seems to you to be inspired by sincerity, by love of truth, of beauty or sublimity on the part of the author or the artist, then you may come to the conclusion—in all likelihood the right conclusion—that it is true and great work. If, on the other hand, you are not convinced in your own judgment and feelings that it possesses those qualities, then, in that unfortunate case, you will probably be justified in coming to the conclusion that you have neither great nor true work before you, and that the author of it has failed in his business.

13. *This doctrine is admirably illustrated in Ruskin's study of the true and false grotesque.*—These criteria of creative or imaginative fitness are admirably illustrated, and were to some extent suggested, by Ruskin's study of the true and false grotesque as exhibited in what he calls the Lombard and Renaissance griffins—two architectural griffins, one of which is to be found at Verona, and the other at Rome. The passage is long, but as it so admirably illustrates the truth of the principles for which I am contending, I make no apology for citing it at some length.

I only wish that I could transfer the drawings of those beasts from Ruskin's pages as easily as I can quote his words. The Lombard griffin carries on his back one of the main pillars of the porch of the Cathedral at Verona; the other is on the frieze of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina at Rome, and is much celebrated, according to Ruskin, by Renaissance and bad modern architects.

14. In some respects, however, he says: "This classical griffin deserves its reputation. It is exceedingly fine in lines of composition, and . . . very exquisite in execution. For these reasons it is all the better for our purpose. I do not want to compare the worst false grotesque with the best true, but rather, on the contrary, the best false with the simplest true, in order to see how the delicately wrought lie fails in presence of the rough truth—for rough truth in the present case it is, the Lombard griffin being altogether untoward and imperfect in execution."

"'Well, but,' the reader says, 'What do you mean by calling either of them true? There never were such beasts in the world as either of them.'

"No, never, but the difference is that the Lombard workman *did really see a griffin in his imagination*, and carved it from the life, meaning to declare to all ages that he had verily seen with his immortal eyes such a griffin as that; but the classical workman *never saw a griffin at all*, nor anything else, but put the whole thing together by line and rule.

"'How do you know that?'

"Very easily. Look at the two and think over them. You know that a griffin is a beast composed of lion and eagle. The classical workman set himself to put them together in the most

ornamental way possible. He accordingly carves a sufficiently satisfactory lion's body, then attaches very gracefully cut wings to the sides; then, because he cannot get the eagle's head on the broad lion's shoulders, fits the two together by something like a horse's neck; . . . then, finding the horse's neck look weak and unformidable, he strengthens it by a series of bosses, like vertebrae, in front, and by a series of spiny cusps, instead of a mane, on the ridge; next, not to lose the whole leonine character about the neck, he gives a remnant of the lion's beard, turned into a sort of griffin's whisker, and nicely curled and pointed; then an eye probably meant to look grand and abstracted, and, therefore, neither lion's nor eagle's; and finally, an eagle's beak very sufficiently studied from a real one. The whole head being, it seems to him, still somewhat wanting in weight and power, he brings forward the right wing behind it, so as to enclose it within a broad line. . . . The whole griffin thus gracefully composed being nevertheless, when all is done, a very composed griffin, is set to very quiet work, and raising his left foot to balance his right wing, sets it on the tendril of a flower so lightly as not even to bend it down, though in order to reach it, his left leg is made half as long again as his right.

"We may be pretty sure that if the carver had ever seen a griffin, he would have reported him as doing something else than *that* with his feet. Let us see what the Lombard workman saw him doing.

"Remember, first, the griffin, though part lion and part eagle, has the united power of both. He is not merely a bit of lion and a bit of eagle, but whole lion incorporate with whole eagle; so when we really see him, we may be quite sure we shall not find him wanting in anything necessary

to the might either of bird or beast." He then goes on to point out in detail the excellences of the Lombard griffin, showing that it does indeed combine the most striking features both of aquiline and leonine nature—in teeth, in throat, in claws, in ears, in wing, &c. He then draws attention to what we might call the spirit of the animal. "Having both lion and eagle in him, it is probable that a real griffin will have an infinite look of repose as well as power of activity. One of the noblest things about a lion is his magnificent indolence, his look of disdain of trouble when there is no occasion for it; as also one of the notablest things about an eagle is his look of inevitable vigilance even when quietest. Look again at the two beasts. You see the false griffin is quite sleepy and dead in the eye, thus contradicting his eagle's nature, but is putting himself to a great deal of unnecessary trouble with his paws, holding one in a most painful position merely to touch a flower, and bearing the whole weight of his body on the other, thus contradicting his lion's nature.

"But the real griffin is primarily with his eagle's nature wide-awake, evidently quite ready for whatever may happen; and with his lion's nature, laid all his length on his body, prone and ponderous; his two paws are simply put out before him like a drowsy puppy's on a drawing-room hearth-rug; not but that he has got something to do with them worthy of such paws, but he takes not one whit more trouble about it than is absolutely necessary. He has merely got a poisonous winged dragon to hold, and for such a light matter as that, he may as well do it lying down at his ease, looking out at the same time for any other piece of work in his way. He takes the dragon by the middle, one paw under the

wing, another above, gathers him up into a knot, puts two or three of his claws well into his back, and wrinkling all the flesh up from the wound, flattens him down against the ground, and so lets him do what he likes. The dragon tries to bite him, but he can only bring his head round far enough to get hold of his own wing, which he bites in agony instead." All this, he observes, the Lombard workman did not do, "because he had thought it out. . . . *He simply saw the beast,* saw it as plainly as you see the writing on this page, and of course could not be wrong in anything he told us of it." [1]

15. *The representation of the purely imaginative is subject exactly to the same kind of interpretation and criticism as the representation of the seen and the familiar.*—This is one of the happiest and most convincing pieces of expository art criticism that I have ever fallen in with, and it goes far, I think, to establish the principle for which Ruskin contends, and for which, by independent conviction, I also contend—namely, that the representation of the purely imaginative is subject to exactly the same kind of interpretation and criticism as the representation of the seen and the familiar. True imagination visualises its objects in an organic, vital, and credible form. The work of pure imagination must convince us that the author or the artist "saw the beast," or whatever it was, in the clear field of his imaginative vision. It must be actual, organic, living, convincing, like the Lombard griffin; not tape-measured, elongated here and shortened there,

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. pp. 109-113. "Every result of real imagination is a truth of some sort; and it is the characteristic of truth to be in some way tangible, seizable, distinguishable, and clear, as it is of falsehood to be obscure, confused, and confusing."—Ib., note, p. 200.

and put together by line and rule in the manner of the Renaissance griffin. In a word, the creative or imaginative fitness of a work may be thus tested: Does it appear, like the works of the Natural Creation, to fulfil its purpose? Is it imaginatively alive, healthy, and active in all its functions? If so, then such a work also may be taken to be true to Nature.

16. *The Minotaur of Mr Watts—a failure.*—Tried by such a test I should say that the Minotaur of Mr Watts in the Tate Gallery is a failure. I doubt if there is any truly imaginative or creative power in that picture. It seems to be but a well-painted bull's head planted on human shoulders—that it is nothing more than a physical combination of the bovine with the human—that it carries no suggestion of a devouring monster which, to encounter, would strain the courage of a Theseus, and wholly fails to produce any impression of the terrible; and just as, according to Mr Ruskin, the Renaissance sculptor never saw a griffin in his imagination, so *I think we may affirm that Mr Watts never had an authentic vision of the Minotaur.* I should say that it is entirely lacking in imaginative *bona fides*, and in no wise helps us to visualise the Cretan monster.[1]

17. *Dante's image of Fraud—a success.*—As an example of good imaginative description, glance at Dante's image of Fraud:—

> "Forthwith that image of vile Fraud appeared,
> His head and upper part exposed on land,
> But laid not on the shore his bestial train.
> His face the semblance of a just man's wore,
> So kind and gracious was its outward cheer;
> The rest was serpent all." [2]

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[1] "I have never seen statues of Jove, Neptune, Apollo, or any of the Heathen Gods that are not as great failures as the statues of Christ and the Apostles."—Samuel Butler, 'Notebooks,' p. 137.

[2] 'Hell,' canto xvii.

Here we are given an opportunity of perceiving by the mind something which we have no chance of perceiving by the senses—an image, moreover, which helps to intensify our conception of the foulness of the fraudulent spirit. For the present let me just mention Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner,' which seems to answer some of the tests. It is a work of imagination most vital, pure, and beautiful. Such a work as Arnold's 'Forsaken Merman' is not so convincing. It creates a situation that is essentially unthinkable; but forget the initial incredibility of the story, and it becomes charming. On the other hand, such a work as the 'Alastor' of Shelley—in the name of the Prophet what did he wish us to understand by it? It is an excellent example of the pseudo-imaginative. Intelligence should control imagination, not imagination intelligence. For the present I do but mention these cases as indicating the nature of imaginative work. I hope to deal with the subject more fully at a later stage.[1]

18. *Pure allegory, also, can only be effective in so far as it accords with the principle of being true to Nature.*—So essential to great literary or other art is the principle of truth to Nature that pure allegory, even, can only be effective in so far as it accords with this principle. The real epic and the real drama demand truth to Nature both in plot and character, and out of such elements the interest of the story must grow as the flower from the stalk, as the leaf from the stem: in other words, the interest or the lesson grows out of the life depicted. In allegory, on the other hand, the natural process is reversed, the lesson is pre-

[1] I had collected and developed much material for this purpose, but it was all accidentally destroyed by fire in 1919. Many poets fall into the error of giving imagination unbridled play. If imagination be not controlled by intelligence, it is almost certain to dash off into absurdity.

conceived; and it is required that plot, character, and dénouement shall harmonise with it. In so far as the author of an allegory achieves such a harmony, he may be said to be successful. Hence the success of, say, 'The Pilgrim's Progress.' Macaulay truly remarks that the mind of Bunyan was "so imaginative that the personifications with which he dealt became men"[1]: therefore, the vitality and the unfailing interest of his great allegory. Speaking of the allegorical instinct which lay deep in the heart of the Middle Ages, Mr Boas observes that "Abstractions like Folly, Abominable Living, or Hypocrisy *only became dramatically effective in proportion as they ceased to be allegorical symbols, and took the concrete shape of typical* representations of the type in question."[2] The observation is just. Allegory is effective in proportion to its vitality—that is to say, the naturalness of the forms in which it personifies and clothes its actors, and according to the organic feasibility and suggestiveness of the story which it tells or the scene which it describes: in a word, according to its imaginative authenticity. Thus, for example, in the old allegory of Reynard the Fox, and in Henryson's rendering of 'Æsop,' the characteristics of the various animals are so well depicted, so graphically visualised and individualised, and their proceedings are recorded in so sprightly and realistic a manner, that they engage our interest and excite our sympathies and antipathies as keenly as the characters of a well-written tale.

[1] On the other hand, 'The Holy War made by Shaddai upon Diabolus for the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World: or, the Losing and Taking again of the Town of Mansoul,' is uninspired, artificial, and heavy.

[2] 'Shakespeare and his Predecessors,' p. 15. See Appendix, Note B.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INSTRUCTIVE ELEMENT IN LITERATURE.

1. *It must be the greatest privilege and the chief glory of the greatest genius to teach the greatest truths and inspire the highest life.*—The opinion is widely held, I am afraid, that Literature has little to do with mental and moral training, and that its chief object should be to amuse. Thus, for instance, Dugald Stewart: "The primary and the distinguishing aim of the poet is to please" [1]; and amongst later writers Mr Frewen Lord contends that the Novel is only for amusement.[2] I do not agree with such opinions, the prevalence of which, it is scarcely to be doubted, may be held to account for the existence of an immense number of frivolous books. That Literature should yield the highest pleasure, no sensible person will deny; but if at the same time it can be made "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and for esthetic delight as well as mere amusement, so much the better for us all. *It must be the greatest privilege and the chief glory of the greatest genius to teach the greatest truths and inspire the highest life.* This latter opinion—namely, that Literature should be as instructive and inspiring as possible whilst it

[1] 'Collected Works,' Vol. ii. p. 442.
[2] 'Nineteenth Century,' March 1903.

accords with the common-sense of the matter—seems also to have been held by the most respected authorities.

2. *Some views of the subject—Aristophanes, Aristotle, Horace, Dante, Henryson, Milton, Swift, Johnson, Lord Kames, Goethe, Napoleon, Fichte, Carlyle, Emerson.*—Just listen to one or two of those "authorities." You will find them well worth your attention. "Horrible facts," says Aristophanes—

> "Should be buried in silence, not bruited abroad,
> Nor brought forth on the stage, nor emblazoned in poetry;
> Children and boys have a teacher assigned them;
> The bard is a master for manhood and youth,
> Bound to instruct them in virtue and truth." [1]

Who shall gainsay it successfully! Of course, in trying to be instructive, you must take care not to be pedagogic. In Literature and Art we shall look for what is implied as well as for what is explicated, and may find more sometimes in the implication than in the explication. As Aristotle says: "Things in tragedy ought to be rendered apparent *without teaching*" [2]—that is, quite unobtrusively, without obvious effort, without direct appeal (which is the method of Nature),—"but in an oration they are to be shown by the speaker and in consequence of the speech."

Remember the fabled services of Orpheus and Amphion:—

> "Silvestres homines sacer interpresque deorum
> Caedibus et victu foedo deterruit Orpheus,
> Dictus ob hoc lenire tigres rabidosque leones;
> Dictus et Amphion, Thebanae conditor arcis,
> Saxa movere sono testudinis et prece blanda
> Dulcere quo vellet." [3]

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[1] 'The Frogs' (Frere's Tr.) [2] 'Poetics,' chap. xix.
[3] Horace, 'Ars Poetica,' ll. 391-6.

Dante is one who continually keeps a didactic object in view :—

> " Lonely each, my guide and I
> Pursued our upward way ; and as we went,
> Some profit from his words I hoped to win." [1]

And a keen student of Dante thus wrote of his works :—

> " And dost thou ask what themes my mind engage ?
> The lonely hours I give to Dante's page,
> And meet more sacred learning in his lines
> Than I had gained from all the school divines." [2]

Unhappily, the great mass of authors have nothing to teach. Having no word to stir the human heart, they can scarcely err on the side of silence, and should confine themselves as much as possible to business and manual activities. The old Scottish poet Henryson considered that—

> " Lerit folk should tech the people of the best," [3]

of the very best, surely ; and thus he addresses Æsop :—

> " O, maister Esope, poet laureate,
> God wait ye ar full deir welcum to me ;
> Are ye nocht he that all thir fabillis wrait,
> Quhilk in effect, suppois they fainyeit be,
> Ar full of prudence and moralitie." [4]

At the beginning of " Paradise Lost," Milton announces the high moral purpose which he has in view. Nay, this purpose was the very inspiration of his work. If one had asked him to renounce this purpose, it would have been asking him to renounce his highest inspiration. The cynical Swift actually claims that even in trifles he had

[1] ' Purgatory,' canto xv.
[2] ' Paradise,' Note to canto viii. (Cary's Tr.)
[3] ' The Want of Wyse Men : Poems,' p. 37.
[4] ' The Prologue to the Fables : Poems,' p. 157.

never written anything "without a moral view." [1] In his Life of Addison, Dr Johnson writes: "No greater felicity can genius attain than that of having purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness; of having taught a succession of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to the aid of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having turned many to righteousness." [2] In his Preface to Shakespeare, he says: "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." And again: "It is always a writer's duty to make the world better." [3] Lord Kames writes strongly in the same sense.[4] A great dramatic poet, says Goethe, "if he is at the same time productive, and is actuated by a strong noble purpose which pervades all his works, may succeed in making the soul of his pieces become the soul of the people. I should think that this was something well worth the trouble." So should I. "From Corneille proceeded an influence capable of forming heroes" (that was worth doing!); "on which account Napoleon said of him that if he were still living he would make him a prince. A dramatic poet who knows his vocation should therefore work incessantly at its higher development, in order that his influence upon the people may be beneficial and noble." [5] Our modern dramatists should listen intently to these words of wisdom. Again, says he, "When a good man is gifted with talent, he always works morally for the salvation of the world, as poet, philosopher,

[1] 'Works,' Vol. xiv. p. 263.
[2] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 572.
[3] Ib., Vol. v. pp. 103, 107.
[4] 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. i. pp. 9-11.
[5] 'Conversations with Eckermann,' pp. 235-6. To same effect La Bruyère, quoted by Moore in his 'Life of Byron,' Vol. vi., note, p. 227.

artist, or in whatever way it may be." [1] To assist in "the salvation of the world" should be the ambition of every Intellect. "Be true to the public: give them of your best." [2] "All poetry should be instructive, but imperceptibly so. It should direct a man's attention to a sense of what it is worth while to instruct himself in. He must draw the lesson from it himself as from life." [3] That is to say, Poetry should reflect the truth rather than preach it. Fichte, says Carlyle, "calls the Man of Letters a Prophet or a Priest continually unfolding the God-like to men; that from age to age they are a perpetual Priesthood, teaching all men that a God is still present in their life"; that in the true literary man, whether acknowledged by the world or not, there is ever a sacredness "guiding it like a sacred Pillar of Fire in its dark pilgrimage through the waste of time." [4] As to Carlyle himself, he strenuously declares that Poetry essentially involves power of Intellect. "It is a man's sincerity and depth of vision that makes him a poet. See deep enough and you see musically." If called upon to define Shakespeare's faculty, he declares that he should call it superiority of Intellect, and think that he had included all under that; [5] and again: "Literature, too, is a quarrel and internecine duel with the whole world of darkness that lies without one and within one." [6] Emerson is no less instructive on the subject. The supreme value of

[1] 'Conversations with Eckermann,' p. 364.

[2] 'Meister's Apprenticeship,' pp. 352, 380.

[3] 'Letters to Zelter,' p. 252. In the same letter he justly notes the inferior character of "didactic or schoolmaster poetry." His own muse sometimes is decidedly pedagogic—*e.g.*, in 'Meister,' 'Das Mahrchen,' &c. I fancy it is a strongly marked German characteristic.

[4] 'Lectures on Heroes,' pp. 156-7.

[5] Ib., p. 106.

[6] 'Past and Present,' p. 104.

poetry, in his opinion, "is to educate us to a height beyond itself, or which it rarely reaches—the subduing mankind to order and virtues. He is the true Orpheus who writes his odes not with syllables but men." [1] The rhyme of the Poet, he declares, "modulates the King's affairs"; and, to mark the sanctity of all high endeavour, he thinks that—

> "Around the man who seeks a noble end,
> Not Angels but Divinities attend." [2]

He who stands in the fighting line with the Divinities must be of considerable account. From the Men of Letters of to-day we might also cite the testimony of Lord Morley in favour of the high calling of Literature. The great end in modern culture, says he, "is to find some effective agency for cherishing within us the Ideal. That is the business of Literature." [3] These authors I have quoted not only as witnesses of the great doctrine for which I contend, but also by way of honouring them for the noble enthusiasm in which they seem to have given their testimony. Any man who challenges the attention of the world should have something important to say to it.[4] Modesty itself demands this concession from the challenger. To this proposition there should be no opposition—not even from the stupid. If you wish to have

[1] 'Letters and Social Aims,' Works, Vol. viii. p. 66.

[2] 'Poems,' pp. 109, 288.

[3] 'Studies in Literature,' p. 115, but unhappily contradicted by himself as quoted below, par. 4.

[4] Amongst the men of to-day Mr Bernard Shaw ranges himself on this subject with men of enlightenment. He speaks scornfully of "the wiseacres who repeat the parrot cry that art should never be didactic," and rightly asserts, "Art should never be anything else."—'Pygmalion.' So Emile Faguet: "He resisted the idea that literature was merely an entertainment or a pastime."—Gosse, 'Aspects and Impressions,' p. 134. "Literature in general, Poetry in particular, should of course instruct, but it *must* delight."—Saintsbury, 'History of Criticism,' Vol. ii. p. 374. Otherwise it would not be Poetry.

a wide audience (and most authors, I suppose, wish for such an audience), you cannot be too meticulously careful as to what you say to it. Write no idle words; do not even speak idle words. Did not the Great Master Himself warn us on this subject? Given the whole world for audience, it would be but a poor privilege unless you had something profitable to present or to propound for its profit—something tending to advance or cherish the Ideal. Write a book, I should say, to charm and reform all the world if you can. It stands in mighty want of reformation. Be continually bent upon doing good. This is the grand need of the Universe, although foolish people may call it "cant" to say so.

3. *Literature should be addressed to the soul of man: they who merely seek to amuse are on the level of clowns.*—Just think of it. We take a man to be a Citizen and Pilgrim of Eternity, however encompassed and oppressed he may be by his temporal and mortal surroundings. Why should he mainly seek to "fiddle empty nonsense" to a being so tragically situated? Why only seek to amuse him? Literature should be created for the immortal soul of man. Does the immortal soul only wish to be amused? Amusement, says Swift, is "the happiness of those who cannot talk." [1] It seems to me that the man who only seeks to amuse his reader is no better than a clown —who, of course, has his recognised place in the world, and even a good clown will sometimes be highly instructive as well as amusing. It should be remembered that monkeys are amusing. "Who are you," asks Whitman, "that wanted only a book to join you in your nonsense?" [2] The cultivation of Hesperian Pippins should not be regarded as a mere source of amusement. Impose

[1] 'Thoughts on Various Subjects,' Works, Vol. iv. p. 332.
[2] 'Leaves of Grass,' p. 265.

not such degradation upon it. Not even *Ribstone* Pippins do we cultivate for the mere fun of the thing. And indeed every man who writes a book and tries to have it published virtually says to the public: "Ho, ye! Listen to me!" He should not venture to do so, I repeat, unless he feels convinced that he has something good to tell them.

4. *The artist also should be animated by the loftiest purpose.*—The artist also should be animated by the loftiest purpose. In estimating a work of art, says Ruskin, ask "whether it have any virtue or substance as a link in the chain of truth; whether it have recorded or interpreted anything before unknown; whether it have added one single stone to our Heaven-pointing pyramid; cut away one dark bough, or levelled one rugged hillock in our path."[1] Contrariwise, it is curious to find Lord Morley speaking "of the offence of art with a moral purpose,"[2] all-forgetful of his noble doctrine of the high calling of Literature, to which I have just referred. Why should not art have a moral purpose? Do not the works of Creation seem to be animated by moral purpose? Is God not serious? Is not moral purpose the most exigent of all our needs? Is it not mainly through the lack of moral purpose that so much of the world welters in misery? It appears to me that the whole of life should be pervaded by moral purpose, not only in Philosophy and Religion, but in the walks of Literature and Art as well. I hold

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i. p. 85. "It is treason to the cause of art for any man to invent, unless he invents something better than has been invented before, or something different in kind."—Ib., p. 124.

[2] 'Voltaire,' p. 129. So Goethe: "A good work of art can, and will indeed, have moral consequences; but to require moral ends of the artist is to destroy his profession."—'Autobiography,' Vol. i. p. 469. A strange contrast to his views set forth above, par. 2.

that all our Churches and Schools should be living Temples of the Ideal.

5. *Great Literature will generally be found to be of high didactic value: even stuttered wisdom is far better than voluble small talk.*—Great Literature, then (returning to our main subject), in addition to its esthetic value—without which it cannot be Literature,—will probably be found, as already suggested, to be of high didactic value to the true student, and that not only by the general drift and suggestion of the story, if it be a story, but also by its meditative and reflective passages. The presence of such passages in a writing is an unmistakable note of intellectual greatness, as we may have occasion to see further on. They are to be found in the writings of all men of first-rate calibre from Moses down to Thomas Carlyle. They specially mark the writer's insight, his knowledge, his general vision, his intellectual grip of things. The great writer is, ever and anon, giving happy and concise expression to the profoundest and most important convictions of the Human Heart. The noble genius shows no small part of his power in reducing the vague to the visual. In doing so he can scarcely fail to be a great teacher. He is continually saying things worth repeating. Indeed, a writer's greatness and true worth may almost be gauged by his quotability. A man is intellectually measurable, as it were, by the memorable things which he has said. Your small man, intellectually or otherwise, is the man who says nothing worth repeating. What is the use of saying anything to us, through the medium of print, unless it be worth thinking about and remembering and repeating on fit occasion? Let all authors, teachers, and preachers reflect upon it. Stuttered wisdom, even, is infinitely better than voluble small talk. The most

copious flux of language without clear purpose and sacred wisdom is curse, not blessing.[1] Let a man talk or write reams every day, and if there be nothing memorable, or thought-worthy, or thought-exciting in it, no vision of vital grandeur or beauty, both that man and his speeches or writings remain contemptible. Apply this criticism to politicians, theologians, philosophers, poets, novelists, critics—to all kinds of writing and speaking people, in short,—and you will find that thousands of them are worthless. Apply it to any particular man's writings, and you will have little difficulty in deciding whether they contain an element of greatness or not. If they be great, you will find them encrusted, as it were, with the gold and the cut diamonds of thought; whilst the small will be marked by the total absence of gem or precious metal.

6. *The Geniuses of the World may be determined by the wisdom and luminosity of their thoughts.*—By what a man has to say of wise and luminous thought—even by this criterion alone you may determine who have been the Seers and Poets of the World. The Seer or great author is always distinguishing himself by letting floods of light in upon important subjects. The greatest of the Biblical writers are of this order, as are Æschylus,

[1] Lord Kames has well remarked that "accuracy of judgment is not friendly to declamation or copious eloquence."—'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. i. p. 22. We have a thousand times too much "copious eloquence" poured into our sound-worn ears. It will be different, of course, when (as in the case of Milton's angels) the eloquence is angelic:—

> "Prompt eloquence
> Flowed from their lips in prose or numerous verse,
> More tuneable than needed lute or harp
> To add more sweetness."
>
> —'Paradise Lost,' Bk. v.

Meanwhile, I think we may take it that to speak with perfect lucidity and suavity to some noble end is the best kind of oration.

Sophocles, Dante, Calderon, Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Carlyle, and their like; whilst your small or trifling author—the non-seeing vain man—carries with him, perhaps, no lantern at all—not even the illuminating power of a rush-light. His feat rather consists in exhaling darkness and extinguishing vision. His works are distinguished not by the embarrassments of riches, but by the embarrassments of poverty in every page.

7. *Poetry and Literature should be civilising agencies. Until a man is spiritualised he is but of the anthropoid order of beasts.*—I hold the opinion that Poetry and Literature at large, if worthy of the name, should be nothing less than civilising agencies. In Nature and Humanity we are face to face not only with bare facts and laws, but with the esthetical and moral implications of such facts and laws. Certain facts of Nature and Humanity produce certain feelings or emotions in every well-endowed and attentive spectator. The highest triumph of a poem or a picture lies in producing such feelings or emotions in the reader or spectator as might be roused by the scenes or incidents which it depicts. In turn, such emotions may act upon the Will, and thence go out to help in the spiritual conquest of man. In the possibility of this consummation lies the possibility of the salvation and the greatness of the Individual, as also the possibility of the salvation and the greatness of the Race. Until he is spiritualised, man is but of the anthropoid order of beasts. Therefore the efforts of all true and noble educators must be directed towards having him spiritualised; and thus it happens that "the profoundest service that poems or any other writings can do for the reader is not merely to satisfy the intellect, or supply something polished and interesting, nor even to depict great

passions, or persons or events, but to fill him with vigorous and clean manliness, religiousness, and give him good heart as a radical possession and habit." [1] To achieve we must aspire. He must be a foolish fellow who does not wish to increase in spiritual and intellectual opulence. To help in this great civilising, spiritualising work must necessarily be the highest end to which the author can devote his energies.

8. *How an author may use his didactic opportunities, exemplified: instances from Shakespeare.* —Just notice (briefly here) how a great author seizes and makes use of his educative opportunities. To begin with, turn up Shakespeare, and you soon light upon instructive passages. Note, for instance, what he has to say on the great evil of self-indulgence :—

> " As surfeit is the father of much fast,
> So every scope by the immoderate use
> Turns to constraint : our natures do pursue
> (Like rats that ravin down their proper bane)
> A thirsty evil ; and when we drink we die."
> —' Measure for Measure,' i. 3.

Admirable discourse, and pregnant, taken apart even from its dramatic setting, and worthy to be meditated upon by all ranks and conditions of society.

> " O, it is excellent
> To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous
> To use it as a giant."
> —Ib., ii. 2.

Excellent counsel, especially to all orgulous and overbearing persons :—

> " Great men may jest with saints : 'tis wit in them,
> But in the less, foul profanation."
> —Ib.

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[1] Whitman, ' November Boughs,' p. 14.

"That in the captain's but a cholerick word
Which in the soldier is rank blasphemy."
—Ib.

"'Thus wisdom wishes to appear most bright
When it doth tax itself."
—Ib., ii. 4.[1]

Keen observation, fine humanism, wise teaching to any who have ears to hear and hearts to understand.

"Fat paunches have lean pates; and dainty bits
Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits."
—'Love's Labours Lost,' i. 1.

The lover of dainty bits should listen intently. Take constant care lest prosperity in the body give rise to ruin in the Soul.

"A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never on the tongue
Of him that makes it."
—Ib., v. 2.

How true and how happily expressed! Or take Corin's vindication of his rural labours:—

"Sir, I am a true labourer; I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate; envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's good; content with my harm; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck."—'As You Like It,' iii. 2.

If all labourers had the wisdom to imbibe Corin's wisdom, it would make better men of them, and tend to establish happier social relationships. Or note the humanity and fine felicity of Tranio's invitation to his fellow-disputants:—

"Please ye we may contrive this afternoon
And quaff carouses to our mistress' healths,
And do as adversaries do in law—
Strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends."
—'Taming of the Shrew,' i. 2.

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[1] Wasn't it Cato the Censor who said that a man should neither praise nor blame himself?

Or that comprehensive passage on feminine ambition :—

> " Woman's heart which ever yet
> Affected eminence, wealth, sovereignty."
> —' Henry the Eighth,' ii. 3.

Throughout most of his works, the observer, the philosopher, the genial and sagacious Doctor of Humanity is ever making his presence felt when you faithfully seek his companionship.

9. *Instances from Burns.*—In this connection take now a glance at Burns—always rich in the poetry of social relationships and social intercourse. In " The Twa Dogs " the aristocratic Cæsar has remarked :—

> " I see how folk live that hae riches,
> But surely poor folk maun be wretches."

It is quite a mistake. Luath, the dog of the people, has a different story to tell :—

> " They're nae sae wretched's ane wad think—
> Tho' constantly on poortith's brink,
> They're sae accustomed wi' the sight,
> The view o't gies them little fright.
>
> " Then chance an' fortune are sae guided,
> They're aye in less or mair provided :
> An' though fatigued wi' close employment,
> A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.
>
> " The dearest comfort o' their lives,
> Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives :
> The prattling things are just their pride
> That sweetens a' their fireside.
> An' whyles twalpennie worth o' nappy
> Can mak' the bodies unco happy :
> They lay aside their private cares
> To mind the Kirk and State affairs :
> They'll talk o' patronage an' priests
> Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts,
> An' tell what new taxation's comin',
> An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.

"As black-faced Hallowmass returns
They get the jovial ranting Kirns,
When rural life of every station
Unite in common recreation:
Love blinks, wit slaps and social mirth
Forgets there's care upon the Earth.

"That merry day the year begins
They bar the door on frosty win's;
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
An' sheds a heart inspiring steam;
The luntin' pipe an' sneeshin' mill
Are handed round wi' richt guid will;
The cantie auld folk crackin' crouse,
The young anes rantin' through the hoose—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them."

It is obviously a vital and delightful picture of domestic scenes in the life of the best class of the Scottish peasantry of the Poet's day, but it is so pervaded with tender sympathy for the brave folk whom it celebrates, and so informed by wide observation and understanding of Human Life and general Human Nature, that it might be accepted at any time, to some extent, as a corrective against social pessimism. On the other hand, there is the companion picture, which is equally instructive. From Luath's humble point of view, he is prepared to suppose that the "great folks'" life must be a life of pleasure, but desires further information on the subject:—

"But will ye tell me, maister Cæsar:
Sure great folks' life's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld nor hunger e'er can steer them,
The vera thocht o't needna fear them."

Just so; but listen to Cæsar on the subject:—

"Lord, man, were ye but whyles whaur I am
The Gentles, ye would ne'er envy them.

"It's true they needna starve or sweat
Through winter's cauld or summer's heat;
They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,
An' fill auld age wi' grips and granes:

But human bodies are sic fools
For a' their colleges an' schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They mak enow themsels to vex them ;
An' ay the less they hae to sturt them,
In like proportion less will hurt them."

All as true as Gospel, and perfectly expressed ; but further—

" Gentlemen, and ladies warst,
Wi' even doon want o' wark are curst :
They loiter, lounging, lank and lazy ;
Though deil-haet ails them, yet uneasy.
Their days insipid, dull an' tasteless ;
Their nights, unquiet, lang and restless.
And even their sports, their balls an' races,
Their galloping through public places,
There's sic parade, sic pomp an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart."

I think we may take what might conveniently be called Manlore to be the greatest and most promising subject to which we can address ourselves. In these verses we have Man-lore of the richest and mellowest quality. Let the poor regard the rich without envy, and let the rich regard the poor with brotherly sympathy. Let each take a considerate and indulgent view of the other. An ecumenical Council of Philosophers from Plato downwards could not better our instruction on this important subject. The whole Poem is one of the most sparkling treasures enshrined in language.

10. *Instruction itself is a source of pleasure.*—To make a good epigram requires a great range of generalising power, aided by a vivid visualising faculty.[1] Burns possesses both these qualifica-

[1] An epigram is " a short poem ending in a witty or ingenious turn of thought, to which the rest of the composition is intended to lead up."—' Oxford Eng. Dict. Coleridge thus defines it :—

" What is an epigram ? A dwarfish whole,
Its body brevity and wit its soul " ;

and de Yriarte :—

" The qualities rare in a bee that we meet,
In an epigram never should fail :
The body should always be little and sweet,
And a sting should be left in the tail."

tions, and is ready for all occasions. Take the often-quoted passage on the importance of self-knowledge :—

> " O wad some Power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us !
> It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
> An' foolish notion ;
> What airs in dress an' gait wad leave us,
> An' even devotion ! "

To say nothing of its fine felicity of expression, Solomon could add nothing to the wisdom of it. A great pity, I think, if such verses were only calculated to " please " ; very sad if, in the didactic sense, they could only be taken as a dead letter. For my part I cannot but think that in so far as they are committed to memory and taken to heart, they can scarcely fail to act, to some extent at least, as a real prophylactic and remedy against vain and conceited thoughts and foolish imaginations. It seems to me that there should be no controversy as to the higher kinds of pleasure and instruction. To feel that you have been instructed is in itself a source of pleasure. To the man of intelligence the pleasure which he receives from a book will be more or less commensurate with the instruction he receives from it. You dishonour yourself in so far as you curtail yourself of the privilege of seeking for intellectual and moral ends.

11. *The grandest service we can render to our kind.*—The grandest service you can render to your fellow-men must be that of helping them to understand what most concerns them, and best fits them to carry themselves nobly and triumphantly in the Battle of Life. Compared with such service, that of merely amusing them can scarcely be worth mention. He must indeed be a stupid fellow who, with death most certainly

in front of him and with questions of unspeakable significance demanding his attention, has no aspiration beyond that of amusing others or of getting himself amused. To promote the noble must be the noblest of all activities. Every man should have a noble Ideal—an eternal Life Purpose. Until he is thus moved, he will be but a mediocre and humdrum person.

12. *The duty of the literary man.*—To set forth large interests, to evoke deep and virtuous sympathies and antipathies, to rouse noble and beautiful emotions, to fill the mind with pure light, to promote all love of the good and all abhorrence of the bad—these should be the chief ends of the man who gives himself to Literature. In any case, such seems to be the tendency of all great authors without exception. Mention an author universally acknowledged to be great, and you will probably have no difficulty in finding that he has said great things and presented you with great vital pictures, full of instruction, rich in moral purpose, and glowing with moral enthusiasm. This theme is closely allied with that of the Quality of Truth, to which subject we will now devote some attention.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUALITY OF TRUTH IN LITERATURE.

1. *Reason and Nature are the test of truth and sanity.*—Reason and Nature are to be followed as closely as possible in every field of human activity. Every law of Reason and Nature should be as soberly regarded as the Law of Gravitation.

2. History, obviously, is not History unless it be essentially true in its statement of facts and in its narrative of events and occurrences.

3. Politicians are mere charlatans when they pretend that they are able by legislative decree to eradicate evils which are born in Human Nature. Great evils will continue to exist even in the best ordered State in proportion to the ignorance and depravity of the population of whom it is constituted. No Legislative or Police System, however perfect, will defeat the Devil and give us a New Jerusalem.

4. Physical Science is unadulterated quackery in so far as it is not a presentment and exposition of the Facts and the Laws of material Nature and their implications.

5. Mental Science is but a madman's craze if it be not impregnably founded upon, or derived, by necessary implication or inference, from the Facts and Truths of Human Consciousness.

6. Theology is disastrous hallucination and mere Devil's Delight when it founds its dogmas and

doctrines on assumptions transcending, or opposed to, Human Experience and Testimony, or at variance with Intellectual and Moral Law: when it dogmatises and doctrinises on the Unknown, the Unknowable, and the Superconscious. If you should be called upon at any time to hold a colloquy with the Keeper of Heaven's Gate, it must be held upon a rational basis; otherwise, stupidity is but "grown vocal," and two fools are but having a senseless palaver. I wish we could bring this great truth home to all clergymen—especially. Fathers and Brethren, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?

7. And Literature of any kind is weakened and perhaps rendered worse than worthless in so far as it departs from credibility and essential truth to Nature; whilst, to put it conversely, everything that is essentially credible and true to Nature is, to that extent at least, meritorious.

8. *The infinite range and diversity of Fact and Truth.*—We now come to consider the quality or intrinsic value of the Fact or Truth. "A taste for the fine arts goes hand in hand with the moral sense to which it is nearly allied. . . . The man who aspires to be a critic must acquire a clear perception of what objects are lofty, what low, what proper or improper, what manly, and what mean and trivial."[1] There is fact of chaff and wheat; of cotton and silk; of tin, copper, iron, and gold; of glass and diamond; of sunlight and candle-light; there is truth of Earth and Sky; of Man and Monkey; of God and Devil; of Heaven and Hell. There is unquestionable truth of the Swine-Sty, and unquestionable truth of the Temple of Divinity.

[1] Lord Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. i. p. 6. As a recent critic in 'The Times Literary Supplement' says, "Every good thing is known and defined by its best."

9. *Golden and Copper Coinages.*—The ideas of one man, within the circle of truth, may be represented as a coinage of intellectual farthings; those of another, as a coinage of golden pieces. Within the circle of truth one man is an intellectual pedlar—a dealer in tapes and trifles;[1] another is an intellectual merchant-prince, offering royal wares. In a word, there is the unit of truth or fact worth, perhaps, a fraction of a farthing; and, on the other hand, there is the unit of truth or fact of such mighty value as cannot be expressed by human figures or by human tongue. This is not a speculation but a calculation—a calculation, let it be admitted, not of mathematical exactness, but of mathematical certainty.

10. *The Great and the Small.*—Æschines is said to have *conversed* in his letters; Demosthenes, in his, to have *harangued.* In human intercourse some persons converse, whilst others—they do but chatter. The discourse of one man breathes the atmosphere of bad places; that of another is fresh and fragrant, and as full of health and beauty as a flower-garden in June. The conversation of one person is the smallest of small-ale—fit for Goslington tap-room; that of another may be good enough to be uttered across the Table of the Gods. Between two men there may be about as much difference as there is between Thor and a Squib-maker.

11. The great and the small are to be found in every field of inquiry. Within the circle of Fact and Truth in Theology there are questions involving weighty matters of the Law, and others touching mint, cummin, and anise—that um-

[1] Like the sexton who, having accompanied a party of visitors over a fine church, inveigled them into an appended rubbish-shoot with the pompous announcement, "And in this 'ere place I keeps my brooms and brushes."

belliferous plant, *Pimpinella Anisum*, and its seed.

12. Within the circle of Fact and Truth there are Histories of the British Empire and Histories of Goslington; Histories of Waterloo and Histories of Peterloo; Histories of the Reformation and Histories of "The Oxford Movement," which latter, I fancy, are not worthy to be discussed across the Table of the Gods. There are Histories of David Livingstone and Histories of Tom Thumb.

13. Within the circle of Political Fact and Truth there are questions of imperial importance and questions touching the administration of Goslington Pump-Well.

14. Within the circle of Fact and Truth there is the Science of Man and the Science of Clothing Man. In Life itself a man may be an epicure and a fly, or he may resemble the Gods. Infinite possibilities may be found sitting in a perambulator—perhaps an unfledged Archangel; on the other hand, perhaps, a creature of the papilionaceous kind, or worse.

15. Within the circle of Fact and Truth as applied to inventions, we have inventions of Alphabets, if not of Language itself; of Music and Musical Instruments; of Gunpowder and Kindred Explosives; of Levers and Wheels and Pulleys; of Handwriting and of Printing Presses —not wholly, I hope, the work of the Devil, as some folk have supposed; of Ships and Compasses; of Microscopes and Telescopes; of Steam-Engines and Electric Telegraphs and Telephones, down to ribbons and buckles and hair-pins: in connection with most of which inventions there has been clear exercise of noble and useful thought. On the other hand, there is Fact and Truth of invention of the paltry kind, whose

highest praise is its ingenuity—manifested, for example, in bagatelle and cards; in the spinning-top and in the wooden flying-dove of Archytas. Herr von Joel "had a wonderful trick of playing tunes upon walking-sticks, which he would borrow from persons in the audience." [1] Madam Boucher played piano and harp at the same time.[2]

16. *Facts and Truth should receive our attention in the degree of their worth.*—But in one and all of these cases it appears perfectly obvious that each fact or truth in question should but engage human attention in the degree of its worth. Thus, for example, the doctrine of water-baptism appears within the rational eyesight to be only of infinitesimal importance, if of any importance at all, as compared with, say, the grand doctrine of speaking the truth as it is in our heart: therefore Mankind at large ought to pay infinitely more regard to the propagation of this doctrine than to that of Water-Baptism. The question of a Village Council for Goslington is of infinitesimal importance as compared, say, with any question touching the safety of the British Empire; therefore every worthy British citizen will devote a million times more attention to this question than to that of providing a Village Council for Goslington. The Steam-Engine is a multitude of times more important to the Human Race than Bagatelle or the Spinning-Top; therefore these latter should make an inconsiderable figure in the Human Mind beside that of the Steam-Engine. A Man himself is immensely more important than the cut of his apparel; therefore the question of the apparel should receive immeasurably less attention than the question of the Man. At shows and

[1] Montague Williams, 'Leaves from a Life,' Vol. i. p. 264.

[2] Zelter to Goethe in Goethe's 'Works.' 'Letters to Zelter, p. 203.

routs and fashionable assemblies we often see persons going about beautifully clothed but otherwise remarkably plain; much better it would be to see them plainly clothed but otherwise remarkably beautiful. The History of David Livingstone is of much more importance apparently than the History of Tom Thumb; therefore the World's David Livingstones should receive a great deal more attention than the World's Tom Thumbs.

17. *Even in the Academies we find many devoted to the Trivial.*—But even in the Academies, alas, we find many devoted to the Trivial—persons, for instance, exploring all languages to explain a word or determine the most trifling event, or even fabled event. It is amazing to contemplate the crowds who strenuously apply themselves to get learned in the trivialities. Think of Salmasius, Scaliger, and such persons labouring with all their might to find out exactly when the Games of Carinus were celebrated, or the historic wrangling which took place as to the exact time when Diocletian became associated with Maximian in the Roman Empire.[1] Think of the manifold wranglings which have taken place touching the geography of Io's wanderings! To the sane mind what does it matter when or whither she wandered? Well may they talk of "that generation of scribbling rogues the Historians!" And I fear that in our own day this spirit of historical pedantry is almost as strong as ever. We get almost asphyxiated by the academic dust which is being constantly raised. Nothing escapes unprinted in these times. Raphael's advice to Tobit, "Write all things that are done in a book," seems to be taken literally by many learned persons. They are deeply erudite and infinitely verbose on ques-

[1] Gibbon, 'Decline and Fall,' Vol. ii. pp. 106, 115; and Vol. iii., note, p. 257.

tions the whole purport of which is not worth the ink required to write a mark of interrogation.[1] There have been thousands who were masters of particles, to one profound in his knowledge of Man. The thousands are in the wrong path; the one is in the right. The thousands should emulate the one. The eleven foolish jurymen should make their accord with the twelfth or sensible man.

18. *Such conclusions are not a mere speculation but a calculation.*—Such conclusions, I repeat, are not a mere speculation but a calculation—almost as certain in its accuracy as any calculation touching pounds, shillings, and pence. Nothing could be more hopeful than that all men and women would be pleased, severally, to try their teeth upon it faithfully, with a determination to find the truth of the matter, and not with an evil disposition to cavil about it. We are all too much inclined to—

> "Enjoy the present hour, adjourn the future thought."

It is a great mistake. In every kind of activity consider carefully what object you wish to attain; appraise it as nearly as you possibly can at its right value, and lay out upon it as much labour as, and no more than, its attainment appears to be worth. If it be of no worth, neglect it wholly. It is no small part of wisdom to ignore the worthless and the trivial—the infinitude of infinitesimals. On the other hand, its worth may be so great that the attainment of it may warrant the expenditure of all the available energies of your body and your soul.

19. *In which we are but following the methods*

[1] Mr Samuel Butler appositely remarks, "We want a society for the repression of Erudite Research and the Decent Burial of the Past. The ghosts of the dead past want quite as much laying as raising."—'Notebooks,' p. 180.

of men in the Market-place.—In all this ratiocination we are but following the methods of men in the Market-place. *There* you are not going to lay out a golden sovereign on what can be purchased for a bronze ha'penny; nor, in the Market-place, if you be a fair-minded person, will you expect or even strongly desire to purchase for a bronze ha'penny that which is worth a golden sovereign. Such is the Common-Sense, such the common meaning of market values and market dealings—the effort to buy or barter on fair terms. If you really wish to buy or barter on *un*fair terms, you are a scurvy knave.

20. *Our Prudence should not be confined to cash sales and cash purchases.*—So should it be in every human pursuit. Do not confine the operations of your common-sense, your prudence, to cash sales or to cash purchases. Cash has almost nothing to do with the higher objects of Life, unless it be used as a vehicle for advancing them. The higher objects are to be priced by a higher standard than coin; but for all that, by a standard none the less real. Let the price—that is, the mental or bodily labour, or travail of soul, which you are prepared to expend on such possessions—be as nearly as possible determined by the actual value of them. You do not, if you can help it, give your money for that which is not Bread—in the Baker's sense of the word: you generally take great care not to give your labour for that which satisfieth not—in the material sense; and you are amply justified in taking such precautions. But to the serious Thinker the Market-place, however important, covers but a small part of the field of human interest. I mention our activities in this part of the field mainly to impress upon listeners the real meaning of common-sense and practical prudence. Most people show a keen desire and

a ceaseless endeavour to obtain value for value in material things; a strong determination not to be defrauded, if they can prevent it, in material things. British legislators, for example, have provided that "No sum or sums of Money, or other thing, shall be taken, raised, taxed, rated, imposed, paid, or levied for or in regard of any provisions, carriages, or purveyance for his majesty, his heirs or successors." [1] All quite rightly; but, I repeat, the Market-place covers but a small part of the field of human interest. It is a miserable thing—most miserable—either for legislators or private men to be shrewd only in cash transactions. It is not to a man's honour to be shrewd in cash transactions alone. Outside the Cotton Exchange and the Metal Market, and enclosing the same, lies all the Universe teeming with boundless interests to the awakened and seeing Soul—interests ramifying up to Heaven above and down to Hell beneath. He should be shrewd in these too. In a word, it is reasonably required of all persons to carry their practical prudence with them—their shrewdness (upon which some people are so apt to plume themselves)—beyond the ugly purlieus of the Market-place; to bring it into the Universe of Boundless Blue lying outside the Precincts of the Commercial, and to make rational use of it in all the grand concerns of the Soul. They ask generally, and rightly require, value for value at the stall and in the shop. They should exercise the same common-sense and make similar requisitions throughout the enclosing Space. As Æschylus says:—

> "Wise is the man who knows what profiteth,
> Not he who knoweth much." [2]

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[1] 'Statute of Frauds,' 12 Car. II., c. 24, 12.
[2] 'Fragment,' 271.

21. *Immensity of Spiritual Truth and Fact as compared with Material Truth and Fact.*—As men and women we are acquainted with two great classes of Truths and Facts—namely, the Spiritual and the Material. Consider the relative significance of each class. Let us approach the subject in our most deliberate, cool, and calculating mood, and be as serious in the business as if we were dealing with "City Facts and Figures," purchasing stocks and shares, or making an investment in cotton or pig-iron.

22. From the secular point of view, take the most prosperous person in the World in any walk of life—a merchant, say, like Anton Fugger of Augsburg,[1] to whom wealth blows with every breeze. Obviously it is all marked perishable. At the very outside it is only worth a few years', perhaps it is not worth an hour's, purchase. His bubble is always about to burst.

23. Take a lawyer whose table is continually covered with briefs extravagantly endorsed, whose eloquence is heard in every court; this man, in his prosperous secularity, will, of course, be as extinct as his eloquence after a very limited number of blue moons.

24. Take a politician who has probably hallucinated himself and prosperously deceived the "masses" all his life—from magazine page and from his carriage window at railway stations as well as from public platform and Government Bench: this man, too, in his prosperous secularity, will also be as dead as the sound of him within a brief period—except as to the harvest of Dead Sea fruits resulting from his labours. The very fame of such a man is craziness and rottenness, offensive to the nostrils of Gods and good

[1] See an account of the wealth of this house. Carlyle, 'Crit. and Misc. Essays,' Vol. ii., note, p. 314.

men even while he treads the surface of *Terra Firma*.

25. *A Dandy and a Spiritual Warrior.*—Strange sights, indeed, are to be seen upon the Periphery of this Terrestrial Ball. Here is a dandy coming along the street. He has inserted his feet into blameless boots; his garments fit him as well as if they had grown upon his body; his hat reflects the very glory of the Sun in the Heavens; his neck-gear is faultless of its kind; he carries a capital umbrella, perfectly braced up, to encounter meteorological contingencies; his tailor and general outfitter can do no more for him. He looks satisfied with himself: the material world is for him.[1] On the other hand, here is a spiritual warrior wrestling with the Devil, or perhaps enduring affliction not for anything material at all, but actually over his sins like the penitent in the Psalms, who cried: "Save me for the waters are come into my soul: I sink in deep mire where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me. Thou knowest my foolishness and my sins are not hid from thee. Let not them that wait on thee be ashamed for my sake." Contrast the relative significance of two such persons. Materially considered, the dandy has undoubtedly the best of the bargain. Spiritually? Ultimately, in any case, one would think it must be a poor outlook for a man when his hat is the most shining thing about him! Disregard your moral bearings on the Voyage of Life, and you are lost.

26. *A snob on Mount Sinai.*—"Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me on

[1] But let no injustice be done. Some of these fellows have developed fine manhood on the battlefield. All honour to such. Their initial disfigurement was probably due, in great measure, to a paltry "education." Few men are educated *as men*.

the top of the Mount." Think of a snob on Mount Sinai! Think of a worshipper of the trivial trying to gain a footing beside the man Moses on the Mount of God! Let us hope that the whole race of snobs would become extinct if they would only permit themselves to reflect for a moment on the incongruity of such a scene.

27. *Gastronomers and Gasteropods.*—Here is a poor fellow, a gastronomer, whose body rules his soul. He is degenerating more and more into mere gizzard every day he lives. Side by side with him consider one whose main object in eating and drinking is (without any claim to ascetic value) that he may be able to do some good work in the world—trying, for example, to govern himself and to leaven the heads of his fellow-creatures with heroic ideals. Corporeally or materially viewed, the two men may seem to be very much alike: both of them, without controversy, are destined for the dust. But spiritually viewed and contemplated they give rise to very different thoughts. In spiritual vision what is a gastronomer better than a gasteropod? Whilst the contemplation of the noble worker must be good for the soul, lifting it up, perhaps, to visions of cherubim and seraphim. It must be one of the most vital functions of great Literature to draw out such contrasts.

28. "*Adventures are to the Adventurous.*"—"Adventures are to the Adventurous." Think of one whose message to Man is—Buy Blacking of a certain Brand! Contrast him, say, with David Livingstone toiling and dying for the reclamation and the civilisation of a continent. It must be quite obvious, I think, to candid thinkers that all the facts and truths and ideas arising from the contemplation of the Blacking advertiser, however extensive the range of his

enterprise, must, in respect of his particular ambition, be of the most trifling interest and importance as compared with the interests aroused by David Livingstone and his labours. Men's lives must be contemptible when their ambitions are contemptible. Greatness can only belong to those who act greatly. "Nurture your mind with great thoughts. To believe in the heroic, makes heroes." [1]

29. *Charles Darwin and the Apostle Paul.*—Charles Darwin's great message to his Generation was—"You are descended from a fish with a swim-bladder"; that of the Apostle Paul—"Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil, for we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Contrast the speculator on the swim-bladder, obsessed by the craze that Man is only a kind of developed fish, with the Apostle militant against the Devil, and trying to rouse us up to put on the whole armour of God! Heaven and Earth! It is difficult to ally and associate a codfish with a Martyr! Whatever the failings of the Theologian may be, there can be no Salvation for us in the Zoologian. The literary man should be found drawing attention to these things.

30. *The intrinsic splendour of the Spiritual.*—In whatever field of inquiry we may choose, the material and the secular, in respect of their intrinsic significance, seem to be as nothing beside the spiritual. The patriot soldier is among the noblest of persons, but a general, or a king, or an emperor prosperously slaughtering multitudes of people for worldly thrones and possessions, is intrinsically of

[1] Disraeli, 'Coningsby.'

less worth, perhaps, than the ambitious advertiser of branded blacking. As with the rest of us, the day of his burial is probably fixed and foreknown in some part of the Universe. Even that "prosperous robber, Alexander," I doubt if he can draw forth much real veneration. "We would observe," says Channing, writing of Napoleon, "that military talent, even of the highest order, is far from holding the first place among intellectual endowments. It is one of the lower forms of genius, for it is not conversant with the highest and richest objects of thought . . . nothing is more common than to find men eminent in this department, who are almost wholly awanting in the noblest energies of the soul—in imagination and taste, in the capacity of enjoying works of genius, in large views of human nature, in the moral sciences, in the application of analysis and generalisation to the human mind and to society, and in original conceptions on the great subjects which have absorbed the most glorious understandings." [1] Holbein's striking work and William Dunbar's great poem, the "Lament for the Makaris," are perennially true. Corporeally and secularly, all men may be viewed as taking per-

[1] Quoted by Poe, 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 423-4. Sir Robert Wilson accuses Napoleon of having poisoned his prisoners at Jaffa wholesale.—'Nineteenth Century,' November 1904, p. 801. Lord Morley denies him even the credit of a law reformer. Speaking of the credit due to the "critical philosophy" of Voltaire, of which we are unjustly bidden to think only in connection with shallow and reckless destruction, he refers to the Italian publicists, "whose speculations bore such admirable fruit in the humane legislation of Leopold of Tuscany," as having had a large share "in that code with which the name of the ever-hateful Bonaparte has become fraudulently associated."—'Compromise,' p. 189. But Lord Morley probably underestimates this remarkable man as much as others overestimate him. That he was a great administrator seems to be as indubitable as that he was a great general. See, for instance, Arthur Hassall, 'Life of Napoleon,' p. 88.

sonal part in the grim Dance of Death. Pope, Emperor, King, Cardinal, Duke, Bishop, Ploughman, Shipman, Beggar—it does not matter very much what the status may be, the close of every human life, the merriest as well as the saddest, ends, from the secular point of view, in a funeral. As Henryson graphically expresses it—

> " With them that trowis oft to fill the sek,
> Death comes behind and nippes them be the nek." [1]

True, all this is obvious, but *it ought not to be neglected because it is obvious. Many obvious things are of the highest importance, and go to make the staple of great Literature. We have no footing but on the obvious.*

31. *Yet the secular facts are largely regarded in practice as the chief facts.*—And yet, though such doctrine should be patent even to the careless, mankind, on the whole, are so fearfully improvident that, in practice at least, they regard the secular and merely animal facts of their existence and their lives as the chief facts—transient and treacherous though they be. To most, perhaps, the whole Universe appears to be little more than secular and mechanical. They almost wholly forget the resplendent facts and truths of their spiritual nature, although these spiritual facts and truths, if sought after, are no less obvious, whilst they are immeasurably more important, than the secular facts and truths. They seem to think—if, indeed they can be said to think—with degenerate and profane Creon—

> " 'Tis labour lost to worship Powers unseen " [2]—

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[1] ' The Wolf, the Foxe, and the Cadgear,' Poems, p. 191.

[2] Sophocles, ' Antigone,' 779 (Campbell). On the comic side we have, in our own day, Mr Shaw's Colonel Craven. The Colonel, under medical sentence of death, is very sad and very seriously disposed, but finding that the medical sentence is founded on a

labour lost to regard the Unseen with any seriousness whatever. At all events, many act as if it were utterly unpractical, altogether visionary, to pay any attention to the unseen—as if, in truth, it were scarcely matter of fact at all. As Emerson says: "Miracles, prophecy, poetry, the ideal life, the holy life, exist as ancient history merely; they are not in the belief nor in the aspiration of society, but when suggested, seem ridiculous; and this notwithstanding the fact that life is comical or pitiful as soon as the high ends of being fade out of sight, and man becomes near-sighted, and can only attend to what addresses the senses." Some distinguished writers even actually spend their lives in preaching Creon's doctrine. They seem to be without any intuition as to the kernel of the nut; they only exercise themselves round the husk and the shell of it, and frequently seem, in fact, to take the husk and the shell for the whole Nut. They make a great mistake. Let them open their eyes wide and investigate the matter, and they will probably find that the spiritual facts, quite unseen by the corporeal eye, are the chief facts—the hopeful, the immense, the illustrious; and that the corporeal and seen, despite their domineering character, are the hopeless, the paltry, the evanescent.

32. *The only rational hope of the Human Race is to be found in the Spiritual.*—If men thought broadly and deeply enough, and made full use of their intelligence, there would, for example, be no room for Materialism, which theoretically excludes the possibility of free personality and rational life, and reduces us to the rank of wretched

false diagnosis of his case, he irately exclaims: "I've done a lot of serious thinking and reading and extra church-going; and now it turns out simple waste of time. On my soul, it's too disgusting!"—'The Philanderer.'

automata. Regarded as material merely, the philosopher whom I have just been quoting continues: "Man is metamorphosed into a thing, into many things." What disaster follows upon this metamorphosis! "The planter, who is a man sent into the fields to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushel and his cart and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer instead of man on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is ridden by the routine of his work, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney, a statute-book; the mechanic, a machine; the sailor, a rope of the ship." [1] It is all too true.

> "Heaven calls,
> And round about you wheeling, courts your gaze
> With everlasting beauties; yet your eye
> Turns with fond doting still upon the Earth." [2]

Our only hope—the only rational hope of the Human Race—is to be found in the Spiritual. We have need to get this great truth firmly fixed in our minds and in our hearts; and it is for Literature to help in promoting this great task.

33. *The secular should be mainly regarded as means to spiritual ends.*—Materialism, in the mechanical and bad sense of the word, and its sequel secularism, arise from the fact that the materialists and secularists of all kinds either ignore the great spiritual facts and truths of

[1] Emerson, 'Works,' Vol. i. p. 85 (Riverside Edition).

[2] 'Purgatory,' canto xiv. In the 'Morte d'Arthur' we read that Arthur, "after overcoming Lucius the Emperor of Rome, made dukes and earls, and made every man rich," v. 12. Even then——! Nothing in it. Much better when it was told Sir Percivale "how our Lord Jesus Christ beat him out of Heaven for his sin, the which was the most brightest angel of Heaven, and therefore he lost his heritage."—xiv. 10.

Life, or remain as blind as puppies to those great facts and truths. Secular or materialistic man is no better than a rabbit in a warren. Indeed one might rather be that little quadruped than a soulless secularist. Painful and agonising though the pressure of the material upon us may be (and it is frequently almost unendurable), the animal life cannot rationally be our chief concern. The thing is incredible. The material and the secular should be mainly regarded as means to spiritual and eternal ends. Men's lives are extensively contemptible because their ambitions are extensively contemptible. He who would attain excellence, must seek the excellent. Yet, in practice, our lives are mainly made up of secularity; and the very Press is continually sending forth torrents of vapid poems and of novels and memoirs and biographies recording proceedings of no more intrinsic importance than the doings of rabbits in a warren—

> "Know then to me much annoyance it gives
> When so many people will sing and will spout,
> Who drives from the world all the poetry out?
> The poets"[1]:

though he might have added, "other people as well." I declare that it is Man, the Spirit, with whom we should all be chiefly concerned, not Man the anthropoid; and this should ever be one of the great themes of Literature.

34. *It is only as spiritual that we can hope for immortality.*—Within the region of the secular there is no adequate scope for the soul of a man. If we are immortal, our immortality clearly lies in that part of us which is called spiritual. For the present I assume that we are immortal—only adding, by way of justifying the assumption, that

[1] Goethe, 'West-Eastern Divan.'

the hypothesis of immortality is absolutely necessary to explain Human Nature. If the Human Soul were not immortal, the greater the man the more tragical to him would be the Universe. If the good man were as mortal as the rabbit seems to be, the state and condition of the rabbit would be enviable compared with the state and condition of the good man. "Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fools so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise?" [1] The loving soul would be continually shot through with agony if it were not hoping in immortality. Our only rational hope is in a World-to-come. Even to the irreligious the conception of a Kingdom of Immortality and Holiness cannot be incredible, while it is absolutely certain that he cannot disprove the existence of such a kingdom. Why then oppose the sacred thought of such a kingdom? Why not rather cultivate the sacred thought of it? I put it to all who believe in the possibility of a better World than this, who have sympathy with goodness. To such it will be seen that the possession of an immortal soul is absolutely necessary to enable us to reap the advantage and the enjoyment of all other high things. In a word, there is no hope in the animal body at all worth speaking about, nor in anything that is only visible through the corporeal eye, or audible through the corporeal ear. Is there? Consequently, if we were moderately wise, we should try to use all our other possessions and endowments in the furtherance of what seem to be our immortal interests.

35. *All our greater notions and ideas are pervaded by the Spiritual.*—All our greater notions and ideas are pervaded by the Spiritual. The greatness of the individual is in exact proportion to the

[1] See the great passage, Eccles. ii. 1-11.

strength and nobility of his spirit—his willingness and power to subordinate the solicitations of the material to the claims of the spiritual. I have seen a man's worldly fortune growing larger and larger every day, whilst the poor fellow himself was growing smaller and smaller. It is disaster of the meanest and most hopeless kind. A millionaire or a billionaire in money may be one of the poorest wretches in the Universe. None of us have yet sat at the Table of the Gods, none of us are as yet personally acquainted with the Gods, but I think we may divine that the most golden metallic opulence in any candidate for their favour, would make no great impression upon that august assembly.

36. *Valour and Cowardice.*—What, for instance, is Valour?—pure Valour, that is to say, not ostentatious bravado or foolhardiness. (He that dreidis na thyng, nor can have na dreid, is not hardy but fuyllhardy and beistly.[1]) All deliberate Valour, in the trenches or elsewhere, is simply a risking of the body and its interests for the honour of the Soul. It is the homage paid by the brave man to the majesty of the Spiritual. What is Cowardice? The sacrifice of the Man to the animal—the apostasy of feeble souls.

> "If a man must bear evil, let him still
> Be without shame—sole profit that in death:
> No glory comes of base and evil deeds." [2]

37. *We respect, reverence, and worship not power, but goodness.*—In our hearts we respect, reverence, and worship not power, but goodness. Enlightened Human Nature itself thus, almost unconsciously, declares its spiritual preferences and appreciations. We could have no respect for Caligula at the head

[1] Gavin Douglas, 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 284.
[2] Æschylus, 'The Seven Against Thebes,' 680-2.

of a thousand legions—none whatever. Thus placed, we might fear him; we could not honour him. We worship not power, but Moral character. Wickedness on the Throne of the Universe (if it could get there) would be more abhorrent than wickedness in a criminal dock. We do not worship the Supreme Being as Infinite Power—at least we ought not to do so,—but as Infinite Goodness. To worship mere power is the treason of cowards.

38. *The true purport of Christianity itself is to leaven Humanity with heroic ideals.*—This I think is the true purport of Christianity itself. That is to say, its chief concern is, or should be, our moral character. Christ's chief purpose seems to have been to leaven Humanity with heroic ideals—to lift up, to inspire, to glorify human character. To Christianise, as I apprehend it, has no other meaning and can have no other meaning, I should say, than to regenerate, recreate, and improve character. This, at all events, is clearly the most sacred interpretation we can place upon it. Christ's life and doctrine taught consistently that the material, however much it may hold our affections, is of small importance compared with the spiritual. In his own life he is taken as our Ideal of spiritual majesty, which is the greatest and, indeed, the only kind of true majesty conceivable. Unhappily this view of the matter is too frequently suffered to fall out of sight even by theologians and preachers. The Theology of many is a disgrace to the Human Head. It should be steadily remembered by everybody (preachers and theologians included) that character is the most precious possession conceivable; that the majesty of Christ himself lies in his character. There is nothing in Heaven above, nor on Earth beneath, nor in the regions under the Earth that can take rank beside, or

compare with, this possession. What though you dwelt on the banks of "the Gold-gushing Fount, the Stream of Pluto," if your character were bad! Rather sit on a three-legged stool with a good character than on an imperial throne with a bad one. The whole Panorama of the Roman Empire, or, well-considered, the whole Panorama of the Kingdoms of the World, establishes the soundness of this conclusion. Character is the thing of worth, and the only possession we can take with us before the Throne of the Highest. Compared with high character, embracing knowledge, wisdom, grace, courage, fortitude, everything else in the long-run is but weakness, imbecility, dross, consignable to the rubbish-shoot.

> "O my good lord, the world is but a word;
> Were it all yours to give it in a breath,
> How quickly were it gone!" [1]

Character is the grandest of possessions; improvement of the same, the loftiest of all enterprises; and Literature honours itself when, by any means, it helps to bring out and emphasise this great doctrine. *Studies in the trivial can never rank with studies in the great and noble.*

39. *The Prophet Haggai on the subject.*—"Consider your ways. You have sown much and bring in little; ye eat but ye have not enough; ye drink but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." Thus, in the name of God, wrote the Hebrew prophet about four-and-twenty centuries ago. It is impossible for prophets and apostles to take a keen interest in trifles. His saying applies to all secular labours undertaken in a

[1] 'Timon of Athens,' ii. 2.

merely secular way. They all end in mere vanity and vexation of spirit. The wages so earned do at best but suffice for the passing wants, and, for the rest, are put into a bag with holes. The only thing of abiding worth is the spiritual profit, which, of course, is obtainable from all kinds of right labour. Any abiding worth or wealth which a man may possess, obviously lies not in his pocket but in his character.

40. *Even talent or genius does not give us the best conception of worth.*—Nor can we obtain a right conception of worth even from the contemplation of talent or genius. It is to be constantly observed that society languishes not so much from lack of cleverness as from lack of morality. We respect the labours of geologists, physicists, biologists, physiologists, and the rest, yet in no one of these rôles can we look to them to do much permanent good to any living wight. Physiology, biology, geology can do extremely little for poor Smith and Brown. Ballooning, quick-travelling, engineering? We greatly admire able engineering; yet passage to the Elysian Fields is not a question of engineering and high speed, clever and advantageous, otherwise, though engineering and celerity of terrestrial movement may be. The slower the blackguard travels—the demagogic politician, for example,—the better for all classes of the community. I would have him permanently delayed at some wayside railway station if the thing were possible. Therefore, it is something far more important than mere cleverness, or even genius, that is chiefly needed. There is much genius of various kinds in the world. At all events, we have abundance of cleverness manifesting itself in manifold works, ranging from the building of pyramids ("mountains builded to keep corn in," according to 'Edward Webbe:

His Travailes'), and mighty roads and bridges, down to performances on tight and slack ropes and the backs of chairs. But morality—nearly everywhere it is found at a low ebb. Sometimes, I fear, it is almost wholly absent even from the Government benches. Still worse, it is sometimes not very discernible in the Pulpit. Emphatically this is the great mischief—a general feebleness of morality, low moral character. Hence our great need of prophets and apostles, of high poets and literary men. Noble worth cannot be found in the whole broad range of the material and secular. These can only become noble in so far as they come to be pervaded by brave moral purpose: which doctrine applies alike to kings and hodmen.

41. *Spiritual purpose is the great need of all classes.*—"Let not our eminent visitors suppose that they have seen America," says Whitman very caustically, when they have passed through, "one after another, the full-dress coteries of the Atlantic cities, all grammatical and cultured and correct, with the toned-down manner of the gentleman, and the kid gloves and luncheons and finger-glasses." [1] No doubt a just remonstrance; although, at the same time, alas, it is to be feared that the uncultured, the ungrammatical, the men who spit cunningly and copiously,[2] have no greater infusion of noble spirit in their souls than their cultured and better-mannered countrymen. This is the great want of all classes—spiritual purpose, spiritual quality, without which neither the kid-gloved nor the barefisted is of any high account. The man who is not of moral build is not a man.

[1] 'Domestic Vistas,' p. 101.

[2] Mark Twain, if I remember rightly, records some wonderful feats in this line.

42. *The healthy growth of the Soul is our highest concern.*—And particularly notice that a man's soul or spirit is the highest personal interest in which he can concern himself, not merely because the New Testament or any other book or person says so, but because it is so in essence, as a matter of observable fact. Gaining the whole World is as nothing compared with the healthy growth of the Soul, as a matter of observable fact. Supposing that to-day somebody could make you a present of these British Islands with all the Real and Personal Property enclosed within their coast lines, it might be of no use to you to-morrow—of no more account than a split pea. All perfectly obvious, no doubt, yet it takes prophets and apostles to teach us these simple things! *Nay, it is the simple great things that prophets and apostles, noble poets and literary men, are mainly needed to teach.*

43. *The calamities of the corporeal are mainly redressible by the spiritual.*—Further, the wrongs, the disasters, the sorrows, the calamities of the corporeal and the temporal are mainly redressible by the spiritual. By this agency chiefly may we hope to "make an end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness." The depravity and degradation of the Human Race, the only hope of raising it is by the agency of spiritual operations—that is, by improving the character of the individual. Great spiritual good may redound to the *giver* of material gifts by judicious and noble giving; but give money to a degraded wretch without regard to his spiritual potentialities, and you are likely to degrade him more than ever. All this will be admitted. The only hope for the human Race at large is to inaugurate and carry on the movement of spiritual reformation and renovation with all our might. It is only by the wider and

wider observance of the Moral Law that we can hope to evolve order from the social chaos. The very filth and squalor of this terrestrial Purlieu are practically irremovable unless by spiritual agencies and influences. It is only by the general lifting-up of Man as Man, only by his general growth in spiritual health and beauty, that we can hope for the real healing of "all manner of sickness and disease among the people." Let all the educational authorities and philanthropic societies consider that they can scarcely hope to do great civilising work but through the healing and nutrient virtues of the spiritual. Let all the professional "reformers" ponder upon it. A Millenium is not conceivable until we have a World of Reformed Characters [1]—not a reformed voting register—not one-man-one-vote, as the political hacks and quacks would have it. Get men truly reformed, and you will have small need for Acts of Parliament. The high welfare and happiness of the individual is inconceivable until he is a Reformed Character—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons all included. This is, I surmise, what Scripture means when it says that you must repent and be converted, or that you must be born again. The Assembly of Just Men made perfect is inconceivable otherwise than as an Assembly of Noble Persons; and a noble Nation is not possible but on the basis of noble Citizens.

44. *But conventional pietism has no cogency.*—Not sudden convertites, not spiritual paupers without any personal "plea," as gruesomely argued and sung in all the Churches. In the name of all that is sensible and sacred, why should we descend

[1] Bernard Shaw puts it still higher. "National Christianity," says he, "is impossible without a nation of Christs."—'The Revolutionist's Handbook,' p. 217.

into the fierce arena of the Battle of Life and strive to acquit ourselves as Heroes, if it is to yield us no "plea" in justification of our existence, no credit in the adventure! There is no more imbecile and disastrous folly in the world than is to be found in the systems of conventional theology — some of them as base in their conceptions of God as they are in their conceptions of man. Such systems, as I have already suggested, are a disgrace to the Human Head. All that Christ could rationally do was to give his hearers sound instruction and advice, and show them by his own example how to live a noble life. This is intrinsically the highest conceivable programme of action that he could have adopted in his grand scheme of saving men. Any higher scheme is, indeed, unthinkable. To me it is utterly incredible that he ever put himself forward as a sacrificial substitute for men; and I take it that such a dogma has no warranty but in some highly metaphorical, contradictory, and probably spurious passages in the Gospel stories. Vicarious sacrifice, as I have elsewhere insisted,[1] is impossible under Moral Law, which Law makes an absolute and indefeasible claim to the personal obedience of every person who can distinguish Right from Wrong. You can no more have a miracle in Morals than in your Banking Account. If in your Banking Account there be a debit which you cannot discharge, you are bankrupt to the extent of that debit; if there be a debit in your Moral Account which you cannot discharge, you are a bankrupt to the extent of that debit in that account. If, in either case, a friend intervenes and discharges the debt or mediates in your favour, you have only effected a change of creditor, and debtor

[1] 'Grammar of Philosophy,' pp. 270-3.

you remain in Moral Law. Our clerical friends cannot reflect too seriously on this great and inexpugnable doctrine. Of course, a man may get a discharge from his bankruptcy, but the position of a discharged Bankrupt can never be an enviable one; and certainly no honourable person would propose to glory in it. In that character no man can be venerable, or even respectable—much less glorious. Yet, *in orthodoxy*, New Jerusalem must essentially be but a great Colony of Discharged Bankrupts; and it must be as Discharged Bankrupts (having "no righteousness of their own") that the Saints are supposed to sing their hallelujahs! There can be no inspiration in such a doctrine. Let all preachers consider it. If from their many thousands of pulpits in these Islands they would, like the great Prophets and Bards, preach with hearts of fire the necessity of personal righteousness, what inroads might they make upon the Kingdom of Darkness! What beauty might we see beginning to spring around us! And it is for all poets and literary men to co-operate with them in such endeavours.

45. *In the regions of the Spiritual all men are under one Law.*—The literary man should lose no opportunity of pressing (by the means most agreeable to his idiosyncrasy) the infinite claims of personal merit upon human regard, and especially upon our orthodox friends of all persuasions: Church of England, Church of Rome, Church of Plymouth, and so forth. Before God, *Turk or Tartar cannot be inferior to any Christian otherwise than in point of personal worth; and, conversely, a Christian cannot be superior before God to any Turk or Tartar otherwise than by the same principle of reckoning.* It stands to Reason that, in the

region of the spiritual, all men must be under this one most sacred Law.[1] It is required of every clergyman of every persuasion to preach this sacred doctrine with all his sacred might. It is the central, the vital, doctrine of all true Religion—the doctrine which we wish to hear resounding through all our Churches. Ethically, the true man will be absolutely indifferent to everything but intrinsic Honour. Personal worth is really the only thing that is one's own, the only possession that bids fair to be of eternal worth, and by which we may hope to co-operate with God (become "joint-labourers with God," as the Apostle phrases it) and add to the Opulence of the Universe. As Arcturus and Orion, the Pleiades and the Chambers of the South, excel a street-lamp in sparkling beauty, so does moral worth excel all other beauty. It is the Pearl of Great Price. With all thy getting, get that Great Pearl first of all. Living or dead, the possession of it must necessarily be our glory, as the failure to possess it must necessarily be our shame—this and nothing else. Heaven and Hell are mainly a question as to our mental and moral habitudes and characteristic energies. As the greatest of Authorities said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," or, obversely, the slavery of Hell. Hence arise our notions, our ideas, our anticipations of dread Justice: hence our fears

[1] A Vicar of Aldershot is reported to have expressed himself, touching electors and elections, in these terms: Every elector "has to make the sign of Christ's Holy Cross opposite the name of the person he votes for"; therefore no Christian can allow himself "to vote for any Jew, atheist, anti-Churchman, or heretic." —'The Church Gazette,' 24th November 1900, p. 62. To find this dark-souled sacerdotal superstition in the Church of England at the close of the Nineteenth Century is distressing enough. It would be highly becoming, surely, for this vicar's Bishop to start out in stern pursuit of him.

of future loss, our hopes of future bliss. All such thoughts—thoughts, obviously, which should be of the most tremendous significance to all men—have their origin not in material, but in what we call spiritual considerations.

46. *Men have a dim consciousness that the Spiritual should be their chief concern.*—And, indeed, in a rough kind of way, mankind know these things. What better proof of it than in the fact that in Christendom alone there are probably some hundreds of thousands of persons told off to preach Religion or the doctrine of the Spiritual; which they do for the most part, unhappily, in a poor blind way. Consider Human Nature in view of this prodigious fact. Notwithstanding the all-embracing folly of the Human Race, notwithstanding the moral myopy by which human vision is so disastrously obscured, they yet half-unconsciously declare, even in spite of themselves, that the Spiritual is the chief thing.

47. *The right and left hand possibilities of Human Nature.*—For all this there are thousands of persons in the world who try to convince themselves that it is quite philosophical to be indifferent about such facts. It is a great pity. I would suggest that by a more reasonable and sacred use of his head the least intellectual among them, if he be honest with himself, has knowledge enough (we are all *living below our knowledge*—some, how far!) to become a kind of angel of light, co-operant with the Divine; and that if he be dishonest, there is a possibility of his becoming a demon of darkness. On the one hand, for example, there is John the Baptist; on the other, Herod and Herodias. Here we have Peter and Paul; there, Judas surnamed Iscariot—and much worse men than he (for it should always be remembered to his honour, that he repented and hanged him-

self). Such persons, so far apart from each other in their moral worth, indicate the right and left hand possibilities of Human Nature *within the clear circle of knowledge*, so that our more extreme sceptics and materialists seem to be without excuse. There should be no materialistic or sceptical talk about the prime concerns of Life. The more kind and sympathetic and serviceable we show ourselves, the better for everybody with whom we come into contact: the more selfish, base, and malign, the worse for everybody. Virtue is the health, wealth, and glory of the Soul: sin is the sickness, poverty, and shame of it. That should be plain as daylight to every thinker. To any one who professes to think, it should be as plain as daylight that the acceptance of the doctrines of materialism necessarily destroys even the theoretic possibility of personal worth—the most glorious conceivable of all acquisitions, the very thought of which is calculated to inspire lofty Life. If all that sort of *light*—material and sceptical—were placed under a bushel or quite snuffed out, the World would be no darker for the loss of it. In fact it would be much less murky, and altogether a very much more hopeful place.

48. *The Supreme value of the Mind or Soul.*—Another remark upon this point—the surpassing worth of the Spiritual. Everybody rightly thinks it a dignified thing to be placed in charge of something important. Now it should be noticed that everybody is actually placed in charge of something important (of more importance, perhaps, than a Planet)—namely, his own Soul, Himself. It is especially incumbent upon all authors and preachers and teachers to reflect upon this fact. Each mind is intended to be honourable and sacred; each mind should be honourable and

sacred; each mind, whether that of king o cotter, should have an honourable and sacrec history; each should be wedded to, and find it chief concern in, the Eternal.

49. *The vision of the awakened Soul in communion with itself.*—And, by the wisdom of the Creator I believe there is such a proud sense of Honou in the awakened and alert Soul that it canno be at peace even with itself as long as it is con sciously subject to any sinful disposition or habit To rouse up and assiduously cultivate this sacrec sense of Honour in themselves and others shoulc be the constant effort of all educators. I submi that the grand and only Catholicon for Spiritua and Social health, strength, and joy is—Heroi Life. (You will not catch the politicians inculcat ing this doctrine !)

50. *Cœteris paribus, Literature is to be valuec according to the degree in which it ministers to ou higher nature.*—To bring out such lessons (by plot and narrative and description, by delineatior of persons, by tracing and deducing the effect o the actions and character of one person upor another, and by any, the most hopeful, means in his power) must needs be one of the chief aims of the author who would toil for beneficent results As with Human Life in its general interests anc activities, so it is in all our efforts to please, teach or guide our fellow-beings. *Cœteris paribus,* al such work is great in the degree in which it ministers effectually to the higher nature of Man small or worthless, or worse than worthless, in the proportion in which it addresses itself to his insignificance. The first requisite of Literary Art is that it be essentially true to Nature. But truth to Nature is not enough. It is now required that the quality of the truth, or what I would call the Thought-Fabric of the poem or any other

literary work, shall be of real worth. Just as there is fact of chaff and wheat, of cotton and silk, of tin and gold, of glass and diamond, of candle-light and sunlight, of pig-stye and Temple of Divinity, so there is Literature ranging in its subject-matter and Thought-Fabric from the extremes of the common, the insignificant, the trifling, the base, up to the loftiest themes of human thought; and just as glass is inferior to diamond, candle-light to sunlight, pig-stye to Temple of Divinity, so is the literature of base, common, and insignificant substance inferior, *cæteris paribus*, to the literature whose substance is of diamond lustre, of sunlight splendour, of sacred grandeur.

51. *Sir Joshua Reynolds, Goethe, and Ruskin on the subject.*—Thus Sir Joshua Reynolds: "Well-turned periods in eloquence, or harmony of numbers in poetry, which are in those arts what colouring is in painting, however highly we may esteem them, can never be considered as of equal importance with the art of unfolding truths that are useful to mankind, and which makes us wiser and better. Nor can those works which remind us of the poverty and meanness of our nature be considered as of equal rank with what excites ideas of grandeur, or raises and dignifies humanity, or, in the words of Goldsmith, which make the beholder learn to venerate himself as a man. It is reason and good sense, therefore, which ranks and estimates every art, and every part of that art, according to its importance, from the painter of animated down to inanimated nature. We will not allow a man who shall prefer the inferior style to say it is his taste; taste here, has nothing, or at least ought to have nothing to do with the question. He wants (such a one) not taste, but sense and a sound judg-

ment." [1] Again: "When a true judge is wrapt in admiration of the intellectual excellences of a picture, it is with pain that he hears a tame remark on the colouring, handling, &c." [2] In the same spirit Goethe writes: "Young people are excited much too early, and then carried away in the whirl of the time. Wealth and rapidity are what the world admires, and what every one strives to obtain. Railways, quick mails, steamships, and every possible kind of facility in the way of communication are what the educated world has in view, that it may over-educate itself, and thereby continue in a state of mediocrity." [3] Again: "The rude man is contented if he but see something going on; the man of more refinement must be made to feel; the man entirely refined desires to reflect" [4]; whilst of poetry he writes: "I revere the rhythm as well as the rhyme by which poetry first becomes poetry; but that which is really deeply and fundamentally effective, that which is really permanent and furthering, is that which remains of the poet when he is translated into prose." [5] (But much too sweeping. Some of the finest witchery of poesy—of thought, word and idiom, may be quite untranslatable.) To the same effect also John Ruskin: "The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly

[1] 'Discourses,' Vol. i. pp. 421-2. There should be "something either in the action or in the object, in which men are universally concerned, and which powerfully strikes upon the public sympathy." He adduces the case of Jan Steen as a painter great at low subjects, but who, in more favourable circumstances, might have been great in high.—Ib., p. 401.

[2] Beechey's 'Memoir,' p. 98.

[3] 'Letters to Zelter,' pp. 246-7.

[4] 'Meister's Apprenticeship,' Bk. ii. chap. iii.

[5] 'Autobiography,' Vol. i. p. 427. In science, of course, "whatever is unfit to stand the test of a literal version is not worth the trouble of being studied in the original."—Dugald Stewart, 'Works,' Vol. i. p. 194.

expressed" (here, I fancy, he overstates the case), "is a greater and better picture than that which has the less noble and the less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. No weight, nor mass, nor beauty of execution can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought. The art is greatest which conveys to the spectator, by any means whatever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts the faculty by which it is received. He is the greatest artist who has embodied in the sum of his works the greatest number of the greatest ideas." [1] In illustration of the operation of this principle he adduces Claude, who, he says, in such subjects as the Building of Carthage, "commonly introduces people carrying red trunks, with iron locks, about, and dwells with infantine delight on the lustre of the leather and the ornaments of the iron" [2]: *exactly as thousands of writers dwell upon all kinds of trivialities in their works.* In the same vein, he scarifies "that infinite monstrosity and hypocrisy"—Raphael's Cartoon of the Charge to Peter. "Note first," says he, "the bold fallacy—the putting all the Apostles there, a mere lie to serve the Papal heresy of the Petric supremacy, by putting them all in the background while Peter receives the charge, and making them all witnesses to it. Note the handsomely curled hair and

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i. pp. 11-13 (1897). To the same effect, Vol. iii. p. 39.

[2] Ib., Vol. i. p. 33. See him also on the degradation of the Dutch School as manifested in their choice of subjects, Vol. v. pp. 279, 304; and on the works of Hayden and Barry, p. 196. Outside their portraiture he also condemns as trivial the subjects chosen by Reynolds and Gainsborough.—'On the Old Road,' Vol. i. pp. 226-7.

neatly tied sandals of the men who had been out all night in the sea mists and on the slimy decks. Note their convenient dresses for going a-fishing, with trains that lie a yard along the ground, and goodly fringes—all made to match, an apostolic fishing costume. Notice how Peter especially (whose chief glory was in his wet coat *girt* about him, and naked limbs) is enveloped in folds and fringes, so as to kneel and hold his keys with grace. No fire of coals at all, nor lonely mountain shore, but a pleasant Italian landscape, full of villas and churches and a flock of sheep to be pointed at; and the whole group of Apostles, not round Christ as they would have been naturally, but straggling away in a line that they may all be shown. . . . It is all a mere mythic absurdity and faded concoction of fringes, muscular arms, and curly heads of Greek philosophers." [1] Thus may a fine subject be rendered contemptible in the conception and handling of it, and all Nature outraged. Elsewhere he remarks: "Claude embodies the foolish pastoralism; Salvator, the ignorant terror; and Gaspar Poussin, the dull and affected erudition of the spirit of the times" [2]: exactly like thousands of authors of books. And on Historical Painting in general, he writes: "*Every relation of the plain facts which the painter saw* is proper historical painting. If those facts are unimportant (as that he saw a gambler quarrel with another gambler, or a sot enjoying himself with another sot), then the history is trivial; if the facts are important (as that he saw such and such a great man look thus, or act thus, at such a time), then the history is noble: in each case perfect truth of narrative being supposed, otherwise the whole thing is worthless, being

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. p. 58.
[2] 'Lectures on Architecture and Painting,' p. 167.

neither history nor poetry, but plain falsehood. . . . Historical painting falls or rises in changeful eminence, from Dutch trivialities to a Velasquez portrait, just as historical talking or writing varies in eminence from an old woman's story-telling up to Herodotus." [1] Just so; and an able critic in 'The Athenæum,' criticising Mr Churton Collins from another point of view, allows that "moral issues must always have a large and even dominant place in the poet's interests." [2] I am inclined to hold with Browning that besides the Soul and its affairs "little else is worth study." [3] Apart from his spiritual relationships to his fellow-creatures and to the Universe, Man is only of interest as a more resourceful kind of badger or beaver. In his total want of sympathy for high things, the very sight of the hard-grained secular person might deflate the enthusiasms of a Choir of Angels, and make them sad.

51*a*. *To be of spiritual import it is by no means necessary that an Author should speak as from the Pulpit.*—And to be of spiritual import it is by no means necessary that an author should speak as from the Pulpit. The poet does not "preach" virtue, but, much better, he will probably compel you or help you by his presentment of life to honour Virtue, and to fall in love with virtuous persons. Extinguish the moral interest in Literature, and you extinguish the Sun in the Heavens. Carlyle, in his famous essay on Sir Walter Scott, seems to me to suppose or to imply that a great

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. p. 43. Again: "We cannot say that a painter is great because he paints boldly, or paints delicately; . . . because he loves detail or because he disdains it. He is great if by any of these means he has laid open noble truths or aroused noble emotions."—Ib., p. 24.

[2] 'Athenæum,' 11th May 1912, p. 524.

[3] Letter prefixed to 'Sordello.'

writer is necessarily a Preacher, and that, because there was nothing of the Preacher about Sir Walter, he was rather a profane and cheap person! In a censorious manner he says that his life was worldly; his ambitions worldly; that "there is nothing spiritual in him; all is economical, material, of the earth earthy," &c.[1] He waxes scathingly satirical over him: "Walter Scott, as a latent Walter, had never amused all men for a score of years, or gained and lost several hundred thousand pounds by Literature; but he might have been a happy and by no means a useless—nay, who knows at bottom whether not a still usefuller?—Walter,"[2] falling into the facetious vein. "The 'Lays,' the 'Marmions,' . . . will be valuable in literary statistics"—a thrust intended for the heart. Shakespeare as well as Scott, he allows, was "unconscious of an aim in speaking; and now if they were equally deep? Or if the one was living fire, and the other was futile phosphorescence and mere resinous firework? . . . In the heart of the speaker there ought to be some kind of Gospel tidings." His writings, he declares in his most pontifical manner, "do not in any case whatever proceed from the innermost parts of the mind."[3] In this fierce diatribe one can scarcely but think that the Prophet of Craigenputtock made a scandalous blunder in his reckoning. He failed to notice that the spiritual may be implied as well as

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. iv. p. 35.

[2] Ib., p. 49.

[3] Ib., pp. 50-61. Did Craigenputtock really regard Scott's account of David Deans and his daughter Jeannie, for instance, as "futile phosphorescence and mere resinous firework"? It is scarcely credible. I fancy that the "futile phosphorescence and mere resinous firework" are Thomas's very own, when he trespasses upon this subject; and they have an exceeding bad odour. It seems to me that Sir Walter Scott has infused the very Soul of the Nation into his Scottish Novels.

explicated and expounded; and I should say that he who fails to find any spiritual import in the great works of Scott has read them with a dull eye, and should blame himself for the barrenness to himself of his investigation.

52. *Nor that he should choose an ambitious subject.*—Further, let it not be supposed that high quality of truth requires an ambitious subject, or that the choice of an ambitious subject gives any warranty that the writer will be found a purveyor of high truth. Very far from it. The subject may be all right, but if the author or the artist be unable to handle it! He had much better handle a broomstick. A genius will write far more effectively about a mouse or a daisy than an uninspired man about Archangels. Cardinal Newman's 'Dream of Gerontius,' for instance, is, to the best of my judgment, as tame a work as could be written. The author scarcely appears in it to be one of the sons of the Prophets at all. Bailey's 'Festus' deals with an ambitious subject, yet it appears to me to be an abyssmal failure. Ambitiously essaying to climb the heights of spiritual sublimity, he has dashed, I humbly think, into the Gulf of Bathos. No; choice of subject will never make an author: the theme will never make the poem. A man digging drains need not be an unspiritual subject. It will depend largely on how the poet or the painter sees it and treats it. He may see brave features in the scene, and pathetic; and invest it with living poetry, enabling the ungifted, perhaps, to see, for example, even as Burns saw, and to feel as he felt, say, in "The Cottar's Saturday Night." Thunder and lightning are not necessary to sublimity. The same in Art. Observe always, says Ruskin, that "the fault lies not in the things being little, or the incident being slight. Titian

could have put issues of life and death into the face of a man asking the way — nay, into the back of him, if he had chosen. He has put a whole scheme of dogmatic theology into a row of Bishop's backs at the Louvre. And for dogs, Velasquez has made some of them as grand as his surly kings." [1] In short, it would appear that a true artist will elevate a humble subject whilst a pretender will depress a great one. "There is a noble way of carving a man, and a mean one; and a great sculptor carves his scarabæus grandly, as he carves his King, while a mean sculptor makes vermin of both. And it is a sorrowful truth, yet a sublime one, that this greatness of treatment cannot be taught by talking about it. No; nor even by enforced imitative practice of it. *Men treat their subjects nobly only when they themselves become noble—not* till then." [2] That seems to be the truth of the matter.

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. v. p. 280. "There may be as much greatness of mind, as much nobility of manner, in a master's treatment of the smallest features as in his management of the most vast; and this greatness of manner chiefly consists in seizing the specific characters of the object together with all the great qualities of beauty which it has in common with higher objects of existence," &c.—Ib., Vol. i., Preface, p. xxxiii.

[2] 'On the Old Road,' Vol. i. p. 376.

CHAPTER IX.

PROPORTION AND SELECTION IN LITERATURE.

1. *Persons and actions should engage our attention in proportion to their relative importance.*—As quality of truth and fact is an essential element in Literature, it will follow that the author ought to deal with his material, with his persons and their actions, in such a way as will best exhibit and interpret their relative importance. Skittles and bagatelle fill up but a very small corner in the Great House of Nature, and they should consequently occupy but a very small corner in human estimation. In Literature they should scarcely appear at all. (Beware of narrow interpretations, of course.) In a word, we must have Selection and Proportion in Literature. History is characterised by Bolingbroke as "Philosophy teaching by example." Literature, in the finer examples of the drama and the novel, might be taken to be Philosophy teaching by *selected* example. A great scene in fiction may impress your mind with some of the deepest truths of Humanity, rouse within you the most heartfelt scorn of baseness, and inspire you with some of the finest raptures of the soul. Obviously, a Chancery lawsuit, for instance, in all its details, would not make an acceptable drama.

2. *The stupidest may claim our attention if he be "brief in proportion."*—The authorities, I fancy,

are agreed on this subject. "A public story," says Horace, "will become your own property if you do not dwell on the whole circle of events," and so on. Beauty "is the purgation of superfluities," said Michael Angelo. "There is not a particle to spare in natural structures." [1] Carlyle observes: "The stupidest man, if he will be but brief in proportion, may fairly claim some hearing from us: he too, the stupidest man, has seen something, heard something, which is his own, distinctly, peculiar, never seen or heard by any man in the world before (?); let him tell us that, and if it were possible, nothing but that—he, brief in proportion, shall be welcome." [2] This is a rule to which all historic, epic, dramatic, and even scientific literature should conform. There is no person so utterly mean and uninteresting as to be completely unworthy of literary presentment, but the *dramatis personæ* should only be accorded such presentment as their importance warrants. Hamlet may occupy the stage as long almost as he likes; Claudius, perhaps, for a shorter time; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are in the drama, as they would be in life, little more than supernumeraries; clowns should seldom be seen unless they be very clever ones. Briefly, the *dramatis personæ* should be ranked and subordinated according to their relative importance; and each person thus duly ranked and subordinated should say not more than enough, and should claim our attention as long as, and not longer than, his importance deserves. Speaking generally, a writer in 'The Athenæum' happily says: "It is the artist's function not to copy but to synthesise; to eliminate from that gross confusion of actuality which is his raw material, whatever

[1] Emerson, 'Works,' Vol. vi. p. 279.
[2] 'Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,' Vol. iv. p. 275.

is accidental, idle, irrelevant, and select for perpetuation that only which is appropriate and immortal." [1]

3. *Literature is well-nigh drowned in the commonplace and trivial.*—This matter is worthy of careful consideration. It is quite obvious that even in real life the days are too short to admit of our giving detailed attention to the history of individuals and their affairs unless they be possessed of something more than routine significance. What sensible person wants to listen beyond the necessary moment to the general chatter of the workshop, or the office, or the drawing-room, or the House of Commons, or of Convocation, or of any section of society whatever, either at work or at play? Who desires to have such chatter recorded and published in ink? Now notice the bearing of such questions upon Literature. If the routine individual in real life is scarcely worth historic attention, how much less must his mere reflection in Literature be worth our study? Yet, unfortunately, the World's Literature—historic and fictional—is filled with accounts of the doings not only of routine individuals, but also of prosy, foolish, and preposterous individuals. The trick is an old one. "I have been trying to read a new novel which I have heard praised," writes Sir Walter Scott. "It is called 'Almacks,' and the author has so well succeeded in describing the cold selfish fopperies of the time that *the copy is almost as dull as the original.*" Exactly so, and forthwith he concludes: "I think I will take up my bundle of sheriff court processes as the more entertaining avocation of the two." [2] In Zola's studies for his book 'Pot-bouille,' it appears that he spent "whole days in exploring the ramifications of (certain) monster warehouses,

[1] March 1885, p. 339.

[2] 'Journal,' Vol. i. p. 370.

interviewing the salesmen and saleswomen on their pay," &c.[1] The results of this investigation, I am afraid, could scarcely be grateful to the Muses, however useful they might be to an industrial commission. Reviewing a certain novel, the critic of a weekly paper remarks: "Incidentally we learn the writer's views upon the way to purchase hunters, to cure jibbers, to speculate on the Stock Exchange; while the marriage-law, free-trade, and privateering come under his review in their turn"—deserts of words without one oasis of verdure to enliven them. We are all more or less familiar with books of that class. A word of advice to the authors of them—a word stern but not unkind. Let them notice that polishing a door-knocker in a skilful and Godly manner is much better than writing novels in a commonplace, unskilful, and ungodly manner; that the latter is actually a poor and base occupation, whilst the former is positively a meritorious occupation if not a high one. It is this fiction of the contemptible—fiction without intelligent purpose and pointing nowhere—that absorbs so much of the attention of the groundlings everywhere, and ties them to the ground.

4. *Bores in Books.*—It may be taken, then, that while the bore in real life is, by common consent, a nuisance, the bore in fiction is almost as great a nuisance, except that he may be more easily discarded. As an offender, indeed, the bore in books is less excusable than the bore in real life, for whereas the bore in books is a wholly gratuitous nuisance, his counterpart in Nature flourishes to some extent against his own will. In any case, I think it may be taken that the commonplace thoughts and doings of commonplace persons, real or imaginary, should never

[1] Sherrard, 'Zola,' p. 195.

appear in print; or, if at all, only to give us a hint of their presence. I think we may conclude that the individual who, in real life, only possesses a minimum of historic interest, can scarcely possess a modicum of interest as transferred to the printed page. Yet the world continues to be pestered with biographies of church "dignitaries," pedantic schoolmasters, hack-politicians, second and third-rate generals, admirals and sea captains, petty grandiosities and innumerable persons of no public account; whilst the annual flood of novels, of the same quality, continues to increase. It is to be wished that, for all such purposes, the Muse's Liquid could be raised to the price, say, of one shilling per dip.

5. "*The palpably superfluous.*"—Quoth Thomas of Chelsea—"Afflicted human nature ought to be delivered from the palpably superfluous; and if a few things memorable are to be remembered, millions of things unmemorable must first be honestly buried and forgotten." [1] What, asks Whitman, "do our current copious fields of print, covering in manifold forms the United States, better for an analogy present than, as in certain regions of the sea, those spreading, undulating, masses of squid, through which the whale swimming . . . feeds?" [2] What do they else, indeed, either in the United States or elsewhere? The sight of those undulating masses of printed squid is sufficient to melt the Muses into floods of tears. If a society could be founded to suppress all bad and useless books!

6. *The great multitude of books an exhibition of human stupidity.*—It is related of Diogenes that being at a fair on one occasion, and looking round about with observant eye, he fervently

[1] 'Frederick,' Vol. ii. p. 30.
[2] 'Democratic Vistas,' p. 58.

ejaculated—"Lord, how many things there are in the world of which Diogenes hath no need!" If that ancient philosopher could be resuscitated and transported into the midst, say, of the Library of the British Museum of to-day! Consider the very catalogues of that Institution; consider even the current Bookseller's Catalogue—a lift for a porter—thin paper—double columns in some parts —small print! Supposing that Diogenes could be presented with a copy of *that* volume! I take it to be one of the most amazing witnesses of human stupidity. It suggests that the *cacoethes scribendi* is probably one of the most desolating and soul-deadening demons haunting the world. It would be more profitable, I suppose, to stop the pens and the mouths of unwise persons than the mouths of lions.

7. *But the frequent should not be confused with the trivial.*—But the frequent should not be confused with the trivial and the commonplace. Some critics fall into this error. Edgar Allan Poe, for example, writes: "The most exquisite pleasures grow dull in repetition. A strain of music enchants. Heard a second time, it pleases. Heard a tenth, it does not displease. We hear it a twentieth, and ask ourselves why we admired. At the fiftieth, it induces ennui—at the hundredth, disgust." [1] I hope it is not true. In any case, his account of the matter does not agree with my own experience. I think he was mistaking the frequent for the commonplace. Even the constantly recurring Sunrise and Sunset, for instance, loses none of its charm by repetition; nor, to take a lower instance, is the hundredth strawberry less pleasant to the taste than the first—if you

[1] 'Works,' Vol. iv. p. 229. Ruskin also seems to suggest that natural beauty may pall upon us. See 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. pp. 310-1.

avoid surfeiting. By Poe's method of computation the Music of the Spheres should, in due course, become as distressing as the hum of the foghorn: Heaven itself would quickly become intolerable to its inhabitants. No, Keats, I think, holds the true doctrine:—

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever;
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
> A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
> Full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing." [1]

8. *Treatment of Evil in Literature: the sheer brutal not a fit subject.*—But the palpably superfluous is not the worst element in Literature. A fine question arises, for instance, as to how far pain and evil are worthy of literary treatment. It is of course extremely difficult to state anything like a definite doctrine on the subject, impossible to pronounce some hard and fast criterion under which we might say offhand this is right and that is wrong. Man, as defined by Aristotle, is a moral or religious animal. Looking round upon the World, one is almost constrained to say in moments of depression that the definition is pitched too high; but, in essentials, we may take it that he is, potentially at least, a moral or religious animal. It is this faculty of being moral or religious which separates him from the purely animal Kingdom; therefore, if he be represented as quite unintelligent and totally defiant of social obligations, he actually does not answer the definition of a man—he becomes a mere monster, and as such, is largely divested of human interest, and transformed into an object of sheer horror and repulsion.

9. *But otherwise with intellectual and cunning*

[1] 'Endymion,' Bk. i.

wickedness.—But it is otherwise with intellectual wickedness. Let an extremely wicked person (an Iago, for instance, or a Mephistopheles) be endowed with a keen intellect and a deep knowledge of human frailty; let him descend into the arena of Life animated by sheer devotion to himself, and by spite and hatred against everybody else; let him be obstinately recalcitrant against every demand of the Moral Law; yet if he perpetrates his iniquities in a sufficiently feasible, specious, and able manner, he will scarcely fail to be both interesting and instructive. To set forth the proceedings of such a miscreant may require the finest efforts of genius. In handling such a subject a great poet will emphasise the clash and conflict of the moral forces, play upon our emotions with strong effect, and bring out in most instructive contrast the horror of sin and the glory of Virtue—the highest achievement within the reach of his art.

10. "*Selection and rejection lie at the root of all worthy design in Art.*"—In relation to this matter, John Ruskin writes: "Amongst other qualities great style consists in the habitual choice of subjects of thought which involve wide interests and profound passions, as opposed to those which involve narrow interests and slight passions. The style is greater or less in exact proportion to the nobleness of the interests and passions involved in the subject." (Here, I think, he should have added the qualifying phrase, "other things being equal.")[1] The great School of Art, he con-

[1] My own notion of style is that the man of broad vision and deep insight is likely to have style enough, and that the man of narrow vision and poor insight will have a style corresponding with the poverty of his endowment. Cultivate the love of truth and beauty, and I think you may safely leave style to take care of itself. In writing, I fancy that no great genius thinks anything about his "style." I should say: Aim at no particular style

tinues, "introduces in the conception of its subject as much beauty as is possible consistently with truth. . . . In any subject consisting of a number of figures, it will make as many of those figures beautiful as the faithful representation of humanity will admit. It will not deny the facts of ugliness or decrepitude, or relative inferiority and superiority of feature as necessarily manifested in a crowd, but it will, in so far as it is in its power, seek for and dwell upon the fairest forms, and in all things insist on the beauty that is in them, not on the ugliness. In this respect, schools of art become higher in exact proportion to the degree in which they apprehend and love the beautiful. Thus Angelico, intensely loving all spiritual beauty, will be of the highest rank; and Paul Veronese and Correggio, intensely loving physical and corporeal beauty, of the second rank; and Albert Durer, Rubens, and, in general, the northern Artists, apparently insensible to beauty and caring only for truth, whether shapely or not, of the third rank; and Teniers and Salvator, Caravaggio and other such worshippers of the depraved, of no rank or of a certain order in the Abyss." [1] Sir Noel Paton holds practically the

but to express yourself very sincerely, very clearly, and very vividly, and there will be nothing wanting. Samuel Butler says: "I never knew a writer who took the smallest pains with his style and was at the same time readable."—'Notebooks,' p. 186.

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. pp. 29-37. "Artists considered as searchers after truth are to be divided into three great classes —a right, a left, and a centre. Those on the right perceive and pursue the good, and leave the evil: those in the centre, the greatest, perceive and pursue the good and evil together, the whole thing as it verily is: those on the left perceive and pursue the evil, and leavé the good." These classes he calls respectively Purists, Naturalists, and Sensualists.—'Stones of Venice,' Vol. ii. pp. 187, 189. "The poems of Rogers, compared with those of Crabbe, are admirable instances of the healthiest Purism and healthiest Naturalism in poetry. The first great Naturalists of Christian Art were Orcagna and Giotto."—Ib., note, p. 195.

same doctrine—namely, that "Selection and rejection lie at the root of all worthy design in Art." [1] "All who know about Art," says Mr Baldwin Brown, "will agree that beauty in works of art is at least of as much importance as truth." (It should be noted, however, that though there may be truth without beauty, there can be nothing worth calling beauty without truth.) "All such understand," he continues, "that a process of selection, omission, combination, must go on before the statue or picture is evolved. They know that Nature is not always or altogether beautiful, and that an artist is not worthy of the name who, in his choice, is too easily satisfied. The mere imitation of nature is not in itself artistic" (*e.g.*, a copying of the warts and wens of nature); "and this will be accepted as true by all who have some practical acquisition with the art of painting and sculpture, though to the outsider there will always remain something fascinating about the former easy and logical theory" that art consists of mere imitation.[2] The same in Literature. A slavish reproduction of everyday life in all its phases, unillumined by the vision and unmodified by the selective genius of the author, would yield the direst commonplace, not to speak of the revoltingly ugly.

11. *The merely murderous and criminal should be dismissed from Literature and Art.*—How far, then, are the evil, the hateful, the painful, the loathsome to be regarded in Literature? How are we to discriminate exactly between the Literature of disease and the Literature of health? To begin with, I think that the merely murderous and

[1] 'Art Journal,' 1895, p. 102.

[2] 'The Fine Arts,' pp. 230-1. To the same effect see Ruskin again.—'Modern Painters,' Vol. ii. p. 159, and Vol. v. p. 177. On landscape "composition," some good remarks in Poe's 'Works,' Vol. i. p. 308.

criminal, as such, should be almost wholly dismissed from the Drama and from fictional Literature in general, and we shall certainly agree with Horace that horrors should not be presented on the stage. Thus, for instance, the leading characters in 'Titus Andronicus' (Aaron the Moor, Timora and her sons) are all revolting monsters, who, whether such miscreants ever existed or not, should not be allowed either to appear on the stage or to befoul the pages of a book. So also as to Ben Jonson's bullies in 'The Staple of News.' In a note to that play, Gifford seriously remarks that "Jonson's object was to expose to scorn and ridicule the pestilent humours of a set of bullies then in vogue," [1] a set resembling, apparently, the Dublin "Society of Blasters," whom Berkeley reprobated. Gifford, and Jonson before him, ought to have noticed that those pestilent bullies should have been regarded as beneath the attention of any self-respecting dramatist, and that they were mainly requiring the attention of the police and the correctional authorities of that day, just as the bullies and blackguards of our own day require the attention of those authorities, and not that of the dramatist or of the artist of any kind. Or take Shelley's 'Cenci.' Generally speaking, the Count, I should say, is merely a kind of infernal machine. The curses and blasphemies which he pours forth, without intermission, show the combined fury and weakness of Bedlam: it is sheer murderous balderdash. Mark, for instance, how he raves in Act iv. Sc. i. It seems to me that to represent a man spending his life in bloody deeds, spouting sanguinary

[1] Jonson's 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 315. See an admirable passage on the diseased and the depraved in Art.—Ruskin, 'Stones of Venice,' pp. 192-3, and 'Fiction Foul and Fair: On the Old Road,' Vol. ii. pp. 7, 18-20, 23, 134-6.

sentiments, and congratulating himself on the general result of the whole business, is simply a monstrous mis-creation, at once ridiculous and repulsive to the sane beholder. The verse is good, but there is no sense in it. Everything is washed away in a torrent of sanguinary verbosity. I should doubt if Mark Twain ever heard blasphemies as lurid on the Mississippi. The situation of the Count's family is appalling—absolutely. On the whole, however, his wife and Beatrice are well depicted, and enlist our deepest compassion, except when, at the trial, Beatrice tries to save herself at the expense of poor Marzio, and waxes wroth with him when, at first, his courage fails under the torture. But the Count, I should say, is altogether a failure—a sheer maniac in a perpetual rage, and unfit to appear on any stage. Literature and art should altogether shun the foul, the monstrous, and abnormal.

12. *Purely criminal agonies are not a good subject for literary treatment.*—In the next place, I think we may say that a criminal, for instance, racked only by criminal fears, does not appear to be a good subject for literary or dramatic treatment. Take Mathias in 'The Bells.' He betrays, I should say, too much *criminal* fear—purely criminal fear. I do not say that such a manifestation is not true to life, but that it is not a good subject for dramatic treatment. The more graphic the representation of his criminal agonies (in the representation of the whole character Sir Henry Irving could not be excelled), the more horrible and repellent is the picture. One might almost as happily be called in to witness the writhings of a hysterical criminal in a condemned cell as to see the histrionic agonies of Mathias. I can scarcely but think that, in the humane mind, all this terrible representation

must arouse the feeling of sheer horror; and I apprehend that it would probably find the most appreciative audience amongst the least cultivated, the roughest and most depraved persons—amongst those, in short, who would be most ready to crowd to a public execution. Much nobler it would have been on the part of the dramatist to have aimed, I should say, at a more spiritual development and delineation of the culprit's consciousness of guilt—heart-stricken, it might be, with the memory of his crime, and battling perhaps in the thorny path of moral regeneration. Apart from some such moral awakening in the unhappy criminal, it is my conviction that the story as it stands should remain buried among the most squalid, sordid, and revolting of police records. It can only give rise to the emotion of horror without the accompaniment of any soothing anodyne to temper it.

13. *But quite otherwise with heroic devotion.*—Compare the conduct and the death of Mathias with that, for example, of Robert Landry in 'The Dead Heart.' It will be remembered that there is a youth in the play, the son of the lady, Catherine Duval, to whom Landry had been betrothed in his happy days, but from whom he had been infamously separated, and under the authority of a *lettre-de-cachet* thrown into the Bastille. During the Reign of Terror this youth has been condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Landry having been liberated at the fall of the Bastille, has meanwhile risen to high office under the Revolutionary powers, and Catherine having learned this fact, comes to implore his services in behalf of her condemned son. He has no official power to help, but, moved by tender memories and heroic thoughts, he resolves upon helping in another way. Disguising himself, he

finds means of taking the place of Catherine's son in prison, manages to secure his escape, and assumes in prison the designation, "number 41," of the escaped youth. The guillotine is now in full swing—the victims being taken, one by one, in numerical order; and "Number 41" being called in due course, the Hero—sadly, firmly, nobly—steps out upon the scaffold, with sacred calm upon his brow. The horror of the scene is lost in its moral grandeur. Existence, indeed, is dark for the time under the sorrows of Life and Death, but the Eternal Glory is dawning in the background.[1]

14. *The obtuseness of the Public to the sublime in dramatic Art.*—In passing, just a word about the representation of this play at the Lyceum. In his impersonation of the Hero I think that Sir Henry Irving's art is nothing short of perfect—more especially, if possible, in that bit of dumb show when he appears upon the scaffold at the close of the play. I have never more fully felt the emotion of the sublime than at that moment. The scene, indeed, was entrancing in its sublimity—a spectacle to be always remembered. But the entrancement was broken all too soon, for when I saw it, the silly part of the audience hastened, in the very midst of the scene, to bustle on its coats and cloaks and wrappers with no more apparent feeling or perception of the grandeur of the representation which was in progress in front of them than if they had been regarding some piece of Jack Pudding buffoonery. Such persons are to be cordially recommended not to prepare to encounter the elements in future until the curtain has duly fallen.

15. *The greater the art, the deeper its religious-*

[1] Analogous to the historic incident discussed, *supra*, chap. iii. sect. 29.

ness.—I may add that this particular impersonation of Robert Landry has still more deeply, if possible, impressed upon me the conviction—a conviction which I have long held—that, other things being equal, the greater the art, the deeper will be its religiousness; or conversely, the deeper its religiousness, the greater will be the art. As Mr Quiller-Couch says: "The Spiritual element in man is the highest object of his study. . . . Nine-tenths of what is worthy to be called Literature being concerned with this spiritual element, for that it should be studied—from firstly up to ninthly—before anything else."[1]

16. *The entirely painful is not a profitable subject.*—In the next place, I think we may take it that the perfectly painful should be wholly avoided both in Literature and Art. "A well-known German poet had shown Goethe his album. 'You cannot imagine what stuff it contains,' said Goethe. 'All the poets write as if they were ill, and the whole world were a Lazaretto. . . . This is a real abuse of poetry, which was given to us to hide the little discords of life, and to make man contented with the world and his condition. But the present generation is afraid of all such strength, and only feels poetical when it has weakness to deal with. I have hit on a good word to tease these gentlemen. I will call their poetry Lazaretto-Poetry, and I will give the name of Tyrtæan-Poetry to that which not only sings war-songs, but also arms men with courage to undergo the conflicts of life'"[2]; which, I think, is very nobly said. Carlyle, in his graphic and mordantly humorous manner, speaks of Shelley as "filling the earth with inarticulate wail, like the infinite inarticulate grief and weeping of

[1] 'On the Art of Reading,' p. 18.
[2] 'Conversations with Eckermann,' p. 277.

forsaken infants." [1] The Literature of to-day, also, is filled with the stock perplexities and platitudes of woe. Agonies which, let us hope, are not really felt by the writers with such poignancy as they suggest, writhe and wail in their pages—

"Torment and loud lament and furious rage."

I think they make a mistake. For instance, what sensible person wants to have poems, or novels, or pictures, or statuary of such life as is depicted, say, in that ghastly novel ——? I will not mention the name of it. It simply launches one into profitless misery. The book is clever: it seems vital. The story may be veritable history, for aught one knows, though, for Pity's sake, I would fain hope that it is not, for I find it more utterly grievous and depressing and desolating than a visit to a Hospital for incurables. Indeed it is much more so, for the Hospital for incurables may be brightened by hope, serenity, religion, but this wretched novel is filled with the absolute blankness and dolefulness of despair, both temporal and eternal. A funeral might be quite a brisk event compared with the perusal of the book. I felt distinctly the worse of it. Despite its vitality, we owe . . . . . no thanks for this story. May the author fail to flourish in *that* kind of literature! 'The City of Dreadful Night' may be mentioned as another work of the dismal kind. If it were seriously taken to heart, one can scarcely but think that its main tendency would be to promote suicide—that the whole population of London would be crowding towards the Thames. The book seems to have been written with a countenance as long as pessimism and the spirit

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. iii. p. 31.

of mutiny against Nature could draw it. Healthy literature cannot be produced in such a spirit. May paralysis fix upon the pens of all such writers. Take some even of Mr W. E. Henley's poems, especially those entitled "In Hospital." [1] They are characterised by keen perception and strong feeling of some of the painful incidents and phases of Hospital life, and they are expressed in such language and with such tone and rhythm as to make the reader see what the poet sees and feel what he feels; but they are painful and doleful both in subject and treatment—they are Lazaretto-Poetry, and we can scarcely be grateful for them. In the remainder of the volume there is much indefinite, vague, incoherent writing, mostly in the same tone of gloom and sadness, which sinks sometimes into the utterance of sheer despair. I might specify another example of this dolorous kind of literature in Synge's 'Riders to the Sea.' This play depicts a situation in some peasant fisher-folks' lives, which certainly impresses us with the cruel tragedy of it all, and makes us wonder that men should be born to encounter the possibility of so heart-breaking an existence; but the author sheds no light upon it, and does not seek to shed any light upon it. The whole story is one of mourning, lamentation, and woe. I doubt if there is either profit or pleasure to be derived from this kind of literature, even though there be a manifestation of fine ability both in the design and in the execution of the work. Give us Tyrtæan, not Lazaretto-Poetry.

17. *Lazaretto-Poetry and Tyrtæan-Poetry.*—To Man is given a tremendous commission under the Sun—namely, to contend with Evil in every conceivable form, from the Cradle to the Grave. To do this intelligently and successfully, he needs

[1] 'Poems,' 1898.

every kind of encouragement and assistance. Lazaretto-Poetry can only distress, weaken, and perhaps paralyse him in the great warfare; but inspire him with Tyrtæan Poetry, and you may help to carry him through to glorious victory :—

> " Wha will be a traitor knave ?
> Wha will fill a coward's grave ?
> Wha sae base as be a slave ?
> Let him turn and flee !
> Wha for Scotland's king and law,
> Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
> Freeman stand, or Freeman fa' ?
> Let him follow me ! "

This is the spirit to inculcate and cherish against all the powers of Death and Hell.

18. *Madness is not a profitable subject.*—Again, the depicting and representing of Bedlam madness should, on the whole, be excluded from the drama and from imaginative literature in general. In any case, the representation of all kinds of delirium should be kept at a minimum. In relation to this question I hope, by-and-by, to discuss King Lear. All representations, too, of the imbecile should be resolutely excluded from the fair Palace of Art, likewise all senile maundering and debility. The more true to nature the impersonations of such characters may be, the more painful it will probably be to witness them. Shun the unprofitable. Nor is the frequent presence of very eccentric persons at all desirable. In no case, probably, should an eccentric person occupy a central, or even a very prominent, position in a work of imagination. For instance, I fancy we have too much of the good-hearted, aphoristic, and crazy baronet, Sir Austin Feveral, in Mr Meredith's novel of the name. His aphorisms, indeed, are intended for intellectual needles, but I am afraid that they are, for the most part, needles

with no point—a remark which would probably apply to a great many of Mr Meredith's needles.

19. *Nor the Corinthian and Carnal: Mother Grundy is better than the lady or the gentleman of Sodom or Gomorrah.*—Similarly, the Corinthian and Carnal should be largely tabooed in literature and art. But go into our theatres and you will find playwrights and managers all too frequently addressing themselves to the representation of the Corinthian and Carnal—that is, to the simian and porcine elements in Human Nature; and scarcely, in many cases, to the pure and noble at all. Their exhibitions of morals and manners would sometimes tend to blast the ideals of a Tartar, unless he was a superior Tartar. The satire of Martinus Scriblerus would apply to them: "The physician, by the study and inspection of ordure, approves himself in the science; and in like sort should an author accustom and exercise his imagination upon the dregs of nature."[1] Such is the true Art of Sinking in Poetry. One is sometimes constrained to suppose, on hearing what they are about, that Sodom and Gomorrah must be their ideal communities. Like certain vile law cases, many of their plays are only fit to be seen or heard *in camera*. They strive to make it appear, some of them, that the institution of marriage, for instance, is only a kind of puritanical tyranny and hypocrisy—an institution to be scoffed at, and that bestiality is the right and praiseworthy arrangement. To oppose and condemn such views is sometimes stigmatised as cant, Mother-Grundyism, and so forth. It is a great pity. Mother Grundy undoubtedly makes mistakes—great mistakes, but I think that she is, after all, a greatly superior person to the lady

[1] 'The Art of Sinking in Poetry,' chap. vii. Swift, 'Works,' Vol. iv. p. 150.

or gentleman of Sodom or Gomorrah. Many of our versifiers, too, are severely suffering from common Corinthianism. It would be cheering to see them undergoing a general recovery from their disease.

20. *The Corinthian author is a social pest.*—There is probably no more corruptive influence at work in Nature than the vile author, or the author of the vile. If the dunghill revellers of literature and the drama could get banished to Juan Fernandez and cut off from communication with other people, it would be a happy consummation. The vile tongue is set on fire of Hell, and so is the vile pen; whilst the latter may be far more sweeping in its range of operations. It is certainly to be wished that all who handle it would betake themselves to healthier pursuits, ever remembering the Apostolic precept—"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Moral fibre is one of the tests of good work. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest a great book or a great play, and it will be good for your health. In the other class there may be something worse than no pabulum. One might be excused for wishing that such authors were like that old gentleman who was "only articulate when he swore."

21. *Infectious or loathsome diseases, either of body or mind, should not be chosen as the subjects of literary or artistic presentment.*—Realism, indeed, is the right thing, but shun squalid realities and squalid imaginations. Let your Realism have quality and proportion. As to certain Realists it is almost a shame to speak of some of the things which are done of them in print. For instance, Zola writes to a friend: "I have received your book on small-pox. . . . I will invent the death-

mask by a comparison of the various documents. I am very much tempted to make it black small-pox, which, in point of horror, is the most original. Only I will confess that if you could manage to see a corpse of a person who died of the disease . . . you would oblige me greatly. In that way I should not have to invent anything—I should have a real death-mask. Be sure to dwell at length on the state of the eyes, of the nose, and of the mouth, to give me a precise and geographical chart," and so on.[1] We can scarcely suppose that such an inquiry was inspired by Apollo! Then we read that he describes "the various odours arising on a hot summer's day from a cheesemonger's shop, as musical sounds"; that he "has always considered *Le Ventre de Paris* as a symphony in the musical sense of the word—a symphony of eating, of the stomach,—the triumphal song of a town's digestion."[2] How would the Pierian Dames, I wonder, like to be invoked on this theme! An invocation to the Goddess of the Sewers might fit the occasion. With Zola's "triumphal song of a town's digestion," contrast a Miltonic symphony:—

> "About him all the Sanctities of Heaven
> Stood thick as stars, and from His sight received
> Beatitude past utterance."[3]

22. *It is a vile thing to dwell upon Evil beyond the remedial necessities of the case.*—Touching the question under discussion, I agree with Ruskin that "all human misery, slaughter, famine, plague, peril, and crime are better in the main avoided, as of unprofitable and hardening influence, unless so far as out of the suffering, hinted rather than expressed, we may raise into nobler relief the

[1] Sherrard, 'Emile Zola,' p. 169. [2] Ib., p. 107.
[3] 'Paradise Lost,' Bk. iii.

eternal enduring of fortitude and affection, of mercy and self-devotion." [1] In a word, it appears that the representation of great eccentricity, loathsome disease, sordid and hopeless criminality, and the whole element of sheer unmitigated horror should, so far as possible, be excluded from all literary and artistic presentment. The utterly painful, the purely criminal, the diseased, the foul, the disgustful in general, are essentially matter for philanthropy, for the medical profession, the legislature, the criminal courts, the sanitary authorities; for the policeman and for the scavenger, with his salubrious shovel and wheel-barrow—not for the poet or the artist. It is a vile thing to dwell upon Evil beyond the remedial necessities of the case, or for any mercenary motive. According to Rénan, it has always been held by the Academy that if letters are "a money-getting concern, they are of all professions the lowest and the last" [2]: wherein the Academy is right.

23. *The truth of Prose and the truth of Poetry.*—There is truth of Prose and there is truth of Poetry; there is bald thinking and there is esthetic thinking. The former is that of the prose man; the latter, that of the genius who puts his whole heart into the business, and thinks affectionately, poetically, spiritually; as, for instance, when Burns, speaking of the services rendered to us by our forefathers, says of them—

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. ii. pp. 139-40. See him also on the treatment of animals in Art.—Ib., Vol. v. p. 283. For further admirable passages on the diseased and depraved in Art see his 'Stones of Venice,' Vol. ii. pp. 192-3 (1867). Elsewhere he speaks of "infidel imagination, amusing itself with the destruction of the body, and busying itself with aberration of the mind. Aberration, palsy or plague, observe, as distinguished from normal evil just as the venom of rabies or cholera differs from that of a wasp or a viper."—'Fiction, Fair and Foul: On the Old Road,' Vol. ii. p. 23. Read also pp. 7, 19, 134-6 (1885).

[2] Sherrard, 'Emile Zola,' p. 276.

"They shook hands with Ruin for what they esteemed the cause of their king and country."[1] The great and the noble will be continually aspiring to reach and set forth poetical truth, and to inspire brave action.

24. *Our hope is in noble thought.*—Great is our hope (though often cast down) in the virtue and power of noble thought. It is ever to be kept in mind, as noted by Carlyle, that "not by material but by moral power are men and their actions governed. How noiseless is thought! No rolling of drums, no tramp of squadrons, or immeasurable tumult of baggage-waggons attend its movements: in what obscure and sequestered places may the head be meditating which is one day to be crowned with more than imperial authority; for kings and emperors will be among the ministering servants; it will rule not over, but in, all heads, and with these its solitary combinations of ideas, as with magic formulas, bend the world to its will."[2] "Late in man's history, yet clearly at length, it becomes manifest to the dullest that mind is stronger than matter; that mind is the creator and shaper of matter; that not brute force, but only persuasion and faith is the king of this world."[3] A man may sit in his study warring against the Powers of Darkness, accomplishing, or at least helping to inspire and achieve, conquests unthought of by Cæsars or Napoleons. "The intellectual man," writes Emerson, "lives

[1] To Lady W. M. Constable, 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 243. What, I wonder, would be the Utilitarian view of such a proceeding!

[2] 'Crit. and Misc. Essays,' Vol. i. p. 400.

[3] Ib., Vol. ii. p. 369. But we need to be patient! "Is it much for me," said Kepler in his isolation and extreme need, "that men should accept my discovery? If the Almighty waited Six Thousand Years for me to see what He had made, I may surely wait two hundred for one to understand what I have seen."—Ib., Vol. i. p. 417.

in perpetual victory. As certainly as water falls in rain on the tops of mountains and runs down into valleys, plains, and pits, so does thought fall first on the best minds, and runs down from class to class until it reaches the masses and works revolutions." [1] Touching this speculation even Buckle is among the prophets: "It is always the case that practical statesmen only apply and work out ideas which have long before been suggested by more advanced thinkers." [2] Yes, if the disorders of the world are ever to be rectified, it must be through the operations of Mind—by the power and influence of brave and noble thinking. "Let us proclaim," says Whitman, "that the slightest song-tune, the countless ephemera of passion aroused by orators and tale-tellers, are more dense, more weighty, than the engines there in the great factories, or the granite blocks in their foundations." [3] But the process is a very slow one. Moses and the Prophets, one is sometimes disposed to think, are little more regarded by the masses (either the well-dressed or the ill-dressed) than if they were a company of bill-posters. Yet the Human Race can have no rational and abiding hope but in Moses and the Prophets—modern, of course, as

[1] 'The Man of Letters,' Vol. x. p. 239.

[2] 'History of Civilisation,' Vol. ii. p. 349. Which admission, by the way, greatly modifies his theory of the insignificance of the Individual in History, and goes far to render any attempted anticipation or surmise of historic movements little more than a sport of the fancy. *Should a man of first-rate ability and character appear amongst our leaders even at the present time* (1908, Campbell-Bannerman Administration), *he might do great things not only for Great Britain, but for the British Empire and for the World at large. Having no such leader, our Country has neither an objective nor a rational policy concerning anything, and staggers along whithersoever Time and want of rational purpose may carry it.* (We now (1924) know that this diagnosis was all too correct.)

[3] 'Democratic Vistas,' p. 54.

well as ancient. The Pen, badly used, may be deadlier than the Sword; but well used, it may become a kind of Fountain of Life. A low author may be a minister of the Bottomless Pit; a high author may be as an Angel of Light bringing blessings to Mankind.

CHAPTER X.

NECESSITY OF LUCIDITY IN LITERATURE.

1. *All writers should energise for the Salvation and Delectation of Smith and Brown.*—It stands to reason that a story or theme of any kind should be of high interest and importance in order to warrant the labour and expense of setting it forth in hundreds or thousands of printed pages; and it stands no less to reason that it should possess those virtues in order to warrant the laying of any claim for it to the attention of the world. Together with high quality of thought, every piece of Literature should be characterised by perspicuity of arrangement and by pure lucidity of expression.

2. *The Virtue of Lucidity.*—This doctrine has been widely recognised. Thus Aristotle: "The virtue of diction consists in being perspicuous." [1] Quintilian: "We should study not only to be understood in what we write and speak, *but to make it impossible for the attentive to misunderstand us.*" [2] Let all the occultists and obscurantists consider it. Cervantes: "Study to express your thoughts and to set them in the truest light, labouring as much as possible not to leave them dark or intricate, but clear and intelligible." [3]

[1] 'Poetics,' chap. xxii.
[2] Quoted by Beattie, 'Elements of Moral Science,' Vol. ii. p. 283.
[3] 'Don Quixote,' Preface.

Locke: "Propriety of speech is that which gives our thoughts entrance into other men's minds with the greatest ease and advantage." [1] Johnson: "Truth, indeed, is always truth, and reason is always reason . . . but good may be so concealed in baser matter that only a chymist can recover it: sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words that none but philosophers can distinguish it: and both may be so buried in impurities as not to pay the cost of their extraction. The diction being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye: and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. *Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing must please at once.* The pleasures of the mind imply something sudden and unexpected: that which elevates must always surprise. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with the consciousness of improvement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure." [2] Lord Kames: "Perspicuity ought not to be sacrificed to any other beauty whatever: if it should be doubted whether perspicuity be a positive beauty, it cannot be doubted that the want of it is the greatest defect." [3] Campbell: "The least obscurity, ambiguity, or confusion in the style instantly removes the attention from the sentiment to the expression, and the hearer endeavours by the aid of reflection to correct the imperfections of the speaker's language." [4] Carlyle: "Clearness of sight we have called the foundation of all talent; for, in fact, unless we see our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it in our understanding, our imagination,

[1] 'Essay,' Bk. iii., ii. 11.
[2] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 193.
[3] 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. p. 19.
[4] 'The Philosophy of Rhetoric,' p. 303; also pp. 311 *et seq.*

our affections?"[1] Newman: "The primary duty of a literary man is to have clear conceptions, and to be exact and intelligible in expressing them."[2] (I wish he had been as sensible touching Theology!) Poe rightly reminds his readers that it is the many who stand in need of Salvation.[3] All writers should tenaciously remember this truth, and resolutely energise for the Salvation and for the delectation of Smith and Brown. Also, we shall especially take the liberty of valuing a philosopher or a theologian in proportion to the worth of his pronouncements to Smith and Brown—who should be the desired nurslings and pupils of all philosophers and theologians. Smith and Brown have the first claim upon all wise men's attention. All wise men (in so far as they are wise) endeavour to shape their discourse for the easy apprehension of wayfaring persons. "He who hath ears to hear, let him hear," is the keynote of their discourse. Under this reasonable requisition of lucidity we immediately get rid of a great many books.

3. *The speech of intelligent purpose and clear thought is alone worthy of utterance.*—No speech but that which proceeds from intelligent purpose and clear thought can possibly be worth the utterance. If you find yourself without intelligent purpose and without clear thought concerning any subject whatever, it is most indubitably your plain duty not to speak about it beyond asking for information. The universal acceptance even of this one precept would have saved us from distracting myriads of books of philosophy, theology, pseudo-science, poetry, history, and general literature, with which the world has been en-

[1] 'Crit. and Misc. Essays,' Vol. i. p. 276.
[2] 'Grammar of Assent,' pp. 18-19.
[3] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 314.

cumbered these thousands of years past. For the love of God and regard for travellers, let authors cease to add to the bewildering immensity of them. Even if the subject of your lucubration be the Fogs of London, we require that, if at all, you shall discourse *clearly* about them.

4. *Yet there are some critics with whom obscurity almost passes as a merit.*—One might have been excused for supposing that a precept so reasonable would immediately be accepted by everybody, and stand in no need of being enforced, but unfortunately this is not the case. In some quarters it does actually appear that obscurity passes for a merit. In our own day, have we not seen critics fitted by nebulous poets with very long ear-caps ? Upon this question some of them have so sophisticated and obfuscated their intelligence that they openly profess to see high merit in deep obscurity ! They exhibit a determination to find in their nebulous favourites suggestions which their writings do not contain, and to draw emotions from them which they would seem to be incapable of yielding. One of them has the boldness to say of certain of the works of a poet belonging to this nebulous school that, whilst they are well-nigh if not wholly unintelligible, their unintelligibility arises from the vast knowledge and understanding of that poet ! In short, it would appear that the knowledge and understanding of the said poet were so great that on stirring occasions ordinary human language was practically of no use to him ! There is a grim comicality about such critics ; but they are worse than comical. We must regard them in the main not as aids to comprehension and understanding at all (which, clearly, should be the heart purpose of the critic), but as actual contributions to the sum-total of human distraction. They must be regarded by

all sensible men in rather a hostile manner—as obstructive nuisances at least.

5. *Thou art but a barbarian unto me unless thou speakest intelligibly and lucidly.*—It might have been hoped that the Apostle would have kept all the critics right on this subject. "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak unto the air. . . . Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian; and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. . . . I had rather speak five words with my understanding that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue." How perfectly clear and convincing it should be to the sane mind! All the muddy writers and all the admirers of the muddy should commit the passage to memory. In Apostolic phrase, "Thou art but a barbarian unto me," unless thou canst speak lucidly—or preserve silence suitable to the occasion.

6. *The obscure as exemplified by Rossetti.*—The Poet's Mind I take to be one profoundly impressed by Life and Nature, and articulately, lucidly, and melodiously responsive to the impression; and I fancy that sensible people will agree with me in this assumption. Assuming this assumption to be sound, what are we to make, for instance, of the following Rossetti sonnet? It runs thus:—

> "By what word's power, the key of paths untrod,
> Shall I the difficult deeps of Love explore,
> Till parted waves of song yield up the shore,
> Even as that sea which Israel crossed dryshod?"

Frankly, I am bound to say that I can discover no glimmer of sense in the question. One cannot

even discover *what*, in Life or Nature, has impressed the poet and given rise to his question. He continues :—

> " For lo ! in some poor rhythmic period,
> Lady I fain would tell how evermore
> Thy soul I know not from the body, nor
> Thee from myself, neither our love from God."

Is it an involuntary expression of muddled intoxication, or is he seriously trying to make out that himself and the lady and God are one and indistinguishable ! He proceeds :—

> " Yea, in God's name, and Love's, and thine, would I
> Draw from one loving heart such evidence
> As to all hearts, all things shall signify ;
> Tender as dawn's first hill-fire, and intense
> As instantaneous penetrating sense
> In Spring's birth-hour, of other Springs gone by." [1]

In the name of daylight, what is the good man driving at ? An author's first duty is to speak intelligibly. A writer in one of the literary papers properly says : " Fine work is *immediately* convincing : the mere turn of a phrase is enough." [2] But how can this sonnet convince us of anything ? —when we cannot even squeeze a meaning out of it. It appears to be but a tissue of gaudy words expressive of nothing real, nothing sane. Like the spiritualistic medium, the poet must have been in " a kind of trance or ecstatick fit " when he composed his sonnet. I do not admire gentlemen in " ecstatick fits," and have no pleasure in their ecstatic visions in so far as they are merely suggestive of a " fit." But there is no objection to sane hyperbole. Take, for instance, Shake-

[1] ' The House of Life,' sonnet v.
[2] ' Athenæum,' 1898, Vol. i. p. 144.

speare's gallant lines — his fine hyperbole on Silvia :—

> " Except I be by Silvia in the night,
> There is no music in the nightingale ;
> Unless I look on Silvia in the day,
> There is no day for me to look upon." [1]

We quite understand the poet's exaggeration ; it is entirely satisfactory and pleasant to sane critics.

Or take a rapture from Burns :—

> " O, Mary, at thy window be !
> It is the wished, the trysted hour.
> Those smiles and glances let me see
> That make the miser's treasure poor.
> How blythely wad I bide the stoure,
> A weary slave frae sun to sun,
> Could I the rich reward secure—
> The lovely Mary Morison !
>
> " Yestreen when to the stented string
> The dance gaed through the lichted ha',
> To thee my fancy took its wing,
> I sat but neither heard nor saw ;
> Though this was fair and that was braw,
> And yon the toast of a' the toon,
> I sighed and said, amang them a',
> Ye are na Mary Morison."

Or take one from Tennyson :—

> " Once
> She leaned on me descending ; once she lent her hand,
> And blissful palpitations of the blood,
> Raising a sudden transport, rose and fell."

Also take one from Longfellow :—

> " Homeward serenely she walked with God's benediction upon her;
> When she had passed, it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music."

No dubiety, I hope, as to the meaning of such passages, or as to whether they are poetry or not.

[1] 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' iii. 1.

7. *The remote in meaning is morally and esthetically lost.*—Glance now at Rossetti's sonnet entitled "Known in Vain," said to be one of the poet's favourites :—

> "As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope,
> Knows suddenly to music high and soft,
> The Holy of Holies ; who because they scoffed
> Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to cope
> With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven should ope ;
> Yet at their meetings laughed not as they laughed
> In speech ; nor speak at length ; but sitting oft
> Together, within hopeless sight of hope
> For hours are silent ; so it happeneth
> When work and will awake too late, to gaze
> After their life sailed by, and hold their breath.
> Ah ! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
> Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
> Follow the desultory feet of Death ?"[1]

If there be any meaning in such writings at all (frankly, I am unable to discern any meaning in them), it is far too remote to be either morally or esthetically effective. *The remote in meaning is morally and esthetically lost.* The amazing thing is that any one who is supposed to be sane and sober should write such gibberish as this sonnet exhibits. It reminds us of the story of Fabricio in 'Gil Blas.' "As a relish to our fruit and cheese," says Gil, "I begged to be favoured with the sight of something, the offspring of his inspired moments." He immediately rummaged among his papers, and read me a sonnet with much energy of tone. Yet, with all the advantage of action and expression, there was something so uncouth in the arrangement as to baffle all conjecture about the meaning. He saw how it puzzled me. "This sonnet, then," said he, "is not quite level to your comprehension. Is not that the fact ?" I owned that I should have preferred a construction somewhat less forced. He began

[1] 'The House of Life,' sonnet lxv.

laughing at my rusticity. "Well, then," replied he, "we will say that this sonnet would confuse clearer heads than thine; it is all the better for that. Sonnets, odes—in short, all compositions which partake of the sublime—are, of course, the reverse of the simple and natural: they are enveloped in clouds, and their darkness constitutes their grandeur. Let the poet only fancy that he understands himself, no matter whether his readers understand him or not." No, says Gil; that will not do at all. "Let Poetry be of what species it may, good sense and intelligible diction are essential to its powers of pleasing." [1] Indeed to speak with perfect candour, I can discover no excuse for the existence of such a volume as the Series of Sonnets entitled 'The House of Life.' It seems to me to be a compilation of vague extravagances, maudlin incoherencies, and suggests that they might have been written under the influence of a bad opiate. It would be as profitable to read them backward as forward. How such compositions come to be printed and published is a curious question to consider. Do not Moses and all the Prophets address themselves to the wayfaring man? If they don't, I beg to say that they should do so—the whole two hundred and twenty-four thousand of them. We even say, with conviction, *Maxima debitur pueris reverentia.* To whom was Rossetti addressing himself? No wayfaring man certainly; and no youth, however intelligent, I fancy, will be able to extract a meaning out of many of those sonnets. For one, I would fain "lose no time in reading them." It is clear and noble meaning we want. Yet the work has earned a laborious panegyric in one of

[1] 'Gil Blas,' Vol. iii. pp. 180-1. So Byron, "A man may praise and praise, but no one recollects but that which pleases—at least in composition."—Moore's 'Byron,' Vol. ii. p. 250.

our leading reviews![1] The critic has noble functions to fulfil. It is sad when he forgets his duty, and accepts the vogue or the popularity or the notoriety of an author as the leading index of merit, or degrades his pen in the service of puffery. Introduce such a critic to some new but unrenowned great work, and it would probably be as if you introduced an owl to a magnificent sunrise.

7*a*. *Lucidity is necessary in plot and narrative.*—And whilst we should have lucidity and terseness of thought and expression in all kinds of composition, it is no less necessary that we should have perspicuity in the construction of plot and narrative. Obscurity or confusion anywhere points to weakness—is weakness, indeed,—and therefore to be remedied if possible. All the best plots and narratives, I think, will be found to be easily followable, going forward simply and clearly: not so simply as to show the end in the beginning, but conducting, perhaps, from more or less darkness into daylight—from perplexity to understanding, from complexity to disentanglement. Or to express it in another way, the plot should grow as from the seed to the stalk, from the stalk to the ear, and to the full corn in the ear, in what we might call an inevitable sequence. Thus interest is likely to be created and preserved to a profitable end. Also, there should be as few subsidiary interests or entanglements as possible; and such of these as may be necessary should be organically connected with the main plot as the branches with the trunk, or as the tributaries with the main stream. Many books so offend in these particulars: they are so complex, so tortuous, so obscure, that

[1] 'Athenæum,' 1885, Vol. i. pp. 82-3. See also a review of Browning's 'Parleyings,' Ib., Vol. i. p. 248, and a recent critic's ecstasies over 'The House of Life,' Appendix, Note D.

to read one of them is no more delectable than the reading of a Chancery Brief. Needless to say, anything like the Chancery Brief is wholly inadmissible in Literature. In a word, the measure of an author's tortuosity and obscurity must be accepted as a measure of his worthlessness; whilst the measure of his simplicity and lucidity must no less be accepted as a measure of his worth.

8. *Obscurity is an injustice and insolence to readers.*—The writings of Browning, of course, furnish notorious and flagrant instances of the obscure. He not only speaks thick, but thinks thick. With much excellent matter in his works, he goes on venting "windy suspirations of forced breath"—stuttering trivialities and obscurities through heavy and painful volumes, obfuscating both his readers and himself in mere clouds of words. Many of his crooked and crabbed ratiocinations in wooden verse I am bound to confess that I cannot follow at all. They *may* be sensible if the meaning of them could be unravelled, but frequently they sound remarkably like sheer nonsense. Even in the narrative parts of his writings one frequently finds the greatest difficulty in making out what he wishes to tell. In 'Sordello,' for instance, he writes :—

> "Be it understood,
> Envoys apprised Verona that her Prince,
> Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since
> A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust
> Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
> With Eccelin Romano, from his seat
> Ferrara,—over-zealous in the feat
> And stumbling on a peril unaware,
> Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,
> They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue."

Obviously it is merely a bit of tangled and congested historic narrative, and by dint of careful reading we may extricate the sense of the prosy story so far; but he continues :—

"Immediate succour from the Lombard League
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast!
Men's faces late agape, are now aghast.
Prone is the purple pavis; Este makes
Mirth for the Devil when he undertakes
To play the Eccelin; as if it cost
Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,
There be sound reasons that preferment fall
On our beloved . . ." [The dots are the poet's.]
"'Duke o' the Rood, why not?'
Shouted an Estian, 'grudge ye such a lot?'"

And so on[1] he goes—

"Stumbling and halting through a chaos drear
Of cumbrous words that load the weary ear?"—

from which I am bound to say that I cannot make out an intelligible narrative. Even as a chronicle it would be quite intolerable. Better to labour as a water-carrier than be compelled to graduate in such works. Browning may have known what he was writing about; but if so, he has completely succeeded in keeping his knowledge to himself. From beginning to end it seems to be but a tissue of soulless stupidities. It is incredible almost that the bard himself had any lucent purpose in this lucubration. Compositions of such a kind we must not credit to a man's "idiosyncracies," as some of the poet's awe-stricken admirers seem to do. Rather do they seem to have proceeded from a kind of craziness of perverse egotism. It is also supposed by some to criticise life with "unsurpassed subtlety"; but we do not particularly wish to have life criticised with unsurpassed subtlety. We want to have it criticised with simple sound sense and clarity, so

[1] 'Works,' Vol. i. pp. 116-7. "Your sonnet," said Gil Blas to his friend Fabricio, "is a roaring deluge of emptiness."—Vol. iii. p. 182. I wish we could have his opinion of 'Sordello'!

as to deepen and widen our knowledge of History and Humanity. A book should be a great-hearted, clear-headed commentary on men and things. It should be written either for profit or joy; or, better still, for both. If it fail in these demands, it has no right to exist. Surpassing subtlety is all too frequently nothing better than surpassing muddlement of thought and imbecility of purpose. The moment I hear a critic pretending to find great and glorious "subtleties" in an author, and pretending to rejoice in such subtleties and to enter into sublime esoteric relationships with him, I begin to suspect that there is something not quite genuine about that critic—that he is energising in the interests of egotism and pedantry, and not of truth. Briefly, I think we may say that obscurity is one of the worst of all literary crimes—disturbing, perplexing, or tormenting the reader in proportion to its intensity, and quite destructive of any possibility of literary effect; whilst on the moral side it seems to involve insolence and injustice to all intelligent listeners. The writer of subtleties should remember that there are only four-and-twenty hours in anybody's day. Nothing very important is very subtle. The minimum demand that I make upon any person who proposes to write or speak, is that he shall be lucid and sensible—even if he claim to be prophetic or apostolic.

9. *Vagueness and Verbosity would mar an Angel's speech.*—Turning to another of Browning's poems—his "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,"—what is really the bone of the Soliloquist's contention with brother Lawrence? Why such hatred of him? What are all his curses about? Curse, if you like, with all the vigour and circumstantial detail of David of Israel; but if that be your game, do really let us know beyond doubt what is the matter. Or glance at "The Return of the

Druses." The plot is obscure; the motive, nebulous; the situations forced; the language, stilted. In this "drama" the author scarcely manifests an inkling of the requirements of dramatic art, which cannot be said to exist unless a clear story emerge from it. One Melanthius, being asked what he thought of the tragedy of Dionysius, said: "I have not seen it, it is so obfuscated with language." Like this tragedy, "The Return of the Druses" may be said to be obfuscated with language. Browning should have saved himself from the trouble of writing it, and us from the trouble of reading it. Than such a "drama" I would rather read Byles 'On Bills.' It is the more vexing to think that he should have achieved so bad a pre-eminence in the obscure and muddled, for, as anybody would allow, his matter is frequently sound and good; but even in this case he has an evil habit of musing and meditating and ratiocinating and monologising upon it until he sometimes loses both himself and his readers in pithless vagueness and verbosity. I think we may safely take it that vagueness and verbosity would mar an Angel's speech.

10. *Lucidity in Art.*—The same doctrine applies to Art. In general, says Ruskin, "all great drawing is distinct drawing; for truths which are rendered indistinctly might, for the most part, not be rendered at all. Good and noble knowledge is distinguished from vain and useless knowledge chiefly by its clearness and distinctness, and by the vigorous consciousness of what is known and what is not.[1] The best drawing

[1] According to Cervantes, Orbeneja, the painter of Ubeda, on being asked what he painted, answered, "As it may hit"; and when he had sprawled out a misshapen cock, was forced to write underneath in Gothic letters, "This is a cock." We have a great many Orbenejas both in Literature and Art, but, I am afraid, without his candour.

involves a wonderful perception and expression of indistinctness; and yet all noble drawing is separated from the ignoble, by its distinctness, by its fine expression, and firm assertion of something" (note well!), "whereas the bad drawing, without either firmness or fineness, expresses and asserts nothing. The first thing, therefore, to be looked for as a sign of noble art is a clear consciousness of what is drawn and what is not; the bold statement and frank confession, 'This I know' and 'This I know not'; and, generally speaking, all haste, slurring, obscurity, and indecision are signs of low art; and all calmness, distinctness, luminousness, and positiveness of high art,"[1] which doctrine, it seems to me, ought to be regarded as beyond dispute.

11. *Exemplifications.*—Take, for instance, some of the pictures of G. F. Watts. With all respect to a great painter, his picture of "Faith," as far as I can see, fails to express any particular mental state. In "Time, Death, and Judgment," I am bound to confess that I can discern no meaning, no assertion of anything. "Chaos" seems to me to be quite a banal composition. "Love Triumphant," "Love and Life," "The All-pervading," "The Dweller in the Innermost"—I confess that, to me, these pictures are dumb.[2]

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. p. 40. In the same place, and elsewhere, he speaks of the province of the indistinct: "In the works of all the great masters there are portions which are explanatory rather than representative, and typical rather than imitative."—Ib., Vol. i. p. 227, note. "There is the assuredly intended and resolute abstraction of the Ninevite and Egyptian sculptors. The man who cut those granite lions in the Egyptian room of the British Museum, and who carved the calm faces of those Ninevite Kings, knew much more, both of lions and kings, than they chose to express."—'Stones of Venice,' Vol. i. p. 233. Such characteristics mark Reserve in Realisation.

[2] In his "Jonah" there is vitality and power, but surely the figure is more suggestive of the Devil in a great rage than of a Prophet delivering a Divine warning.

The mountain heaves, but nothing emerges—not even the little quadruped. Very different with "Love and Death"; so with "Sic Transit." This is a powerful picture, full of meaning. By the simplest and most legitimate means, it produces a deep impression of the silence and sadness of Death. Vital and powerful also is the picture "For he had great possessions." You have only to look at it to understand and to be impressed. It is to the eye what lucid language is to the ear.

11*a*. *Music also should be lucid.*—A similar law, I believe, is applicable to musical compositions. "There are no great artists who are great artists simply for a mind or two here and there," says Mr Ernest Newman. "The greatest artists are always the most universally comprehensible." [1]

12. *Great Work almost immediately evokes appropriate feeling in the intelligent reader or hearer.*—Lucidity, then, we must hold to be an essential quality of all Literature worthy of the name. If a poem or a part of a poem, a story or part of a story, possesses first-rate value—if, indeed, a literary composition of any kind is to be held in high account,—it will be found, on the intelligent reading or hearing, to touch the chords of feeling almost immediately; it will be found to evoke almost immediately the appropriate emotion of the reader or hearer of ordinary intelligence and endowment. If it does not almost immediately produce such results, or, still worse, if the readers or hearers have to read the story or the poem over and over again to arrive at its meaning; if they have to sweat their brains over it and make ingenious constructions in order to squeeze a meaning out of it (as we have to do with the gnarled and noduled utterance which Browning

[1] 'The Sunday Times,' 22nd August 1920.

inflicts upon us in his evil days), we may safely come to the conclusion that such story or poem has failed in rational purpose, and that as a contribution to Literature it must be held to be worthless, if not a positive nuisance, to real students. The object of the lamplighter is to illuminate the wayfarer's feet; the steady purpose of the writer should be to illuminate his Head.

13. *Nature herself evokes the right feeling in the beholder at once, or probably never.*—Test the principle in the presence of Nature herself. Ocean, air, landscape, forest, flower, song of bird, sighing of the breeze, rippling of the brook—all these practically produce their appropriate esthetic effect upon the observant and well-endowed mind at once, or probably never. Of course we throw out of account the careless and unendowed person. If, for instance, there be one who cannot immediately see and feel the glory of the setting sun, he is not esthetically endowed, and there's an end of the matter; if he cannot at once perceive and feel the grandeur and sublimity of "the World of Waters," he may as well cultivate his artistic instincts on a canal-bank; if he feel no emotion of awe in the cataclysmic roll and crash of the thunderstorm, we must leave him to amuse himself with squibs and crackers; if he do not instantaneously hear music in the rippling of a brook or the whispering of a breeze, that soul will probably find its joy in Sambo and his bones. But, I repeat, Nature will always receive appropriate responses from the well-endowed and observant mind as soon as it is directed to her charms. Upon this point I apprehend that all will be agreed, unless it be the capricious and the crotchety, who, of course, must be left to their own resources.

14. *So, a joke, or a play of wit or humour.*—Or test the principle—necessity of lucidity by a joke

or play of wit or humour. The effect must, on the whole, be immediate to the ordinary apprehension, or the joke is most probably worthless; the wit, no wit; the humour, no humour. Undoubtedly there are some people who seem to have no sense of wit or humour at all, like the serious old gentleman mentioned in the 'Life of Swift.' One Rossengrave played a voluntary at St Patrick's Cathedral, where Dr Pratt heard him, and Swift was also present. Pratt dined at the Deanery the same day, and was so extravagant in his encomiums on Rossengrave's performance that several of the company said they wished they had heard it. "Do you," said Swift; "then you shall hear it," and immediately sung out so lively and yet so ridiculous an imitation of it, that all the company were drowned in laughter except one old gentleman, who sat still with great composure, and showed neither curiosity nor approbation. On being asked the reason of his indifference, he answered with great gravity "that he had heard Mr Rossendale himself play it before." [1] It would be useless, therefore, to address our present argument to anybody of such a temperament; but we shall suppose that our audience is not quite so phlegmatic as that old gentleman, and, in order to test the doctrine for which I contend (namely, that the effect of real wit, or humour, or drollery of any kind is instantaneous), I request their attention to a few more or less familiar cases.

[1] Hawkesworth, 'Life of Swift,' p. 63. There is also the classic story of the Scottish judge. During the trial of a case an advocate made a joke which excited all the Court except the judge into a high degree of hilarity. Exactly twenty-four hours later the same judge, on the same bench in the same Court, suddenly broke out into loud laughter (to the astonishment of everybody in the Court), and, clapping his hands with joy, exclaimed, "I see through it noo; I see through it noo!"

15. Take the minister's grace over his dinner of salt herrings: "We thank thee, O Lord, for these, the very least o' thy mercies." I hope it was not necessary to expound the joke to the party round the dinner-table!

16. An old Scottish lady being asked by a neighbour to explain "guid mainners," replied thus: "Aweel, ye see, Janet, it's just like this. If you were to tak' a daunder down the road and to meet wi' Saint Peter, it would never dae for you to begin speakin' to him about cocks"; whereupon I trust that Janet immediately understood that whether she held colloquy with the Prince of the Apostles or any other gentleman, "guid mainners" required that she was to pay the most delicate attention to his susceptibilities.

17. An old Scottish gardener had been bitten by an adder, and, as an antidote, his master promptly drenched him with whisky. His health being inquired after next morning, he replied with great enthusiasm: "I'm nane the waur o' the bite, and a' the better o' the whusky." The story should immediately operate to lighten even the constitutional gloom of a teetotaller.

18. Querist: "What makes you speak to yoursel' sae much, Marget?" Marget: "What for no? Whaur dae you think I could gang for better company?" The Querist, if intelligent, must have felt, on the instant, that Marget's arrow had gone home to the centre of the target. The story reminds us of Neil Ronaldson's compliment to Swertha in Scott: "I ken few of consequence hereaboot—excepting always mysel', and maybe you, Swertha, but what may, in some sense or ither, be called fules." [1]

19. Benevolent old lady to a Cockney rogue and vagabond: "I suppose you've had a good many

[1] 'The Pirate,' chap. xxiv.

trials in your time?" Cockney rogue and vagabond: "But only two convictions, lidy." If the benevolent old lady was "quick in the uptak'," the answer would immediately awaken her sense of humour and illuminate her vision of rascaldom.

20. Who can fail to feel an immediate joy in the wag who telegraphed home that "the report of his death had been greatly exaggerated"?

21. "An American, whose imagination had been fired by Southey's wonderful word-picture of the Falls of Lodore, voyaged across the Atlantic in order to see for himself the tumultuous course of the Waterfall. On arriving at Liverpool he at once started for Cumberland, and, armed with map and compass, set out, full of enthusiasm, on the search for the scene. It was a hot day at the end of a dry summer, and as hour succeeded hour and still no cataract rewarded his efforts, he flung himself down on the dry bed of a streamlet on the hillside, weary and despairing. Catching sight of a native of the country, he hailed him joyfully: 'Can you direct me to the Falls of Lodore?' he called. The man, looking at him, grinned graphically, and replied: 'You're sittin' on 'em.'" Anybody might see at a glance that this little history is better than most novels.

21*a*. Two Irishmen have escaped from a burning barn, and one of them, in the excitement of the moment, has pulled on his breeches front to rear. Says the other one: "I hope you're not kill't, Pat?" "I'm not kill't," replies Pat, surveying his nether extremities distractedly, "but, och shure, I've been most terribly twisted." It is to be hoped that even Swift's serious old gentleman would, without delay, have been tickled into a smile at least over this situation.

22. *A Carlylean error, touching the first impressions made upon us by great works.*—I venture to

say that in all these cases the effect upon folk of fair intelligence would be instantaneous. Once more, test the principle by the undoubtedly great work of any undoubtedly great author. The test, I surmise, will give results in full agreement with the principle: the perusal of such a work will almost immediately produce in us an impression of its greatness—not, perhaps, a finished impression (which, it may be, is only obtainable by careful study of the work), but a conviction that it is great. Carlyle, indeed, has stated (as if it were a law) that "the commonest quality in a true work of art, if its excellence have any depth and compass, is that, at first sight, it occasions a certain disappointment; perhaps even, mingled with its undeniable beauty, a certain feeling of aversion"[1]: in which doctrine we cannot possibly agree with him. Homer, Virgil, Dante, Chaucer, Dunbar, Shakespeare, Calderon, Molière, Burns, Scott—surely we have no preliminary feeling of aversion when we survey their *best* work! I venture to remark that there is no excuse for such a statement. You might as well say that we are affected with a preliminary feeling of aversion when we behold the Sun and the Moon and the Stars.

22*a*. *The poet must be able* (1) *to feel deeply, and* (2) *to communicate his emotions.*—It is implied in all that has been said that the poet must be able, firstly, to feel deeply, and secondly, to communicate his emotions. He must be able to make his convictions, our convictions; his emotions, our emotions; his delight, our delight.[2] This is the proper work of the poet. How is he to do it if

[1] 'Crit. and Misc. Essays,' Vol. ii. p. 1. In relation to musical compositions, Mr Ernest Newman discusses this subject excellently in a recent issue of 'The Sunday Times,' 12th April 1921.

[2] As Mr Clutton Brock very happily says—The artist imposes upon his work "the emphasis of his delight."

we can detect no meaning in his effusions! Or even if his meaning is only to be discovered by passing it through a critical strainer! If one man presumes to speak to another, he is clearly a bore and a nuisance if he does not, in the first place, strive to make himself intelligible. What would be the use of interviewing even an Archangel if he did not make himself intelligible! I have a positive grudge against ladies and gentlemen who rob me of my very limited time by nebulous discourse of any kind; and such persons should not feel offended when we consign their "works" to the rubbish-shoot. In these conclusions I feel sure that all sensible people will agree with me.

23. *We rejoice in the light of an Author, never in his darkness.*—But this is to be noted. Even the great writers, almost without exception I should say, produce more or less rubbish—some of them large quantities of rubbish. This is the confusing element in their writings; and when in perusing a great author you do really get perplexed and tormented by him, you may rest assured that your perplexities and torments are due not to his literary virtues but to his literary vices; not to his strength but to his weakness; not to any goodness in his work but to some badness. Then there is a further source of confusion to the public in the fact that there is a common tendency among feeble and prejudiced critics to find something esoteric and grand in the rubbish of writers of repute, and to set up a kind of heathen cult and worship of the obscure.[1] But

[1] It is not improbable, I fancy, that their admiration of the esoteric and obscure ceases when they have done praising them. Such is not our position with the great lucid writers. Their works are far other than pegs upon which to hang verbose or rhapsodic panegyrics. They permanently enrich the minds of those who study them, and get numbered among the fair treasures of memory and delight. Such works we keep by us for joy. If we keep an obscure book by us it is merely for reference, never for joy.

it will not pass with men of discernment. We rejoice in the light of an author, never in his darkness. All the great writers themselves are greatest when most lucid. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths," is the highest praise bestowed on what is deemed the Divine Word. Let this, then, be insisted on—that clear intelligibility is the first merit of speech, written or spoken; that obscurity of utterance is a literary crime of the most offensive kind. Even Prophets and Apostles degenerate into nuisances when they speak and write obscurely. All speakers and writers should vigorously drill themselves into obedience to this requisition—not only theologians and philosophers and professional writers and speakers, but poets and novelists as well. Notice that every deviation, even the slightest, from the intelligibility attainable, is, so far, a positive detraction from the merits of the speech or writing, and represents loss of power and time both to author and reader. Consider what a mighty advantage it would be to the world at large if the whole immense library of Slawkenbergius and Phutatorius could be destroyed! Literary aspirants who cannot make themselves clearly and easily intelligible to the ordinary auscultator, either in prose or poetry, ought religiously to keep their thoughts and visions to themselves, and refuse themselves the licence of verbal utterance. As already noted, this precept of perspicuity is nothing less than Apostolic: "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken?"[1] Rather let your wisdom boil in your

[1] Although, alas, the Prophets and Apostles themselves are frightful offenders against this Law of Lucidity, frequently the Apostolic and Prophetic knowledge is not equal to the Apostolic and Prophetic intentions. Think of the pathless wilderness and

own head, or wherever the intellectual furnace may burn, until you can pour it out in limpid transparent purity. Even the most froth-brained person of this somewhat frothy world should be able to appreciate the Apostolic counsel and to pay the most sacred regard to it. Besides, generally, words should not be multiplied, for, when they accumulate, they are like leaves, and—

> "When they most abound,
> Much fruit of sense beneath is scarcely found." [1]

This also should be religiously remembered—concentration with lucidity of expression is a great quality. In the ballad, for instance, of "Fair Ellen of Kirkconnell Lea" a vital tragedy is presented within the short compass of eight-and-twenty lines.

24. *And the injunction "Festina ad eventum" should not be neglected.*—Again, in every plot and narrative we wish to find quickness of movement —to be clearly conscious of progression, almost, in fact, as in the case of a railway journey. "A play analysed," as Lord Kames excellently said, "is a chain of connected facts of which each scene makes a link. Each scene accordingly ought to produce some incident relative to the catastrophe or ultimate event by advancing or retarding it. A scene that produces no incident, and for that reason may be termed barren, ought not to be indulged, because it breaks the unity of action. A barren scene can never be entitled to a place,

jungles of distraction that have grown out of their obscure visions and ratiocinations—wildernesses and jungles in which the Human Race have almost completely lost their spiritual reckoning!

[1] Hobbes has well remarked in relation to Law that all words are subject to ambiguity, and, therefore, that "multiplication of words in the body of the Law is multiplication of ambiguity."—'English Works,' Vol. iii. p. 336.

because the scene is complete without it." [1] All beating about the bush, all running round a ring, all dwelling upon trivialities is to be avoided. A good author, it has been written, "skims over a multitude of circumstances under which an occurrence has taken place, because he is aware that it is proper to reject what is only accessory to the object which he would present in prominence. A vulgar mind forgets and spares nothing." (Witness whole troops of novelists, living and dead: they won't leave a button unnoticed if they can help it.) "He is ignorant that conversation is always but a selection; that every story is subject to the law of dramatic poetry—*festina ad eventum;* and that what does not concur to the effect weakens it." [2] Thousands of books—even good ones—are twenty times too long. A wide observance of these cautions would effect an immense saving in the World's Bill for Paper and Ink. Whether your work be a novel or a drama or a poem, whether your poem be idyllic or epic, *festina ad eventum.* But whether in many or few words, give us lucidity. The task of the Poet is so to visualise and envisage a person or persons, or scenes and things, as to enable us to see and feel them as he himself saw and felt them. Herein I think we have the essence of his Poetry, which will be correspondent with the greatness and importance of the objects which he represents, and the clearness of the vision with which he saw.

[1] 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. pp. 408-9. "An Act is so much of the drama as passes without intervention of time or change of place. A pause makes a new Act."—Johnson, 'Works,' Vol. v. p. 139.

[2] Ancillon, quoted by Sir William Hamilton, 'Lectures on Metaphysics,' Vol. ii. p. 268. See also 'Ars Poetica,' 146-9.

CHAPTER XI.

SINCERITY IN LIFE AND LITERATURE.

1. *Sincerity in General.*—Am I in earnest? Am I sincere? This is one of the most important questions which a man can address to himself, and a question by which every worker should be continually testing himself. The insincere man is quite undeserving of light or any other benefit. It may be assumed, I apprehend, that all benefits are given to us by our Creator in absolute sincerity, and are intended to be used by us in absolute sincerity. It is criminal to be insincere—criminal against both the Highest and ourselves, in any department of life or labour. The liar is one of the worst enemies of Divinity, as might be inferred from his alleged paternity.

2. *This great virtue is sometimes credited to fanatics.*—And let there be no dubiety about the meaning of Sincerity. It simply means the honest determined use of all or any of our faculties either in doing or in refraining from doing anything. I think there can be no real doubt as to the substantial truth of this definition; yet so perversely ingenious are some unhappy persons that they like to cast doubt and confusion upon the meaning of some, even, of the plainest words, and plume themselves in so doing as if it were rather a clever trick. "Words are grown so false," says the clown in 'Twelfth Night,' "that I am

loath to prove reason with them." Thus the very word Sincerity is, in our day, beaten out so broad by some people as, with them, to cover all manner of sin and folly; and, indeed, with this breadth it sometimes becomes so shallow as to have almost no meaning left in it at all. For example, your most stupid ecclesiastical fanatics of any kind, your Lauds and Torquemadas, grinding their teeth in all hatred of manliness and common-sense, even such as they are credited by a fish-blooded school of Historians and Philosophers with this most precious virtue of Sincerity! This is a fashion with which I cannot profess to have much sympathy. If it were truly permissible to suppose that these Lauds and Torquemadas made the best use of their faculties of which they were capable, or even a fairly moderate use of them, when they tortured or murdered their fellow-creatures as heretics, then it would be permissible to think of them (though at the fearful expense of confounding the Moral Law) as sincere men, not otherwise. As I interpret the conduct of such men, they acted mainly as they did under the influence of evil passions. It will never do to gauge a man's sincerity by the turbulence of his passions. By such a mode of reckoning the vilest murderer may be reckoned a sincere character, even though he seems to have entered into a covenant with Hell!

3. *Sincerity must be rooted in the intellect, not in the passions.*—There is, of course, the possibility of truth and sound conduct being lost to view in the excitement, perhaps, of even a noble passion, as in the frightful case of ascetics and self-immolators: hence the rational necessity of being strictly rational on all occasions to the best of our ability. If the very prophets and apostles had all been strictly rational!—as they should have been. (By this

time they might have reformed the world.) The solution of the difficulty seems to be that *your sincerity must be rooted in the Intellect and not in the passions.* The erroneous head is a head dominated by passions, by evil passions for the most part. The Devil's, I take to be the most erroneous of all heads. Intellect has obviously been given to us to preside over our lives, and to keep our passions in due subordination. The first condition or warranty of sincerity in the individual is that he make the best use of the faculties he possesses. There is no getting over this position. That man who withdraws from the light of Common-sense on any question is, so far, insincere or crazy; just as he would be insincere or crazy who voluntarily withdrew from daylight into a dungeon to study painting. In accordance with this principle I cannot but hold him to be a scoundrel or else a madman of the most dangerous kind who, in pretended regard for the welfare of Humanity, tramples on the God-created feelings of Humanity, as, for instance, when he forces a tarry jacket on a fellow-creature whom he regards as a heretic and sets fire to him, either for love of that heretic's soul in particular, or for love of other people's souls in general. In such conduct, I maintain, there is no evidence of Sincerity at all, but, on the contrary, I should say, abundant evidence of damnable cruelty or of devilish madness; not light of Heaven in the souls of such wretches by any kind of interpretation, but vermilion glow of Hell in its most terrific hue.

4. *The great evil of conventionality in Theology: Originality and Vitality are only to be found in heart sincerity.*—Originality and vitality, in any subject whatever, are only to be found in heart sincerity, in personal convictions. "The tendency

of all human invention," writes Mr Mahaffy, "is to become conventional, then cramped, then effete. It is to be revived only by breaking with venerable traditions and going back to nature, to natural man and natural things, for new inspiration." [1] Excellently observed. "The little mind who loves itself will write and think with the vulgar; but the great mind will be bravely eccentric, and scorn the beaten road from universal benevolence." [2] See how this frightful evil of conventionality, which is too often but another rendering of insincerity, has blighted religious teaching and cursed religious life. *To this day thousands of men are constantly engaged in teaching only what they themselves have been taught, not what they, in sincerity of soul, have found out to be true.* It might in truth be said that, in some of our theological schools, *the students are positively taught not to think beyond what they are taught, that their education is completed when they leave the school.* The result is that thousands of our Churchmen, of all denominations, are but another kind of organ-grinders. However good they may be in other respects (and let it be gladly granted that there are excellent fellows among them), we do but find them, for the most part, grinding, from week to week, the poor hurdy-gurdy of theological conventionality. Throughout Christendom there is a very large orchestra of them continually playing an appalling sequence of the most hopeless tunes. How can such performances do any good! How can they touch the souls of men! How, in such circumstances, can churches be anything but a failure?

5. *The dogma of human worthlessness and of hereditary damnation.*—Take, for instance, the one

[1] 'History of Greek Literature,' Vol. i. p. 7.
[2] Goldsmith, 'Works,' Vol. vi. p. 6.

dogma of human worthlessness—not sinfulness, be it observed, which is painfully apparent to us all, but absolute worthlessness and hereditary damnation—a dogma which, with some others, vitiates the whole body of Christian Theology. I take it to be one of the most disastrous and soul-blasting insincerities ever breathed by Satan and received by men, the deadly root of infinite jungles of error and pestilence. Just think of it. Here is a man writing in a book, or serenely declaring from a pulpit, that we are all God-condemned and incapable of any native worth from the moment of our birth! Reflecting upon his grim announcement, can we escape from the conclusion that he is merely retailing a stupid conventional falsehood which he himself has been taught, and in no wise a doctrine which he himself has manfully worked out from the evidence before him? Yet I suppose that it is one of the dogmas entertained and more or less cherished by all the orthodoxies, inclusive even of the Mahometan.[1] Now just try to believe it that we are all in a state of "original Sin," or hereditary damnation—that, in short, we are all hereditarily damned! I venture to say that we can no more accept this dogma of hereditary damnation than we could accept one of hereditary Salvation. Ethical Law and ethical computation necessarily require that the life and conversation of the individual be taken as the basis of his spiritual status, both present and future. The very thought of hereditary guilt would be laughed out of Bow Street, London, and much more, I venture to surmise, out of the Bow Street of New Jerusalem. Really, our orthodoxies should all sincerely repent themselves of their follies, and drastically reform themselves.

[1] As to Mahomet's views, see Sale, 'Koran, Prel. Discourse,' pp. 69-70.

6. *No man should dare to teach any doctrine which he does not hold by heart-conviction.*—Let it be repeated that when a man declares such a dogma as that of hereditary damnation as an article of his religious belief, it is impossible to take him seriously. There is no heart-conviction in it, no infusion of moral cogency. A bill stuck on a wall says what has been stamped on it; so, all too frequently, the parson. Now it should be held that no man has any right, *as a professed teacher*, merely to play the part of a bill on a wall; no man should dare to teach anything which he does not hold by personal conviction.[1] It is simply stupid and sinful and disastrous to do so, unless he notify at the same time that he is only saying what he has been told to say. With what strength and grace shall any gentleman in Crockford preach honesty, say, in secular business, if he himself be constantly found speaking without conviction, or shuffling in his premises, shuffling in his theology?

7. *Ludicrous situations created by clergymen insincere in their Theology.*—Let a man question himself and others more and more, and make sure of the ground of his doctrine. By this method of procedure he will best reveal both the Knowledge and the ignorance of both parties. It has been rightly said of the pre-Reformation Church that the life had been eaten out of its services; that there was no reality in its creed; that the prayers were learned by rote; that the sermons were mechanical and perfunctory; that the people sat

[1] "Truth must be ground for every man by himself out of its husk, with such help as he can get, indeed, but not without stern labour of his own."—Ruskin, 'On the Old Road,' Vol. ii. p. 278. Surely so. Every ship must be moored by its own anchor. I am not saved by what *you* believe, but by what I believe, and the converse. The hope of man lies in the individual, not in the corporation.

in darkness while spiritual and intellectual stupor settled like densest fog upon the Church.[1] In a word, priest and people had been bludgeoned into stupidity by theological dogma—into a state of sheer spiritual coma. Let the churches of to-day take warning from those ghastly times, and strive to abolish theological insincerity. Notice the grotesque situation which it creates for itself. Here is a parson preaching, say, the dogma of hereditary damnation, that we are all born under "the wrath and curse of God." If he or his congregation really believed it, they would, of course (every one of them), be shaking with fear; but mark, the very parson himself is quite calm over the infinitely calamitous dogma which he is propounding; and the whole congregation is quite calm likewise, despite the infinite calamity under which it proclaims them to be sitting! How, in such circumstances, can either parson or people be credited with sincerity? Both parties pretending to regard themselves as in a state of natural perdition, yet maintaining all the while (every man, woman, and child of them) an equal pulse-beat and a countenance of perfect equanimity! If it were not so serious, the whole scene would be wildly ludicrous, and shake the very "midriff of Despair" with laughter.

8. *Squalid socialistic wretches credited with sincerity.*—Nor is the noble adjective sincere debased in its application to dark-souled ecclesiastics only. Even in our own country any discontented and squalid wretch who gabbles himself into notoriety, any paltry blackguard schemer who has gained a following of ignorant men, any dusky ruffian inciting to "land-hunger" and the murder of landlords, and generally steering his course by the light of Hell-fire, even such as he are actually

[1] Skelton, 'Maitland of Lethington,' Vol. i. pp. 199-205.

voted "sincere" in some quarters![1] The dingy anarchist, hating honest labour, paralysing industry, envying the good of others, eyes constantly fixed on his neighbours' pockets, curdling the sweet milk of human affection into sulphuric acid, blowing up and mangling innocent men, women, and children with his infernal bombs—even *him* our euphemistic and extremely polite age sometimes clothes with the ascription of sincerity, and congratulates itself in the act, on its "liberality!" The word is murdered every day in cold blood.

9. *By such usage the moral vocabulary is debased.*—It is deplorable. In a world of sin and folly such as this, it may be anticipated that ugly things will be continually happening, that grievous obstacles will be continually cropping up to obstruct human progress; but it ought not to be extravagant to hope that, amongst reputable persons, words of moral import may not be lightly used; that the Moral Vocabulary may not be debased; that bold and broad manifestations of wickedness and folly may not be regarded as demonstrative of "sincerity."

10. *And Literature is of no account unless it be steeped in sincerity.*—Whilst the presence of sincerity or insincerity is more or less easily to be noted in the activities we have been discussing, and whilst those activities are blissful or baneful to the world according to the spirit which inspires them, the presence of sincerity or insincerity in Literature is scarcely less easily determinable. I have heard a good carpenter exclaim, on surveying

[1] The "patriot" Mitchell, for instance, whom Mr M'Carthy calls "the one formidable man among the rebels of '48." This "patriot," says the same writer, "settled for a while in Richmond, Virginia, and became *an ardent advocate of Slavery and an impassioned Champion of the Southern rebellion.*"—'History of our own Times,' Vol. i. pp. 339-40.

the infamous handiwork of a fellow-craftsman: "Is the man alive who did this?" One might frequently and indignantly exclaim: "Is the man alive who wrote such and such a book?" The very soul of book-writing, as of any other work, will be found to lie in the sincerity and heart-purpose of the author. A true interest in the subject, an absolute sincerity of thought, should precede literary execution. If the motive of any work, be it prose or poetry, is merely volitional or professional, the work will almost certainly be flat and stupid. If sincerity, spontaneity, enthusiasm precede literary execution, the work will almost certainly be fine.[1]

11. *The Literature of Volition and the Literature of Spontaneity.*—There are vast quantities of literature which are more in the nature of arduous exercises and business tasks than of inspired creation: the former, though good enough, perhaps, in its way, not good enough to call for utterance; whilst the latter, the creative, will be found to be as natural and masterful and almost as necessary as a birth, demanding to see the light. Thousands of poems, novels, &c., are published which do not call for public utterance any more than a college exercise. Learning gets drowned in ink.

12. *A criterion of literary fitness: Do you sincerely think that what you propose to say is worth noting and remembering?*—Carefully consider whether the thoughts and fancies which you propose to record, or the observations which you

[1] So in the arts. "The Book I called 'The Seven Lamps,' says Ruskin, "was to show that certain right states of temper and moral feeling were the magic powers by which all good architecture, without exception, had been produced," &c.—'The Crown of Wild Olive,' p. 88. "I mean to try to show, and believe I *can* show, that a simple and pure conviction of our having done rightly is not only attainable, but a necessary seal and sign of our having so done."—'On the Old Road,' Vol. i. p. 445.

propose to make, are worth noting and remembering or not. If, on careful reckoning, you sincerely think so, boldly write them down; but if you cannot honestly come to this conclusion, resolutely refuse to spend one dip of ink upon them. The general adoption of this one criterion of literary fitness would evaporate whole floods of trivialities and of vapid maunderings in all the provinces of mental activity, and reduce the flow of literature into manageable and fertilising streams.

13. *Some able men on the subject—Montaigne, Milton, Swift, Johnson, Goethe, Emerson, Carlyle, Ruskin.*—Some of the best writers have dwelt upon this theme. As it is of the very highest importance, it should be profitable to commune with them concerning it. "He who speaks what he thinks," observes Montaigne, "strikes much more home than he that only dissembles. Hear Cicero speak of the love of liberty; hear Brutus speak of it: you may judge by his style that he was a man who would purchase it at the price of his life." [1] "Let him who would write heroic poems," said Milton, "make his life a heroic poem." Swift wrote: "I do not mean by a true genius any bold writer who breaks through the rules of decency to distinguish himself by the singularity of his opinions, but one who, upon a deserving subject, is able to open new scenes, and discover a vein of true and noble thinking which never entered into any imagination before." [2] Again: "You judge very truly that the taste of England is infamously corrupted by shoals of wretches who write for their bread." [3] Dr Johnson was of opinion that they "who destroy the confidence of society, weaken the credit of intelligence

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. ii. p. 519.
[2] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 347.
[3] Ib. (to Sir Charles Wogan), Vol. xiv. p. 266.

and interrupt the security of life, harass the delicate with shame and perplex the timorous with alarms, might very properly be awakened to a sense of their crimes by denunciation of a whipping-post or pillory." [1] Nature, said Goethe, "understands no jesting; she is always true, always serious, always severe. She is always right, and the errors and faults are always those of man. Him who is incapable of appreciating her, she despises; and only to the apt, the pure, and the true does she resign herself and yield her secrets." [2] In his correspondence with Zelter he says: "In your essay I find the words, 'What we do not love we cannot do'; then my eyes were opened." [3] Emerson writes nobly on the subject: "The effect of any writing on the public mind is mathematically measurable by its depth of thought. How much water does it draw? If it awaken you to think, if it lift you from your feet with the great voice of eloquence, then the effect is to be wide, slow, permanent over the minds of men; if the pages instruct you not, they will die like flies in the hour. The way to speak and write what shall not go out of fashion, is to speak and write sincerely. Take Sidney's maxim: 'Look in thy heart and write.' *He that writes to himself, writes to an eternal public.* The permanence of all books is fixed by no effort, friendly or hostile, but by its own specific gravity, or the intrinsic importance of their contents to the constant mind of man." [4] "Language has lost its meaning in the universal cant." [5] Carlyle is equally rich on the subject:

[1] 'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 24.
[2] 'Conversations with Eckermann,' p. 367.
[3] 'Letters to Zelter,' p. 26.
[4] 'Spiritual Laws,' Works, Vol. ii. pp. 145-7.
[5] 'Miscellanico,' Works, Vol. xi. p. 245. To the same effect see also Vol. ii. pp. 154, 338; Vol. iii. p. 15; Vol. iv. p. 181; Vol. viii. pp. 191, 290.

"The grand point for a writer is not to be of this or that external make or fashion, but, in every fashion, to be genuine, vigorous, alive—alive with his whole being, consciously, and for beneficent results." [1] Again: "Considering the number of mortals that handle the pen in these days, and can mostly spell, and write without glaring violations of grammar, the question naturally arises: How is it, then, that no Work proceeds from them bearing any stamp of authenticity and permanence, of worth for more than one day? Shiploads of fashionable novels, sentimental rhymes, tragedies, farces, diaries of travel, tales by flood and field are swallowed monthly into the Bottomless Pool. Still does the Press toil; innumerable paper-makers, compositors, printers' devils, bookbinders, and hawkers, grown hoarse with loud proclaiming, rest not from their labour, and still in torrents rushes on the great array of publications, unpausing to their final home, and still Oblivion, like the Grave, cries Give! give! How is it that of all these multitudes no one can attain to the smallest mark of excellence, or produce aught that shall endure longer than snowflake on the river, or the foam of penny-beer? We answer: Because they *are* foam; because there is no reality in them." [2] And yet again: "The dishonest speaker, not he only who purposely utters falsehood but he who does not purposely, and with sincere heart, utter Truth and Truth alone; who babbles he knows not what, and has clapped no bridle on his tongue, but lets it run racket, ejecting chatter and futility—is among the most indisputable malefactors omitted or inserted in the Criminal Calendar." (Let the politician ponder upon it.)

[1] 'Crit. and Misc. Essays,' Vol. i. p. 19.

[2] Ib., Vol. iii. p. 58. Touching the Literary Army, see 'Latter-Day Pamphlets,' p. 191.

"To him that will well consider it, idle speaking is precisely the beginning of all hollowness, halfness, infidelity; the genial atmosphere in which rank weeds of every kind attain the mastery over noble fruit in man's life, and utterly choke them out: one of the most crying maladies of these days, and to be testified against, and in all ways, to the uttermost withstood. Wise of a wisdom far beyond our shallow depths was that old precept: Watch thy tongue; out of it are the issues of Life."[1] Yes, the very issues of Life. Consider how, in Eden, it was in the first place the word, not the deed; the bad advice, not a flourish of violence, that brought ruin. Ruskin is ever strenuous in the same cause: "In the reading of a great poem, in the hearing of a noble oration, it is the subject of the writer and not his skill, his passion and not his power, on which our minds are fixed. We see as he sees, but we see not him. The power of the masters is shown by their self-annihilation" (*i.e.*, by their absorption in their subject). "It is commensurate with the degree in which they appear not in their works. The harp of the minstrel is untruly touched if his own glory is all that he records. Every great writer may be known at once by his guiding the mind far from himself to the beauty which is not of his own creation, and the knowledge which is past his finding out." The poet, so to speak, should be lost in his poetry. And the same test is to be applied to Art, though, as in Literature, the subjects of Art have all too frequently "been regarded as mere themes upon which the artist's power is to be displayed; and that power, be it of imitation, composition, idealisation, or of whatever kind is the chief object of the spectator's observa-

[1] 'Crit. and Misc. Essays,' Vol. iii. pp. 84, 89.

tion." [1] That virtue of originality which men so strain after, he observes, "is not newness, as they vainly think (there is nothing new), it is only genuineness; it all depends on that single and glorious faculty of getting to the spring of things, and working out from that; it is the coolness and clearness and deliciousness of the water fresh from the fountain-head, opposed to the thick, hot, unrefreshing drainage from other men's meadows." [2] Fine truth here. It might almost be said that perfect sincerity amounts to originality; for (1) it speaks not without deep conviction; and (2) says not anything willingly, much less writes anything willingly, which has been better written before. Therefore profound sincerity in writing will be almost necessarily original. Ruskin even holds that "no man ever painted, or ever will paint well, anything but what he has early and long seen, early and long felt, early and long loved." [3]

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Preface to second edition, pp. xxiv-v. Hence, when Reynolds speaks of allegorical painting as giving the artist a "greater opportunity of exhibiting his skill" (see his 'Seventh Discourse'), he assumes the presence of a motive which should not exist in the mind of the artist.

[2] Ib., Vol. ii. p. 178. E. A. Poe confuses novelty with originality.—'Works,' Vol. iii. p. 444. He should have noticed that nothing intrinsically great or beautiful ever palls. Sunset is quite as impressive after seeing it a thousand times as on first beholding it. A perfect rose is as beautiful to the old as to the young. As long as your health is good, you do not cease to enjoy palatable food.

[3] Ib., Vol. i. p. 130, and to the same effect, Vol. ii. pp. 3, 59, 182. Again, "In early times Art was employed for the sake of religious fact," but at a later time, the time of Raphael, "religious facts were employed for the display of art. The transition, though imperceptible, was consummate; it involved the entire destiny of painting. It was passing from the paths of life to the paths of death."—Ib., Vol. iii. p. 55. So fatal it is for art not to be inspired by right motive. So in life at large. "I challenge you, in all history, to find a record of a good soldier who was not grave and earnest (in his youth ?). And, in general, I have no patience with people who talk of the thoughtlessness of youth indulgently. I had infinitely rather hear of thoughtless old age."—'Crown of Wild Olive,' p. 160.

An exaggeration here, I daresay, yet containing the true doctrine of the necessity of utter earnestness in painter and author alike. Inspiration can only come to one who is in love with his subject, and working upon it in heart sincerity. The inspired writes under a kind of necessity to utter; the uninspired from a mere ambition to write, or from some other unlawful motive—not from a necessity to utter, and therefore with neither moral nor esthetic afflatus. Without this inspiration of sincerity, books possessing a certain amount of secular use may indeed be manufactured and produced, but they will have little or no relationship to the wants of the Human Soul. Such books will have no more inspiration or sacredness within their covers than 'The London Post Office Directory'; and if the entirely secular-souled person takes to poetry, we shall almost certainly find that his harp has a remarkably poor twang.

14. *Mediocrity in the arts is not permissible.*—It is also held that mediocrity in the arts is not permissible. Horace will not put up with it. Montaigne votes mediocrity in poetry to be intolerable. A man, says he, following Horace, "may play the fool in everything else, but not in poetry." [1] Ronsard is reported to have said, "Mediocrité est extrème vice." Goethe condemns it utterly.[2] "Never imagine," says Ruskin, "that there is reason to be proud of anything which can be accomplished by patience and sand-paper." [3]

[1] 'Essays,' Vol. i. p. 395, and Vol. ii. p. 419.

[2] 'Conversations with Eckermann,' p. 133; 'Meister's Apprenticeship,' Bk. viii. chap. v.

[3] 'Stones of Venice,' Vol. ii. vi. 19. Of course, the true literary man will never neglect patience and sand-paper, on which question see Horace, 'Ars Poetica,' 408-10, and 'Satires,' i. 10. It is said of Cardinal Bembo that he was so scrupulously careful to give his compositions the utmost finish that he kept forty portfolios into which every sheet entered successively, and was only taken out to undergo correction before it entered into the next

Admirable though such things may be in their way, they are not sufficient for an artistic or a literary equipment.

15. *No utterance but that of strong sincerity is worthy of attention.*—Indeed, no utterance but that of strong sincerity seems to be worthy of attention. What is not of deep conviction descends through all the stages of feebleness down into mere lying. Let no man utter a word in Literature, or in Theology, or in Philosophy, or in speculation of any kind but in strict accordance with his convictions, and we shall immediately get quit not only of all lies but of most rubbish—such, for example, as is contained in the vast libraries of Slawkenbergius and Phutatorius. Just think of the blessedness of such a consummation! Messieurs the Humbugs of all kinds should consider it.

16. *The insincere in Literature are mere Simoniacs.*—Heart-meaning, this is the first and most crying necessity of Literature as of everything else—a consuming desire to spread light and health and freshness and beauty in a world too much inhabited by ignorance and evil. Is a thing true? Does the literary aspirant actually feel that he has something important to say? Or something beautiful or impressive to set forth? Some such conviction as this is the seal and warranty not indeed of his literary fitness but of the possibility of his literary fitness. If a man merely takes it upon him to write as a profession, or as a means of making a livelihood, or through egotism or paltry ambition, there is no probability, I should say, of his possessing any genuine literary fitness. Such a person must be regarded as a mere Simoniac in Literature; the very sight of him must be

Limbo of this Purgatory.—Hallam, Introduction, Vol. i. p. 446. What the results of this purgatorial handling might be, I cannot say.

offensive to the Muses. His work will most probably be stamped with commonplace, vapidity, platitude, and general worthlessness in every page, and he will but constitute himself another lettered nuisance. The books of men thus uncalled are a load to sink a Navy. Before taking up his pen a man should almost feel that a burden is laid upon him to take it up; that he will actually be failing in his duty if he does not take it up. He should have something of the Apostle's feeling when he declared that a burden was laid upon him to preach the Gospel—that it was woe to him if he did not preach the Gospel. As previously urged, all right Scripture is, as it were, given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, or some other high object. Every word that a man may *speak* even, he has been told that he shall have to give an account thereof on a certain very important day. We have this warning on the highest authority. Indeed, it is our authentic first interest to work in continual view (so to speak) of that Day, not merely with a regard to penal consequences, but more especially from an intelligent appreciation of the advantages arising from, and with a noble veneration for, the inherent and intrinsic beauty and glory of such work.

17. *The right author is at war with the evil powers.* —If it were only for the intrinsic dignity of the Service—the Service of the Highest,—every man of sense should be anxious to be thus employed. Call this Puritanism if you like, but, whether you do so or not, you (if you claim the honour of being an intellectual and responsible being) shall not escape from the necessity of regarding it as sound doctrine. To all such I repeat that absolute sincerity of thought and word and deed is de-

manded of them not only by what is sometimes reproachfully called Puritanism, but by common prudence. The right author is essentially a foe to darkness—at bitter warfare with the powers of evil, not forgetting those lurking, perhaps, within the circumference of his own being. Let an author approach his subject and begin his work in this spirit, and he will probably be able to write about it to some good purpose.

> "He whose complaints would bend my stubborn heart,
> Must bring me tears of Nature, not of Art" [1]:

this is the sacred truth of the matter. Neither in the old days nor now shall onion tears move the heart of any discerning person. In a word, Authorship is a great evil unless inspired by high motive. Better for Society that a man should be a petty larcener than an insincere writer. Even the imitator is intolerable. As Landor has said: "Whoever is an imitator by nature, choice, or necessity has nothing stable; the flexibility which affords this aptitude is inconsistent with strength." [2] Homer strikes the right note:—

> "Call, too, Demodocus, the bard divine,
> To share my banquet, whom the Gods have blessed
> With powers of song delectable." [3]

Unless the Gods have blessed you with the powers of song, don't sing upon any account; otherwise

[1] Persius, 'Satires,' i.

[2] 'Imaginary Conversations,' Vol. vi. pp. 51-2. "An amateur's drawing or a workman's drawing, anybody's drawing but an artist's, is always worthless in itself. As *Art*, an amateur's drawing is always worthless."—Ruskin, 'On the Old Road,' Vol. i. Pt. ii., p. 412. He complains of the imitator further that "he has not sense to steal the peacock's feathers, but imitates its voice."—Ib., p. 447. Brown discusses the difference between imitators and original writers.—'Philosophy of the Human Mind,' Vol. ii. pp. 255-6.

[3] 'Odyssey,' viii. 51-4 (Cowper).

you only assist in drowning the voices of the divine singers. Thus Pindar:—

> "Genius her stores from Nature draws;
> In words, not wit, the learnéd shine;
> Clamorous in vain like croaking daws,
> They rail against the Bird of Jove Divine." [1]

18. *Feigned inspirations.*—But let us proceed to the practical test and, in the first place, see how insincerity manifests itself in literature. Sincerity, be it remembered, may be regarded as the honest and careful use of all the powers we have of doing, or of refraining from doing, or refusing to do, anything; whilst, conversely, insincerity is the dishonest or careless or merely ambitious use of such powers. As before suggested, all workers should, ever and anon, ply themselves with the question: "Am I sincere in this or that work?" "Does it actually express my true convictions of philosophic, or religious, or literary truth?" Or it might even take this form: "Am I really impressed by any conviction which had better be expressed?" Or still more to the purpose: "Are my convictions of such a nature that I can scarcely refrain from expressing them?" Some such question would indicate the spirit of self-examination and self-criticism, in which every true literary man should begin and carry on his work.

19. *Examples from Akenside.*—For instance, looking into Johnson's edition of the poets, if such a writer as Akenside had occasionally catechised himself in the manner suggested, he would never, in discussing the 'Use of Poetry,' have ventured to advance the proposition that—

> "Shakespeare's powerful art
> O'er every passion, every art,
> Confirm his *awful* throne."

[1] 'Olympian Odes,' ii.

Why "awful throne"? The Throne of Deity we regard as "awful." We may properly speak, too, of an awful earthquake, or of an awful calamity of any kind. Vulgarly also, or colloquially, it may be quite permissible to speak of an "awful rogue," and young ladies frequently tell of "awfully pretty" things; but where comes in the *awfulness* of any poet's poetical position, however eminent it may be? Nor, I surmise, did Akenside himself really think that Shakespeare's excellence in the dramatic art had anything "awful" about it. This is the point. He was simply determined to say something uncommon about Shakespeare, despite the all-important fact that he had really nothing to say, the natural result of his rash ambition being, to some extent, a tissue of fibreless fustian, an effusion of ranting nonsense.

20. In a poem entitled "On leaving Holland" (obviously a most dangerous subject to choose as a poetic theme) he gravely tells us concerning the country in question that—

> "She breathes material fogs to damp its restless flame";

which, I suppose, means that, in the poet's view, the spirit of that country was so fiery that it required material fogs to damp it down into a kind of tolerable living temperature. Now this might have been a very good way of chaffing the Dutch people if they had deserved it; but they did not deserve such treatment, and Akenside did not cultivate the satiric muse. He was just effusing in the panegyric vein, simply determined to say something fine about Holland, although he had nothing vital to say. Fustian the result was bound to be.

21. Again, he takes to addressing the Muse, another very hazardous occupation to unin-

spired persons, and thus he pours himself out :—

> " Where is the dread prophetic heat
> With which my bosom wont to beat ?
> . . . . . .
> When first she sealed me for her own,
> Made all her blissful treasures known ? "

How, I ask, could any truly sincere and ordinarily endowed man ever have dared to commit balderdash of this kind to paper ? No man in full possession of his senses would do such a thing. Akenside was but expressing factitious sentiments—sentiments which he had never felt. If his temperature could have been taken when he was making up such compositions, it would have been found, I apprehend, that there was as little " dread prophetic heat " about his soul as there was when he went to pound pills. So, when he writes as follows :—

> " Yet let me still with grateful pride
> Remember how my infant frame
> He tempered with prophetic flame,
> And early music to my tongue supplied." [1]

Think of such verses getting recited at a picnic on Parnassus ! On reading an effusion of the kind one might suppose that the writer had laboured under the delusion that sense and sobriety were only applicable to the eating of his dinner—that they had no claims in Literature at all. If he had possessed the particular virtue which I am commending, it would have saved him from all the toil and trouble of producing almost any of those works called his " poems," including his best known, " The Pleasures of the Imagination." Supposing even that he had treated this subject

[1] Inscription ix.

upon a prose basis—the basis upon which it might have been more or less successfully attempted,—he was largely incompetent for the task; but as he elected to clothe it in poetical form and diction, we have, as a result, six books and a fraction, of rubbish for the most part. Now heart-sincerity, in combination with any considerable degree of brain power, never yet, I believe, produced one line of rubbish, but always turns out something sensible at least. Heart-sincerity by its very nature wages an eternal warfare with the fustian-monger—never departs (except, perhaps, under sudden surprise and momentary forgetfulness) from the region of Common-sense.

22. *Isaac Watts.*—Departure from the region of Common-sense, so frightfully common with Philosophers and Theologians, is always a more or less disastrous proceeding. Think of good Isaac Watts, even, overleaping its sacred boundaries, and losing himself in the wilds of poetical insobriety. Think of a clergyman so far forgetting himself as to declare—

> "Honour demands my song! Forget the ground,
> My generous Muse, and sit among the stars!"

whereas that Godliest of all senses, Common-sense, would have clearly told him, if he had been disposed to listen to it respectfully, that the first thing for his Muse to do was not to forget the ground at all and sit among the Stars, but in the first place to obtain a firm footing on the very ground which he despised, and to be contented to "sit among the Stars" later on. Thousands of poets immediately go to poetical rack and ruin through cutting their professional connection with the solid ground, just as, by the same error, thousands of philosophers and theologians lose their wits and fall into fatuity. He names the

poem "True Courage," too! It is much more suggestive of frantic audacity.

23. Again, in the name of "Lyric poetry" and modest sincerity, how came he to say of his good friend Gibson:—

> "Gibson with his awful power
> Rescues the poor precarious hour
> From the demands of death!" [1]

It is next to impossible to believe that he really supposed that there was anything "awful" in the powers of Gibson; and thus, instead of enshrining the memory of his friend in a graceful compliment, he sticks it permanently upon a pillory. You do a friend but an ill turn when you write bad complimentary verses about him.

24. In another place he fatuously declares—

> "Custom . . .
> My genius storms her throne" [2]:

with which claim contrast, for instance, Horace's fine anticipation of literary immortality, or the genial vaticination of Burns:—

> "He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
> But aye a heart aboon them a';
> He'll be a credit to us a',
> We'll a' be prood o' Robin."

25. *The weak man is at his weakest when he writes poetry.*—Or was it the work of sobriety and manly sincerity to write what he calls "Divine Songs" like this:—

> "Then will I read and pray,
> While I have life and breath,
> Lest I should be cut off to-day,
> And sent to eternal death!"

which seems to manifest nothing more than a mere prosy and pietistic determination to say

[1] Johnson's 'Poets,' Vol. lvi. p. 45. [2] Ib., p. 63.

something at all hazards. Ruskin asserts, I believe truly (provided that we substitute in the passage the word "pietistic" for the word "religious"), that "no Literature exists of a high class produced by minds in the pure religious" (say, pietistic) "temper. On the contrary, a great deal of Literature exists produced by persons in that temper which is markedly and very far below average literary work." [1] In every case, probably, the weak man is at his weakest when he writes poetry.

26. *Collins.*—Even men of ability are almost certain to write poor stuff—perhaps sheer nonsense—the moment they cease to be spontaneous and sincere. Thus, for instance, when Collins apostrophises fear in these words:—

> "Ah, fear! Ah, frantic fear!
> I see, I see thee near!"

we feel perfectly certain that the poet's pulse was quite normal at the time; that he was all the time, in fact, as cool as a fish in the water, and had no thought of anything terrible. Such an exhibition of poetical possession might be regarded as no more than another kind of experiment with the air-pump.

27. *John Dyer.*—When John Dyer, a man of some poetical faculty, speaks of—

> "Dover's wind-cliff,
> Tremendous height!"

we immediately feel that he is but mouthing

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. v. pp. 228-9. But there is *religious* poetry of the loftiest grandeur. Cf. chap. i. par. 6, and note 3. Unhappily most of the hymns sung in churches are a disgrace to the Human Head, regarded either as lyrics or theology.

windy inanity. When he panegyrically demands of his versifying friend, Aaron Hill—

> " Tell me, wondrous friend, where were you
> When Gideon was your lofty song ? "

we are convinced on the spot that it was an absolutely factitious and foolish inquiry, the result being that both the inquirer and the " wondrous friend " inquired about, were rendered ridiculous.

28. *Christopher Pitt.*—Nearly all the panegyrists of royal and eminent persons are among the ignoble throng of rodomontadists. Christopher Pitt, poetising on one of the Georges, thus wrote of him :—

> " Mild, yet majestic was the monarch's mien,
> Lively though great, and awful though serene " [1] ;

and he described this mild, majestic, lively, great, awful, and serene person's daughter as—

> " The royal maid in whom the Graces joined
> Her mother's awful charms and more than female mind." [2]

29. *Ambrose Phillips.*—Ambrose Phillips lavished his feeble thoughts upon William of Orange in these ridiculous terms :—

> " Hail to the shades where William great in arms,
> Retires in conquest to Maria's charms ! "

30. *Edward Young.*—Edward Young, when insincere, could so little distinguish between the sublime and the ridiculous that he expressed himself thus about Queen Anne :—

> " Hear with alarms our trumpets fill the sky ;
> 'Tis Anna reigns ! The Gallic squadrons fly."

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[1] Johnson's ' Poets,' Vol. iii. p. 12. [2] Ib., p. 17.

Cæsar coming, seeing, and conquering was nothing to Queen Anne; whilst of George he speaks as issuing decrees in conjunction with Jove:—

"By George and Jove it is decreed," &c.,[1]

George actually standing first in the partnership. He is scarcely less accommodating in his strains in praise of Sir Robert Walpole. "See Britain," he exclaims—

"See thy Walpole shine from far:
His azure ribbon and his radiant star!"[2]

Such things have been done in the sacred name of Poesy; but the point is that a moment's sincere thought, a little honesty, on the part of any of these bards would have saved the world from all their balderdash. To such writers must be denied even—

"The foolish title to a fountain,
The right of common on a mountain."

31. *Cowley.*—Cowley makes exhibitions of himself no less humiliating. He actually writes of poor, slippery, mendacious Charles the First as being—

"Most like the Deity!"[3]

What he calls—

"The mysterious library,
The beatific Bodley of the Deity,"

contains no ranker rubbish than may be found in his effusions.

32. *Roscommon.*—Think of a rather clever fellow

[1] 'The Merchant,' Strain i.
[2] 'The Instalment.'
[3] 'Johnson's 'Poets,' Vol. vii. p. 82. See also his ridiculous poem on himself.

like Lord Roscommon describing Charles the Second as—

> "Great Charles whose birth has promised milder sway;
> Whose awful nod all nations must obey!" [1]

Quoth Mahomet: "God loveth no arrogant vainglorious person. And be moderate in thy pace and lower thy voice, for the most ungrateful of all voices surely is the voice of asses." What a blessing it would be if we could raise a great mutiny amongst our poets, artists, philosophers, and theologians against stupidity and insincerity!

33. *Otway.* — Glance at Otway's "Windsor Forest." Is there a line of it worth a dip of ink? Pity but some Castruccio could be on the ground to thunder to such scribblers: "All upon pain of present death, forget to write!"

34. *Waller.*—Read Edmund Waller on "The Prince's Escape." Then you might pass on to his "Address to the King"; then compare these two pieces with his panegyric on Cromwell, and

[1] Johnson's 'Poets,' Vol. xvi. p. 119. See Swift's directions for making a birthday song, Vol. xliii. p. 192. His flagellation, I fancy, was too much deserved by most of the writers of the time, and, indeed, such flatteries seem to have been common in all ages. Even Virgil and Horace were great offenders in this vein. With such outpourings it is refreshing to contrast Sir David Lyndsay's fearless and noble advice to James the Fifth :—

> "Considder weil thou bene bat officiare,
> And wassall to that Kyng incomparabyll," &c.,

in 'The Testament and Complaint of the Papyngo,' or his reflections on—

> "Imprudent princis but (without) discretion,"

in 'The Tragedie of the Cardinall.' I am afraid that few princes and potentates of that age were as faithfully warned and admonished by their subjects. Lyndsay's editor (David Laing) was of opinion that it would not have been permitted in England.—Lyndsay's 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 293. On the other hand, see (in 'The Testament') how lovingly and respectfully he recalls to the young King the memory of his father :—

> "Allace! quhare bene that rycht redouted roye," &c.

you will find that he is equally devoted to all parties!

35. *Dryden.*—Read even Dryden, say, on the Death of Lord Hastings, or on Charles the Second:—

> "The peoples' prayer, the glad diviners' theme,
> The young men's vision and the old men's dream";

excellent verses in this case, without doubt, but as bestowed upon Charles how absolutely factitious and misapplied! Or look through his "Britannia Rediviva." If the literary men of the past had generally possessed the honesty of a superior kind of tramp, it would have forbidden and prevented the very existence of thousands of volumes which cumber our public and private bookshelves.

36. *Francis Bacon.*—Nor is it in verse alone that we have to complain of the presence of insincerity. Some allowance might be made to the hot heads and raging emotions of such as deem themselves poetically inspired, or who have been in severe want of money—some patch of excuse for their boiling effusions; but what is to be said for those who have committed the same kind of offence in cold-blooded prose and amid fulness of bread? Listen to Lord Bacon addressing himself to James the First in the opening to 'The Advancement of Learning': "Representing your majesty many times into my mind, and beholding you not with the inquisitive eye of presumption to discern that which the Scripture telleth me is inscrutable, but with the observant eye of duty and admiration: leaving aside the other parts of your virtue and fortune, I have been touched, yea, and possessed with an extreme wonder at those your virtues and faculties which the philosophers call intellectual; the largeness of your capacity; the faithfulness of your memory; the swiftness of your apprehension; the penetration of your judg-

ment, and the faculty and order of your elocution . . . so likewise in these intellectual matters there seemeth to be no less contention between the excellency of your majesty's gifts of nature and the universality and perfection of your learning . . . there is met in your majesty a rare conjunction, as well of divine and sacred literature as of profane and human; so as your majesty standeth invested of that triplicity which, in great veneration, was ascribed to the ancient Hermes: the power and fortunes of a King, the knowledge and illumination of a priest, and the learning and universality of a philosopher." But read the whole shameless panegyric.[1] Thus is the Devil's game played. Thus not only do we get book-loads of foolish stuff, but the recipients of their banal and wicked flatteries are made ten times more the children of evil than they were before. When he who is reckoned about the greatest light of his age, thus addressed James in cold blood, what wonder that he became giddy and vain, and entertained foolish thoughts of himself?

37. *It was adulators of monarchs as much as monarchs themselves who brought on the Civil Wars.* —Bishop Andrews, too, the model of the sacerdotal party, even went the length of declaring in plain speech that James was inspired by God![2] In the accounts which we have of the Hampton Court Conference, we are alternately struck with the folly of the king and "the abject baseness of the bishops, mixed, according to the custom of servile natures, with insolence towards their op-

[1] The following compliment was not only allowable but happy: "Your majesty's noble person being a noble confluence of streams and veins, wherein the royal blood of many Kingdoms of Europe are met and united."—"A Speech touching Purveyors," 'Works,' iii. p. 250.

[2] Green, 'Short History,' &c., p. 489.

ponents." [1] See especially the miserable sycophancy of Bishops Andrews and Williams in connection with the Gowrie Conspiracy.[2] Even Cecil's correspondence with James was full of "blasphemous adulation." [3] In a later age Lyttleton declared that the King was the vicegerent of God! Thus it was not so much James that cursed England, but rather that eminent Englishmen, especially of the sacerdotal faction, with miserable and damnable flatteries and insincerities, and, of course, to the infinite shame and loss of all concerned, cursed poor James and his successors with their sinful adulation, from the crown of the head to the soles of their feet, and brought on the civil wars.[4] For a further study in literary insincerity and human baseness, read Bacon's 'Discourse in praise of Queen Elizabeth,' and contrast it with his 'Declaration of the Treasons' of his fallen friend and benefactor the Earl of Essex.[5] It is a sickening exercise. In reading such compositions we are reminded of the definition of a Greek sycophant, "a happy compound of common barretor, informer, pettifogger, busybody, rogue, liar, and slanderer." Or look at the Dedication prefixed to the first volume of 'The Spectator,' or that to the fourth volume of 'The Tatler.' Think also of the prose and rhyme which—even down to very recent times—flow into being on the smallest provocation. If men will not be silent, they might at least be truthful.

38. *Nor is good intention a sufficient warranty for authorship.*—When a well-meaning Cardinal, for

[1] Hallam, 'Const. History of England,' Vol. i. p. 215.

[2] Hailes, 'Annals of Scotland,' Vol. iii., notes, pp. 365, 373.

[3] Taylor, 'Scotland,' Vol. ii. pp. 394-5.

[4] It is sorrowful to find Molière in the same category of corrupters. In the Prologue to 'Les Facheux,' his collaborateur, Paul Pelisson, exclaims in adulation of Louis the Fourteenth, "Lui-même n'est-il pas un miracle visible?" &c. See also his own panegyric on Louis in the Prologue to 'Le Malade Imaginaire.'

[5] 'Works,' Vol. iii. pp. 22-39, and pp. 138-9.

instance, resolves to fabricate a Heavenly vision, here is the result. An Angel says to Gerontius :—

> " We now have passed the gate and are within
> The House of Judgment ; and whereas on Earth
> Temples and palaces are formed of parts
> Costly and rare, but all material,
> So in the world of spirits, naught is found
> To mould withal and form into a whole
> But what is immaterial ; and thus
> The smallest portions of this edifice,
> Cornice or frieze, or balustrade, or stair,
> The very pavement is made up of life—
> Of holy, blessed and immortal beings,
> Who hymn their Maker's praise continually." [1]

Here we have not only a house built up of living beings—cornice, frieze, balustrades, and stairs,—but the very pavement is compacted of living beings, who, laid prostrate though they be, used up as building material and painfully laid out in courses of live masonry, are continually engaged in praising their Maker ! How would the good author himself have liked to be built into such a fabric ? Think of the operose incongruity, the grotesque absurdity, of the whole conception. Every one should understand that there is imaginative as well as logical absurdity—absurd imaginations as well as absurd thoughts. A man has need of caution, even though he be a Cardinal, when he begins to fabricate visions. In such a case we do not doubt the writer's good intention : we simply marvel at his sheer lack of judgment. The first virtue required in the poet is that he be strictly sensible, despite all cavillers.

39. *How Sincerity manifests itself in Literature.* —But let us now turn away our eyes from the imbecile and evil offspring of insincerity and folly in

[1] ' The Dream of Gerontius.' It is difficult, of course, to say where lack of judgment ends and insincerity begins ; but in great lack of judment itself there is probably to be found a considerable infusion of insincerity. An entirely sincere man will scarcely essay an enterprise that is far beyond his knowledge and strength.

Literature, and notice, for a little, how sincerity and sense manifest themselves in the same field. When you see a new but crazy table or chair, or a new window-frame that will neither go up nor down, or a new lock on a door that will not answer to the movement of the key, or which, perhaps, will not suffer the key to move, you may at once safely conclude that there has been no sincerity, no self-respect, or no competence on the part of those who have been responsible for such work, and that they have been profanely working upon profane principles for profane wages. On the other hand, there are locks and keys to be seen, and doors and window-frames, and tables and chairs of fine workmanship, and fabrics of fair tissue, which appear to have been made sacredly, as it were, in the fear of God and under artistic inspiration. With regard to the former class of goods we look at them perhaps with indifference, perhaps with disgust and wrath; whilst the latter continually gives us satisfaction, perhaps some measure of delight. In their way they are things of beauty and a joy as long as they last.

40. *The Hebrew Scriptures.*—So in Literature. Think for a moment of the sacred writings. There is, indeed, a great deal to criticise in those writings. The very authorship of most of them is exceeding hard to prove. It cannot, for instance, be proved who, beyond dispute, was the author of a single Psalm. Critics have long applied the critical microscope to them in vain—or very much in vain. More, in their folly they are still using it very laboriously, and will probably continue to use it for ages to come without arriving at a finality on this question of their actual authorship. Candidly, I think they may now safely resign all this controversy to the Devil. All we can say in its favour is that it is not so bad as the credos and incredibilities of religious obscurantists and tran-

scendentalists. In any case, fortunately, it is a question of almost no importance. Look at some of the Psalms—say the 23rd, or the 94th, or the 95th, or the 100th. Read them attentively, and you are simply carried away from the question of personal authorship altogether.[1] They represent man in deepest communion with the Divine. You can have no doubt with most of them—no doubt whatever—that they are the sacred utterance of some sincere soul, and almost as little doubt that it will be a happy thing for those who can harmoniously join with him in his worship. They impress upon us the conviction of their sincerity and truth just as the Sun impresses upon us the conviction of daylight. They burn and blaze upon us with the intensity of their spiritual heat; they warm and vivify the receptive soul with the glory of their beams. In a word, those old Writings, even with all their imperfections on their front, remain, in a high sense, a Book of Life; and all this quite apart from the question of their individual authorship, which, I repeat, is after all only a question of infinitesimal importance.

41. *Sincerity is creative and life-giving.*—Thus whilst sincerity is essential to genius, it is perhaps the greatest part of genius. It is of inexpressible worth. It is creative and life-giving. "Ye shall be as Gods" through sincerity. When it speaks it almost necessarily carries conviction of its veracity—veracity which, being duly cultivated, will probably rise into genius, and become a channel of sacred influences.

42. *It is exemplified by all great authors.*—But it is not necessary to go to what are called the Sacred Writings to find perfect spontaneity and sincerity of authorship. We find the spirit largely manifested in all great authors. There is not one such in whose works we shall not find many evi-

[1] Cf. Ruskin as quoted above, par. 13.

dences of perfect spontaneity, transparent good faith, right passion for his work. Give me an acknowledged great work of an acknowledged great Author, and I will take in hand to find such passages in that work as burn and shine and glow in the white heat of their sincerity.

43. *Withal they are but human.*—But let there be no mistake. I do not for a moment mean to say that the great writer or thinker has emancipated himself from all earthly considerations and lower affections.[1] That were absurd. In opposition to theologians, most of whom seem to assume that Mankind have an easy time of it, and proclaim human worthlessness as part of their creed, I hold that man at present occupies a terrible position, and that he is not wholly worthless. Notwithstanding the Divine potentialities of his nature, he is severely interested in mundane markets and in mundane matters generally. The pressure of the temporal upon him is enormous. Let your enterprising earthly provision merchant advertise in his shop window (as he sometimes does) a "Great Downfall in the price of Bacon," and if you are of an observant turn of mind and occasionally take an inquiring walk through the poorer streets, you may easily see some poor brother eyeing the announcement with pathetic intensity, even the "Great Downfall," perhaps, not having brought the Bacon within his reach; wherein is call for pity, one of the elements of tragedy. Indeed—

> "the wide and universal theatre
> Presents more woeful pageants than the scenes"

presented to us on stages. The theologian who comfortably tries to suppose that Man is the indulged Child of Providence, and that he has

[1] An affection, according to Plato, is "an irrational movement of the Soul as regards either an ill or a good."—'Intro. of Alcinous to the Doctrines of Plato,' chap. 31.

nothing to do but sit for Salvation in the "Just as I am, without one plea" attitude, is living in a Fool's Paradise, the apples whereof may one day afflict him with bad dyspepsia.

44. *No Army can fight without a commissariat of some kind: no man can operate without one.*—So even our noble friends, our Dantes, Shakespeares, and Miltons, our Burnses and Carlyles, as long as they have to trudge about on this rascal-trodden Globe, need, like ordinary mortals, a certain irreducible minimum of terrestrial goods to keep them afoot and in the fighting line—for which goods it becomes them to take honest forethought. Enormous and pathetic difficulties frequently occur in the effort to make "an honest penny." No army can fight without a commissariat of some kind; no man can operate without one.[1] Even John the Baptist needed some quantum of locusts and wild honey, a raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins. If Archangels lived on cabbages, it would be a matter of vital necessity with them that the supply should be kept up. Also in the Shakespeare and Burns families there may be infants to provide for with something more than Hesperian Pippins and Pierian Waters—however excellent this Banquet be.

45. *But there is no great work done unless the heart be in it.*—Further, even in the great moments of great men it is possible that pettiness may intrude. Worldly ambition, for instance, that "last infirmity of noble minds," will sometimes force its sinuous way into a great man's thoughts. The very Apostles of Christ could scarcely keep it out. But this I will say, and I believe that everybody with any discernment and sense of

[1] As Mr Saintsbury says: "One of the most disagreeable penances of the working man of letters, (is) the necessity of stepping out of his proper sphere in order to keep himself within it."—'History of Criticism,' Vol. iii. p. 318.

responsibility will agree with me, that when our great men were doing their greatest work, it is probable that the earthly interests of life had, if any, only a small share in their thoughts. Their affections, their hearts, were engaged in the work. It was moulded, as it were, in the heart of a seraphic burning.

46. *Instances from Dante.*—Test this doctrine by a few instances. When Dante (to take a familiar passage) conjured into poetic vision the Cavern leading down into Hell with the appalling words inscribed over the entrance :—

> " Through me you pass into the City of Woe ;
> Through me you pass into eternal pain ;
> Through me among the people lost for aye,
> Justice the Founder of my fabric moved ;
> To rear me was the task of Power Divine,
> Supremest wisdom and primeval love.
> Before me things create were none save things
> Eternal ; and eternal I endure :
> All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

The Theology and the Eschatology of the passage must be taken as subject to serious criticism, yet when he wrote these lines, can we imagine that he was moved by any spurious thoughts, or interests, or affections whatever ? I think not. I think it most highly probable that for the time being he had forgotten even his fiercest enmities, and that his whole soul was brooding with profoundest concern on Human Life and its dread issues.

47. *His commentary upon earthly dignities.*—Or take the commentary upon the vanity of earthly dignities which he expresses through the lips of Pope Adrian the Fifth in ' Purgatory ' :—

> " A month and little more, by proof I learned
> With what a weight that robe of Sovereignty
> Upon his shoulders rests, who from the mire
> Would guard it ; that each other fardel seems
> But feathers in the balance. Late, alas,
> Was my conversion : but when I became
> Rome's pastor, I discerned at once the dream
> And cozenage of life ; saw that the heart

Rested not there, and yet no prouder height
Lured on the climber ; wherefore of that life
No more enamoured, in my bosom love
Of purer being kindled. For till then
I was a soul in misery, alienate
From God, and covetous of all earthly things :
Now, as thou seest, here punished for my doting." [1]

Who, reading these lines, can doubt the intensity of Dante's convictions as to the emptiness of the highest of earthly dignities in themselves—their utter insufficiency to minister to the wants of the Human Soul ? He thinks that no prouder height than the Papal Chair could lure on the climber ; but that height attained, it was found vanity. Man is a Spirit, and can only find satisfying good in the spiritual. The Body should be taken as the Vehicle of the Soul.

48. *His apostrophe to Avarice.*—Or listen to his outburst against Avarice :—

" Accurst be thou
Inveterate wolf ! whose gorge engluts more prey,
Than ever beast beside, yet is not filled." [2]

From such lines one cannot fail to be convinced of Dante's heart abhorrence of avarice. It is impossible to take them for the mere mouthing of a professional person.

49. *Archdeacon Barbour on Freedom and Thraldom.*—The better to illustrate the principle that the poet's heart must be manifested in his work, take a passage from an old Scottish poet, Archdeacon Barbour, who is much less known than he ought to be. Listen to him on the subject of Freedom and Thraldom :—

" Ah ! fredome is a noble thing !
Fredome mayss man to haiff liking ;
Fredome all solace to man giffis ;
He levys at ess that frely levys.

[1] 'Purgatory,' canto xix. [2] Ib., canto xx.

A noble hart may haiff nane ess,
Na ellys nocht that may him pless,
Giff fredome failyhe : for fre liking
Is yharnyt our all other thing.
Na he that ay hass levyt fre,
May nocht know weill the propyrte,
The angyr, na the wrechyt dome
That is couplyt to foul thyrldome.
Bot gyff he had assayit it,
Than all perquer he suld it wyt,
And suld think fredome mar to pryss
Than all the gold in warld that is.
Thus contrar thingis evir mar,
Discoveryingis off the tothir ar."

Indeed, he concludes that Thraldom is far worse than death :—

" For quhill a thryll his lyff may leid,
It merrys him, body and banys, (*mars*)
And dede anoyis him bot anys.
Schortly to say is nane can tell
The halle conditioun off a threll." [1]

Who can doubt the perfect good faith of the poet in these lines ? Who can doubt for a moment that he perfectly understood, appreciated, and loved true freedom and all its blessings ? Who can doubt that he saw the evils of thraldom, and entertained a perfect heart-hatred of it ? As certainly as Barbour's heart glowed with spiritual fervour when he dwelt in the flesh, so certainly do these lines glow with spiritual fervour. All poetry written in such a tone of mind will probably bear the sound of it, and be worth our attention. The lines quoted may be taken as a classic utterance on the grand subject of freedom. They will lose nothing by use. A thousand years hence they will express the best feelings of the noble human heart as well as they express them to-day, or when they were written five hundred years ago.

[1] ' The Bruce,' i. 225-274.

Burning sincerity almost rises into genius; and where genius speaks, it generally possesses the grand virtue of saying something worth repeating.

50. *Dunbar's meditation on Death.*—Or take William Dunbar's great meditation on Death in "The Lament for the Makaris":—

"The stait of man does change and vary,
Now sound, now seik, now blythe, now sary,
Now dansand mirry, now like to dee;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

"No stait in Erd heir stand is sicker;
As with the wynd wavis the *wicker*, (*willow*)
So wannis this warldis vanitie;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

"Unto the deth goes all estaitis,
Princis, prelattis and potestaitis;
Baith riche and pure of all degree;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

"He taikes the Knychtis into the feild,
Enarmet undir helme and scheild;
Victor he is at all mellie;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

"That strang, unvynsable tirrand
Takis on the maderis breist sowkand
The bab, full of benignitie;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

"He taikes the campioun in the stour,
The captane closit in the tour,
The lady in bour full of bewtie;
Timor Mortis conturbat me.

"He spairs na lord for his piscence,
Na clerk for his intelligence;
His awfull straik may na man fle;
Timor Mortis conturbat me."

Who can doubt this poet's soul-throbbing sincerity and veracity?

51. *Shakespeare.*—Glance now at Shakespeare. We have not to look far for proofs of his poetic

sincerity. Take the familiar lines in "The Tempest":—

> "These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted unto air, into thin air;
> And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve,
> And like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a wrack behind."

When Shakespeare wrote these lines, full as they are of high thought and bathed in glowing splendour of diction, it is not conceivable that he wrote only to tickle the ears of the audience at any theatre. I cannot but think that he wrote mainly in contemplation of the approaching tragedy of the Crack of Doom.

52. Or take a part of the scene between Cæsar and Calphurnia:—

> "*Calphurnia.* What mean you, Cæsar? Think you to walk forth!
> You shall not stir out of your house to-day.
> *Cæsar.* Cæsar shall forth: the things that threatened me
> Ne'er looked but on my back; when they shall see
> The face of Cæsar they are vanished."

A little too boastful, perhaps, but probably true to Cæsar's character. The dialogue proceeds:—

> "*Calphurnia.* Cæsar, I never stood on ceremonies,
> Yet now they fright me. There is one within,
> Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
> Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
> A lioness hath whelped in the streets,
> And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead;
> Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds
> In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
> Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.
> The noise of battle hurtled in the air;
> Horses did neigh and dying men did groan,
> And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.
> O Cæsar, these things are beyond all use,
> And I do fear them.

Cæsar. What can be avoided
Whose end is purposed by the mighty Gods ?
Yet Cæsar shall go forth, for these predictions
Are to the world in general as to Cæsar.
Calphurnia. When beggars die there are no comets seen ;
The Heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.
Cæsar. Cowards die many times before their death ;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come." [1]

It is scarcely open to doubt, I should say, that such a passage as this evinces complete poetical good faith. It clearly shows, in my opinion, that Shakespeare was profoundly interested in the personality of Julius, and probably, indeed, too much impressed by him. It shows that the poet was profoundly interested in his tragical situation ; profoundly awed by the superstitions of the time ; profoundly concerned in man's relationship to the Supreme Powers. In a word, we are convinced that he expressed no more than he actually felt about the matter. Still more is this evident, perhaps, in the great oration scenes of the Play, in which the speeches of Brutus and Antony seem to pulsate with vitality, and bring home the conviction that the Poet staked his dramatic sincerity on every word of them.

53. I have suggested that the dramatist was probably too much impressed by the personality of Cæsar, and have made the suggestion because it appears to me that, a little lower in the scene quoted, the great man degenerates into a braggart. Quoth he :—

" Danger knows full well
That Cæsar is more dangerous than he.
We were two lions littered in one day,
And I the elder and more terrible ;
And Cæsar shall go forth."

[1] ' Julius Cæsar,' Act ii. Sc. 2.

It is almost unthinkable that any man, let alone any great man, would speak of himself in such terms. So also when he says to Antony :—

> " I rather tell thee what is to be feared
> Than what I fear, *for always I am Cæsar.*" (i. 2).

Wherein he seems to me to be suffering from a dreadful " tympany of self-conceit." A great man does not much insist on his own greatness. He prefers that other gentlemen should blow his horn for him. At this point of the play, Shakespeare might, with advantage, have entered into a deeper consultation with himself, and clothed the fortitude of his hero in modest utterance.

54. *Michael Bruce's " Ode to the Cuckoo."*—Entering another field, take Michael Bruce's " Ode to the Cuckoo " :—

> " Hail beauteous stranger of the wood.
> Attendant on the Spring ;
> Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat
> And groves thy Welcome sing.
>
> " Soon as the daisy decks the green,
> Thy certain voice we hear :
> Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
> Or mark the rolling year ?
>
> " Delightful visitant. With thee
> I hail the time of flowers
> When Heaven is filled with music sweet
> Of birds among the bowers.
>
> " The school-boy wandering through the wood
> To pull the flowers so gay,
> Starts when thy well-known voice he hears,
> And imitates thy lay.
>
> " Soon as the pea puts on the bloom
> Thou fly'st the vocal vale,
> An annual guest in other lands,
> Another Spring to hail.

"Sweet bird, thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

"O, could I fly, I'd fly with thee;
We'd make, with social wing,
Our annual visit o'er the Globe,
Companions of the Spring."

Is it not charming? Can any one doubt the genuineness of the youthful poet's raptures?

55. *Burns.*—Now take a few stanzas from Burns—a meditation on Nature:—

"Even winter bleak has charms for me
When winds rave through the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary grey;
Or blinding drifts, wild, furious, flee,
Darkening the day.

"O Nature, a' thy shows and forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms;
Whether the summer kindly warms
Wi' life and light,
Or winter howls in gusty storms
The lang, dark night.

"The Muse, nae poet ever fand her
Till by himsel' he learned to wander
Adoon some trotting burn's meander
And no think lang;
O sweet to stray and pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang." [1]

No question touching the poetic sincerity of these stanzas. Or take "A Bard's Epitaph":—

"Is there a whim-inspirèd fool
Owre fast for thocht, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool?
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool
An' drap a tear.

. . . . . .

[1] To W. Simpson.

"Is there a man whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career
Wild as the wave?
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

"The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low
And stained his name.

"Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soar's fancy's flights beyond the Pole,
Or darkly grubs this earthly hole
In low pursuit,
Know, prudent, cautious, self-control
Is wisdom's root."

Here are no feigned musings, no feigned self-castigations, but the sterling ring of sincerity in every line: sincerity in his sketch of his own character; sincerity in his petition for sympathy; sincerity in his caution to the reader; and with the sterling sincerity we get the sterling value, the pure gold, the fine craftsmanship. The Poet's glowing heart was in the work.

56. *Keats's "Ode to Autumn."*—Or take Keats's 'Ode to Autumn":—

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom friend of the maturing sun,
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

. . . . . .

"Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
Whilst barréd clouds bloom the soft dying day,
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft,
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourne ;
Hedge-crickets sing ; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies."

No doubt, I should say, that the poet was authentically impressed by some rich autumn scene.

57. *Wordsworth.*—Note the same characteristic in the following Wordsworth sonnet in another vein :—

" High is our calling, friend ! Creative art
(Whether the instrument of words she use
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues)
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet in the weakest part
Heroically fashioned, to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And oh ! When nature sinks as oft she may
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness :
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard." [1]

58. *No great work can be done without sincerity.*—In all these passages, I should say, there is the unmistakable quality of sincerity. To some people, unhappily, cash seems to be about the only reality, but it had nothing to do with "A Bard's Epitaph," nor with Shakespeare's contemplation of the cloud-capped towers and gorgeous palaces, nor with Dante's vision of Hell-Gate ; neither had the professional spirit, nor pedantry, nor pride, nor egotism, nor any other sinful or low motive-power. Their inspiration, first and last, was a profound interest and concern in the tremendous facts and problems of Man and the Universe. All the millionaires in the world could not present

[1] To R. B. Haydon.

mankind with gifts so precious as those given to them in great poetry.

59. *Even laughter to be genuine must be sincere.*—And whilst thus insisting upon sincerity in Literature and all other works, let it not be supposed for a moment that one is hostile to gladness, or mirth, or laughter. That were a contemptible doctrine. Lord Chesterfield was wrong in saying that "you are not to pipe and fiddle." The better advice would have been: "Don't pipe and fiddle too much; pipe and fiddle on suitable occasions." Laughter, too, may easily proceed from the heart. The fountain of laughter, as well as the fountain of tears, seems to have been created by God. There is no hostility between laughter and religion, even though Prophets and Apostles do not seem to be much given to hilarity. The point is that your laughter should be sincere from the heart outward, and not merely a facial contortion. We may see one whose smile is a kind of beatitude, whilst that of another is a mere display of teeth. In Johnsonian phrase, we should not manifest the vociferation of merriment without "the tranquillity of cheerfulness"; and, again, we shall find this genuineness of mirth making its presence felt in truly witty or humorous writings as freshly and spontaneously as the dew of a summer morning or evening upon the grass.

60. *All Nature is inspired and glorified by sincerity.*—In a word, all Nature is inspired and glorified by sincerity. Hear the birds in Spring. Do they not warble their sweet lays as with heart and soul! Listen to the sighing of the wind or to the murmuring of a brook. Regard the crash and the far-bellowing roar of the thunder. Witness the rising of the Sun, or the glowing splendours of Sunset. Nature gives us sincerity in all its forms—in gladness, seriousness, and solemnity.

61. *So, all the works of sterling men.*—And just as there is no suggestion of weak or improper motive in the splendours of Sunset, nor in any other occurrence in Nature, so in all the works of sterling men, literary, artistic, or any other kind, there must be no suggestion of weakness or insincerity. In every department of Life the first of virtues is glowing, quenchless, Godly sincerity in thought, word, and deed. We cannot have too much wisdom or too little folly either in Life or in Literature. In both the moral motive should be supreme because, intrinsically, it is of the highest importance and significance. All the greatest Literature, I surmise, is, in some way or other, concerned with the moral issues. If in these a writer is deeply absorbed, this sacred prepossession will probably enable him to express himself in the most appropriate forms. All impressive social intercourse is saturated with moral implications and moral significance either for good or evil.[1]

[1] I am utterly out of agreement with Professor Saintsbury when he says: "Generally speaking—the saying has of course the danger of the double edge, but it is true for all that,—when Good Sense comes in at the door, Ecstasy flies out of the window, and when Ecstasy flies in at the window, Good Sense and (the lower) Reason retire prudently by the door." 'History of Criticism,' Vol. ii. p. 289. It will not do. It is sound sense, I submit, that gives rise to the most witching ecstasies. Who wants ecstatic nonsense! The less of it the better. No poet, I repeat, is worth speaking about except in so far as he is sound in the Head. The same in every field of mental activity.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CROWNING GLORY.

1. *What is the quality which lifts a composition into indubitable poetry?*—But yet another step. A work should be true to Nature, according to its kind, in plot, narrative, and description. Its diction should be melodious. It should be instructive, well-proportioned, lucid, and sincere; but though possessing all these excellent qualities, it may yet fail to achieve perfection. All these qualities, indeed, are essential to, but do not necessarily imply the highest poetry. What, then, is the quality which lifts a composition into the highest rank? Is there any poetical calimeter in our tool-basket by the application of which to any composition we may be able to say with some confidence—this is perfect, and that is not?

2. *Man and Nature are complementary to each other in all their relationships.*—Let us see. It is to be noticed that, in all their relationships, Man and Nature are complementary to each other. The Farmer, for instance, can do nothing without Nature, but, on the other hand, Nature does very little without the Farmer. The engineer cannot build a bridge without the material supplied by Nature, but Nature with all her store of stones will never build a stone bridge. The learner can do nothing without the natural faculty, but the natural faculty does not make a learned man unless the learner makes faithful use of it; and

similarly in Poetry and all the Arts. The poet can do nothing of any worth without the facts presented to his notice in Nature and History, but all the facts in Nature and History will not make a poem until the creative mind of the poet takes them up and weaves them into magic tissues.

3. *The prime characteristics of the Virtue which constitutes poetry.*—The question seems to be: Does the author see his subject (great or small) with his whole soul? Has it really and truly aroused *his* emotions? Is he verily enamoured with it? Is he obviously sorrowful, or joyful and enthusiastic about it himself, and giving spontaneous utterance to his enthusiasm? If so, he has probably produced a poem; and if you be an adequately endowed person, you will see with him, feel with him, rejoice with him in his vision and presentment of the subject, and participate in the glow of his enthusiasm. In a word, we fall into the poet's mood; we are one with him; in which case we may almost take it that his art is absolute. Such seem to be the characteristics of the Virtue which constitutes poetry.[1]

4. *So of Art.*—The same in respect of Art. Thus Ruskin: "Imitation can only be of something material; but truth has reference to the statements both of the qualities of material things, and of emotions, impressions, and thoughts. There is a moral as well as material truth, a truth of im-

[1] A recent critic happily says: "Poetry must do at least four things at once—it must interest the mind; it must move the feelings; it must delight the ear; it must awaken and set thinking the imagination."—'Times Literary Supplement,' 19th May 1921, p. 321. And, in 'The Morning Post,' Mr E. B. Osborne recently wrote: "In proportion as it satisfies our spiritual needs—*i.e.*, according to its usefulness,—we rate Poetry as great, greater, greatest of all." Mr Lascelles Abercrombie defines a Work of Art as "an emotional experience so recorded as to produce an emotional experience in others"—Ib., 3rd October 1924,—which exactly corresponds with my own definition.

pression as well as of form, of thought as well as of matter; and the truth of impression and thought is a thousand times the more important of the two. Hence truth is a term of universal application, but imitation is limited to that narrow field of art which takes cognisance only of material things." [1] The sources of beauty "are not presented by any very great work of art in a form of pure transcript. They invariably receive the reflection of the mind under whose influence they have passed, and are modified or coloured by its image." [2] In the same way the poet's mind is reflected in his poem. Mere topographical delineation of a landscape is not sufficient. "The aim of the great inventive landscape painter must be to give the far higher and deeper truth of mental vision rather than that of physical facts, and to reach a representation which, though it may be totally useless to engineers and geographers, . . . shall yet be capable of producing on the far-away beholder's mind precisely the impression which the reality would have produced." [3]

5. *The poet and his emotions must be taken to be part of Nature.*—We will now endeavour to illustrate the doctrine in relationship to poetry. Take a night scene from 'Paradise Lost':—

> "Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
> Had in her sober livery all things clad;
> Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
> They to their grassy couch, these to their nest,
> Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale:
> She all night long her amorous descant sung.
> Silence was pleased. How glowed the firmament
> With living sapphires: Hesperus that led
> The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
> Rising in clouded majesty, at length,
> Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
> And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw." [4]

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[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i. p. 24. [2] Ib., Vol. ii. p. 151.
[3] Ib., Vol. iv. pp. 23-24. [4] 'Paradise Lost,' Bk. iv.

In every line of it, I think, is discernible absolute sincerity in the poet, pure love of Nature, perfect poetic rapture—all resulting in an exquisite night-picture of the Heavens and the Earth. As far as I can see, there is in this picture no appearance of effort at all, no suggestion of simulated feeling. On the contrary, every line of it seems to have been inspired by true and deep emotion. What space, tone, serenity, beauty, sublimity in the picture!

6. *Poetic interpretation.*—Let it be noticed that the sights and sounds which the poet here records are not a mere succession of poor, soulless, mechanical incidents, but are rather a kind of living though inarticulate language, evoking the sweetest of feelings within the well-strung heart. In the gradual coming on of night, there is something more than a change from light to darkness: there is the rich suggestion of labour accomplished—of well-earned rest and repose. As the cattle lie down for the night, say, in rich pasture, breathing a long breath of satisfaction and beginning to ruminate, and as the voices of the birds become silent, we are witnesses not only of animal actions but of social moods and doings which arouse our human sympathies towards our humbler fellow-creatures. When, in the beginning of the night, a nightingale pours forth its music from a leafy grove, we do not merely think of a little feathered biped making a noise, but of a sweet bird warbling lullaby to Nature. In short, all Nature is full of moods; of voices communicative of such moods, and of appearances suggestive of them. Some of the birds give us vespers and morning hymns. In autumn the robin seems to warble dirges as it sits on the house-top, or on some bare branch of a tree. The sparrow gives us its cheery chirp; the rook, its complacent caw. The curlew sounds

a melancholy moorland note; the owl gives us a weird ghostly to-whoo. The vernal woods breathe hope and gladness: in summer they become suggestive of fulfilled ambitions; in autumn they are gorgeously eloquent of transitory glories; in winter they speak of desolation. The thunder expresses wrath; the tempest, fury. The ocean and the brook are full of moods. The rising Sun is divine strength; the rising moon is queenly majesty. Such is poetic interpretation.

7. *Deep feeling must precede noble expression.*—Now, as already remarked, the poet is the man who by his works can produce the same kind of effect upon us as Nature produces by her presence and her voices.[1] It is thus that he acquires the name of Poet or Maker. But before he can give utterance to such living words, it is quite evident that his own heart must be fully responsive to the rich language and influences of Nature. Deep feeling must precede noble expression. It takes the subjective *self* as well as the objective *not-self* to make up the inspired poem, or picture, or piece of any kind. Unless the poet's self has, in the first place, been thrilled with this language of Nature, all the products of his muse will be mere mouthing—mere muscular pump-work; there will be no poetic afflatus at all in his poetical outbreathings. The heart thrilled as well as the object thrilling it is included under Nature. The poet surveying Nature, with all his perceptions and emotions in unison, must, I repeat, be taken and considered as part of Nature. Milton surveying, or, rather, contemplating Nature, is, for poetical purposes, complementary to Nature.

8. *The Ideal, in its poetical sense, is Nature seen through Man.*—Bearing in mind that Nature includes Man the poet, with all his emotions, we

[1] See chap. iii. on 'The Sources of Poetry.'

are enabled, to some extent, to dispose of the difficulties attaching to the word " ideal "—a word frequently used in a very vague manner, and, at other times, as if it were something quite apart from the Natural. Such a conception of the ideal I take to be wholly false. Let it be always borne in mind that Nature includes Man—not merely the Darwinian or anthropoid Man, but the Divine Man, the poet, inclusive of all his ideals of perfect love and beauty with all the corresponding emotions to which they give rise. In a word, the ideal, in its poetical sense, is Nature seen through Man.

9. *Truth to Nature includes pure Ideality.*—Thus, in its fullest sense, absolute truth to Nature will be found to include pure Ideality. The noblest poem will set forth Nature as she is seen and felt by the healthiest and most fully endowed mind. An ignorant peasant, indeed, may see the same kind of things as John Milton saw, and hear the same kind of sounds as he heard—darkness coming down, silence with it, bird and beast going to rest, moon rising, and so forth ; but very different in degree the emotions produced by such sights and sounds on the poet and on the peasant respectively ; at all events, how differently would they express their emotions ! But, of course, we should be entitled to take Milton's account as the better rendering of Nature.

10. *Analysis of the Miltonic night-scene.*—Bearing these considerations in mind, let us now proceed to a more particular examination of the lines quoted above ; analysing its perfections, let us see how they are made up.

Firstly, I should say that they evince absolute sincerity on the part of the poet—pure delight in the scene which he has in contemplation. His are no hired or artificial raptures. The paltry

soul of professionalism has not entered into his labours. The scene which engages his contemplation has not been chosen as a mere theme for the display of pretty words and empty extravagancies. On the contrary, the poet is manifestly found in pure loving communion with Nature, and the poem is the heartfelt and melodious expression of his appreciation and his love.

Secondly, almost every line of the poem is absolutely true to Nature, not merely a cold and colourless photographic production, but Nature as felt and reflected from the full-orbed human soul. It is simply the faithful account of a beauteous night-scene as witnessed and felt by John Milton, or by any one fit to enter into full communion with Nature and him. Thus considered, the words of the poet are so true to Nature, so expressive of her loveliest moods, that in accordance with the general canon of poetical excellence which I have asserted, they produce the very same kind of effect upon us as would Nature herself, if we were placed amid the circumstances which they describe. Take the poem to pieces, and I surmise you will find that this is true :—

" Now came still evening on "—

a simple assertion of the progress of a constantly repeated but beautiful occurrence.

" And twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad "—

a lovely figurative, but imaginatively true, statement of the effects of deepening twilight upon the landscape.

" Silence accompanied "—

simple truth to Nature ; no verbiage ; no strug-

gling and straining after pretty speech; no rhetoric; no tin-ware.

> "For beast and bird
> They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
> Had slunk."

Again, simple truth to beautiful Nature, except, perhaps, in the work "slunk," which, I think, scarcely well describes either the couching of the beasts or the gentle retreat of the birds.

> "All but the wakeful nightingale;
> She, all night long, her amorous descant sung."

Still pure description of Nature with an added personal interpretation, so to speak, of the nightingale's song—an interpretation which is, at the same time, perfectly convincing and satisfactory to the reader. But to continue—

> "Silence was pleased."

The poet's personal impression of the effects produced by the bird's sweet music in the stillness of the night; the poet's personal impression of those effects simply though metaphorically expressed, with no rant, no fustian about it at all. Then—

> "How glowed the firmament
> With living sapphires."

A descriptive reverent expression of admiration, in which we can all join with him, bringing up before us not only the glorious star-spangled scene —"the jewelled darkness of night" (in the fine phrase of Mr Stephen Graham)—but the devout poet in solemn heart-communion with it; whilst the concluding lines—

> "Hesperus that led the starry host, rode brightest," &c.,

are but another simple description of another oft-recurring event in the nocturnal Heavens, inter-

preted, idealised, vivified by the poet's imagination. For, as previously remarked, it takes the subjective self as well as the objective not-self to make up the material for the inspired poem, somewhat in the same way as it requires the musician to educe music from the organ. The Subjective is the complement of the Objective. It is the spiritual contribution to the poem: the resulting fusion or harmony is poesy.

Thirdly, the poem exhibits not only truth to Nature in all its details, but an economic selection of beautiful natural circumstances. There is no attempt to tell everything that could be thought about; no crowding of the canvas or parchment.

Fourthly, having made his selection of beautiful occurrences and circumstances, the poet arranges and composes them with perfect taste and harmony. He knows exactly what to do with his materials, so as to exhibit them to the best advantage. Set all the glories of Nature before the mere poetaster or bardling, and he will give you a poor inflated account of them, decorated over with tinsel, falsehood, and vulgarity. Take a poet to a clear brookside, and he will either be silent about it altogether, or say something truly descriptive or interpretive concerning it. The same in other lines. Lay the choicest flowers of Flora in the lap of one domestic artist, and, if flowers indeed can be vulgarised, she will but make them up into a bundle of coloured vegetable products. Give another a few blossoms from a cottage garden, and she will combine them into a bouquet for the Gods. The same law runs through all poetry, all art. In the lines under criticism Milton shows his mastery in this art of selection and arrangement.

Fifthly, in diction the poem resounds with

melody, yields us the fine music and resonance of blank verse at its best. Notice throughout the coincidence between the pauses of sense and melody. "It may be affirmed without hesitation that their coincidence in verse is a capital beauty." [1]

Indeed, to sum up, this night-scene is almost demonstrably perfect, filled with sincerity and love of the subject; true to beautiful Nature in every line; harmonious in its composition; melodious in its verse; communicative of the poet's raptures; a joy for ever. Coin, conceit, pedantry, professionalism, rhetoric, vice of any kind, have nothing to do with it—simply nothing.

11. *With the foregoing scene compare an uninspired piece from Cowper.* — With this inspired and inspiring poetry let us now compare what may be regarded as a merely didactic yet, in its way, excellent piece from Cowper. It runs thus:—

> "Where now the vital energy that moved
> When summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
> Through the imperceptible meandering veins
> Of leaf and flower? It sleeps, and the icy touch
> Of unprolific winter has impressed
> A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
> But let the months go round, a few short months,
> And all shall be restored. These naked shoots,
> Barren as lances, among which the wind
> Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
> Shall put their graceful foliage on again;
> And more aspiring and with ampler spread,
> Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost.
> Then each in its peculiar honours clad,
> Shall publish even to the distant eye,
> Its family and tribe," [2]

and so on. Now, though these verses have truth in them and a kind of genuine worth of their own, they have, I should say, little poetic vitality.

[1] Kames, 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. p. 103.
[2] 'The Task,' vi. 135-49; 'Works,' Vol. ix. pp. 236-7.

They are written mainly from the didactic or improving point of view, not from the rapturously poetic point of view. They are the work of honest volition, not the inspired chant of spontaneity. They are true in the analytic or scientific, but not in the synthetic or constructive—not in the poetic or creative, sense. To teach is right. In opposition to a great many critics I hold that all great Literature does teach, but it does not teach obtrusively—not as *ex cathedra. Every poem worthy of the name must have a strong emotional origin. The primary task of the man of science, as such, is to expound the meaning of Nature; the primary task of the poet and of the literary artist is to give voice to her emotions. The didactic intention must not be obvious in the poem.* In these lines it is not only obvious but intrusive. "Vital energy," "pure and subtle lymph," "imperceptible meandering veins," "intestine tides," "peculiar honours," "publishing their families and tribes to the distant eye"—all such language is, I would suggest, more the phrasing, more represents the attitude, of the peering scientific man than of the rapt poetical spirit vibrating to the touch of Nature.

> "Where now the vital energy that moved
> When summer was?"

Where, indeed? But the question is tame and dry, as is most of the passage. It is simply a scientific inquiry. Some parts of it might be quoted for didactic purposes; no part scarcely for poetic truth of Nature, or as expressive of the charm of poetic delight.

12. *And also an inspired piece.*—But we should be at once unjust to Cowper and untrue to ourselves if we did not go to him for a picture

for our gallery. Take the following October scene :—

> " 'Twas on the morn of an autumnal day,
> October hight, but mild and fair as May ;
> When scarlet fruits the russet hedge adorn,
> And floating films envelop every thorn ;
> When gently as in June the rivers glide,
> And only miss the flowers that grace their side :
> The linnet twittered out her parting song,
> And many a chorister the woods among ;
> On Southern banks the ruminating sheep
> Lay snug and warm : 'twas summer's farewell peep." [1]

Here is as fair a picture as one need wish to hang in the gallery of memory. Wherein do its merits lie ? I think they can be fairly well indicated. Notice, in the first place, its perfect truth not only to Nature (for that is not enough) but to beautiful Nature : a mild, calm day in Autumn ; the russet hedge adorned with scarlet berries ; the gossamer reaching from twig to twig—marvellous alike in tenuity and tenacity ; the river lazily gliding through its lowland channel ; the linnet softly warbling its sweet dirge ; the sheep placidly enjoying the mellow after-glow of summer : all these particulars, I submit, are not only exactly true to Nature but to beautiful Nature. The whole picture is full of the slumberous and pensive calm of Autumn. It does not give us Nature dissected and anatomised as in the last case, but Nature whole, living, and beautiful. Notice further the perfect lucidity of the description and the fine melody of the diction ; the whole picture, we are convinced, being pervaded by the purest spirit of spontaneity, sincerity, and delight, all of which is duly communicated to the receptive reader. This passage possessing such merits, will be charming and quotable to all time—quotability, I always

[1] 'Anti-Thelyphthora,' Works, Vol. viii. p. 115.

think, being one of the highest tests of poetical and of general literary excellence.

13. *A stanza from Keats.*—Now take a stanza from Keats :—

> " O what can ail thee, Knight-at-arms,
> Alone and palely loitering ?
> *The sedge has withered from the lake,*
> *And no birds sing.*" [1]

No doubt as to the presence of the poetic afflatus in these lines. They vividly bring before us a scene of wintry desolation, and enable us to participate in the mood and feelings of the poet concerning it.

14. *An old Ballad.*—Now glance at an old ballad :—

> " Hie upon Hielands,
> And laigh upon Tay ;
> Bonnie George Campbell
> Rode out on a day.
>
> " He saddled, he bridled,
> And gallant rode he,
> *And hame cam his guid horse,*
> *But never cam he.*
>
> " Out cam his mother dear,
> Greetin' fu sair,
> And out cam his bonnie bryde
> Rivin her hair.
>
> " The meadow lies green,
> The corn is unshorn,
> But bonnie George Campbell
> Will never return." [2]

The author of the Ballad is unknown, but who can fail to feel the tragedy of it ? Who can doubt its poetical good faith ?

15. " *The Lass of Livingstane.*"—Give ear to

[1] ' La Belle Dame Sans Merci.'
[2] Child, ' English and Scottish Ballads.'

Lady Nairne's Ballad, "The Lass of Livingstane":—

"Oh, wha will dry the dreepin' tear
She sheds her lane, she sheds her lane?
Or wha the bonnie lass will cheer
Of Livingstane, of Livingstane?
The crown was half on Charlie's head,
Ae gladsome day, ae gladsome day;
The lads that shouted joy to him
Are in the clay, are in the clay.

"Her waddin' gown was waled and won, (*chosen and bought*)
It ne'er was on, it ne'er was on;
Culloden Field, his lowly bed,
She thought upon, she thought upon.
The bloom has faded frae her cheek
In youthfu' prime, in youthfu' prime;
And sorrow's witherin' touch has done
The deed o' time, the deed o' time."

No words are necessary to emphasise the living power of this little poem. Truth to Nature in every touch, melodious expression, transparent sincerity, deepest feeling; and I think we may safely conclude that any who remain unimpressed by it must either be very stupid or deaf to the voice of Poetry.

16. *A few lines from Whitman.*—In a word, the poet is so filled with the spirit of his theme, and he himself is so charged with the sorrow or the joy of his emotions, that he is able to convey them to the intelligent listener and to draw him into living sympathy with them. Test again by a few verses from Whitman on a totally different kind of theme:—

"O magnet South! O glistening, perfumed South! My South!
O quick mettle, rich blood, impulse and love! Good and Evil!
O, all dear to me!
O, dear to me my birth-things—all moving things and the trees
Where I was born,—the grains, plants, rivers,
Dear to me my own sluggish rivers where they flow, distant
Over flats of silvery sands or through swamps,

> Dear to me the Roanoke, the Savannah, and the Sabine,
> O pensive far away wandering, I return with my soul
> To haunt their banks again." [1]

And although we have never been there, *we*, too, haunt them with him in glowing sympathy. Such verses show how simple a poem may be—that if it be sincere and true to Nature, and provided it be charged with such feelings as engage our sympathy, and gives the impression of human relationship and attachment to the scene it describes, it may consist of little more than a catalogue of names and places with their associations.

17. *The Crowning Glory.*—Nashe calls Poetry "the hunny of all flowers, the quintessence of all sciences, the marrow of witte, and the very phrase of the Angels." [2] More simply and less fancifully I think we may take it to be *Sincere thought suffused with emotion and melodiously expressed.* The Poet makes you participate with him in his thoughts and feelings; you become as one with him in his sorrows and joys and raptures according to the measure of their intensity. "This is the true office of the masters of all the ideal arts, to evoke, as did the rising sun on Memnon, the sleeping beauty and music and melody of another's soul, to make every reader a poet, every onlooker an artist, every listener eloquent and tuneful, so be it that they have the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the loving and understanding heart." [3] To this desired end the Muses are in constant alliance with COMMON SENSE.

[1] 'Leaves of Grass,' pp. 359-60. In another vein, read some of his "Drum-Taps"—*e.g.*, "Come up from the fields, Father," or "Vigils strange I kept on the field one night," or "A March in the ranks hard-prest."—Ib., pp. 236-9.

[2] 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 63 (Grosart).

[3] Dr John Brown, 'Horæ Subsecivæ,' Vol. iii. p. 22.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

The Vagaries of Critics. (P. 22.)

The quarrel between authors and critics is indeed perennial. Thus Johnson: "Whoever aspires to the notice of the public has in almost every man an enemy and a rival, and must struggle with the opposition of the daring and elude the stratagems of the timorous; must quicken the frigid and soften the obdurate; must reclaim perverseness and inborn stupidity." [1] Goldsmith: "The rewards of mediocrity are immediately paid; those attending excellence, generally in reversion." [2] When one asked Burns whether the Edinburgh literati had mended his poems by their criticisms, he replied: "These gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine that it is neither fit for weft nor woof." [3] Lamb speaks of "the labours of years turned into contempt by scoundrels." [4] Ruskin complains that for year after year it was necessary for him to pursue his work "through the abuse of the brutal and the base." [5] Unhappily, the history of Literature exhibits many such excesses. Notoriously the early attacks on Byron and Keats were particularly revolting. Caliban criticising Prospero is always one of the ugliest sights under the sun. Far better for a critic to hold horses in the streets honestly than to splash ink on any author ignorantly and dishonestly. The honest man of ink is a venerable person, but the canker-mouthed literary Caliban——! It is an offensive monster that can

[1] 'The Rambler,' No. 127. [2] 'Miscellaneous Works,' Vol. vi. p. 6.
[3] Wilson, 'Life of Burns,' p. 181. [4] 'Works,' Vol. ii. p. 99.
[5] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. v., note, p 302.

only be reformed, perhaps, through fear of agues and agonies. They are like the ass in the fable. An ass wandering near a village in the evening saw the light of the rising moon beyond a hill. "Ho, ho, Master Redface," said he, "you are going to point out my long ears to the villagers, are you? I'll meet you at the top of the hill and set my heels into you." So he scrambled painfully up thither, "and stood outlined against the broad disc of the unconscious luminary, a more conspicuous ass than ever before." [1]

On the other hand, in the case of writers of reputation, either deserved or undeserved, the constant tendency of critics is to fall into high-sounding eulogies over them. See, for instance, the 'Athenæum' panegyric on Tennyson's 'Beckett,' January 1885, p. 7; on Meredith's 'Diana of the Crossways,' March 1885, pp. 339-40; on 'Rhoda Fleming,' July 1886, pp. 137-8; on 'The Amazing Marriage,' 1895, Vol. ii. p. 748. Even our greater men are all too apt to fall into indiscriminate admiration of the Shakespeares and Goethes, and to break out into bloated panegyrics upon them—Carlyle, for example.[2] See also his prepossessions in favour of Novalis. After quoting a long mystifying passage from that author, he remarks: "The judicious reader will suspect that more may be meant than meets the ear" [3]; whereas, in a writer outside his sympathies, I am afraid he would have called it "clotted nonsense." Schiller's 'Wallenstein' he characterises as "a vast and magnificent work." [4] If he had not been prepossessed in favour of Schiller, he would scarcely, I surmise, have spoken of it in such terms. Such is the difficulty of obtaining genuine critical opinion.

So with the art critics. "When once a painter's reputation is accredited, it must be a stubborn kind of person indeed whom he will not please, or seem to please; for all the vain and weak people pretend to be pleased with him for their own credit's sake, and all the humble and imaginative people seriously and honestly fancy they *are* pleased with him, deriving, indeed, very certainly delight from his work, but a delight which, if they were kept in the same temper, they would equally derive from the

[1] 'Fun,' 1872-3.
[2] See his 'Miscellaneous Essays,' Vol. ii. pp. 437-8.
[3] Ib., p. 32.
[4] 'Life of Schiller,' p. 150.

grossest daub that can be manufactured in imitation by the pawnbroker." [1] Bearing upon this subject, Talfourd, in his 'Life of Charles Lamb,' records an amusing incident that occurred at the exhibition of one of Haydon's pictures, "The Entry into Jerusalem." "When the crowd of visitors, distinguished in rank or talent, stood doubting whether in the countenance of the chief figure the daring attempt to present an aspect differing from that which had enkindled the devotion of ages—to mingle the human with the Divine, resolution with sweetness, dignified composure with the anticipation of mighty suffering—had not failed, Mrs Siddons walked slowly up to the centre of the room, surveyed it in silence for a minute or two, and then ejaculated in her deep, low, thrilling voice, 'It is perfect!' quelled all opposition, and removed the doubt, from his own mind at least, for ever." [2]

Per contra, read 'The Athenæum' and 'The Literary Gazette' opinions of the Turner pictures in the 1842 Academy.[3] They must be at once both amusing and terrifying to original artists, especially the facetious ribaldry of 'The Athenæum.' Ruskin himself is very severe on Hazlitt and others as art critics. "I ought," says he, "to have apologised before now for not having studied sufficiently in Covent Garden to be provided with terms of correct and classical criticism. One of my friends begged me to observe the other day that Claude was 'pulpy'; another added the yet more gratifying information that he was 'juicy'; and it is now happily discovered that Cuyp is 'downy.'" [4]

Again, 'The Athenæum,' which fell so savagely on 'Modern Painters,' saw in Ruskin's wooden verses "coinage from the true mint," whilst 'The Literary Gazette' discovered in him "all the force and spirit of Byron"; and 'The Torch' welcomed in him "a new fountain for the old poetic waters." [5]

In 'The Sunday Times' of 7th November 1921, Mr Ernest Newman makes some excellent remarks on the musical critics. "The uncompromising partisans of the old music," says he, "are almost as much at fault as those

[1] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. iii. pp. 142-3.
[2] P. 204.
[3] Cook, 'Life of Ruskin,' Vol. i. p. 128.
[4] 'Modern Painters,' Vol. i. p. 222.
[5] Cook, 'Life of Ruskin,' Vol. i. p. 91.

(of the new). They have not used their judgment as critically as they should have done on the music of the past. They have blindly accepted a good deal of inferior music from the great men merely because they were great; and so they have put a good many false coins in circulation. Bach is sometimes dull; Beethoven, sometimes turgid; Mozart, sometimes empty." (I surmise it is so.) "The plain man feels them to be so in this work or that; and it only confuses his standards when he sees that the people, who are supposed to know their Bach or Beethoven or Mozart inside out, apparently admire a wretched page of their idol as greatly as an inspired one." (A similar commentary might be made on what goes on probably in almost every department of learning and action. The very idiocies of celebrated persons are sometimes taken to have been strokes of genius.) "In short, the time has come for that transvaluation of all values in music that Nietzsche desired in another sphere. All our histories of music need rewriting in the light of music as it is now. Historians must learn to tell the truth about the inferior work of even the greatest composers. There must be one critical law for the rich and for the poor; one standard of judgment that is valid for all music, old and new." Parallel remarks would exactly apply to most of the critics of all the Philosophies and Theologies, all the Literatures and Arts. Ignorant praise may be as harmful as ignorant condemnation.

NOTE B.

ALLEGORY. (P. 139.)

The allegorical obsessions and predeterminations of the mediæval poets and romancers lead not only their readers but themselves into constant embarrassments and tormenting imbroglios. Much of their allegory fails in its "second intention." In Malory, for instance, we read, "Then Arthur drew his sword Excalibur, but it was so bright in his enemies' eyes that it gave light like thirty torches."—'Morte d'Arthur,' Bk. i. chap. vii. What is here symbolised?

"Me liketh better the sword, said Arthur. Ye are more unwise, said Merlin, for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword, for while ye have the scabbard upon you, ye shall never lose no blood be ye never so sore wounded."—Ib., chap. 13. "Gerlon the marvelest knight that is now living, for he destroyeth many good Knights, for he goeth invisible."—Bk. ii. chap. xiv. What do such things mean? Nothing is of any account without clear meaning. "Morgan Le Fay shaped herself, horse and man, by enchantment into a great marble stone."—Ib. She sends to Arthur a deadly mantle studded with diamonds.—Ib., chap. xvi. Gareth is presented with a magic ring by the lady of Liones. —Bk. viii. chap. xxix. So in 'Orlando Furioso,' Bradamant, the sister of Rinaldo, possesses an invincible spear, and unhorses every antagonist. Rogero, her admirer, possesses a winged horse and a marvellous shield which blinds the eyes of all beholders. Brunello possesses a magic ring; Astolpho, a magic spear; Orlando, a magic sword, Durindane; Rogero, a wonderful weapon, Belisarda. It is all very tiresome. The magic ring, I see, is supposed to symbolise Reason (viii. 2), under the influence of which he sees Alcina turned into a hideous hag (vii.); but how cumbersome is all such mechanism! Orlando is cured of his madness by washing, and breathing from a mystic cup (xxxix). Then in Spenser, what is symbolised by Arthur's Shield? ('Faërie Queene,' vii. 35; viii. 20), or by the looking-glass which King Ryence received from Merlin (iii. ii. 19), or the enchanted spear of Britomart? (Bk. iv. 4). And what about the swords Colado and Tison, and the horn Bavieca in 'The Chronicle of the Cid'? Similar questions are continually arising in Dante's great work, and sometimes in Dunbar—*e.g.*, in 'The Goldin Terge.' So, in 'The Lay of the Nibelungs.' Siegfried, called upon to distribute the treasures of the Nibelungs, does so, and is rewarded with the Nibelung's sword, but

"Ere he could end the sharing, they had begun the fight";

whereupon he falls upon them and routs them—

"With their good sword resistless that was ycleped Balmung."

What is symbolised by this resistless sword? Again, Siegfried

> "Did slay a dragon with his own hand and sword,
> And in its blood he bathed him till horny grew his skin,
> And thus no sword can cut him, as hath been often seen."
>
> St. 100.

His "Hood of Darkness," Tarnhelm, gives him miraculous strength. It

> "Was fashioned in such a wondrous way
> That any man who wore it could carry out straightway
> Whatever thing he wanted, whilst no man could him see:
> Therewith he won Brunhilda, when mickle woe had he."
>
> St. 338.

What is symbolised by the "Hood of Darkness"? Again—

> "The valiant Volka drew
> A fiddle-bow, a strong one, and long and mighty too,
> Which to a sword had likeness, right keen and broad of blade."
>
> St. 1785.

What does this mean? Or take the whole allegory of Rabelais. As a story it is crude, gross, and quite gratuitously obscene—obscene as if from relish of obscenity; whilst as symbolism it does not very palpably hit any mark. The commentators and translators laboriously try indeed to show, but not very successfully, I am afraid, that he hits many marks; but the very fact of such attempts having to be made shows very conclusively, I should say, that the allegorist has failed in his main object. The implied intention of the allegorist is, I suppose, to make his lesson more vivid by his allegory than by plain narrative. What is the use of satire if you have to strain your ingenuity to make out what it means? I take Rabelais to be among the least worthy of all authors of great repute.

To take a modern instance, Stevenson in his 'Will-o-the-Mill' writes a kind of allegory the second intention of which does not seem to me to be very clear.

In old days Allegory also invaded the provinces of Theology and Philosophy, "treated their categories as

independent beings ; and poetry and art had but little to add in order to give them personality." [1]

Lord Kames shows that metaphors and allegories should be short.[2] But it would be a safe rule never to allegorise at all unless by so doing the allegorist can give vitality, clarity, and point to his doctrine.

NOTE C.

IMAGINATION. (P. 133.)

There is much vague talk about the Imagination. Hobbes had a funny notion of it. It is, says he, "nothing else but sense decaying or weakened by the absence of the object," [3] with much elaborated nonsense on the subject. Hume had quite a crude conception of its functions.[4] Dugald Stewart wrote : "The province of imagination is to select qualities and circumstances from a variety of different objects, and by combining and disposing these to form a new creation of its own. In this appropriated sense of the word it coincides with what some authors have called a creative or poetical imagination," [5] all very crude and inadequate. What has this process to do, say, with the imagination manifested in Dante's 'Inferno'? Hamilton and others fail to disentangle the Imagination from the other faculties, and confuse the whole subject.[6] The Imagination, he declares, produces and creates nothing ; that "it only rearranges parts—it only builds up old materials into new forms" ; and that in reference to this act it ought to be called not the *productive* or *creative*, but the *plastic*." What old materials was Dunbar building up into new forms when he wrote his great poem, 'The Dance of the Seven Deidly Synnis'? According to Spencer Baynes, "Imagination is the faculty which retains, gathers up, and realises our experiences." What experiences did Burns gather up and realise when he wrote his "Address to the Deil," or

[1] Burckhardt, 'The Renaissance in Italy,' pp. 408-9.
[2] 'Elements of Criticism,' Vol. ii. p. 285.
[3] 'English Works,' Vol. i. p. 396.
[4] 'Essays Moral and Literary,' Vol. ii. p. 42.
[5] 'Collected Works,' Vol. ii. p. 26.
[6] See 'Lectures on Metaphysics,' Vol. ii. pp. 265-6, 500.

described the dance of warlocks and witches in Alloway Kirk, and detailed the gruesome setting of it? Like Hamilton, Poe asserts that Imagination is not creative, that "all novel conceptions are merely unusual combinations." His own poem "The Raven" was, for instance, an "unusual combination" of—what? Imagination and Invention are discussed in 'The Athenæum,' 1886, Vol. ii. p. 197.

NOTE D.

LUCIDITY. (P. 202.)

A recent critic incidentally speaks of "'the whorls of fluted sound,' the subtle cadences, the quintessential extracts of thought and feeling in 'The House of Life'"—speaks of it, in short, as if it were something very exquisitely fine and altogether magical. I must confess that this kind of talk is sheer jargon to me. I hold, for my part, that all great poets and philosophers are great mainly in so far as they are capable of making a great appeal to Smith and Brown, because they have so much of those gentlemen in them, not because they have so little, as some of the critics seem to suggest; not because they have so little of common humanity in them, or that they are so vapourish, but because they are vitalised with the best elements of humanity. Thus I am of opinion that when a writer is very vague, or very cryptic, or very subtle, he ceases to the extent of his vagueness, crypticism, or subtlety to be either a poet or a philosopher, but contrariwise, becomes an egotist or vain person; perhaps an oddity, simply; perhaps a humbug or a charlatan; perhaps a bore. Further, in so far as a man can only make his appeal to specialists, I should say that either as poet or philosopher his claims must be small.

At his best no great literary genius needs commentators and elucidators. In so far as a great genius even needs elucidation, I doubt if he is a great genius. He is at his worst when he is obscure—he is a babbler and a barbarian unto me. It is always the first function of genius to elucidate a subject, to show it in its fulness as far as possible.

It should be considered that Emotion can only spring from that which is clearly known and strongly felt, and that in no case can it spring from the obscure and perplexed. All obscurity and perplexity in thought and utterance absolutely defeat any rational purpose the writer may have in view. Thus it happens that so many poets and philosophers are constantly defeating themselves and harassing their readers. If a gentleman talking in the bad Browningesque manner were to buttonhole me in Eternity, I should make a very sincere effort either to reform him or to break away from him. In order to excite emotion, which is the first and most precious function of Poetry, your meaning, I repeat, *must* be clear; and the clearer your meaning, the more effective will your power be. Let all poets mark, learn, and inwardly digest this great truth, and be admonished to hate obscurity.

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