APHORISMS AND REFLECTIONS:

A

MISCELLANY OF THOUGHT AND OPINION.

BY

WILLIAM BENTON CLULOW.

"Le jugement est un outil à tous sujets,
et se mêle par tout."—*Montaigne.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Of the following work but little other account can be given than that it contains the results of meditation, casual, or pursued with more continuity, as the impulse of the writer dictated. The volume has grown out of a former one under the title of "Horæ Otiosæ, or Thoughts, Maxims, and Opinions." Had that title been retained, the book would have borne some affinity to those vessels of our old navigators which had made the voyage of the world, and which, though called by the same names, could show scarcely a plank or other part of the structure unchanged. Suffice it to express a hope that the medley of notions, fancies, and allusions here offered to the public, may serve to occupy a vacant hour, or stimulate to speculations more ingenious and elaborate.

ERRATA.

Page 78, line 5, for *distinguished* read *distinguishing*.
— 100, — 7, for *timber* read *tinder*.
— 276, — 4, (note) for *comprehension* read *composition*.
— 282, — 5, for *has* read *as his*.
— 381, — 12, for *delayed* read *denied*.

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APHORISMS AND REFLECTIONS.

ON CHARACTER.

I.

Character is composed of detached qualities, which are generally elicited by circumstances. If a person therefore marked down each particular trait, at the time of its disclosure, he would at length be furnished with the elements of a correct portrait; but to complete the picture, it would be necessary to combine the separate features in a certain order or relative disposition. Suppose a statue were broken into fragments, what sort of representation would the pieces convey in their disjointed form? or even if again united, unless the several parts were adjusted to each other according to their respective proportions? The lineaments of mind are sometimes depicted as the landscapes on old China, the effect of which is but grotesque from the want of symmetry and perspective.

II.

The generality of men have no ruling passion, but spend their days in a kind of passive acquiescence,

and are borne on unconsciously by the tide of life. A ruling passion requires mental energy, of which most people are destitute. I do not apply the appellation to what would properly be termed a hobby, of which Sterne has delineated so amusing a specimen—though many are without the tinge of any whimsical peculiarity—nor to a transient impulse towards a particular end, to be succeeded perhaps by another impulse, equally strong and not less transient. But that I call a ruling passion which is the main object of a person's existence, and to which his thoughts, aspirations, and efforts, ultimately or more nearly tend. When this can be discovered, which is not always done even where the feeling has the strongest hold, it is the key to the whole being, nor is Pope's representation at all over-coloured.

III.

Perhaps it is questionable whether the nature of man has been developed in a degree at all proportionate to its structure and resources. What imagination could have dreamed, in the earlier ages of the world, that he was capable of those varieties of action which he has since exhibited? or that so peculiar a combination of mental and moral qualities was possible as some persons have possessed? If we can conceive that with the same faculties and susceptibilities mankind could be placed under a new system of external influences, may we not conclude that their characters would be so differently moulded that they might almost pass for another order of beings? Fancy

for a moment the disparity between the attributes of a person while an inhabitant of earth, and when existing in a spiritual or disembodied state. To what could the alteration be ascribed but to the change in his circumstances, or his introduction to new scenes, and exposure to a new class of impressions?

IV.

Whatever an abstract or a primary view may seem to suggest, there is not perhaps more originality of character in remote and thinly-peopled districts, than in cities or populous towns, where modes and superficial resemblance often hide the distinctions that really exist. Men however are so much influenced by mutual association, and the conventional forms of life, that a general similarity of taste and manner is apt to be acquired by intermixture with a large circle of acquaintance; as the hardest substances lose their inequalities or prominences by frequent collision with other bodies.

V.

In some persons we may observe a profusion of feeling, which if left to its own operation, will expend itself on a multiplicity of trivial or vexatious objects. The remedy is to have some elevated pursuit or passion which shall absorb the feelings. Excess of sensibility will not then waste itself on trifles, and concentration of feeling on a specific object may tend to facilitate its attainment.

VI.

To gain a correct acquaintance with human nature, it is not necessary to move in a public or extensive sphere. A more limited circle of observation conduces to greater minuteness and accuracy. A public mode of life is favourable to a knowledge of manners; a private, to a knowledge of character. Montaigne, so far as his general habits are concerned, appears to have mingled little with the world, answering in most particulars to the idea of a philosophical recluse; yet his writings display extraordinary familiarity with man, his foibles, sentiments, and passions. Few persons of liberal tastes and education have passed their days in closer retirement than Shenstone; but to say nothing of his poetical performances—his Schoolmistress, or the traits interspersed in his Elegies and miscellaneous pieces—the prose essays which he has left behind evince a shrewdness of perception, and a penetration into the springs of conduct, not often found in those who spend their existence amidst the bustle of society. A similar remark may be applied to Cowper, and no inconsiderable number of our poets and most sagacious moral writers.

VII.

Those that pride themselves on the discernment of faults and imperfections in others, frequently overshoot the mark in their calculations of conduct. They seem to consider man only as a selfish being, and

forget that he is also the subject of imagination, caprice, affection, besides various complex principles and sentiments, which have all a material influence on his behaviour. To these inaccurate notions respecting mankind, the writings of certain philosophers and popular moralists have in some degree contributed. It is not improbable that the ethical speculations of Hobbes, so much in vogue in the time of Charles the Second, though now little read, have not yet lost their effect. There are multitudes of false maxims in Rochefoucault; not perhaps that he takes too disparaging a view of human nature as a whole, but making no allowance for the operation of instinctive feeling or of fancy, he attributes almost every action to some definable motive, and every emotion to an interested or unworthy origin. For the tone of this severe but acute critic of his species, the best apology, no doubt, is the circumstance that he drew his observations from a heartless and dissipated court: but it is curious to remark how, sometimes, the rarest sagacity can be neutralized by malignity of disposition in forming sinister auguries. Iago appears to have expressed his real belief when he said, as many without his villany or his shrewdness would be ready enough in the like case to think, that Desdemona would not be constant in her attachment.

VIII.

An accurate delineation of the mental properties of almost any one would include some traits never be-

fore presented, or never in the same combination; and his biography would no doubt be deeply interesting if it fell into competent hands. The question is not so much, who is the subject? as, what are the qualifications of the writer? It is noted in Hazlitt's Conversations of Northcote, that there is something in the meanest countenance which a skilful artist can turn to advantage. Certainly the most dramatic sketches in the productions of Scott and Crabbe are usually taken from the lower or familiar ranks of life, which are often conceived to be least fertile in remarkable personages. It is only weakness of penetration which makes the number of originals appear small.*

IX.

The influence of physical causes, in the formation of intellectual and moral character, has never been

* A sentiment of the kind occurs somewhere, I believe, in the writings of Pascal. The following ingenious observations may serve to illustrate the point. "Le peintre habile," says the Abbé du Bos, "a le talent de discerner le naturel qui est toujours varié. Ainsi la contenance et l'action des personnes qu'il peint, sont toujours variées. L'expérience aide encore beaucoup à trouver la différence qui est réellement entre des objets, qui au premier coup d'œil nous paroissent les mêmes. Ceux qui voyent des negres pour la premiere fois, croyent que tous les visages des negres sont presque semblables; mais à force de les voir, ils trouvent les visages des negres aussi différens entre eux que le sont les visages des hommes blanc. Voilà pourquoi Moliere a trouvé plus d'originaux parmi les hommes quand il a été à l'âge de cinquante ans, qu'il n'en trouvoit lorsqu' il n'avoit encore que quarante ans."—*Reflexions Critiques sur la Poesie et sur la Peinture.*

sufficiently regarded in any system of education. Organic structure, temperament, things affecting the senses or bodily functions, are as closely linked with a right play of the faculties, as the materials and condition of an instrument of music with that wonderful result called melody.

X.

It is often persons of original and creative minds that are most subject to versatility. The same impatience of what is familiar, which is discovered in their fondness for novelty of scenes and associations, impels them not unfrequently to assume a variety of disposition, or a number of different tastes and sentiments in succession. When marked by no new attributes or impulses, they soon grow weary of themselves. Some, as Shakspeare, show this multiplicity of nature in the characters depicted in their writings, and into the prototypes of which, as presented to the imagination, they must have transfused themselves for the moment by the alchemy of genius. Others limit the changes chiefly to manners or exterior manifestations; as the famed Alcibiades, whose strange metamorphoses were perhaps more owing to his mental amplitude and elasticity, than to any merely politic device.

XI.

Solitude is adapted to give a knowledge of character; mixing with the world, to draw out or to

modify character. The former shows man in the abstract, or in his universal being; the latter in his several phases and varieties.

XII.

The predominant passion of any one relates to those objects as to which he can least bear to learn the success of others, if he himself is unsuccessful.

XIII.

One touchstone of character is the prevalent train of reflection in seasons of relaxation from customary pursuits; and another criterion, though care is necessary in its application, is the texture of the thoughts in dreaming. Who can suppose that the slumbering visions of an imaginative or intellectual genius are similar to those of a clown? or that no distinctive peculiarities mark the dreams of the sensual, the avaricious, the aspiring, the revengeful, the affectionate? A man's nature is often more strikingly depicted in his sleeping than in his waking hours. Physiognomists too have the best opportunity for the exercise of their skill when the subject of their scrutation is asleep. I have heard of a schoolmaster who used to enter the apartments of his pupils by night, for the purpose of watching the expression of the countenance while mind is thus left to its unfettered operation, that he might be assisted in his judgment of their temper and capacities.

XIV.

The feelings of some, though once open to a variety of impulses, are now buried so deep in the heart, that few of the vicissitudes of life can move them; as in the profound parts of the ocean, the fluctuations on its surface, the sunshine, cloud-shadows, breeze, and tempest, are equally unknown.

XV.

How many interesting displays of understanding and disposition, exhibited by childhood, are entirely lost for want of enlightened discrimination on the part of observers. In general, parents are sufficiently quick-sighted in noticing the early traits of their children, but commonly overlook the most characteristic phenomena, or class them with those of an ordinary description. Would Chatterton have been thought a stupid boy till about the close of his seventh year, had he been appreciated by sagacious judges? The command he acquired over his play-fellows; his indication of a thirst for fame; the peculiarity and independence of his manners—all appearing before the age of five—pointed him out as endued with no common capabilities.

XVI.

The finer and the ruder elements of our nature are sometimes strangely blended together. Persons of

impetuous and apparently unbending temper, often possess a latent fund of affection, and exquisite sensibility. It would be endless to enumerate examples, which include some of the most celebrated names on record. Milton may be classed among the number. On perusing his controversial performances, we discover traces of the bitter in his composition; but how many passages of his poetry contain the sweetest effusions of gentleness and pathos! Luther exhibited the union of a loving spirit with a rugged severity of demeanour; the latter displayed chiefly in his public conduct; the former, where it shone brightest, in his domestic relations. Burke is another instance. His bearing was accounted not a little imperious, at least in the contests of politics; while the ordinary tenor of his existence, and some incidents in particular, evinced a generous, sympathetic heart, susceptible of the most refined emotions of tenderness. To the same category may be referred Dr. Parr, who veiled a more than common share of kindness under a rough and often dogmatic exterior. "There is a sweetish pulpy manner," says Walker in his Original, "which I have observed uniformly covers, both in men and women, a bitter kernel." Even Johnson, with all the rigidity and occasional intolerance of his tone, was no stranger to the bland and benign sentiments which add so much grace to mental or literary dignity.

XVII.

It is not unfrequent for certain peculiarities of mind or propensity to be transmitted by descent; yet

this must arise from the transmission of certain physical properties. Souls are not propagated; but by the materials and composition of the body, the qualities and operations of the intellect are undoubtedly affected. This circumstance may in some measure account for the differences which seem to prevail in the mental and moral attributes of the sexes.

XVIII.

The features of character are like those of a landscape, which imperceptibly vary with the progress of day, and as lights or shadows are reflected on the scene. Or they are like rivers, on which while gazing after a brief interval, we fancy them the same that we saw before; but the mass of waters we then beheld has passed away, and nothing is the same but the channel, and the banks with their trees or verdure. Perhaps there is no moment in which a person's qualities are exactly the same as at any other period.

XIX.

A considerable portion of self-confidence has a tendency to unfold the bent of a man's nature, as well as to bring into activity his more dormant capabilities and passions.

XX.

The kind of character often found the most agreeable in life is that of the good-humoured, vivacious, con-

vivial wit. But this of all descriptions affording marks of intellect, commonly leaves the faintest impression after death; notwithstanding the exclamation which Shakspeare puts into the mouth of Henry of Wales, on the supposed loss of his boon companion Falstaff,—

I could have better spared a better man.

What were the prince's, or rather the monarch's recollections of that mirthful genius, after the period of their separation? To secure a lasting place in the memory, some of the sterner or more elevated attributes seem necessary. The man of facetiousness and pleasantry is soon forgotten; the philosopher, or even the cynic, lives in spite of us in our remembrance.

XXI.

For the most part the French may be considered superior to the English in delineation of character, if not as to the whole, at least with regard to its nicer shades. Read the French novelists, or satirical writers, or the biographical and miscellaneous works in which the literature of France is so rich, and you will discover a singular refinement of sagacity, with a number of felicitous and subtle reflections, on the subject of individual qualities, manners, and motives of action. If we may boast some geniuses, as Chaucer and Shakspeare, incomparable in the art of personal portraiture, the faculty appears to be more commonly diffused among our neighbours.

In general also women are more rapid, and in no small variety of particulars, more acute observers of

character than men; but their quickness of perception seems owing to a sort of instinct, or native sensibility, rather than to the exercise of induction, or a process of analysis. The truth perhaps is, that they draw their conclusions from fewer premises: or facility produced by habit may explain the secret; the position which the fair sex occupy in society, as not possessed of much direct power, requiring a more careful study of surrounding agents.

ON MIND, STUDIES, AND INTELLECTUAL HABITS.

I.

It is not with the mind as with cabinets of art, which are of limited dimensions, and can admit only a certain number of curiosities. In proportion to the multiplicity of ideas is the capacity for still farther augmentation. The more truths the understanding accumulates, the easier is their retention; for as memory depends on association, an increase of attainments supplies so many additional links of connexion; so that mental acquisitions are susceptible of indefinite enlargement. It will commonly be found that paucity of ideas is combined with feebleness of memory, and that he who possesses the least knowledge has the worst retention.

II.

A person whose understanding is replenished with facts, or the principles of science, has a palpable kind

of intellectual wealth, perhaps also the most available. But a man may be rich in the stores of imagination and feeling, while he appears to the generality almost destitute of mental treasure. The description, which applies to all of poetic cast, includes many an unlettered child of genius, who, cut off from the bustle and refinements of life, spends his days amid rural scenes and solitary musings. An instance of the sort may be noted in Clare, the Northamptonshire peasant, whose gentle and meditative spirit discovered so sweet a charm in the humble walks to which his experience was confined. And can we doubt that there are hundreds of similar mould, whose artless reveries, and deep though simple emotions, having no vent either in verse or prose, remain hid to all but the conscious individuals? Several of the best and noblest kinds of lore—those which relate to the heart and character, including the wide domain of fancy and ideal truth—are not comprised in any Cyclopædia.

III.

Some ideas rush into the mind ready formed, like Minerva issuing from the brain of Jupiter; while others are most gradual in their formation, first showing themselves in a partial or indistinct manner, like the moon slowly emerging from a cloud, or seen obscurely through its picturesque folds, but by degrees assuming a definite, and at length finished and luminous appearance.

IV.

The process of nature, whether in the growth of bodies or the revolutions of the seasons, is always too slow and unbending for an active and impatient genius, which is therefore more delighted with the world of intellect, where there is greater rapidity of operation, as well as more scope for the exercise of control. To what extent a passive disposition, and a habit of tranquillity may be fostered by converse with material phenomena, is a question deserving of speculation.

V.

In the minority of the understanding, it is most expert in seizing terms, without an adequate comprehension of the ideas which they include. In its maturity, it is chiefly occupied with ideas, to the comparative neglect of terms. In the former case, terms furnish ideas; in the latter, ideas supply terms.

VI.

Perhaps there is something in the mode by which insects and other short-lived creatures receive apprehensions and sensations, that makes life seem to them as long as it appears to ourselves. At least with regard to human beings, we know that a wide disproportion may subsist between actual and conscious longevity. The latter is affected by the vividness, the succession and variety, the retention or rapid oblivion

of ideas: so that if the customary methods of computing existence were abolished, namely, the artificial, as by clocks, sun-dials, or other mechanical contrivances—and what may be called the inductive, as the changes in nature, in society, and our corporeal frames; or if the understanding was formed incapable of drawing conclusions respecting time from such circumstances—which may be considered the case with the lower animals—it is not improbable that a person dying at the age of twenty or thirty, would have much the same impressions concerning the duration of life, as another who survived till the period of ninety or a hundred. Nor is it impossible that if a man were to live a thousand or for any indefinite number of years, he would deem his career as short at the close, as most persons imagine their own who leave the world at sixty or seventy.

VII.

When ideas enter a barren brain, they lie inactive and dead, like seed cast into sterile ground. But when they fall on a genial soil, they are almost sure to germinate, and spring forth in some new or beautiful forms.

VIII.

The study of languages has given a character to modern minds by the habits of discrimination and analysis which it requires; and has partly contributed to the present advancement of science and reasoning.

To represent it as nothing but a criticism of words, or an exercise of memory, is utterly erroneous. It demands no trifling perspicacity and judgment; admits the operations even of fancy, picturing things of which words are but the symbols; and tends to promote quickness and depth of apprehension. A good linguist is alway a man of considerable acuteness, and often of pre-eminent taste.

IX.

Some intellects gather strength from slight and imperceptible causes, as trees occasionally flourish almost on the naked rock. In both cases, however, the nutrition actually received is less inconsiderable than might be supposed. Trees, in the circumstances mentioned, derive supplies of air, as of moisture, through the medium of their leaves—the latest researches in vegetable physiology demonstrating, that the principal food of plants is drawn from the carbon of the atmosphere: and with regard to the understanding, its nourishment may appear scanty merely because extracted from objects, or appropriated in ways, little obvious or common.

X.

Truth, of whatever kind, is only fact or reality. But in a multitude of instances, mankind are much fonder of fiction than of reality; all false sentiments being so many fictions or fancies in place of facts. One reason may be, that there is often considerable

difficulty in arriving at facts, but little or none in taking up with some vague or apparent resemblances.

It is with great beauty that Plato speaks of truth as τὸ ὄν, that which *is*, in contradistinction to what he stigmatizes as τὸ δοξαστὸν, or that which consists in opinion.* In the application of these expressions, indeed, the founder of the Academy proceeds on views somewhat remote from modern speculation; limiting the τὸ ὄν, to those eternal archetypes or ideas which he supposed to reside immutably, yet as distinct essences, in the Divine Reason; while all outward things, and the notions of them, are but shadows or fantastic mockeries. To the knowledge of external objects therefore, as perpetually changing, and subject to dissolution, he refused the name of truth or science, employing the epithet δοξαστὸν, expressive of such knowledge as unreal, or dependent on imagination. It is not difficult to perceive, amid several points of discordance, an affinity between Plato's position, that nothing is true but the intellectual, and Bishop Berkeley's celebrated theory respecting the non-existence of a material universe.

XI.

If we are to exist only during the brief space allotted to human life, our education is of little consequence; but if the mind is immortal, it is worth cultivating. In general it is no doubt gifted with a capacity of high progression even in the present

* See his Phædo, *passim*.

state. It was a maxim of that extraordinary and ill-fated genius, Chatterton, that man is equal to any thing, requiring but industry and self-denial to achieve whatever he pleases. The notion is in substance perhaps correct; though few persons have their faculties so far awakened or stimulated as to resolve on signalizing themselves, and still fewer to maintain the resolution unimpaired, amidst the sacrifices and toils exacted by its performance. To do so would argue the possession of no vulgar endowments; a determination to excel being seldom found apart from a proportionate ability for success. Perhaps we should make a nearer approach to accuracy in saying, that not many things are impossible to a mind capable of entertaining a fixed and prolonged passion for their attainment.

XII.

General knowledge, as distinguished from that which is limited to certain subjects, may be compared to the possession of numerous senses. Profoundness in particular branches is similar to a few senses, but those more acute. The former is more desirable to the individual; the latter, where the communication of ideas is attempted, to others. It was the opinion of Barrow, that "general scholars please themselves most" —it might be added, perhaps, that they best secure their own benefit—"but those who prosecute particular subjects do more service to the community."*

* Biographical Memoir of Barrow, prefixed to the edition of his Works by Hughes, 1830. p. lxxxvii.

The notion seems to have influenced his practice; for notwithstanding his scholarship and ample miscellaneous acquisitions, he applied his chief attention to mathematical researches, in which his proficiency made him the worthy predecessor of Newton—and during the latter part of his life especially, to divinity. The result also appears to have sanctioned his views; for his mathematical works, though practically superseded by subsequent ones, are excellent, and his theological productions are immortal. No doubt it would be easy to adduce exceptions to the position.—It was a wise saying of Sir Matthew Hale, that a man cannot be thoroughly master of his own profession without a tincture of other sciences; a persuasion which may be traced to his friendship with Selden, by whose advice he first extended his inquiries beyond topics of law, to the wide field of universal learning.

XIII.

There is in some minds a remarkable combination of romance and judgment, feeling and philosophy, aptitude for the closest reasoning, with habits of desultory and wandering imagination. Take, for instance, the eloquent and eccentric Rousseau; a singular medley of enthusiasm and intellect, in whom fancy and susceptibility were predominant, yet who excelled in observation and analysis, and, as several of his performances evince, was capable of no mean logical achievements. We may also specify that extraordinary light of scholastic theology, the cele-

brated Abelard, whose genius, somewhat like that of his great master Aristotle, though subtle and metaphysical, was not without a tincture of the poetic, and whose passionate ardour of attachment had a strange counterpart in the events of his history, so curious in a man of letters and a recluse. The Germans are perhaps distinguished, to an extent beyond most other nations, for the union of attributes apparently so opposite.

XIV.

As people in later times may be considered the ancients of the world, the effect is analogous to the imaginary case of living throughout the series of vanished ages. Yet how little would such an experience of the past, suppose it possible, assist in the regulation of present conduct! How superfluous would be the greater number of the particulars accumulated! A similar redundance of ideas may be possessed in relation to prior events, which are rarely of much service in the management of actual circumstances. A slight intermixture with men and things will afford more practical wisdom than the collective facts of all history.

XV.

The thorough investigation of any topic will qualify the mind for succeeding in a different department. The reasons are, because there is great similarity in all matters of research as to appearance, operation,

influence, or other circumstances; and also because the understanding acquires strength and enlargement from the exercise itself. In studies therefore, if a person aim only at general expansion or acuteness of intellect, almost any subject will be equally beneficial, when examined with patience and impartiality.

XVI.

Heaven, earth, ocean, the universe, are replete with the materials of imagination and thought; but all remain barren to a barren genius. A fertile or poetic mind clothes every object with a thousand borrowed ideas and associations, while an ordinary mind sees in every thing only its naked self. To such a one, the more subtle and intellectual species of relations are somewhat as a landscape painted on canvass would be to the sense of touch, suggesting but the notion of a smooth flat surface; or as a composition in Chinese or Arabic, which to a person acquainted with the language might awaken a succession of pleasing or pathetic images, would appear to another who beholds in the piece nothing but an assemblage of grotesque and unintelligible characters. Wordsworth has finely depicted an unsusceptive, prosaic spirit of this cast:

> A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more.

No doubt a large proportion of mankind live and die without having their interior vision opened, or experiencing a momentary touch of refined sensibility or enthusiasm. What a beautiful and moving picture

is often presented in the scenery of the clouds! yet to the generality, all these gorgeous and magnificent appearances are utterly lost, because the faculties are so debased and sophisticated.—On the other hand, were an affluent genius restricted to the meagre particulars of a common dictionary, it would discover abundant scope for reflection, and even for the exercise of fancy. It is the prerogative of natures of this class to give rather than take, resembling in effect the prism, under whose action the simplest element assumes the most exquisite combination of hues.

XVII.

Let the study of intellectual philosophy be combined with that of political economy, as the former is concerned chiefly with speculative abstractions, and the latter with practical details. The exertion of the faculties in opposite directions appears to have been a favourite principle with Plato, who joined to the culture of poetic taste the severer researches of geometry, and in whose writings we discover so remarkable a uinon of subtlety and imagination.

XVIII.

The scenes and incidents of history and poetry fade from remembrance, as the objects and brightness of a landscape disappear when the shadows of the evening descend. The realities of life, no less than the pictures of fancy, leave but a transient impression behind; so that after a long succession of ideal and

actual vicissitudes, only a few of the more prominent circumstances remain, like the brilliant spots on the summits of the highest hills, when the sun has withdrawn his beams from the rest of the creation.

XIX.

Truth itself has not sufficient charms to captivate the vulgar, but must be veiled in mystery, or invested with adventitious ornaments or attractions, to strike the popular taste. An unsophisticated mind loves truth for its very simplicity.

XX.

With what vividness and profusion do sentiments and feelings sometimes revive, that have long been slumbering in the soul! We may conceive the possibility of all past ideas being restored to the memory, as the characters written with invisible ink are revealed on the application of the appropriate chemical agent. Perhaps something of the kind will take place at the last day, when, to the wonders attending the resurrection of the body, will be added the resurrection of myriads of thoughts, which, though now sleeping and forgotten, may, like the spell-bound figures of romance, start forth on a sudden into life and energy. The supposition appears at least as probable as a conjecture of Locke's, that certain orders of angelic being have the power not only of retaining all their accumulated knowledge, but of setting it before them at once as in a picture.

XXI.

Men hope, by systems and rules, to shape different minds according to one fixed model; but nature and the accidents of life intervene to thwart the design, and thus keep up the infinite diversity of intellect and attainments, corresponding to the equally varied tempers and fortunes of mankind.

XXII.

Amidst the multiplicity of books and sciences that invite our curiosity, the most compendious and effectual method is to study any particular topic in works where it is systematically and fully treated. There will afterward be little occasion to consult other performances on the subject, as a slight inspection of those parts only which profess to contain any new discoveries will be amply sufficient.

XXIII.

It is often the aspiration of men of genius to possess a robust and healthy frame; yet mind seems to triumph most when conjoined with a body which is infirm or sickly. Is it that the activity of genius wears out or deranges the animal constitution? and may not this be considered as an appointment of Providence, intended to counteract the elation of mental superiority?

XXIV.

Many persons have patience in affliction, who have little or none in the pursuit of truth. Yet in the latter case it is more beneficial, being productive of positive advantage, while in the former the advantage is chiefly negative.

XXV.

A peculiarity observable in some is the periodical recurrence of intellectual activity; the greatest portion of it usually existing in the absence of external gratification and excitement. The reverse however is the condition of others, whose powers of reflection or imagination are most kindled by commotion and variety. Gibbon relates that his faculties were never more vigorous than amidst the bustle of his parliamentary winters; and the author of Childe Harold is known to have composed several of his exquisite tales when immersed in all the frivolities and dissipation attaching to fashionable life in the metropolis.

XXVI.

What is the reason that deep investigation for the most part inspires so much attachment to the subject? Not because other subjects are less fertile or propitious; but the whole world of matter and of mind being peopled with captivating truths, we require

only to have our eyes opened to any particular department, to discover the wonders which it contains. The principle is much akin to that which makes parents deem their children possessed of innumerable fascinations; the supposition being seldom perhaps erroneous, habits of daily converse and affection ensuring the observance of attractions which are unperceived by less interested spectators.

XXVII.

The impressions of the fancy are often of so subtle and complicated a nature, that to analyse them, no ordinary discrimination and practice are required. There are thousands of feelings of which the elements, if not the causes, lie almost totally concealed from the persons affected. A sudden change of scene or pursuit is sometimes the best solver of the mystery. Such an undefinable or undefined state of mind is, however, no bar to its loftier efforts, as under its influence men of the highest powers frequently throw off their most finished sketches. Shakspeare, it is probable, had seldom a distinct or intellectual comprehension of the various ingredients which enter into his immortal creations. Genius commonly works by the mass; while speculators and critics perform the part of the chemist in decomposing materials.

XXVIII.

A man must have his mind strangely closed to some of God's most beautiful works, that cannot

enjoy companionship and converse with the heavenly bodies, in a solitary walk on a fine star-light evening.

XXIX.

Madness is much more common than is frequently supposed, and seems by no means incompatible with the vigorous exercise of the intellectual functions. In such instances, we may allow, it must be the disease in its lowest stages, or else what physicians call *monomania*, that is, madness confined to a single topic. But it is possible for a person to be insane, in the strict acceptation of the term, who is capable of discussing a question in a connected and argumentative manner, or of conversing intelligibly on subjects in general. Look at the phrensy of Don Quixote, who, however, spoke with the utmost rationality on all points not relating to chivalry; and observe the peculiarity, the singleness of the disturbance in the case of Cowper, whose literary capacities, when he could bring himself to write, were shown to have suffered no decay. The mischief is when persons whose brain is disordered are unsuspected of the misfortune; for then they are often censured where no censure is due—or are treated with advice when they ought to be treated with medicine—or if in stations of power, play off their freaks to the consternation or misery of their dependents. I have no doubt that the father of Frederick the Great of Prussia was insane; his absurd and unnatural cruelty towards his children, all too under the colour of religion, and with every appearance of sincerity, being inconceiv-

able on any other hypothesis. Nor do I question that many have undergone the last penalties of the law for actions which mainly originated in a diseased state of that mysterious organ by which we think. It would be one of the nicest of problems, requiring for its solution consummate skill both in physiology and in ethics, to determine, in certain cases, the lines which separate mental aberration from idiosyncracy on the one hand, and from moral delinquency on the other.

Not a few, perhaps, remain without the suspicion or the developement of the malady, because that part of their nature in which it lurks has never been excited; as an instrument of music with a string or two untuned, which happen not to be struck, or not in a connexion to make the dissonance perceptible. Others are suspected on grounds sufficiently trivial, insanity being sometimes attributed to genius because of the eccentricity of its movements; as though it would be remarkable if those who are original in feeling and mental combination, should deviate from others in actions or demeanour. Shall the interior mechanism and operations be peculiar, and not the external signs or results? The surface only is perceived by the ordinary class of minds, to whom all the treasures of fancy and meditation lodged in the soul are utterly invisible. Hippocrates well reproved this shallowness of judgment, affirming, after his interview with Democritus to examine the justice of the charge against his sanity, that the allegation applied, not to the philosopher, but to his detractors. When Sophocles was compelled to vindicate himself from an accusa-

tion of the kind, he recited the beautiful tragedy of Œdipus Coloneus which he had just composed, and was at once acquitted by the Areopagus. Some have impeached the soundness of Byron's intellect; but to mention no other qualities in his writings, the penetration, sustained energy, and practical views of life which they present, coupled with the impossibility of fixing on any thing like real alienation in his conduct, evince the folly of the imputation. That he was not without a latent tendency of the sort, may readily be acknowledged; a person of his ardent temperament and extreme sensibility being especially liable to those impressions from without, which most threaten the equilibrium of the mental faculties.

XXX.

No kind of study or inquiry into fact, is a proper object of contempt. It is not unfrequent to possess a passion for particular species of knowledge, but the understanding is scarcely in a proper tone unless information or truth, of every description, be seized with avidity. What Cicero describes as essential to the finished orator, acquaintance with the whole circle of learning, is not less desirable for all who aspire to the distinction of combined or comprehensive thought. Variety of studies and speculations, so far from weakening the faculties, is a powerful means of promoting their activity and growth. You seldom meet with persons of eminent capacity, whose range of reflection has been chiefly restricted to one department.

XXXI.

How few and shadowy are the ideas which occur to the mind, on a review of any topic that has some time before engaged its curiosity! The greater part of most histories and narratives is perfectly useless, and never retained. The object attempted therefore should be compression, not amplification; and only those characters and incidents described that furnish the materials of accurate and philosophical criticism. The mere accumulation of facts must in time lead to this result; for though a selection of the more picturesque traits may be applied to the purposes of romance or the drama, the only way in which the whole succession of events can be treated, will be something perhaps between the plan so admirably exemplified by Guizot, in his Lectures on European Civilization, and the more copious method of Mr. Hallam, in his Constitutional History of England, which presents the spirit of the subject in a manner no less captivating than instructive.

XXXII.

The discovery of new ideas is not essential to the character of mental originality. A certain juxtaposition or combination of well-known truths, will often supply unquestionable proof of decided originality and invention. It is with the operation of thought somewhat as with that of the kaleidoscope, which out of a few simple materials, freshly arranged, and sub-

mitted to the action of light, produces the most surprising forms of novelty and beauty. Perhaps I may add, that what are called creations, and in a certain sense with accuracy, are rather but new forms or combinations elaborated out of the mind's pre-existing stores by the chemistry of genius.*

XXXIII.

Brutes exhibit almost every indication of mind that can be found in man; as memory, judgment, imagination, gratitude, friendship, revenge, together with a capacity for progressive advancement, and an adaptation to circumstances of those habits which are commonly referred to instinct, and which, in spite of numerous examples to the contrary, are usually represented as invariable.

It has been alleged that brutes never advance beyond certain established limits; but who contends that their understandings or ranges of action are uncircumscribed? Were the objection valid, it would disprove the existence of a rational principle in man; for *his* operations are restricted to determinate boundaries, and in several respects he displays a correspondent identity or monotony of movement. A nice observer of the inferior tribes of creation will detect innumerable shades of difference, both as to sagacity

* Buffon, I presume, was of this opinion. "L'esprit humain," says he, in one of his most eloquent pieces, "ne peut rien créer; il ne produire qu'après avoir été fécondé par l'expérience et la méditation; ses connaissances sont les germes de ses productions."—*Discours prononcé à l'Académie Française.*

and procedure, among individuals of the same class. It is also undeniable that of some animals in particular, the progression bears a marked proportion to what may be termed their education or experience. A spaniel that has been well trained, and habituated to the varied exercise of his faculties, is much more intelligent and acute than a younger or less instructed specimen of the breed; in cases, at least, where there has been no hereditary transmission of accomplishments. There is one circumstance especially deserving of note in this inquiry, that dogs, like children, are excellent physiognomists; a fact which can no more be traced to any property or influence distinct from reason or the inductive process, than a poem such as Gray's Elegy could be expected to turn up from a promiscuous shaking together of the letters in a dice-box.

XXXIV.

A leading distinction between men of enlarged and philosophic genius, and the uninformed multitude, appears to be, that the former perceive, at least in part, the reasons or causes of things, while the latter perceive only the things themselves. But as to practical advantages, there is considerable equality between the two classes.

XXXV.

Wit is most sharpened by intercourse with the world; judgment, as well as fancy, by solitary medi-

tation. The same influences, however, will in certain respects be alike favourable both to wit and judgment; which, apart from the shrewd testimony of Mr. Tristram Shandy, might appear to be sufficiently compatible, from the frequent examples of their union,—the brightest wits being often, like Pascal, among the most piercing thinkers. The chief difference between the attributes seems to be, that wit, besides cutting with a finer edge, and attaining points which elude a calculating process, is much more rapid and condensed in its operation.

XXXVI.

Is it better to wait for ideas to arise spontaneously, or to strike out thought by application to some particular subject? With imaginative minds, the former course may be preferable; the latter with those which are argumentative. The prevalent authorship is certainly not owing to voluntary gifts of intellect; or to musings such as those which Dr. Henry More, in the dedication of one of his works, represents himself as having nourished amidst the solemn shadow of his patron's woods.

XXXVII.

What a fund of various and interesting lore has been accumulated by some persons, who die without having rendered it available to themselves or others! In many instances the best part of a man of letters goes down with him to his grave. Such appears to

have been eminently the case with the poet Gray; and more recently with that prodigy of erudition, the celebrated Dr. Parr. Let the attainment of knowledge give place to its application and use. Speculation is subordinate to action, and learning to its employment.

Some allowance, however, should be made for the effect of contemplative pursuits on the intellect and pleasures of the party concerned, even where the fruits of meditation extend no further. If expanded views, elevation of sentiment, exquisite tastes and associations, have been acquired, shall reproach be administered with severity because the results of these accomplishments have been little diffused? Is it nothing to imbue one immortal mind with the graces of literature, or to ennoble it with the lights of science? Perhaps, as Crabbe seems to have apprehended, it is not improbable that mental culture will have an important bearing on the condition of the spirit through all its future stages.*

* With these explanations and remarks, it may not be amiss to weigh well the following passage from a writer, who, like Socrates, aspired to bring down philosophy from her airy wanderings to the common interests and improvement of man. "The greatest error of all the rest," says Lord Bacon, discoursing on what he quaintly styles the diseases of learning, "is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or farthest end of knowledge: for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity, and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men: as if there were sought in knowledge a couch, whereupon to rest a searching and rest-

XXXVIII.

The very appropriation of what is valuable, and the rejection of what is worthless or indifferent, in things relating to mind, argue no slight intellectual superiority. Many persons read books in the way the generality hear sermons, who, provided the tinkling of the bell continues, are satisfied; or somewhat as mere scholars study the Iliad, which, being alike Greek and the composition of Homer, is all conned with equal fondness or assiduity. Yet few even of the best productions but may be compared to certain antique figures that have come down to us, part of which represents a living, if not beautiful object; the rest a piece of dead mechanical matter.*

XXXIX.

The chief recommendation of mathematical studies consists, perhaps, in their tendency to discipline the mind. But that end can be accomplished with equal advantage by the perusal of any abstract argumentative performance, as Butler's Analogy, or Chilling-

less spirit; or a terrace, for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state, for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground, for strife and contention; or a shop, for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse, for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's estate."—*Advancement of Learning*, Book 1.

* Several specimens of the kind will be found in the learned Montfaucon, "L'Antiquité Expliquée," especially in the delineations of the ancient lamps, tom. v. par. 1.

worth's Religion of Protestants. In this case also the understanding will be storing itself with fresh ideas, so as to receive more benefit than the study of mathematics can afford; although the science may deserve attention on account of the mental enlargement likely to result from acquaintance with a new branch of inquiry.

XL.

Persons of rapid conceptions may be regarded as possessing the advantage of a longer life than those whose apprehensions are slow.

XLI.

To attain a correct, especially a comparative estimate of different things, it is often necessary to contemplate them at a considerable distance, and after imagination has lost the impressions which it may have derived from any one in particular; as, in forming an opinion respecting the qualities of a landscape, we do not confine our attention to individual objects, but survey the whole in their combined appearance, and under a certain remoteness of aspect.

XLII.

There appears no more probability against the supposition of difference in the original constitution of minds than of bodies. In fact, the whole analogy of nature and of Providence sanctions the hypothesis

that minds are originally different. If the theory be correct, there may be some foundation for the notion of Coleridge, who delighted in the subtlest thought, that there is a sex in souls; a problem which had not escaped the curiosity of Rousseau, whose structure of feeling left few points of sentiment unexplored.*

XLIII.

It is a mistaken notion that the mass of mankind, who pass their lives in ordinary and active pursuits, are destitute of education. Most of the objects and affairs which come under their notice, demand the exercise of some judgment and discrimination; so that the faculties are often more invigorated and sharpened by this species of education, than by that which is obtained almost exclusively through the medium of books. There is one accomplishment in particular, observable in men of business and the world—they are in general no contemptible physiognomists. A practised mendicant in one of our large towns is as good a judge of countenances as Lavater himself, though without his rules.

XLIV.

All affect to applaud the repeated perusal of the best productions, yet few adopt the practice. It may

* "Dis-moi, mon enfant," writes Claire to Julie, "l'âme a-t-elle un sex?—*La Nouvelle Héloïse*, seconde partie, lettre v."—For the views of Coleridge, see Specimens of his Table Talk, p. 38. sec. edit.

be doubted whether the omission is deserving of censure, and whether the understanding is not more expanded and enriched by entering on new fields of research, than by minute familiarity with any subject or any writer. Desultory and immethodical reading is not without its advantages, and seems preferable to that which, however select or systematic, is confined to a particular walk of speculation. Pope, Scott, Byron, Johnson, with other of our greatest writers, indulged in a wide range of miscellaneous reading, especially in early life. Mr. D'Israeli quotes the adage, *Cave ab homine unius libri*, to illustrate the benefit of thorough acquaintance with one distinguished author.* Against the maxim propounded by the ingenious essayist, I have nothing to allege; but the citation affords it no countenance. "Beware of a man of one book" may signify, not that he will prove an overmatch for your powers, but that you will find him to be a pedant or a fool. There is a difference between addiction to one book, and confinement to one.

XLV.

Of literary acquisitions, those are often found the most useful as well as agreeable, which have not been secured in the regular path of study? yet the very ability to appreciate and apply these stores has perhaps been communicated by the more direct and

* Curiosities of Literature, vol. vi. p. 135.

less captivating inquiries. It is remarked by Dugald Stewart, that in tracing the history of the moral sciences, including such as are least akin to metaphysics, the greatest improvements appear to have been made by men whose faculties had been trained in that salutary school.*

XLVI.

The advice is unsound, as well as impracticable, which recommends that our time be always occupied with some industrious, or at least specific pursuit. After laborious mental efforts, the attention should be diverted to the lightest subjects possible; and as a general rule, it is best to leave the intellect a good deal free to its own operations, and to the entrance of casual reflections. Hobbes attributed his superiority to the moderation of his reading, affirming that if he had read as much as the philosophers, he should have been as ignorant. The fact is, he read less than he meditated. This, the great secret of all vigorous, creative thought, is a prime requisite in constructing the durable monuments of genius.

XLVII.

The mass of diversified truths which lie beneath the outward appearances of things, never enters into the imagination of the generality; as when the eye

* Dissertation on the Progress of Metaphysical Philosophy, Part Second, *sub finem.*

gazes on the wide and uniform surface of the ocean, it little dreams perhaps of the rocks and valleys, the beds of coral or the forests which sleep below, or of the living prodigies that people and replenish its interior recesses.

XLVIII.

Throughout the system of animated nature, little proportion is observable between compass of mind, and that of the frame which it inhabits. There are more indications of reflection and contrivance in a bee, for instance, than in a lion or an elephant. Among human beings, the diminutive in body are often the largest in soul. With the brute creation in particular, the degree of understanding seems regulated by the purposes, not the dimensions, of the bodies which they possess.

XLIX.

A feeble memory is accompanied with several advantages, as it throws the mind chiefly on its own resources, and thus contributes to its energy and independence; for the same reason, it would seem, that negro children are said to surpass others in quickness, because left so much to themselves and the exercise of their faculties.* It also renders the re-examination of subjects more fertile in pleasure,

* So stated in Prichard's Researches into the Physical History of Mankind, vol. i. p. 160. third edition.

as the charm of novelty has not been destroyed by familiarity and retention.

Close thinkers have seldom a prompt, if a tenacious recollection, at least beyond certain walks; being chiefly occupied with abstract trains of meditation, or with argumentative processes, where nothing is admitted but what relates to the demonstration. On the other hand poets, dramatists, those whose business is to depict external images or events, or the unbodied creations of fancy, have often a treasury of ideas not less available than extensive; the elements of their strength being combination, feeling, incident, and the shows of things, all which are powerful principles of suggestion and remembrance. Association, which is the life of poetry, is in a special degree that of memory. In Newton this faculty seems to have been but indifferent; in Sir Walter Scott it was all but universal and infallible. His works, as appears to have been the case with his conversation, are full of anecdote and allusion, fetched from an inconceivable variety of stores, yet bearing most intimately on the sentiment of the passing moment.

L.

There is no great wisdom in urging persons generally to aim at intellectual eminence. The enlargement of the domains of literature or science, and the nobler products of fancy, are commonly the work of those rare gifted spirits that appear but at intervals, and burst through every barrier; while

for instruction or entertainment, an ample amount of literary wealth has been already contributed. Nor will it be alleged that high culture is required in the ordinary occupations of life, for which a very moderate share of understanding is sufficient. What is most desirable is a fund of practical sense, in conjunction with principle; qualities that seem to prevail for the most part among the Swiss, though with few or no instances of brilliant genius or profound lore.

LI.

If we suppose, which we may without admitting what is usually considered the doctrine of materialism, that the attributes and exercise of the intellect depend essentially on physical organization, we allow what is equivalent to a natural and original difference in minds; such a difference, at least, as cannot be produced or destroyed by education.

LII.

How little do the brute or insect parts of the creation know of man, his character, feelings, or pursuits! Probably our capacities are as narrow, and our apprehensions as dark, in reference to the universe at large.

LIII.

Minute accuracy is requisite in few branches of speculation or learning, and is almost incompatible

with extensive and diversified attainments. The principles that lie at the basis of any subject intended to be understood, should no doubt be thoroughly mastered; but in general the attempt to combine profound and critical correctness of detail with a wide expatiation in the realms of knowledge, would be about as rational as to expect in the same eye a far-reaching and a microscopical power of vision.

LIV.

Most of the physical sciences are still in their infancy, though the system with which we are conversant, or that which dates from the Mosaic creation, has now, according to the best computations, subsisted above seven thousand years.* So endless are the properties and phenomena of nature, that the research of another period equally long would fail to exhaust the subject, and might even leave a still greater variety of mysteries for exploration. "The farther we advance," says Mr. Babbage, "from the origin of our knowledge, the larger it becomes, and the greater power it bestows to add new fields to its dominion."† Savages are puzzled with few obscurities in the material universe; and the philosopher meets with more things to excite his wonder than the uninstructed peasant.

* I take here the chronology of the Septuagint, as probably more correct than that of Archbishop Usher, adopted in our common versions of the Bible.

† Economy of Machinery and Manufactures, p. 315.

LV.

A powerful barrier to intellectual advancement, is a profusion of miscellaneous objects inviting attention, amusing the fancy, and frittering away the feelings and thoughts. This is one reason why the wealthy, who are occupied with elegant trifles, or the industrious classes who are seeking to be wealthy, or busied with the means of obtaining a subsistence, so rarely excel in the departments of mind. He who would secure intellectual pre-eminence must spend much of his time in solitary reflection. It is not uninstructive to hear Goethe, whose life was devoted to literature, and who has been accused of not mingling sufficiently in practical affairs, complain, on reviewing his career, of the diffusion of his faculties among so many things unadapted to the proper workings of his genius.*

LVI.

Where the understanding is vigorous and rapid, the chief requisite is not profound information, but

* "The claims upon my time and capabilities, from within and from without," said he, "were too many. My only happiness lay in my poetic talents; yet even in this how have I been, through outward things, disturbed, limited, and hindered! Had I kept myself more apart from public business, and could I have lived more in solitude, I had been happier as a man, and as a poet I had effected much more." The passage, which occurs in Echermann's Conversations with Goethe, is taken from Mrs. Jameson's agreeable work called, "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada," vol. i. p. 192.

such a general and attractive view of subjects as may excite the faculties to the performance of their functions. For popular purposes, at least, the aim of literary artists should be similar to that of Rubens in his landscapes, of which, without neglecting the minor traits or finishing, he was chiefly solicitous to present the leading effect, or what we may call the inspiration.

LVII.

Though eminent superiority of parts is usually accompanied with a consciousness of the distinction, yet if a person of the rarest genius were to desist for a considerable period from literary pursuits, especially from the practice of composition, he would probably, if of sensitive or poetic mould, begin to question his ability to produce any thing above the common. Nothing is so satisfactory a proof to the mind of its capacity and resources, as the actual employment of its powers. A giant can be convinced of his strength only by its exertion.

We have a curious commentary on the point in the Life of Byron, whom his biographer supposes to have been chiefly influenced by a feeling of self-diffidence in desiring to cancel all his previous performances, at a time when the minor critics were assailing him with a series of factious disparagements, and when his pen was unfortunately quiescent, from a resolution which he had taken of appearing no more as an author. Perhaps it was a similar distrust, rather than an impulse of resentment, which led

Collins to consign to the flames the unsaleable copies of his exquisite lyrics.

LVIII.

How many subjects that deserve investigation will every man, when he comes to die, be necessitated to leave unexplored! There was something touching, though with a tinge of the ludicrous, in the account once given by a person of his feelings in the near prospect of dissolution, but who happened to recover, that his principal regret was, that he would never have an opportunity of reading a valuable work which he had just purchased.—But though death changes, it surely neither terminates nor suspends the activity or the intellectual operations of the soul. Rather, we may deem, a shadow is cast on our present acquisitions and researches by the reflection, that the moment after death a person of the smallest intellect or acquirements, if not endowed with more capacious faculties, will at least attain more wonderful discoveries, than the greatest philosopher while on earth.

LIX.

Independence of judgment is one of the rarest things in the world; and the prevailing defect in education is the neglect of the reasoning or discursive faculties. The consequence is, that among those who are regarded as well-educated, few are capable of comprehending or discussing an extensive or com-

plicated question. It is observed by the elegant author of Fitzosborne's Letters, that "thinking is one of the last exerted privileges of cultivated humanity." I believe it was Fontenelle who affirmed, that he would undertake to persuade mankind that the sun was the source neither of light nor heat, if only six philosophers would stand by him in his assertions.

LX.

It is not uncommon for the understanding to grasp a great general truth, without a minute perception of its elements, or of the various principles which it involves. Certain truths, especially to intellects of a certain class, are like the New World when first discovered by Columbus, of which he could little dream the vastness or undeveloped capabilities.

LXI.

One effect of an extensive acquaintance with books, and a concomitant of intellectual expansion, is a freedom from extravagant or exclusive admiration of any. It is rare for a person of small reading to be without some literary idols, whose worship, even if excused by their merit, is pretty sure to be little tolerant or catholic. We may apply in this case what Johnson said of London, that a man is much less likely to form an injudicious matrimonial choice there than in the country, from the greater latitude and variety presented by a metropolis.

LXII.

It is possible for the mind to be peculiarly constructed or exercised, without being superior, or what is termed original. There is a peculiarity of meanness, of contraction, of affectation, in mental things.

LXIII.

The possessors of knowledge have in some instances, perhaps, more errors than the vulgar; but they have also a thousand times more truths. The ignorant have few errors, since they have but few notions of any sort. Who would disparage the faculty of vision, because, with the myriads of beautiful objects and scenes which it discloses, it occasionally reveals such as are deformed or unsightly?

LXIV.

There are certain departments of research, or species of metaphysical inquiry, that can boast little merit in themselves, but deserve notice on account of the brilliant conceptions which some masterly genius has shed on the otherwise uninviting theme. Of the former particular we have not a few specimens in the polemical writings of our old divines, more especially those of Jeremy Taylor, the interest of which, so far as the subject is concerned, has long since evaporated, or which have been displaced by treatises more concise and logical; but which display

a profusion of fine fancy and curious lore, offering a rich repast to minds of poetical or inquisitive cast. For an example of speculative disquisition utterly void of claims to regard on the score of its leading philosophical aim, we may refer to Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments; a work of which the fundamental position is not less chimerical than absurd, yet whose appendages and embellishments are so rich and picturesque, as justly to secure it a lasting place among the most fascinating productions of literature.

LXV.

The misplaced reverence or precision of those who make a point of reading the whole of the works which they undertake, is apparent from the circumstance, that it is often a matter of chance or caprice with authors themselves, whether so much or more is prepared for perusal. The best rule is, to examine only such parts as comprise what is original, or new to ourselves. In various instances, the taste which would erect what is fortuitous into a principle or standard of government, is sufficiently curious. It was of course an affair of mere accident or contingency, that Dryden employed but a certain portion of the vocabulary of our language; yet Fox, no mean authority in literary niceties, originally intended, in composing the historical fragment which he has left behind, to use no words that are not found in the writings of that celebrated poet. The trait may remind us of a set of purists in Latinity some centuries

ago, who affected a similar scrupulosity about words not sanctioned by the practice of Cicero.

LXVI.

Nature conquers ignorance, but philosophy conquers nature.

LXVII.

Sometimes ideas stream into the imagination as thick and rapidly as flakes of snow descend in winter, while at other times it is unvisited with a single thought; in both cases apparently without the intervention of the will. The effect of different things on the mind is like the sound of chimes at a distance, which are now full, now die away on the ear, according to the medium through which they are conveyed, or the state of the organ to which they are conducted.

LXVIII.

To excel in the sciences or in languages requires almost exclusive application during life; but to excel in the walks of polite literature, the more diversified the subjects of inquiry the better.

LXIX.

Warmth of blood may suit a sportive or exuberant fancy, but coldness of temperament is not essential

to correct judgment. Persons of the most vivacious and impassioned genius have sometimes the greatest perspicacity and discrimination; while minds of a stoical order are in numberless instances overrun with error. What vehemence and fire pervade the eloquent effusions of Burke! though without any dearth of profound accurate reflection. In the writings of multitudes, frigidity is at least as conspicuous as absurdity. The notion that ardour is incompatible with soundness of apprehension, has no more foundation in philosophy than in fact; and seems to belong, in its primary source, to the class of prejudices which Bacon denominates *idola specus*, or those dependent on individual peculiarities,—a category perhaps the most comprehensive of all.

LXX.

Method and punctuality are so little natural to man, that where they exist they are commonly the effect of education or discipline.

LXXI.

There is slight reason to censure indolence of body, if conjoined with activity of intellect. Paley, Hume, Gibbon, and a large proportion of literary men of every class, have been examples of the union. Idleness is a physical rather than mental attribute, being commonly the result of corporeal relaxation or disease. You will seldom discover a man of lean and spare habit who is averse to occupation, unless constitutionally

ill-formed, or whose strength has been impaired by the derangement of some function :—and what is the reason ? Because the muscular fibre, the nerves, the whole substance of the frame, are of closer and firmer texture. Indisposition to exertion is perhaps in every instance combined with laxity of the solids. Mind, however, by its spontaneous operations and ardour, is able to assume no mean command even over enfeebled organs and a distempered system.

LXXII.

It is the fancy of some that persons whose predilections or modes of action differ materially from their own, are touched with insanity ; while others extend the charitable suspicion to all who cherish any lofty and magnanimous sentiment or design. It would however be an indication of insanity, or at least an inexplicable phenomenon, if minds differently constituted and circumstanced were to exhibit an identity of judgment or taste.

LXXIII.

Notwithstanding the mental subtlety and other advantages attending the right prosecution of languages, the ancients must have possessed no trivial superiority over the moderns, in being able to devote attention almost entirely to knowledge itself, without the necessity of spending so large a portion of life in acquiring the instruments of knowledge. The Greeks studied no other tongue than their own, lest

its purity should be impaired by the intermixture of foreign idioms; yet where did philosophy, eloquence, poetry, painting, statuary, architecture, flourish with so much vigour? Little, it is true, was to be learned at that time from other nations, at least through any literary medium; though Egypt and the East had furnished even the Greeks with the seeds of various speculations, and the former country had been their first instructer in the fine arts. Nevertheless this concentration of reflection and effort to so great an extent among themselves, had doubtless considerable influence in raising them to that perfection for which they were celebrated. Among the Latins, however, during the more cultivated periods of their history, initiation into the language and literature of Greece formed a regular part of liberal education. Cicero derived almost all his philosophy from this source, his observations being often but the echo of doctrines which had been propounded by the great masters of wisdom in that favoured clime.

LXXIV.

As thought supplies materials for discourse, so discourse gives precision to thought, as well as often assists its evolution. The best orators owe half their inspiration to the music of their own voice. Yet profundity of ideas is commonly an impediment to fluency of words. This is at least the case where logical pertinence, or a transparent exhibition of the subject, is attempted. Coleridge was a deep thinker

and a ready speaker; but his intellectual associations were not the most broad or palpable, nor did he clothe his mysterious abstractions in the most perspicuous phraseology. Those harangues which flow with the greatest facility, and are what some call eloquent, seldom display much power of reflection or imagination.

LXXV.

There is as much difference, in point of mental fertility and acuteness, among the uneducated as among the more cultivated classes; and this difference is manifested in their views and methods of procedure in relation to things that fall within their respective provinces. The ascendency of a superior intellect is almost sure to be felt, whatever be the sphere in which it happens to move. When the Marchioness d'Ancre, one of the ladies of the bedchamber to the Queen Regent of France, widow of Henry the Fourth, was arraigned and brought to the scaffold on a charge of sorcery for the influence she had acquired over her mistress, she defended herself by saying, that the only sorcery she had exercised was that of a strong mind over a weak one. It is nothing extraordinary that Cervantes, when a captive at Algiers, was at the head of his fellow-captives, some of them persons of high rank, in their efforts to achieve their escape. You would find, even amongst a company of gipsies or beggars, that the cleverest and most gifted usually take the lead.

LXXVI.

Minds the most inquisitive and active, seldom enjoy so much of the comfort of knowledge as minds of an inferior stamp, because they are less elated with past than anxious about future conquests. What Boileau says in his satire intended to affix the character of folly on the several orders of mankind, is especially applicable to the followers of learning,—

Que le plus fou souvent est le plus satisfait.

The experience of those whose intellect has been truly opened, is something like that of a man who from the hollow of a valley looks up to the stars, which then appear little higher than the neighbouring hill tops; but after toiling to the summit, he perceives them stretching away remotely in the immensity of space.

Those who on a discovery of the unexplored subjects which study discloses, lament the scantiness of their acquirements, may console themselves with the reflection, that in reality they know much compared with the generality, or with their former selves.

LXXVII.

Few propositions are so simple or elementary as not to require some deliberation before an opinion can be formed of their truth or falsehood. Yet the generality decide on the most intricate questions with a promptitude which nothing but absolute intuition

could justify. Sir James Mackintosh has been accused of moral cowardice or infirmity, for apparent vacillation in summing up the argument on controverted or obscure points of speculation or history: but that seeming embarrassment was owing to extent, not weakness, of intellectual vision; and is besides more valuable, as a lesson of modesty and patient judgment, than the utmost readiness in pronouncing decisions that no one could impeach. It would be difficult to conceive a finer spirit of philosophic candour than pervades the disquisitions of this admirable writer, presenting so remarkable a contrast to the authoritative, and often oracular style assumed by Johnson.*

* The portrait which Pliny gives of his friend Aristo, includes several points that may well call to mind the accomplishments and intellectual character of Mackintosh. "Quam peritus ille et privati juris et publici! Quantum rerum, quantum exemplorum, quantum antiquitatis tenet! Nihil est quod discere velis, quod ille docere non possit: mihi certe, quoties aliquid abditum quæro, ille thesaurus est. Jam quanta sermonibus ejus fides! quanta auctoritas! quam pressa et decora cunctatio! quid est quod non statim sciat? et tamen plerumque hæsitat; dubitat diversitate rationum, quas, acri magnoque judicio, ab origine causisque primis repetit, discernit, expendit."—*Plin. Epist. i.* 22.

It is not unpleasant to read the account of a similar hesitance, united to no ordinary perspicacity and comprehension, in Bishop Sanderson. "Though he was blest," says his biographer and friend, "with a clearer judgment than other men, yet he was so distrustful of it, that he did over-consider of consequences, and would so delay and re-consider what to determine, that though none ever determined better, yet, when the bell tolled for him to appear and read his Divinity Lectures in Oxford, and all the scholars attended to hear him, he had not then, or not till then, resolved and writ what he meant to determine."—*Life of Dr. Robert Sanderson.—Walton's Lives*, p. 417. *Major's ed.* 1825.

LXXVIII.

It is in the very nature of mind to enlarge its possessions, nor can we imagine any limits to its progress in knowledge. The memory of some, however, though not exactly like that of the rustic gentleman in Aristophanes, who forgot things before he had learnt them, is so little tenacious, that continued application produces rather a change than an augmentation of ideas.

LXXIX.

The way to intellectual proficiency is the comparative disregard of what is acquired, and the pursuit of what is original or unknown. A person who aims at the expansion of his faculties, will be careful to exact information or stimulus from every subject of his research, and esteem no work of particular value which fails to suggest some new reflections.

LXXX.

Philosophy has been spread out before us for ages, though with little effect from the specimens which Nature herself has exhibited. How much might have been discovered respecting the laws of motion, and the applications of which they are susceptible, by observing the structure of birds, especially of the fishes which swim the most rapidly! While mankind were employing, for the purposes of writing,

the skins of beasts, the inner bark of trees, waxen tablets, the papyrus, or other materials more durable, as brass or stone, the wasp tribe of insects were fabricating paper, with no small ingenuity, in the formation of their nests. The principle of the telescope, and even its latest improvements, might have been suggested by careful examination of the human eye; not to mention that several of the most interesting and useful problems in mechanics might have been learned from the architecture or anatomy of animal bodies. The general course has been, to ascertain the positions of science in some abstract or circuitous manner, and afterward to notice the exemplifications of them which the universe affords.

LXXXI.

An inferior understanding is bewildered amid the details and appendages of a subject, attaching as much importance to these as to the leading and most decisive principles. A vigorous intellect discriminates the essence of a question, and by its rapid operations compresses the necessary particulars into a very minute compass.

LXXXII.

The history of some minds is varied only by the successive idols of their admiration. Such appear incapable of existing without subjection to others, and destined never to act for themselves, or secure any intellectual achievement. To this servile adora-

tion, genius often bends in its earlier and more enthusiastic days; but as the faculties ripen, its gods die away. I will add however one qualifying remark, which may be extended perhaps to a few other instances—that never has mind of superior mould, and of lettered tastes, made any advance in comprehension or power, without an increase of admiration for the matchless, resplendent creations of Shakspeare.

LXXXIII.

To doubt, though often essential if we would think, is so far from being, as Diderot represented, the first step in philosophy, that in many cases it were the extremity of folly. On the other hand not a few persons, both in speculative and active life, seem patrons of Tertullian's theological maxim, *Credo quia impossibile est.* A proper regulation of credulity and distrust is one of the best indications of a healthy and expanded intellect; the wisest course being held by him who, according to the direction of Bacon, has learned to doubt with judgment that he may end with certainties.

The notions which we successively adopt and abandon are perhaps more numerous than those which we retain; for though in the case even of the finest genius opinions may be taken up on very slight grounds—a rashness against which Lord Chatham so earnestly cautions his nephew—yet where the mind is worth much, crude ones, if not neutralized by intermixture with those of a different kind, will

sooner or later be cast off. So that except where the faculties are nearly passive, or the judgment so timorous as to vacillate on the simplest points, the formation of a man's creed is not like that of a house, every stone or brick added to which increases its size; but rather like the process of assimilation in the animal economy, where the substance incorporated into the system bears but an insignificant proportion to the materials which have been received and expelled.

It is remarkable that the classes of pyrrhonists and dogmatists have included respectively some of the most sagacious of thinkers; an observation which may be applied to the slighter instances of approach to the one tendency or the other, often curiously enough blended in the same individual. The founder of inductive science himself, who could disdain all the trammels of scholastic authority, and rear a system which claims exclusive deference to actual phenomena, betrayed a structure of mind essentially tinctured with the credulous, being a firm believer in a multitude of the idlest and most untenable assumptions in physical and other departments; while on some particulars he was strangely averse to innovation, having rejected the most brilliant of scientific discoveries, the Copernican theory. To this example may be added that of Pascal, who, though a thorough geometrician and profound reasoner, as well as sincere Christian, seems not to have scrupled the grossest of Catholic dogmas; transubstantiation, the virtue of relics, the theological infallibility of the Pope, and the impossibility of

salvation out of the Romish communion. Of the opposite class take, by way of counterpoise, two names distinguished for at least equal acuteness, Bayle and Voltaire. Hume's philosophic speculations, except so far as mere exercises of metaphysical ingenuity, are evidently fruits of the same spirit. The subtle disputations of the schoolmen must on the whole have fostered a propensity to pyrrhonism; which, whatever its occasional aberrations, has not been without signal advantage to the progress of discovery, whether in abstract research, or in archaic and classical lore; to the order of keen sceptical investigators belonging no small proportion of the German literati, whose critical lucubrations have often assigned to fable traditions and narratives which were accustomed to receive implicit credence as fact.

LXXXIV.

What is termed light reading is sometimes censured without reason. If the expression be employed to designate poetry, fictitious compositions, biographical or miscellaneous memoirs, essays, anecdotes, books of travels or natural history, it would be desirable to know the departments of literature which are either so agreeable or instructive. Cicero, philosopher as he was, disdained performances untinctured with amusement. *Lectionem sine ulla delectatione, negligo,* says he. There is more real, meditative wisdom in the effusions of poesy, than in the systems of the schools; and more mind in the sparklings of wit than in the generality of didactic treatises. Milton, illus-

trating an argument by one of the allegories of the Faery Queen, displays as well his penetration as pleasantry in asserting, that Spenser is "a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas."* I for my part, observes Montaigne, care for no books but such as are pleasant, adapted to my entertainment, or those which comfort me, and teach me how to regulate my life and death.†

Where mental acumen or power of abstraction is the chief object of pursuit, no works perhaps are comparable to those of the argumentative class, especially in the higher branches of metaphysics. But the best way to acquire a well balanced and healthy tone of the faculties, is to exercise them all more or less, and accustom them to alternate tension and relaxation. Niebuhr, who may be called the discoverer of Roman history, and whose prodigious stores of knowledge scarcely surpassed his perspicacity and powers of combination, was, as so many commanding intellects are recorded to have been, not insensible to the charm of lighter study, diversifying his profound researches with the perusal of novels, and particularly delighted with those of Sir Walter Scott.

LXXXV.

The thoughtful and philosophic are frequently as much captivated by appeals to the physical part of our nature as the vulgar. It is not a little curious to

* Areopagitica. † Essais, liv. i. chap. 38. De la Solitude.

notice the effect of mere rhetorical power, as sweetness, intonation, and variety of cadence, in awakening passion, and procuring admiration towards common-place, with those of sage and stoical pretensions, who in theory had abandoned such influences to the unreflecting crowd. Both have the same senses, though not the same intellects; and in this case, as in so many others, feeling triumphs over philosophy. By the way, what Demosthenes is said to have uttered respecting action as the chief requisite of an orator, applies more strictly to melody and compass of voice. Garrick is reported to have declared, after hearing the celebrated Whitefield preach, that he would be able to put an audience into tears by the varied repetition of the word Mesopotamia.

LXXXVI.

Except for professional or particular purposes, those kinds of knowledge are the most valuable of which the interest increases with life; a trait that pre-eminently distinguishes theology—not indeed the scholastic and traditional dogmas which often pass under that name, but the science which is conversant with man's noblest intellectual and spiritual relations, and as presented, without distortion or spurious intermixture, in the authentic revelations of the Deity.

LXXXVII.

The highest and the lowest orders of mind are sometimes conducted to the same result, though by

a very different path. They are often alike, for example, in their contempt of certain objects or pursuits which usually appear attractive to others. But in the one case, contempt is indulged because the understanding is far above them; in the other, because it is far beneath them.

LXXXVIII.

A penetrating judgment, unless combined with a stoical heart, is sometimes fatal to the repose of its possessor; for, like the gifted Cassandra, it is destined to see things to which others are blind or incredulous, and often therefore occasions unpleasing collision with prevalent sentiments and admiration.

LXXXIX.

It is pleasant to have the mind tranquilly occupied, catching ideas that float by, as a bough across a stream detains the light matters or flowers that glide along the surface. Such sort of intellectual quiescence, or passive entertainment of thought and fancy, is represented by Lord Bacon as conducive to longevity. "Admiration and moderate contemplation," says he, "have a great power to prolong life; for these detain the spirits upon pleasing subjects, without suffering them to tumultuate and act disorderly. . . .But subtile, acute, and severe inquiries, cut short life; for they fatigue and wear out the spirits."* This is perhaps a reason, as he intimates,

* History of Life and Death.

why anchorets and other persons of calm existence have so often attained to extreme old age. We may picture to ourselves meditations of this placid kind connected with such a scene as that so exquisitely portrayed by Spenser:

> A little lowly hermitage it was,
> Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side,
> Far from resort of people that did pas
> In traveill to and froe: a little wyde
> There was an holy chappell edifyde,
> Wherein the hermite dewly wont to say
> His holy things each morne and eventyde;
> Thereby a chrystall stream did gently play,
> Which from a sacred fountain welled forth alway.*

Next to the study of nature, and the spectacle of fine landscape or woodland views, the perusal of poetry and romance is most favourable to these habits of agreeable rumination.

XC.

The sciences of which the study affords the greatest exercise to the understanding, are not those whose principles are the most fixed and demonstrable, as, for instance, natural philosophy, or mathematics; but such as involve a degree of fluctuation, and require the balancing of probabilities, as political or mental philosophy, ethics, or human nature in its individual manifestations. To borrow an illustration from the fine arts:—the former may be compared to the capitals of Corinthian columns, or friezes of regular proportions, which, however neces-

* Faery Queene, Canto I. stanza 34.

sary or ornamental, demand no invention or fancy in the architect, but only adherence to a model, with a certain amount of mechanical skill. The latter resemble the Arabesque or old Gothic embellishments, the draperies, and more intricate combinations of beauty, which require not only a wider range but a loftier order of talent.

XCI.

It is worth while to master some kinds of learning, were it only to arrest the impertinence of sciolists and pedants, who assume an air of mystery and elevation on account of their attainments in those branches. Perhaps it would be a sufficient compensation for joining the society of Freemasons to discover, what one of the uninitiated will scarcely be pardoned for terming, the apparent emptiness of their rites and cabbalistic jargon.

XCII.

A wise man would choose to have his history recorded in his memory rather by the successions of thought, by the changes and progress of his mind, than by the outward circumstances or events that he may witness, or to which he may be subject.

XCIII.

Let the imagination receive an early tincture from such works as Gulliver's Travels, and the Arabian

Nights' Entertainments, that its notions of possibility may not be bounded by the ordinary course of things, much less by the limited customs or maxims of any particular country. For capacities more advanced, especially those of metaphysical turn, the writings of Berkeley which comprise his beautiful ideal theory, so beautifully propounded, might not be without effect in precluding that impatience of every thing novel or speculative, which is so serious a barrier to freedom and expansion of thought.

It is a remarkable trait of the Thousand and One Nights, that while the main texture of the stories presents the wildest marvels of oriental fiction, the work abounds in faithful delineations of the manners and superstitions of the Arab tribes, as for the most part they exist at the present hour. The circumstance may surely claim for the collection the good graces even of the most punctilious lovers of fact; the staple of truth which runs through the tales being enough, we might suppose, to have preserved them from Bishop Atterbury's disparaging remarks in one of his letters to Pope. If that prelate had not seen them for the first time in old age and in sickness, we could scarcely conceive a more decisive proof of his radical destitution of a taste for the imaginative, than the slight, not unmixed with aversion, he betrays for the fine fables and colourings of these wonderful performances. I dare say he admired the Odyssey, the Arabian Nights of antiquity.

The fashion of cramming the infant mind with scientific lore, instead of feeding it with those poetic and fictitious narratives which nourish the fancy, and

awaken the slumbering sensibilities, is at length, we hope, rather on the wane. It is not less true of intellect than of the body, that premature exertion occasions mal-conformation or disease. Some of the sagest observers of human nature have entered their protest against a system which, beginning with children as men, bids fair to end in their becoming not men but children. I might mention the names of Coleridge, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, the shrewd and erudite author of the Doctor, and others among the choice spirits of our time. The admirable nursery tale of Goody Two Shoes, whose title is no doubt sufficient to provoke the contempt of many grave pretenders to wisdom, has been attributed with considerable plausibility to Oliver Goldsmith, the most fascinating prose writer in our language. Dr. Johnstone, in his Life of Parr, relates an amusing anecdote of the venerable scholar buying at Shrewsbury a large number of old nursery stories, as Tom Hickathrift, Red Riding Hood, &c. to the special delight of Dr. Butler (late Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry) and his pupils. The origin and transformations of these ancient popular legends form a subject of no small literary, as well as philosophic curiosity.*

The doctrine is applicable to other periods besides the earliest. Sterne, in alluding to a story of two lovers whose tomb was feigned to be in the neighbourhood of Lyons, and which he describes as having remained with him better than any thing else he had read in the account of that celebrated city, remarks,

* See an excellent article in the *Quarterly Review*, No., xli. on the "Antiquities of Nursery Literature."

with his not unfrequent mixture of gaiety and penetration, "that there is a soft era in every gentle mortal's life, where such a story affords more *pabulum* to the brain than all the frusts, and crusts, and rusts of antiquity, which travellers can cook up for it." The fine sarcastic vein which sparkles through the works of this extraordinary wit, who made so merry with the solemn fopperies of his time, would not be amiss in our own, amidst the empirical conceits which dulness engenders, and folly is pleased to patronize.

It has been somewhat the vogue, among certain readers and critics, to abuse this eccentric writer, whose genius displays the vivacity and brilliance of Rabelais, with a power of the pathetic which that eminent satirist never possessed, for an affectation of sensibility, covering but a selfish or cold-hearted nature; an imputation which I for one will never admit. Nor will I allow that his productions betray any appearance of morbid sentimentality; however I may regret that feelings so exquisite as his were combined with unworthy conduct, or that his compositions should be stained with passages calculated to offend purity of moral taste, if not piety. A heart capable of *conceiving* such a character as uncle Toby, to say nothing of the episode of Le Fevre, and many a beautiful fragment besides, could not have been without stamina essentially estimable.

XCIV.

A man's opinion of practical things is rarely worth much before the age of thirty; though some intel-

lects are so precocious, that their apprehensions in general are as sound and mature at eighteen or twenty, as at any subsequent period. If the observation be correct, there appears something rather startling in Lord Bacon's idea, that the notions of those between twenty and thirty form the chief basis of political augury; especially if the position be meant to include not only those who think for themselves, but the much larger class who, as Robert Hall phrases it, "think by proxy." Broad views of a national kind, however, are less dependent on reflection or authority, than on the plastic power of circumstances, which may happen to be of the right description or otherwise.

XCV.

Whatever veneration a wise man may feel for the great luminaries of his species a century or two ago, he will take care to be pretty well versed in the literature of his own times. There are a thousand associations connected with living or recent authors, which not only excite deeper interest, but assist in entering more fully into the spirit and compass of their writings; just as in reading the history of our own country, there are certain local traits or traditionary notices which mix themselves with the narrative, and of which a foreigner could have scarcely the least conception. The observation extends to works far different from such as Butler's Hudibras, the Dunciad, and others of a satirical kind, which were of course much better relished as well as

understood at the season of their appearance, than they can possibly be in the present or any future age, and which are now chiefly preserved by those sparkles of wit, or condensed masses of thought, which no time can impair.

XCVI.

In youth study; in maturity compose; in old age correct.

XCVII.

Mere exemption from error in general is within the reach of an ordinary genius. The characteristic of a powerful one is to grasp after new or vigorous ideas, though it may hold them in connexion with several minor inaccuracies. How many crude fancies are scattered over the speculations of Montaigne! how many extravagant or doubtful positions disfigure those of Jeremy Taylor! Yet where will you meet with greater discursiveness of view than in both these writers, the latter also gilding every subject with the brightest hues of imagination? There are not a few errors and false assumptions in the works of Lord Bacon; but what majesty, profoundness, poetry, and invention! Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy is invaluable, not so much for any precise information, as for its ample range of reflection and allusion, added to the wit and the variegated, recondite lore which saturate its pages. We might safely affirm that in ninety cases out of a hundred, a mind above the

common is more distinguished by comprehension and variety than by unimpeachable correctness of thought, which is compatible enough with poverty and sterility of intellect.

XCVIII.

Perhaps the education intended to render a person most active and skilful in practical affairs, should be conducted in the main without the intervention of books. Of course where a situation of control, or any office requiring more the exercise of brain than of hand is concerned, a different course would be eligible. Thus the training of ordinary soldiers, like that established in the Spartan state, which was only an extensive military organization, is effected by oral instruction, example, and practice. In this manner also, according to Xenophon, the ancient Persians appear to have been disciplined for the pursuits of civil as well as martial life.

XCIX.

The most important truths are in every body's possession; and are acted upon successfully by the rude, without any consideration of their reasons or evidences, and sometimes without a perception of their existence. This is the case in natural science, mental philosophy, and ethics. With regard to science, the least informed act every day on the principle, that in proportion as the weight of a body approaches the centre, the danger of its falling is

diminished. This axiom every person, whether conscious of the circumstance or not, applies practically in walking. And so with respect to innumerable exemplifications of other laws of physics. In like manner as to the phenomena of the understanding, every man has an intuitive persuasion that memory depends on attention; that a mutual and mysterious connexion subsists between mind and body; that one train of thought often gives rise to another; in other words, that there is such a thing as the association of ideas. What are called the *discoveries* of intellectual philosophy amount to little more, in substance, than such simple and universally acknowledged facts.* In reference also to the doctrines of morality, or the maxims by which men should regulate their conduct in society, the most ignorant are acquainted with the principal; as, that vice creates uneasiness in the breast; that we should do to others as we wish they would do to ourselves—an aphorism inculcated by Confucius five hundred years before the Christian era, and which, as imprinted on the heart, is coeval with human nature itself—that we ought not to steal, be

* I am not insensible to the extraordinary merits which characterize the metaphysical writings of the late Dr. Thomas Brown, whose disquisitions on the relation of cause and effect appear to throw considerable light on most branches of intellectual and scientific research. But, in truth, he is indebted for the fundamental principles of his philosophy to the theory of causation developed by Hume, of which Brown's system is chiefly an establishment and ramification; although the boldness, ingenuity, and amazing analytic acuteness, by which his speculations in general are distinguished, entitle him to the character of an original and profound, as well as successful investigator of mental phenomena.

proud, ungrateful, selfish, and so forth. Now it is the business of a philosopher to show *why* we ought to pursue or to avoid any particular course. But in many instances, especially in the physical and mental sciences, the most intelligent can only classify, or give technical and artificial names to things, without possessing a whit more knowledge than the most illiterate.

C.

The different kinds of mental accomplishment or superiority may be estimated generally, perhaps, in the following order: 1. Original and inventive thought, including not only discoveries such as those of Sir Isaac Newton, or disquisitions like Butler's Analogy, opening new vistas of reflection at each step, but especially ideal creations, as Shakspeare's, which so often exhibit a union of the subtlest with the most comprehensive reach of intellect. 2. Fancy and poetical embellishment—displayed chiefly in gleams of imagery, or the decoration of the more solid intellectual structures; as the ornaments of an architectural pile, or flashes of lightning on its unshrinking proportions. 3. Humour and satire; among the raciest specimens of which, by our elder wits, take, for instance, the far-renowned Hudibras—and by the modern, Lord Byron's Vision of Judgment. 4. Picturesque narration or description; of which, by the way, it is easier to find examples among the biographers, novelists, and writers of travels, than among historians, if we except the old chroniclers.

5. Imitation; not of course in the sense in which Aristotle refers to it all poetry and music, as being imitations of nature, but rather the copying of what others have artificially produced.

CI.

There is a profusion in the works of God Almighty worthy of his infinitude. Perhaps the larger proportion of those which are confined within the narrow boundaries of our own world, are concealed from our view. To say nothing of the contents of the ocean, or of regions unexplored by man, we have reason to believe in the existence of innumerable objects which we are unable to descry with our present senses or means of discernment. Yet it is conceivable that the universe may include orders of being endowed with faculties capable of apprehending minutely all these objects; and possibly man, in a future state, may be furnished with additional and more exquisite instruments of perception, able to discover not only the portions of matter which are now invisible, but an endless variety of incorporeal intelligences. What but the want of certain organs could prevent us from now discerning myriads of ethereal existences, did they, in pursuance of whatever mystic or benevolent aims, frequent our globe, as Milton so beautifully fables?—

> Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep.*

* Paradise Lost, book iv.

CII.

The primary objects of scientific as well as speculative pursuits should be, the enlargement and purification of the mental powers, and the discovery of new phenomena or facts susceptible of practical application. The latter is the distinguished, although not perhaps the sole characteristic of the system propounded by Bacon. The Platonic, to which it has sometimes been opposed, aims chiefly at the supremacy of reason, or the acquisition of moral truth and beauty. By the one we enlarge our dominion over nature, with the view of assuaging the ills and multiplying the commodities of life: by the other we aspire to a dominion over mind, or an elevation of spirit which can dispense with exterior commodities. A philosophy which provides us with extrinsic accommodations is good, but a philosophy which teaches us to forego or despise them is better. The Baconian, addressed principally to the material or physical part of our constitution, is more concerned with man as a creature of sense than of intellect or intelligence: the Platonic confines itself almost exclusively to the spiritual and invisible part of our being. The one is more productive in immediate or palpable results; the other, operating on what is incorporeal, has little fruit to exhibit to the eye, but not on that account may the fruit be less real or precious. If in this case the success is small, owing especially to the absence of those motives which Revelation presents, it is in kind more excellent; and though failures may have

been frequent, the object was nobler. Bacon's system is most applicable to the masses; Plato's to the reflecting few, who influence the masses. The former is best suited to the infancy of man and of society, appeals to sense always making impression before that which speaks to the understanding. Accordingly the inductive method and the practical arts were cultivated with no contemptible results ages before the epoch of Bacon; though at the period when he arose scholastic subtleties being in the ascendant, his services were of inestimable worth in directing curiosity to more rational objects of pursuit. The lessons of the Athenian sage are calculated for a higher stage of cultivation, his school being the most elevated, of merely human range, to which the faculties can be introduced. On the supposition of immortality, which should fairly be entertained in a question like the present, no comparison can be instituted between the scope or dignity of the respective systems; that of Bacon being circumscribed to a temporal existence, while Plato's comprehends effects unbounded by earth or time.*

* Some of these observations were suggested by an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, No. cxxxii., on the character and philosophy of Bacon; an article which, for richness and amplitude of thought, splendour of illustration, and nervous eloquence of language, has few parallels among the critical productions of our literature. But the estimate which the writer offers of the ancient philosophy, including the sublime, matchless disquisitions of Plato, appears to me by far too disparaging, and the utility of speculation in general to be in great degree overlooked. The essay also contains a strange hypothesis or implication concerning the aim of Socrates, as though he regarded with indifference or contempt the practical interests of men. That he attached too little consequence to the departments of knowledge

CIII.

Professions of universal education are as ludicrous as professions of universal cure, the obliquity and

which come under the denomination of physics or natural philosophy, and to similar branches, may be admitted; though the manner in which those sciences were then prosecuted, and the aspect in which they presented themselves, are sufficient to account, if not to atone for the circumstance:—but the whole tendency of his instructions was of a practical kind. It must be needless to adduce in confirmation the well-known passage of Cicero, in which Varro is described as saying, "Socrates mihi videtur, id quod constat inter omnes, primus a rebus occultis et ab ipsa natura involutis, in quibus omnes ante eum philosophi occupati fuerunt, avocasse philosophiam, et ad vitam communem adduxisse"—(*Acad. Quæst.* lib. i.); a statement which is so beautifully illustrated by the discourses of Socrates, as narrated in the Memorabilia and Œconomics of Xenophon, and which may be taken as no unfair representation of Bacon's system itself—a system which, as he observes of his Essays, "comes home to men's business and bosoms." The fact seems to be that the word philosophy, as used by the ancients, had a more restricted meaning than it holds among the moderns, and related rather to the mind than the body, according to a remark of Seneca, quoted p. 66 of the *Review*: "It is not her office to teach men how to use their hands. The object of her lessons is to form the soul." It is no disparagement therefore of the philosophy cultivated by Plato and his compeers, if she failed to multiply the physical comforts of man. Her object was different; her aim was to expand and ennoble the spirit. Whether she succeeded in that object is another question; though it would require no small temerity to deny, that the speculations of antiquity have occasioned incalculable benefit to the leading intellects of every succeeding age, and through them advanced the welfare and happiness of countless millions. It were clearly as unreasonable to inveigh against the ancient professors of wisdom because they did not interfere with practical science or the mechanical arts, which they left to other hands, and perhaps too much depreciated, as it would be to censure the race of metaphysical and ethical inquirers of recent days, as

inaptitude of some minds being absolutely incurable. It is remarked by the philosophical historian of the

Locke and Leibnitz, Clarke, Berkeley, and Descartes, for devoting themselves to abstract research, or asserting the superior dignity of the province which they had chosen. The controversy, in short, turns on the comparative merits of speculation, moral and metaphysical, and the arts of life; though the strictures of the critic would apply with equal force to the finest emanations of the human intellect, to the most exquisite creations of fancy, as well as the profoundest discoveries on any subject bearing no particular relation to the physical condition of our species.

That the ancient systems of philosophy included several untenable and some preposterous positions, besides being deficient in certain cardinal truths which our more fortunate situation has rendered common, is a matter neither of surprise nor reproach. Certainly it is not a little unfair to detach from the mass of noble sentiments entertained by the Stoics, for instance, the feeblest and most absurd points of their system, and pushing them to their extreme limit, to make them a chief ground of comparison in an estimate of the ancient philosophy. How much more just, as well as candid, are the conclusions expressed by Sir James Mackintosh, in his admirable Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy! Referring to the moral writings of Plato, he says, "The object is to inspire the love of truth, of wisdom, and of that supreme and eternal Mind, which contains all truth and wisdom, all beauty and goodness. By the love or delightful contemplation and pursuit of these transcendent aims for their own sake only, he represented the mind of man as raised from low and perishable objects, and prepared for those high destinies which are appointed for all those who are capable of them." "His works," he afterwards asserts, "are the store-house from which moralists have from age to age borrowed the means of rendering moral instruction easier and more delightful;" and well defines the character of the system which they embodied by declaring, that "his aim was as practical as that of Socrates." To the Stoics, notwithstanding any theoretical extravagances which they embraced, the same competent judge awards the superiority over every ancient sect, extolling them as "that noble school which preserved great souls untainted at the court of dissolute and ferocious tyrants; which exalted the slave of one of Nero's courtiers to be a moral teacher of aftertimes; which, for the first, and

Roman Empire, in contrasting the elaborate nurture bestowed on Commodus with his subsequent de-

hitherto for the only time, breathed philosophy and justice into those rules of law which govern the ordinary concerns of every man; and which, above all, has contributed, by the examples of Marcus Porcius Cato, and of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, to raise the dignity of our species, to keep alive a more ardent love of virtue, and a more awful sense of duty, throughout all generations." (See the Section containing a "Retrospect of Ancient Ethics.") In these results, it must surely be admitted, we may trace a "philosophy of fruit," and not a mere "philosophy of words;" unless, adopting the somewhat Utilitarian nomenclature of the reviewer, we designate as fruit only what conduces to the outward advantage of our race.

The sum of the dispute may be comprised in narrow limits. The design and tendency, and on the whole the effect, of the ancient philosophy, were the mental elevation and improvement of man. The chief aim and result of the Baconian philosophy, according to the exposition of the critic, are the physical well-being or comfort of man. The one exalts and refines the soul; the other relieves or gratifies the body. Both are distinguished by their appropriate utility; but which are the more important, ethics or physics? the regulation of mind, or the knowledge and control of matter?

I would just add, in reference to the article which has occasioned these strictures, that to me it seems not to render justice to the merits of Bacon's philosophy, though the great object of its eulogium, considered in its actual as well as intended application to science in general, comprising metaphysics, morals, and the research of truth in whatever region of contemplation. That such extension of his scheme was fully proposed by himself, is evident from a passage in the *Novum Organum*, lib. i. aph. 127, where he says, "Dubitabit quispiam potius quam objiciet, utrum nos de naturali tantum philosophia, an etiam de scientiis reliquis, logicis, ethicis, politicis, secundum viam nostram perficiendis, loquamur. At nos certe de universis hæc, quæ dicta sunt, intelligimus: atque quemadmodum vulgaris logica, quæ regit res per syllagismum, non tantum ad naturales, sed ad omnes scientias pertinet; ita et nostra, quæ procedit per inductionem, omnia complectitur." And in another place he gives a different view of his philosophy, even in relation to its aspect on physics, from the picture drawn of it by the reviewer. "Opera ipsa," says he, "pluris facienda

meanour, that "the power of instruction is seldom of much efficacy, except in those happy dispositions where it is almost superfluous." Yet it is with mental as with bodily distempers; few are unsusceptible of mitigation.

CIV.

The facts of history and of science constitute only the materials of knowledge. Fact without philosophy is like matter uninformed with mind; or like the letters in a printer's case, compared with the same when put up into type; or as the words and syllables of a dead language without an interpreter.

CV.

Men of superior capacity do not, perhaps, derive so much benefit from mixing with individuals of their own stamp, as with those of dissimilar, or even sub-

sunt, quatenus sunt veritatis pignora, quam propter vitæ commoda."—*Nov. Org.* lib. i. aph. 124. This last sentence is clearly at variance with a main position of the article under notice; on which I would remark in conclusion, that while pronouncing so high and deserved a panegyric on the philosophy of Bacon, it contains what I cannot but deem an exaggerated representation of his moral delinquencies,—whether estimated by the usages or ethical sense of those times, or by various practices of party and legislative policy in our own; of a different kind, it is true, but not less absolute or less mischievous infractions of the immutable principles of right.—From a note in Mr. Hallam's Literature of Europe, vol. iii. p. 168, I am happy to find that, for some at least of the opinions expressed in the preceding strictures, which were written on the appearance of the critique to which they relate, I might adduce the authority of his eminent name.

ordinate intellectual qualities. If you mingle with the recluse cultivators of literature, yourself one of the fraternity, you will be apt to talk from books rather than things, traversing too, ground which you have already gone over; or if with those of education, but whose minds have never been fledged—a class highly respectable, especially on the score of numbers—one of three things must take place: either you cannot unbosom yourself,—or you will startle and incur suspicion by the appearance of paradox,—or yielding to the pressure, you will be liable to pursue a beaten and barren track of thought. But when you get into company with a person of native shrewdness, though without any tincture of letters, who supplies you with fact from his own sphere, or notions suggested by his opportunities of observation, your ideas are put into a new train, and your thinking faculty is aroused. Better indeed converse with a hedger, or one who breaks stones on the road, than with those who but echo the truisms or fallacies of the day, and whose views never rise beyond the level of the hackneyed and traditionary.

CVI.

The ancient practice of allowing land to remain fallow for a season is now exploded, and a succession of different crops found preferable. The case is similar with regard to the understanding, which is more relieved by change of study than by total inactivity. Paley justly conceives that a mind well disciplined can turn from the perusal of a poem

or light essay to a piece of abtruse reasoning, without any feeling of abrupt or unnatural transition.

CVII.

Many of the finest and most interesting emotions perish for ever, because too complex and fugitive for expression. Of all things relating to man, his feelings are perhaps the most evanescent, the greater part dying in the moment of their birth. But while emotions perish, thought blended in diction is immortal.

CVIII.

There is great absurdity in despising mere ignorance, though it is an absurdity which some who affect to be philosophers are the most prompt to indulge. Who is there that may not be pronounced ignorant? Was Newton not ignorant? or Bacon, or Locke? or Voltaire, whose genius seems to have penetrated almost all subjects of human research? From the first order of created intelligences, to the meanest insect or worm, there is an endless gradation in knowledge; and shall those who occupy a certain height in the series or chain, contemptuously regard such as are placed a link or two below, while myriads of beings incalculably more enlightened than themselves, constitute the ascending ranks, all of whom are at an infinite distance from the supreme and incomprehensible Mind? It imports little how few or how many a person's acquisitions may be. The

question is, What is the *species* or *effect* of the information he possesses? Between the most intellectual and accomplished man, and the lowest specimen of humanity, there are more points of equality than of difference.*

CIX.

An excursive fancy will frequently have sentiments or images suggested to it, which most would deem impossible to be connected with the immediate objects of its contemplation. It is the prerogative of

* The absolute infinity of the field of science, contrasted with the limited capacities and duration of man, suggests some important lessons as to the right application of inquisitive habits. On this topic, a reflection of Bishop Butler is entitled to no small regard. "Men of deep research and curious inquiry," says that eminent prelate, "should just be put in mind not to mistake what they are doing. If their discoveries serve the cause of virtue and religion, in the way of proof, motive to practice, or assistance in it; or if they tend to render life less unhappy, and promote its satisfactions; then they are most usefully employed: but bringing things to light, alone and of itself, is of no manner of use, any otherwise than as an entertainment or diversion."—*Sermon on the Ignorance of Man.*

It may be questioned, however, whether any discovery or truth, even the most speculative, can be wholly barren or unprofitable; for if not turned to account by the discoverer himself, it is almost sure to be so by others; or if too refined for practical objects, it may expand the intellect, and thus prepare it for contemplation or efforts in channels more directly serviceable. Besides, if mere entertainment of an innocent kind be secured, that surely is no despicable result. Alas! how few are the pursuits which effect so much. There is also the whole range of an endless existence before us, with its inconceivable varieties of occupation and circumstance; so that what is unappropriated in this world, may not be without use or application in the future.

genius, without the production of paradox or incongruity, to assemble and to blend remote ideas, which to an ordinary understanding would always have remained separate.

The faculties seem most enlarged by those conjunctions of thought which are founded on distant and apparently opposite relations. What is true respecting intermarriages among a particular race, or the members of any exclusive order, as occasioning unhealthiness or degeneracy of offspring, applies emphatically to mental associations. As the ancient Spanish grandees, who never contracted alliances beyond their own circle, exhibited a palpable deterioration of character, intellectual and physical; so the contemplative power, if restricted to the range of dialectic or obvious resemblances, will be stunted, or put forth little native vigour. Thoughts not naturally akin must be wedded, to produce the immortal fruits of intellect.*

* Dr. Prichard, the able and learned explorer of so many points of scientific and antiquarian curiosity, has collected an abundance of particulars establishing the position, that "mixed offsprings originating from different races within the limits of the same species, generally exceed in vigour and in the tendency to multiplication the parent races from which they are produced." After citing a number of examples from various parts of the world, he introduces the following, selected nearer home. "The Celtic and Slavonic races were not so strongly marked in their physical differences from the German or Teutonic race as many other tribes of mankind, yet there existed some physical peculiarities which distinguished these nations. It may be observed that, in many instances, the intermixture has produced breeds physically superior to the majority of either ancestral race. This may be remarked in some parts of Ireland: where the Celtic population of that island is nearly unmixed, they are, in general, people of short stature, small limbs and features; where they are intermixed with English settlers or with

CX.

Minute research is unfavourable to a power of generalization, merely because less attention is devoted to combined and comprehensive views, and because in that case the one habit is strengthened at the expense of the other. Nothing however in the structure of mind, forbids the union of both; and a certain distribution of intellectual effort will ensure the faculty of analysis, together with that of combination.

CXI.

According to the habit which prevails in the association of thought, may be determined the order and merit of different minds, whether as imaginative, original, argumentative, affectionate, humorous, &c. One of the leading objects of education, and that to which most others may be reduced, is to regulate the connexion of ideas.

CXII.

Condensation results from the mastery of a subject. It is imperfection of view or imbecility that occasions diffuseness; and to such a cause, rather than amplitude of resources or invention, that we

the Lowlanders of Scotland, the people are remarkable for fine figures, tall stature, and great physical energy."—*Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, vol. i. pp. 149, 150, third edition.—The principle has been equally confirmed in its application to the understanding.

owe the generality of bulky tomes; for great books, like large skulls, have often the least brains.

CXIII.

There are multitudes of truths which are worthless in themselves, and merit attention merely as stepping-stones, or as a ladder conducting to something ulterior. When that is attained, the ladder may be dispensed with. The time will perhaps arrive when the topics which have served the infancy of reason, and the facts which may be compared to the scaffolding of an edifice, being laid aside, the essence of truth, in every department, will be so condensed and simplified, as to come within the reach of the most limited capacity. This would still leave boundless scope for disquisition and varieties of view; as hitherto problems and perplexities have multiplied faster than solutions or discoveries, and that too in proportion to the amount of civilization and culture. The nations most advanced in the career of intelligence and refinement, have always been the most speculative and curious. It was so with the oriental nations most famed in the history of thought, among whom so many sects and philosophies sprang up. It was so with the most polished state of classical antiquity, the subtle and meditative Athenians. It has been so in western Europe since the revival of letters, and especially since the breaking down of the old landmarks of opinion by the French revolution. It is so at present with individuals, in relation to each other. The larger their

comprehension and sagacity, the greater commonly is the number of points on which they differ; it being in the nature of a developed mind to stretch its views into remote tracts, while every mind has its original or acquired peculiarities.

CXIV.

We forget incalculably more of our own thoughts than those of others. What crowds of imagery, what varieties of scene and adventure, what unfathomable depths of feeling, are often compressed within the space of a few hours' sleep, yet with little more impression on memory than is produced by colours on a landscape. Nothing so much convinces me of the boundlessness of the human mind as its operations in dreaming.

CXV.

Many seem to consider a taste for luxury as involved in a taste for knowledge, and bring against the latter objections which belong, if they apply at all, only to the former. Mere refinement, apart from correspondent means, may not be very desirable; but is totally distinct from enlargement of views, which can never, under any circumstances, be of itself injurious.

CXVI.

The practice of reading is calculated to form a habit of abstraction, and so far to elevate the

mind by giving it exercise and pleasure without the intervention of sensible objects. If not of particular service in directly assisting reflection, it is at least necessary to supply a sufficient variety of topics for reflection. It is one of the best methods of instruction where error or prejudice is to be overcome, as no personal feelings are implicated in the case. You do not disclose your mistakes or ignorance, or exhibit your inferiority, in consulting a written composition, which enlightens without mortifying. The great advantage, however, is not perhaps appropriation of the sentiments or facts perused, but the mental process which is carried on at the time by comparison, contrast, fancy, &c.; so that even where the ideas which books have presented are forgotten, the understanding may have been strengthened, or rendered more active. But let the custom of reading much at once be avoided, as few things are more irksome or less beneficial. Reading should diversify and assist, rather than constitute, the principal occupation of the mind.

CXVII.

We may regard the whole series of intellectual phenomena as a succession of ideas, more or less intimately associated. This seems to be the case even in dreaming, where, however, the principle of cohesion is often so faint as to be imperceptible, or almost immediately lost; the scenes which make the impression following each other in broken rapidity

like the optical illusions termed phantasmagoria, or the representations in a raree-show.

CXVIII.

The necessity of contemplating objects in an abstract and systematic manner, betrays the narrowness of our mental faculties, which are unable to apprehend what is complex without separation or analysis. Yet nothing in nature is presented to us in an abstract form; and provided we have a generally correct view of elementary qualities, the more we can combine subjects and ideas, the more rapid will be our intellectual progress.

CXIX.

To preserve the understanding healthful, frequent variations in the trains of thought are necessary. The wits of the schoolmen, as Lord Bacon has well noted, became diseased from the confined circle of their reading and meditations; and it may be observed in examples of regular madness, that the mind is almost constantly running on the same theme.

CXX.

The study of man, though one of the most important branches of research, and calculated to promote acuteness and nicety of observation, seldom augments or multiplies a person's pleasures. They whose speculations are much applied to the subject of

human nature, seem in general more tinged with melancholy than such as limit their inquiries for the most part to other topics. When we look at man, we behold a palace in ruins; an elaborate piece of mechanism disorganized and broken; the noblest faculties often employed on the meanest objects; and happiness blighted or impaired by the waywardness of passion, or the strokes of misfortune. What wonder if our admiration is blended with regret? But when we turn to the material universe, we perceive no traces of irregularity or derangement, and no deviation from the laws which it originally received. The stars retain their orbits, and shine as beautifully now as at the beginning. Who can examine the structure and growth of a plant or flower, and not experience a tranquil unmingled delight, such as is rarely derived from reflection on the qualities or the history of man?

Habit, indeed, or peculiarity of mental structure, may render the study of mankind more interesting than that of nature. An expression of Crabbe's, who, like Johnson and Charles Lamb, was no admirer of the country, illustrates this feature in his own character. "When I called on him," writes a friend, "I remarked, that his house and gardens were pleasant and secluded: he replied, that he preferred walking in the streets, and observing the faces of the passers-by, to the finest natural scene."* The circumstance, however, may be easily explained. All must have felt the additional liveliness imparted

* Life and Poems, vol. i. p. 284.

to a landscape by the sight of living objects, especially of man; but there is surely a difference between such a distant, superficial gaze, and the investigation of his inner being or his fortunes. Besides, whoever adverts to the prevailing tone of this poet's compositions, will be apt to conclude, that the pleasure he derived from his favourite meditations was not unalloyed with many a bitter sentiment. For their effect on his mind, we may refer perhaps to a passage in his "Parish Register" of births, marriages, and deaths:

> When these my records I reflecting read,
> And find what ills these numerous births succeed;
> What powerful griefs these nuptial ties attend;
> With what regret these painful journeys end;
> When from the cradle to the grave I look,
> Mine I conceive a melancholy book.*

How different, we may imagine, must have been the strain of feeling associated with the occupations of White of Selborne, which he has exhibited in so picturesque a manner in his Natural History and Observations; or with the calm, sylvan researches to which we are indebted for Evelyn's Discourse on Forest Trees.†

* Crabbe's Life and Poems, vol. ii. p. 200.

† There are few pursuits connected with the out-of-door study of nature, which do not yield a similar pleasure to that expressed in the following passage, by one of the best of our British ornithologists. "When the vexations of the world have broken in upon me," says Waterton, "I go away for an hour or two, amongst the birds of the valley; and I seldom fail to return with better feelings than when I first set out."—*Essays on Natural History, chiefly Ornithology, by Charles Waterton, Esq., of Walton Hall*:—a capital book, abounding

CXXI.

The way to invigorate and excite the powers is not so much to urge them with a multitude of motives, as to bring some great subject before the attention. To peruse a work impregnated with the conceptions of genius, or illuminated with the bright images of fancy, is one of the best modes of stimulating the faculties; as nothing is a more pleasing incitement to intellectual ambition, than the biography of men of letters.

CXXII.

Those of a romantic or melancholy cast, feel at seasons the deepest pleasure in contracting their sails and their desires, and revelling in the luxury of their own mental resources.

CXXIII.

Although adherence to a round of systematic study is often indispensable, yet by shackling the powers, and keeping them too much at one monotonous pitch, it tends to impede excursive and original reflection. The sentiment, however, will commonly be deemed

in curious details, and tinctured with a raciness of style and manner, as rare as it is agreeable. The autobiographical sketch prefixed to the work is one of the most entertaining pieces of the kind in our language. Not many readers, I presume, can help being delighted with the downright honesty, and other amiable traits of the writer.

heretical by minds of a certain order, who seem to imagine that uniform exertion of intellect is most to be desired, and that nothing is valuable but what is the result of drudgery. Few of our best writers have been noted for methodical application or habits; though it may readily be admitted that toil, more or less, is the condition of all literary excellence. But it is toil of the brain, rather than of the hands or the memory; a toil little dependent on volition, or the recurrence of particular hours, although more time is generally consumed in such occupation than mechanical efforts require; the understandings of contemplative men being almost incessantly employed in some species of exercise, even when apparently disengaged from mental pursuits. The difficulty is not in the primary conception, which is usually a pleasure, but in the choice and combination, the colouring and embellishment of thought. These often demand renewed and painful processes of meditation, to which the mere slave of seasons and rules is a stranger. Such is the light in which Horace speaks of his *operosa carmina*. "With whatever faculties we are born," says Cowper, "and to whatever studies our genius may direct us, studies they must still be. I am persuaded that Milton did not write his Paradise Lost, nor Homer his Iliad, nor Newton his Principia, without immense labour." It was a singular feature in the literary habits of Goldsmith, that he composed his prose with rapidity, but his poems with slow and elaborate care. The former may be likened to the beautiful forms of frost-work, thrown up in a single night; the latter to those of

flowers, tardier in their growth, yet more exquisite in their appearance.*

CXXIV.

I consider there is a certain quantity of distempered brain in the world, which, though sure to manifest itself in some way, is often checked and diverted, or prevented from attaining its ultimate effects, by the variety of absurd opinions that, in one department or another, are always to be met with or invented.

* Sir Walter Scott, whose prodigious literary industry places his testimony above suspicion, says, "I doubt if men of method, who can lay aside or take up the pen just at the hours appointed, will ever be better than poor creatures. Lady Louisa Stuart used to tell me of Mr. Hoole, the translator of Tasso and Ariosto, and in that capacity a noble transmuter of gold into lead, that he was a clerk in the India House, with long ruffles and a snuff-coloured suit of clothes, who occasionally visited her father, John Earl of Bute. She sometimes conversed with him, and was amused to find that he did exactly so many couplets day by day, neither more nor less; and habit had made it light to him, however heavy it might seem to the reader."—*Lockhart's Life of Scott*, vol. vi. p. 317, 1st ed.

I have sometimes been surprised at a remark of Johnson respecting Pope, who wrote a considerable part of his translation of the Iliad, as well as other pieces, on odd scraps of paper, the backs of letters in particular; a practice which the critic censures as an instance of penurious frugality, "by which," says he, "perhaps in five years five shillings were saved." Yet Pope is acknowledged to have been remarkably profuse in his liberalities to domestics, and to have counted on devoting an eighth of his income to charity. I have little doubt that the usage in question arose from the poet's irregular habits of composition, which led him, when in the mood for writing, to seize the first paper that presented itself; being accustomed, as stated by his biographer, to record at the time any casual thought or expression that struck his fancy.

The mad humour which used to be absorbed by the dreams of alchemy, witchcraft, astrology, and other exploded chimeras of the dark ages, is as rife as ever, only expended on newer and less imaginative follies.

CXXV.

In proportion to the vigour of the understanding, is the necessity of energetic occupation for its powers. Johnson, I doubt not, would have been much happier, had he been more strenuously employed in coping with subjects adapted to the range of his robust and capacious intellect.

CXXVI.

It is pleasing to observe, how frequently those qualities in our nature which usually require to be counteracted, become in effect the occasions of our advantage. We are prone, for example, to neglect whatever is imposed as a task; yet this disposition is not seldom a preservative from considerable injury in education, where the subjects or modes of study prescribed are, in numbers of instances, more suited to contract and deaden the opening faculties, than to foster their expansion or sensibility. Milton not more quaintly than justly describes the repast which is often provided for the satisfaction of juvenile appetites, as a "feast of sow-thistles and brambles." A rigid, uniform system of training in particular, whether applied

to intellect or habits of life, is little favourable to elasticity or luxuriance of thought, and sometimes operates as a blight to every thing imaginative or original. Of all the states of antiquity, Sparta, which was governed by the strictest institutions, produced the fewest geniuses. It is remarked by an accomplished critic,* that from the schools of the Jesuits, eminent as they were in merit, yet being conducted on one unvarying plan, scarcely a single mind has arisen that has decisively enlarged the boundaries of any great branch of research. Descartes however should in fairness be excepted; for though he retired to Holland with a view to enter on his career of bold philosophic speculation, yet he had long before adopted his principles of independent reflection, having resolved, when but nineteen years old, to lay aside all books, and endeavouring to obliterate the notions he had received, investigate for himself the foundations of knowledge. The deduction would merely be, that some minds are of so vigorous and irrepressible a cast, that no species of discipline can quell their inherent capabilities. Schiller astonished the world with that eccentric outburst of fancy and enthusiasm, the Robbers, in which he sought relief from the stifling emotions of a perplexed and meditative brain, when a student in a ducal academy, the organization of which was in every part adjusted but to the dead level of a well-working piece of machinery.

* Quarterly Review, No. cxxx. art. on Hallam's Literature of Europe.

CXXVII.

The effect of wit is perhaps more dependent on the structure of understanding to which it is addressed, than any other species of mental emanation. The brilliant scintillations of fancy in which Sheridan so much delighted, or the refined sarcastic railleries of Voltaire, would be lost on those of prosaic mould, as sparks of fire on wetted timber, or the strokes of a fan on the hard rock; while the quips and puns and epigrammatic conceits which, thick and close as the trees of a forest, succeed each other in Hudibras, require for their impression a mixture of the meditative with the facetious. On the other hand, the homespun drolleries of Sancho are calculated for minds of every stamp, as are the humours of the sapient Fluellen, and especially of that worthy and redoubted knight, Sir John Falstaff.

CXXVIII.

Of some minds the first decisions are commonly the best, subsequent meditation serving only to bewilder or weaken their conceptions. This is chiefly the case with imaginative minds, and for the most part perhaps with those of women, who seem to arrive at results more by a species of intuition, than by a process of reasoning. On the contrary, certain persons, and those often of the deepest intellect, appear incapable of forming accurate conclusions with promptitude. Their thoughts must hover for a

while over the generalities of a subject; but the conclusions which they ultimately adopt, are almost sure to be of the genuine stamp.

CXXIX.

An ardent and impassioned genius, when impelled to some difficult or illustrious enterprise, often flatters itself with the prospect of subsequent remission or repose; but after the object is achieved, the fire still glows in the breast, and stimulates to fresh efforts, till life itself is consumed with the restless energy.

CXXX.

The bolder and more excursive our inquiries, the better, if equal diligence be employed in the process of verification. Unless the mind be free from a contracted adherence to prevalent opinions, those *idola tribus* which Fancy so often conjures up at the bidding of Folly, its powers will ever remain in a state of pupilage, and no expectation of intellectual proficiency can be rationally entertained. If the literary were more abandoned to their own reflections and criticisms, their understandings would be proportionally more sound and masculine. Even Schiller is said to have had his principles of composition disturbed and injured, after the appearance of his Wallenstein, in consequence of the innovations of Goethe and others. Disregard for the mere authority of great names has occasioned most of our best things, yet is commonly viewed with the utmost

suspicion and ill-will. Thus it was with Copernicus, on reviving the Pythagorean doctrine respecting the solar system; with Harvey in reference to the circulation of the blood; not to mention the contempt attached to Lord Bacon by so many witlings of his time, Sir Edward Coke amongst the number, for disabusing the world of the speculative absurdities which had led it astray. The Reformation itself was nothing but an insurrection of individual judgment against the most extensive, potent, and in some respects most venerable authority ever exercised by man. Of the temper apt to be awakened by unaccustomed theories, though propounded with ever so much acuteness or vigour, we are not without illustration in the disparagement still heaped by some, with pretensions to critical sagacity, on what I will venture to call, in spite of any occasional deductions on the score of one-sidedness or eccentricity, the profound and incomparable disquisitions of Bentham.

CXXXI.

Error is sometimes so nearly allied to truth, that it blends with it as imperceptibly as the colours of the rainbow fade into each other.

CXXXII.

Perhaps the leading distinction of superior intellect is a power of compression; a faculty which presupposes that of generalization. A subordinate

understanding never perceives more than certain fragments or mutilated portions of a subject,—surveying the field of thought as a landscape through a tube.

CXXXIII.

What nature with pretensions to refinement, is so unimaginative or perverted as not to receive more pleasure from gazing on the clouds, as they pass in silent and solemn majesty along the sky, or assume every variety of shape and colour, than from scanning the movements of men, or criticising the motives and purposes by which they are actuated? So might dream youthful enthusiasm, cast in the mould which genius so often exhibits; but facts supply some curious anomalies. Madame de Stael, though endowed with taste, susceptibility of feeling, and romance, appears to have been utterly without relish either for loveliness or grandeur of external views.—It is an interesting feature in the character of the Turks, amidst all their degradation and narrow range of sentiment, that they entertain a passionate admiration for the beauties of scenery, and the more picturesque combinations of objects. Such is the testimony of M. de Lamartine, a poet, as well as skilful observer of the poetry of life and manners. "The admiration of beautiful prospects, fountains, the expanse of the sea, and the horizon bounded by chains of snow-capped mountains, is the ruling instinct of the nation. . . . Sovereign and subjects, rich and poor, have but one want, one feeling,

in the choice and arrangement of their dwellings, namely, to charm the eye with a beautiful prospect. If the situation of the house, and the poverty of the owner, preclude this luxury, then, at least, there are a tree, a sheep, and a dove-cot, in a patch of ground surrounding the hut."* Not much different is the account given by Lady Wortley Montagu of the Turkish people, who, like most inhabitants of the East, are little changed by the lapse of centuries. The enchanting landscapes which adorn their sunny clime, especially in the neighbourhood of Constantinople, must be no doubt favourable to the nourishment of this simple taste. Yet the Turks, so far as I am aware, have produced no painters or descriptive writers of eminence, any more than the Swiss, with all the fascinations of their remarkable country. As to the former, by the way, the fine arts can never be expected to flourish among a people whose religion forbids the representation of *living* things.

CXXXIV.

Many of the greatest minds have been nurtured in solitude. Where there is extreme susceptibility of impressions from immediate objects or occurrences, a rather sequestered mode of life seems preferable for genius, to allow sufficient scope for its unbiassed operations. A poetic temperament in particular, if it does not always shrink from the bustle of the world, at least courts the luxury of its own ruminations unbroken. It is amidst scenes

* Pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

of romantic and picturesque seclusion, that the musings of Beattie's minstrel are cherished:

> Concourse, and noise, and toil, he ever fled,
> Nor cared to mingle in the clamorous fray
> Of squabbling imps; but to the forest sped,
> Or roam'd at large the lonely mountain's head,
> Or, where the maze of some bewilder'd stream
> To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led,
> There would he wander wild, till Phœbus' beam,
> Shot from the western cliff, released the weary team.

How many poets, enriched by converse with nature, have had their imaginations impaired, or their lives embittered, by converse with man!

CXXXV.

The progress of truth is not only impeded, but often supplanted for a time by that of error, in consequence of the precipitance and passion of men, and the multiplicity and haste in which works are now published. Harvey is said to have spent eight years in maturing his discovery respecting the circulation of the blood, before he communicated it to the world. A genuine search after truth is a very quiet, unostentatious thing.

CXXXVI.

Persons of the most capacious and active genius usually become soonest weary of the things to which their attention is applied, whether scenery, pursuits, or trains of meditation. The fact is, that by the

energy and compass of their powers they quickly penetrate and exhaust a subject, so that afterwards it presents few additional features for contemplation or inquiry.

CXXXVII.

The argument from analogy is of more general application than any other in the concerns of ordinary life; and with all its susceptibility of perversion, is of essential service in comprehensive and original speculations. It is capable of something more than repelling objections, or confirming truths already established; a utility of which incomparably the finest specimen is that exhibited by the great work of Butler: it sometimes conducts to the most illustrious discoveries. It was but a happy conjecture of Newton's, founded on this principle, which led to his solution of the planetary system. A perverted or capricious use of this instrument was a principal hindrance to the progress of physical science among the ancients, as well as during the darkest eras that succeeded the fall of the Roman empire.

CXXXVIII.

It seems at first sight extraordinary, that many who reason correctly on some topics, should fail to do so on others. The explanation, however, appears to coincide with that which applies to diversities of sentiment among different persons. In all cases of error, only part of the subject is perceived. Let the

particulars which go to make up truth on any question, be brought equally before ten thousand separate minds, and they will all adopt the like accurate conclusions. In one sense all intellects are equal, just as all eyes are equal.* Men differ, not in the natural capacity of judging, but in the extent to which the facts or ideas that constitute the materials of judgment, obtain admission to the understanding. Erroneous views, therefore, are owing simply to the circumstance, that the elements of correct opinion are incompletely before the mind, whether from its inadequate dimensions, its impatience, or the operation of prejudice; in consequence of which the evidence is examined in a partial or cursory manner. Whenever the whole of truth is present to the mind, conviction must be the necessary result.

CXXXIX.

Natures that move principally in the higher realms of thought, and indeed all persons of insulated habits or experience, can form but a faint idea of the modes of reflection that characterize the majority of mankind, or of the impressions which they receive from particular scenes or events. It has been said that one half the world knows not how the other half lives: it may be said, with at least equal truth, that one-half the world knows not how the other half thinks.

* Naturellement l'esprit ne peut se tromper dans le côté, qu'il envisage, comme les appréhensions des sens sont toujours vrais."—*Pensées de Pascal*, tom. i. p. 249, Paris, 1812.

CXL.

Genius is commonly of an effervescent character, and requires some vent for its own relief. If its activity can be concentrated on mental departments, and employed chiefly in registering its own contemplations and fancies, its vigour and resources will probably be displayed to the best advantage. Such at least is the case with a certain class of geniuses, as Rousseau and Byron, whose writings are filled with delineations of themselves and their own impressions. A contrast however is presented in others, at the head of whom is Homer, and among our own countrymen, Shakspeare, who has travelled the round of universal nature, but, except in his sonnets, has scarcely touched on his individual history or sentiments.

CXLI.

The inheritance of some appears to be a restless exercise of reflection, from which no scenes or pursuits afford the means of escape; a distinguished but comfortless patrimony. Something of the kind, though less intense, is described by Bishop Hall, in a passage relating to those of contemplative habit, who, he intimates, are no more able to avoid thinking, than the eye which is open can avoid seeing. It is with the action of meditative genius as with the march of life, in which if there are many apparent there are no real pauses; the movement of mind

being similar to the flowing of the tide, which, even when it seems to recede, is only gathering itself up to send forth a further wave.

CXLII.

Profound and unintermitted application of intellect is frequently more injurious than beneficial, as it tends to repress the excursions and impair the elasticity of its powers. The cultivation of a logical cast of mind in particular, is apt to establish a habit of too connected and uniform a train in the association of ideas. The affairs of life, and the production of originality, demand remote and varied, rather than intimate or consecutive combinations of thought.

CXLIII.

Perhaps in most cases the understanding grows more between the ages of fifteen and twenty, than during an equal space in any other part of life. It is not impossible, however, that in the periods of infancy and childhood, more information, though of a particular kind, is amassed; as it is then that we learn the use of the senses, and form our acquaintance with the material universe. The function of sight for instance, simple and instinctive though it may appear, yet, as any one may be satisfied who reads Dr. Brown's observations on the subject, is acquired by a very artificial and curious process.*

* See his Philosophy of the Human Mind, Lectures xxviii and xxix. The germ of the reasoning is to be found in Bishop Berkeley's Theory

But attention to the progress and developement of the faculties will commonly show, that about the season immediately succeeding adolescence, the mental operations are marked by a sensible accession, if not of rapidity, at least of compass, vigour, and discrimination.

CXLIV.

The best ideas are usually such as come unsought and unbidden; which may be said to seize the mind, rather than the mind to seize them; and which allow it no respite or repose till it has delivered itself of the burden. A paroxysm or inspiration seems to

of Vision, to whom the merit of the discovery in great degree, though not exclusively, belongs; Locke having apparently furnished him with the first hints on the subject, which he prosecuted with no less originality than acuteness. The point is elucidated, with equal sagacity and candour, in Dugald Stewart's Introduction to the Encyclopædia, Part Second, sect. 4, *sub finem.*

By the way, the common distribution of the senses into five, though useful, and sufficiently accurate for the purposes of distinction, is without support in fact. Man has in reality but two senses, those of sight and touch; while much that is usually classed under the former is the effect of the latter. Taste, smell, hearing, are only modifications of touch; the first being the sensation consequent on the application of certain particles to the papillæ of the tongue; smell, the sensation arising from the action of certain particles on the olfactory nerves; and hearing, the sensation produced by the action of the substance called air on the tympanum. According to the principle which admits five senses, we might add a sixth, though it could scarcely be called an external one, in hunger, which is the sensation occasioned by the repletion of the vessels that distil the gastric juice.—In strictness, perhaps the whole of our sensations, those of sight included, may be resolved into touch,—the ideas of different colours being the sequences or results of certain movements communicated to the optic nerves.

agitate the subjects of genius, and to impel them, almost in spite of themselves, to intellectual activity. The feeling resembles, though more impetuous in its operation, that to which Boileau refers the origin of his satirical compositions:

> Enfin c'est mon plaisir: je me veux satisfaire;
> Je ne puis bien parler, et ne saurois me taire;
> Et dès qu'un mot plaisant vient luire à mon esprit,
> Je n'ai point de repos qu'il ne soit en ecrit:
> Je ne résiste point au torrent qui m'entraîne.*

CXLV.

Little as we know of the laws or operations of mind, we know less perhaps, on the whole, of the properties and susceptibilities of matter.

CXLVI.

After the lapse of so many thousand years, not any material enlargement of the human faculties is perceptible. Knowledge has made some slight progression, but intellect less, and imagination, it is probable, none at all. Mankind, or rather certain portions of them, sometimes recede, sometimes advance, but only to an inconsiderable extent in either direction. Civilization, like Christianity, has hitherto been migratory rather than progressive. In the arts of life we often revive or modify, rather than invent or even improve. With regard to sculpture, painting, and architecture, we are acknowledged to be far infe-

* Satire vii. 89.

rior to the ancient Greeks; while it is well ascertained that the Egyptians, as far back at least as the epoch of the Pharaohs, were noted for the exquisite taste and workmanship displayed in various species of manufacture, especially in articles of domestic furniture.* The boundaries of our race, like those of the inferior classes of animated being, seem fixed by pretty determinate laws. There may be occasional or individual advancements, or temporary retrogressions; but the original limits remain impassable, and the general standard continues the same. Such a view of the subject appears to correspond best with the notices which religion conveys respecting the present state as necessarily imperfect, because intended to be but introductory to another, in which the mental expansion commenced on earth may be carried on for ever.

It is remarkable that each great division of the Old World has had its period of cultivation and eminence, and that the track has usually been in regular order from east to west; thus establishing the compatibility of mind with every climate, as well as the fugitive character of the distinction. The movement is evidently in the same direction still—literature and

* The Egyptians themselves, it is not improbable, derived their arts, as well as literature, from an eastern, and still more remote origin. Their relation to the Ethiopians, as at least the more ancient stock, is supported by the architectural remains, the hieroglyphical inscriptions, and various temple ornaments extant in Lower Nubia; while their affinity with the Hindoos is placed beyond dispute by the prevalence, among both, of the same dogmas, manners, and institutions—the doctrine of metempsychosis, the distinction of castes, and other remarkable characteristics.

social refinements springing up with vigorous luxuriance on the American continent; so that we may apply to the stream of intellect, as of national greatness, the fine stanza of Berkeley, with a wish at least for the fulfilment of the prophecy with which it closes:

> Westward the course of empire takes its way;
> The four first acts already past,
> A fifth shall close the drama with the day;
> Time's noblest offspring are the last.

CXLVII.

While some kind of agitation is indispensable to the health and vigour of the mind, the species of commotion occasioned by events, or external causes, appears less favourable than that which is produced by its spontaneous efforts or reflections. Certainly an aptitude for what may be called self-evolved thoughts and feelings, is indicative of native power; and when applied to certain general subjects, is, according to Wordsworth, a mark of the poetic constitution.*

CXLVIII.

Mental character may in great part be determined by the nature and extent of the speculative curiosity

* "The poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner."—*Preface to Lyrical Ballads.*

entertained. Persons of the lowest class of intellect have scarcely the smallest tincture of the feeling; while the portion which they possess is exercised about objects the most trivial and barren. A man of pre-eminent powers is usually distinguished for a curiosity at once comprehensive and insatiable.

CXLIX.

The culture of the affections and the fancy is a most important branch of education, though in general it is entirely neglected. It would indeed require a widely different order of instructors from those that commonly abound.—The greatness of man appears not chiefly from his intellect, for he knows but little, and reasons less; nor from his immortality, for matter is probably indestructible as well as mind —to say nothing of presumptions in favour of the future existence of brutes—nor from the ingenuity or magnitude of his performances; for in both these particulars he is rivalled or surpassed by some of the lower tribes of creation—witness the cells of the bee, and the coral-reef islands of the Pacific, the work of animalcules. But it is the wondrous, fathomless endowments of feeling and of imagination, viewed especially in their moral relations, that most betoken his grandeur, and invest him with so mysterious a dignity. I can never think meanly of a being who is capable of the exquisite dreams that visit the youthful fancy, or of the passions that are portrayed in the tragedy of Othello.

CL.

What are called parallel cases are dangerous things in argumentation, especially when pushed to excess as they are liable to be. Few methods of illustration or proof are more futile, or more open to the attacks of a subtle polemic. The remark of Lord Chesterfield, in censure of those who in ordinary conversation resort to supposed parallels from antiquity, is applicable to most similar expedients to set off truth, error, or personal consequence: "There never were, since the creation of the world, two cases exactly parallel." He adds, however, with much sense, "Take into your consideration, if you please, cases seemingly analogous; but take them as helps only, not as guides." Even if the outward circumstances of any given events were strictly alike, the state of the agents and of society at the time will always be found different, from the perpetual flux and peculiarity of all minds, individual or collective. Machiavel's Discourses on Livy, which are founded on the assumed resemblance between certain points in the early history of Rome, and recent occurrences in that of Italy, derive their principal value from the reflections and philosophical maxims interspersed through the work.

CLI.

They whose general intellectual occupation is of an abstruse or little imaginative nature, often feel

more interest than others, at least find no trivial entertainment, in the efforts of fancy, or the lighter productions of letters; perhaps because contrast and novelty are thus brought into more direct and pleasing operation. Brown the metaphysician, and with higher results Boscovich, so noted for his mathematical and scientific genius, cultivated the art of poetry; as, though not with equal enthusiasm, did Roscoe, the erudite historian of Leo the Tenth and of Lorenzo de' Medici. Grotius also united to his many other distinguished capacities that of votary of the muses; and the same may be said of Malebranche, Leibnitz, and other subtle thinkers. Galileo had a remarkable taste for similar studies, and for all the more elegant parts of literature. One of the gravest and deepest divines in our language, Bishop Hall, was in his earlier days a wit, and a brilliant writer of satire.* Montesquieu could amuse his old age with the love verses of Ovid. Gray, the scholar, critic, antiquary, philosopher, as well as bard, facetiously prefers, to the paradisiacal enjoyments of the Koran, the reading of new romances. If he could hazard such a panegyric in reference to the novels of Marivaux and Crebillon, what would he have said to the dazzling miracles of our Northern Magician? It is worthy of notice, that to the perusal of the class of fictitious compositions, the acute and incomparable Berkeley was much addicted.

* Hall's Satires, written while he was a student at the University, and published about the age of twenty-three, may fairly be cited in illustration of the position in the text, having no doubt been composed in the intervals between severer studies.

CLII.

For the most part minds which ripen with rapidity are imaginative; while those distinguished for deep or original thinking are slow in attaining maturity. We read of Pope, Thomson, Kirk White, Burns, and many others, as having given proof of their poetical talents at a very early age; but seldom do we read of juvenile metaphysicians. There have been some instances, to be sure. Brown's Observations on the Zoonomia of Dr. Darwin, written at the age of eighteen, are a prodigy of the kind. Pascal showed his mathematical and philosophic propensities in the mere dawn of his genius; and Bishop Butler must have been remarkably precocious in a power of speculative disquisition, when he could carry on about twenty a controversy with Clarke, in a manner to win the applause of that abstruse though unsatisfactory reasoner. A similar remark applies to Berkeley, who, when quite young, produced several of his highly subtle and ingenious performances. In general, however, the force of the passions must be pretty well spent, to ensure any sustained or successful exertion of the meditative faculties.

CLIII.

The appropriate criterion of intellectual merit is authorship. It was a saying of Dr. Henry More, that if a man had written a book, his readers, endowed with ordinary penetration, would be able to

judge what he really was. But the maxim must be received with some qualification. Certain kinds of performances, as those which are scientific or recondite, admit few or no personal traits of their authors; and in the present state of our language, when abstract phraseology is so prevalent, and composition reduced to so artificial and uniform a standard, hundreds of works are produced from which no one could divine the temperament or peculiar properties of the writer. It is only in a general respect that authorship can be considered a test even of mental capacity; some who have made but an indifferent figure in the walks of letters, having displayed consummate genius in other departments. Cardinal Richelieu, so eminent for his statesmanlike qualities and achievements as prime minister under Louis the Thirteenth, betrayed almost the weakness of a child in aiming to eclipse his illustrious contemporary Corneille, the greatest of French dramatists. Of Bonaparte also it is not a little curious to know, that between his seventeenth and twenty-second year, while lieutenant of artillery, he composed several essays and other pieces, which from the specimens still remaining, though not without merit, appear to have been chiefly remarkable for his usual florid and declamatory vehemence of style. In bulletins, however, and military harangues, he is acknowledged to have displayed powers not unworthy of his preeminence as a commander. It is no doubt possible for a man to be great, in certain provinces, yet not able to read or write. To say nothing of Attila or Tamerlane, neither of whom, it is probable, could do

the one or the other, it is alleged that Mahomet was destitute of the latter accomplishment; a thing which has been asserted of Charlemagne, though we might have supposed with little appearance of truth, as, besides his care for the interests of literature, evinced by the establishment of schools and the patronage of the learned, he spoke Latin with fluency, and could read Greek.*

CLIV.

All that is often necessary to occasion a flow of ideas and fancies, is to increase or accelerate the tide of blood in the veins. Happiness, in the sense of pleasurable sensation, is produced in partly the same manner; a bottle of wine, it has been said, affording as much enjoyment for the time as the acquisition of a kingdom.†

CLV.

The best way of acquiring most branches of knowledge, is to study them, if possible, for some specific object or occasion. This will supply the curiosity with a powerful stimulus, and communicate to the search a practical character essentially beneficial. In mental as in most other efforts, excitement is half the battle. Pope, we are told, obtained his acquaintance with the classics by reading them solely

* For these particulars respecting Charlemagne, we have the authority of Eginhard his Secretary.

† See Landor's Imaginary Conversations

for the sense. On the same principle it might be expedient for boys to be taught foreign languages through the medium of fictitious or other entertaining performances; as in French the Adventures of Gil Blas, those of Telemaque, or what is as captivating as any romance, though with all the recommendations of truth, Voltaire's splendid historical sketch of Charles the Twelfth. Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield is one of the first books used by our Gallican neighbours in learning the English. How much miscellaneous information, and in how short a time, is often accumulated by gentlemen of the bar, to equip themselves for a particular cause. There is a freshness too and vivacity about knowledge amassed from such directness of purpose, which seldom fails to evince its superior efficiency.

CLVI.

Instructions on manners, and on the economy of life, are infinitely more important than many of the subjects included in our prevalent systems of education. With some persons, the best recommendation of a study appear to be its remoteness from the ordinary affairs of men and of society; so that speculations about the heavenly bodies, investigations of insect nature, or the abstract properties of numbers, assume an aspect of greater consequence than the living world, or any of the circumstances in which mankind are practically interested, or over which they have actual control. It is an

unpleasing symptom in literature, when its efforts are lavished on scientific or abstruse disquisitions, to the comparative neglect of life, imagination, and the feelings.

CLVII.

The theory which assigns distinct compartments of the brain to different intellectual faculties or acts, is, whether true or false, not disproved by the circumstance, that various portions of that organ have been destroyed by accident or in battle, without any mutilation of mind being the result. It seems not improbable that the mental powers of some persons being in great degree dormant, the instrument of their operation may be so obtuse as to sustain injuries or mutilation with comparative impunity; somewhat perhaps as several of the lower classes of animated existence can bear excision of parts, without perceptible diminution of vital energy. Besides, there is plausibility in the representation, that the brain consisting of two hemispheres or divisions corresponding to each other, one part may be mutilated without detriment to the mental processes, just as one eye may be impaired or disabled, yet the function of vision be retained. No instances are on record in which both sections of the brain being thus affected, integrity of understanding remains. The whole problem is but a question of fact; for *a priori* it is no more incredible, as in no view is it more mysterious, that the mind should employ certain parts of the brain in particular acts,

than that she should employ the brain in any of her operations.

CLVIII.

We need a chapter in our literature on the physiognomy of brutes, compared, throughout, with the manifestations of intellect which they otherwise appear to present. Certainly the general cast of temper and character is as clearly discoverable in the aspect, especially the eye, of brutes as of men.

CLIX.

Amidst the existing profusion of excellent works on miscellaneous topics, it seems undesirable for any but professional men, or those of peculiar aptitude, to enter profoundly into scientific researches. Extensive attainments in these branches are little beneficial to the understanding, being apt to subtilize or contract rather than dilate the contemplative faculty; and are for the most part incompatible with proficiency in more important, as well as more interesting investigations.

There are certain inquiries, indeed, which combine with what is scientific so much that is practical, and besides affording scope to a rational curiosity, are so intimately connected with the questions of morals and happiness, that to be ignorant of them would be a discredit to any one with pretensions to education. Such are the subjects so ably expounded by Dr. Southwood Smith in his Philosophy

of Health; a book which, while intelligible to an ordinary capacity, embodies the most valuable discoveries in physiology, presenting views alike sound and comprehensive on the points it is intended to illustrate. An acquaintance too with the leading principles of science, in whatever department, those principles being elucidated in so admirable a way in Sir John Herschel's Preliminary Discourse, may be cultivated with advantage; among other reasons because most subjects, as well as truths, have a mutual affinity, more or less blending with each other; and because a habit of minuteness is necessary to correct and modify all general speculations.

CLX.

The superiority of a great mind is evinced not so much in its ordinary views or currents of thought, as in the reflections or fancies which spring up during its moments of inspiration, or when its powers are applied to some specific subject. This may in part account for the self-diffidence which frequently accompanies genius, especially in its more inactive and quiescent seasons.

ON LIFE, MEN, AND MANNERS.

I.

Life is composed of few things indefinitely diversified, and is like the ringing of a great many changes on a small number of bells.

II.

Mirth grafted on general gravity of temperament or profession, appears the more graceful. In such cases there is a sufficient background of solidity in the character, to admit some of the lighter tints and rays of humour ; while the contrast thus presented renders the combination more pleasing.

III.

The mind often practises illusion on itself, when, after the defeat of some favourite enterprise, self-

congratulation is indulged on account of the benefits associated with the disappointment; while the advantages of success, suppose it had been attained, are entirely overlooked. Thus also the judgments of men frequently err on a larger scale. The suppression of Catiline and his accomplices excited the exultation of multitudes in the Roman commonwealth; yet, nefarious as the conspiracy appears to have been, who can affirm that in case he had succeeded, the condition of the citizens would have been materially worse? or that more convulsions and miseries would have ensued, than at intervals afflicted the state for centuries after his death? Useful as may be the temper which makes the most of actual results, its occasional oversights are not ill shadowed forth in the story of Diagoras, who, surveying a number of pictures in the temple of Neptune of those who had been saved in shipwreck, and being reminded of the efficacy of invocation in the like peril, exclaimed, But where are the pictures of those who have been drowned?

IV.

People are often pleased with flattery, even when they know it to be nothing better. The reason is, it is a mark of deference, if not to merit, yet to consequence. To many persons, especially the proud and ambitious, attentions are almost equally acceptable, whether proceeding from fear and interest, or from admiration and esteem.

V.

When the incidents of life are few, they produce a more powerful impression on the mind, and deficiency in variety of feeling is made up by its intensity. "Toutes les grandes passions," says Rousseau, "se forment dans la solitude." Certainly, seclusion and retirement are most favourable to unity of emotion, and to those deep though indescribable currents of thought, which sometimes issue in heroic or tragical events, but which might have been dissipated, or never had an existence, amidst a busy throng of active pursuits and interests. Petrarch only aggravated the flame which consumed him, by burying himself in the lonely, picturesque recesses of Vaucluse.

VI.

Decision and firmness in a cause which is but indifferent, often achieve more than timidity and vacillation in a good one. There is something in the mere exhibition of energy which controls the commonalty of minds, and disposes them to follow in the train; as weeds or other floating substances are drawn into the wake of a vessel in full sail. Such a reflection has at times crossed me on witnessing the disposition in children, or way-side loiterers, to fall into the track of a person who happens to pass by with a steady and determined pace. We may see the effect of an unswerving, irrepressible bent of

mind in Don Quixote, who, though surrounded with every ludicrous accompaniment, was able to captivate and master the more ordinary nature of his squire.* It demands no great intellect, certainly, to display a fixed, resolute, persevering spirit, such a temper being in fact exhibited by many of the brute creation; but few who possess this species of pertinacity or doggedness of aim, leave the world without attaining some kind of distinction, or a certain amount of success in whatever line they have chosen.

VII.

To be anxious for the performance of every trivial thing in the best manner, would make life a burden. There are many things which we may be safely allowed to do wrong, or to find out the most expert method of doing for ourselves. Instead of following the advice of Lord Chesterfield, to aim at perfection in every thing, reason would rather dictate the concentration of our efforts on the higher species of accomplishments; as this will find any one occupation enough, while the other course will be apt to confound both his efforts and perceptions. A wise man will avail himself only of the more general maxims or directions, apart from the consideration that facility in smaller points will often best come from the mastery of great ones.

* Coleridge, I believe, refers the Knight's influence to the exhibition of lofty aims and mental accomplishments. We are not, however, in any case to overlook the fascination of the expected island or earldom.

VIII.

It is sometimes reckoned a symptom of modesty in men of conspicuous abilities, to acknowledge their deficiencies or mistakes with so much promptitude; while it is considered a mark of pride in others to be so tenacious for themselves. But the same spirit may reside in both. A great man can make concessions, without humility, because the chief points of his superiority are not affected by petty abatements. A little man, in contending for trifling distinctions, is contending for his all.

IX.

To carry war into the territory of the enemy has been commonly regarded as the best security of your own. It is a piece of policy, often the refuge of an ignoble mind, to apply the maxim in defence of character.

X.

To commend a person for qualities or accomplishments in which he is generally thought deficient, is almost a certain way to his good opinion, especially if suffering on account of those deficiencies.

XI.

It has been alleged that brutes are inferior to men chiefly in not profiting by the acquisitions of pre-

ceding races. I fear that human superiority would not be the most conspicuous, if it were determined by the application or neglect of those maxims which the course of centuries has accumulated for the regulation of conduct. Mankind learn little by the experience of past generations, but go through the same follies, and buy wisdom, if they get it at all, on the same costly terms.

XII.

Death diminishes the value of some men's opinions, and enhances that of others.

XIII.

It is a symptom of a feeble mind to employ every attainable facility for the accomplishment of its purposes; of an ill-regulated mind, to make use of every accessible enjoyment.

XIV.

Trite maxims sometimes appear invested with originality, when their correctness is first ascertained by experience. It is curious to find Hamlet, when stung with the revelation of his uncle's atrocities, and while resolving to expunge all previous impressions from his brain, set down for retention, as if some strange, undreamt-of axiom,

> That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain:

an observation which in substance he had probably

met with again and again among those "saws of books" that he had just mentioned. The trait is wonderfully natural: but in such cases we often find a counterpart to what Johnson said of Goldsmith, that had he fulfilled his project of travelling in remote countries to collect improvements in the arts, he would have brought home a common grinding-barrow as one of his foreign acquisitions.

The discoveries which a person makes in any province of mind, depend more on the point at which he commences his researches, or the direction that he takes, than on the sagacity or independence of his powers. One man of acute perception shall never advance much beyond common-place, because, through a perverse taste for tracing out each element of truth, he busies himself in demonstrating what has been a thousand times demonstrated, and thus ends where he ought rather to have begun. Another, endowed with no higher faculty of discernment, shall attain curious or striking results, because, realizing the simile of the dwarf on the shoulders of a giant, he employs the accumulations of others but as a vantage ground for his own explorations.

XV.

It would be hopeless to attempt to reduce the conduct of men to rule, as few are not more governed by general opinion, by caprice, fancy, passion, than by the decisions of intellect. Who shall determine the course of the wind, or the variations of a feather's flight? It is the fate of those whose law is transi-

tory impulse, that they are totally without influence on all the great occasions of life, when counsel takes the place of mere sentiment or inclination. The vain and frivolous, even when they offer sagacious advice —a circumstance which, however curious, sometimes happens—are usually disregarded; for much the same reason that liars are mistrusted though speaking the truth. Murat, so little noted, amidst all his bravery and chivalrous accomplishments, for the higher qualities of mind, exhibited a momentary sparkle of acuteness when, leading the van of Napoleon's expedition to Russia, he recommended him to pass the winter at Smolensko; a suggestion which, if followed, might have prevented the downfall of the Emperor, and changed the aspect of Europe.*

XVI.

If you find a person suspicious, you may read his history, and conclude that he has often met with

* With regard to Murat, whose weakness presented the form rather of imprudence and vanity than defective intellectual parts, and whose military talents, to say nothing of his capacity for civil rule, are beyond dispute, it is for critics in the profession of arms to decide on the correctness of another opinion which he maintained, namely, the facility with which the British squares at Waterloo might have been broken by a certain attack of cavalry. The reasons, as stated at length in the very entertaining "Memoirs of the Life and Adventures of Colonel Maceroni," vol. ii. p. 302, would almost incline one to suspect, that the main cause of Napoleon's overthrow on that occasion, was the circumstance of his not having appointed to the command of the French horse his old companion in arms and brother-in-law; the conqueror with him of so many battles; who, as he himself truly asserted, "never charged a square which he did not break;" and who was unquestionably the first cavalry officer of modern times.

treachery or ill-treatment; for of all qualities, suspicion is the least natural to man. When not traceable to such a source, it is commonly the symptom of a diseased brain, as was clearly the case with Rousseau, who in the latter part of his life especially, imagined that the philosophers and great men of his acquaintance had conspired to effect his ruin. A circumstance which struck Sir Walter Scott, in his interviews with Lord Byron, is related to have been the transient shadowings of such a temper in that singularly constituted genius—whether owing to one or both of these causes cannot perhaps be determined—but which vanished of themselves in the progress of conversation.*

XVII.

Perhaps there are few who, on a retrospect of life, would be willing to live it over again; yet this may be owing as much to its progressive character as its partial unhappiness.

XVIII.

Men are so conscious of their own imbecility, that submission to others is often readily conceded, simply as the means of freeing from the burden of self-command. The majority of the race appear framed for subjection. Why else should armies march and confront death at the will of a single leader? or laws, enforced by a handful of function-

* Moore's Notices of the Life of Lord Byron, vol. iii. p. 166.

aries, assert their empire over millions? To the generality it is much easier to be governed than to govern themselves; a principle which will explain the enormous power of the Papacy, as well as the frequent success of enthusiasts and empirics. Appian informs us of a certain tribe who sent ambassadors to the Romans, requesting permission to be under their control. In all collections of persons, whether few or many, refined or illiterate, you will commonly find one or more who take the lead, and in whose pre-eminence the rest seem almost instinctively to acquiesce.

XIX.

There is a large fund of power in the world unappropriated and inactive; but a still larger portion misapplied and perverted. Were the mere waste talent and energy of mankind to be used aright, three-fourths of the ills that afflict the species might be overcome. If, like the lost things pictured in the allegoric scene of Ariosto, neglected or abused capabilities could be exhibited to the eye, what a curious and melancholy spectacle should we behold!

XX.

They who most enjoy life are often the least careful for its preservation. It is proverbially the feeble and unhappy who cling to life with the greatest tenacity. The explanation may be, that the future is estimated by the present and the past. What is known imparts

a colouring to what is unknown. A mind already filled with satisfaction has no place for solicitude or fear. A mind long habituated to grief does not easily promise itself better things; nor is it capable of vivid conceptions of happiness. To feel ardent desires for enjoyment, some portion of it must be already experienced.

XXI.

A man of proper demeanour will be unassuming towards inferiors, but exact by not witholding respect from his equals and superiors.

XXII.

As the invention and perfection of a thing rarely proceed from the same person, so it frequently happens that he who only improves on the contrivances or discoveries of another, reaps the principal advantage of them. They who have first struck out the path in any province of inquiry or enterprise, and thus conferred a signal benefit on their kind, have seldom, till periods comparatively recent, been able to boast the rewards of their genius, or the felicity of their fortunes. Columbus was almost heart-broken by the vexations and wrongs accumulated upon him during a considerable part of his career. Galileo, to whom the world is indebted not only for the telescope and thermometer, but for several important acquisitions in astronomy, geometry, and mechanics, was imprisoned by the Inquisition, and persecuted for a

long series of years before his death, for promulgating the system of Copernicus, besides being compelled to recant the opinions which he had demonstrated. Lord Bacon, who is properly considered the Father of inductive philosophy, and the indicator of the course which has led to our present improvements in science and art, spent the closing years of his life in disgrace and privacy, though not owing to the maintenance of any speculative tenets. And Locke, one of the earliest writers who laid down on a broad and rational basis the principles of toleration and civil liberty, was deprived of his situation in the University, having already sought an asylum in a foreign land. On the whole, however, he was perhaps among the happiest of those who have materially contributed to the advancement of the human species.

XXIII.

It is in the game of life as in the game of chess; each strives to gain as much, and to lose as little, as possible. The logicians, in laying down a variety of arguments supposed to be the most effective, as the *argumentum ad hominem*, the *argumentum ad verecundiam*, and so forth, have forgotten the most powerful of all—the *argumentum ad crumenam*. Pascal quotes the title of an Italian work, *Della opinione regina del mondo*, as containing more than many an entire volume. No doubt; but the true queen of the world, of whom opinion is but the puppet or occasional deputy, is interest; in vernacular English, selfishness.

XXIV.

Almost all motions in nature are graceful. The slow, majestic travelling of the mountain mist and of the clouds; the rapid and infinitely varied flight of birds; the winding ascent of the cottage chimney smoke; and the ever-changing undulations and swellings of the ocean, strike the most ordinary observer. The reasons that mankind are often inelegant in their movements, are partly the influence of debility, or of artificial habits, occasioning a defective action of the muscular system; partly the operation of mental feelings, producing affectation or constraint. When Sir Joshua Reynolds would depict attitudes most characterized by grace, he selected children as his models. You will hardly see a group of them at play, that do not exhibit more ease and gracefulness of action than is to be found in the saloons of fashion.*

XXV.

Man often acquires just so much knowledge as to discover his ignorance, and attains so much experience as to regret his follies, and then dies.

XXVI.

It is frequently politic to entertain distrust of others, but seldom wise to indicate that distrust. The reply of an old Italian courtier to Sir Henry

* See Hazlitt's Conversations of Northcote, p. 267.

Wotton, who had besought his advice respecting the best course for him to pursue at Rome, embodies the pith of what is called worldly wisdom: *I pensieri stretti, et il viso sciolto.* With "the thoughts close, and the countenance open," a person, as Sir Henry rightly concludes, may travel safely over the whole world. Such concealment or partial simulation, however, though well enough suited to the atmosphere of courts, especially the petty Italian ones of those days, and perhaps serviceable in general to pilgrims in foreign climes, is little accordant with nobleness of temper, or that frankness of bearing which forms so much the charm even of casual intercourse.*

XXVII.

Scandal is the sport of its authors, the dread of fools, and the contempt of the wise.

XXVIII.

It is sometimes remarked, in panegyrics on the great, that their merits are such as to shed a lustre

* For this anecdote of Sir Henry, see his Letter to Milton when about to proceed on his foreign travels, *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, p. 342. ed. 4th. The advice of Polonius to his son, on embarking for France, includes a similar lesson to the Italian's; and for those just entering the motley, panoramic scenes called life, is altogether one of the best pieces of counsel, expressed in concise and pointed phraseology, that human sagacity has produced. See Hamlet, Act i. scene 3. The pithy aphorisms come naturally enough from an acute and practised courtier; though we should scarcely have expected such raciness and condensation of thought in one whose intellect received so contemptuous an estimate from a personage of Hamlet's penetration.

on their dignity. The compliment is not particularly flattering, estimated by the fact that much less excellence is necessary to adorn a high than a low station; to the popular eye, eminence of rank concealing or softening a multitude of blemishes, which would be noticed and criticised in a meaner sphere. It was the comfort of Sancho, in prospect of the government which had been promised him, represented as demanding so many niceties of behaviour, that when he arrived at that distinction, and grew rich and munificent, nobody would observe his defects. Whether or not, as Lear thought, "robes and furr'd gowns" hide all vices, they at least reflect a wonderful brilliance on small virtues.

XXIX.

In proportion to the increase of refinement, is the interest produced by delineations of ruder times. The pictures of Border feuds and adventures, and of the customs prevalent among the ancient Highland clans, which the pages of Scott so well exhibit, possess a much stronger charm to ourselves than they could possibly have done in the era to which they refer. This is perhaps occasioned in part by the novelty of the scenes described; in part also by a latent contrast in favour of present manners and comforts.

XXX.

Our life ought to consist chiefly of meditation and action; or, as the aphorism is expressed by the

Roman orator, *Homo ad duas res natus est, intelligendum et agendum.* It is the province of reason to determine the proportions, and maintain a proper balance between the two; but if the higher part of our nature is most sought to be cultivated, the former should have the decided preponderance. The past affords most materials for reflection; the present for activity.

XXXI.

Though it is ascertained that the inhabitants of cities and large towns do not, on the average, attain so great an age as those who reside in the country, yet their life may be regarded as of longer duration, because more filled with actions and events. Claudian's old man of Verona, who spent his days amidst his native fields, without ever visiting the neighbouring city—*vicinæ nescius urbis*—might have had plenty of rural content, but in spite of his longevity must have died young. Those who, possessed of intelligence and refined tastes, emigrate from a populous empire abounding with all the concomitants of civilization, to a solitary, ill-provided region, essentially contract and curtail their existence. In ten years, perhaps, they secure nearly the same amount of the essence of life, its varied ideas, its pleasing fellowships, its healthful collisions, as might have been comprised within the space of a few months in the land which they have forsaken. Laplace remarks that the invention of logarithms has lengthened the life of astronomers. Certain it is that the accommo-

dations and facilities arising from the progress of arts, and the ampler range of intellectual enjoyments connected with a high state of social improvement, have such an effect on those who participate these advantages. It would be scarcely extravagant to affirm that men like Napoleon, Pitt, or any Lord Chancellor of England, may have lived as much in one week, as numbers in remote provincial places during forty or fifty years. Many persons in the latter situation appear to vegetate rather than live. They have seen perhaps the greater portion of a century: in this interval statesmen have risen and fallen; philosophers, poets, artists, flourished and passed away; dynasties been overthrown, empires founded, and the whole aspect of society changed; yet the only variation in the mental being of these individuals, is that occasioned by the few simple occurrences belonging to the narrow sphere in which their lot has been cast. The several periods of history sustain a similar proportion to each other. A year or two will sometimes include the events of ages. From the French revolution, and the wars which followed, there sprang up more striking incidents, and more curious manifestations of human nature, than the world had exhibited since the epoch of the crusades.

XXXII.

One epitaph is sufficiently comprehensive for most persons:—Here lies A MORTAL. In that word is comprised a brief space of trivial joys, and trivial sorrows. The rest is a phantom.

XXXIII.

If solitude deprives of the benefit of advice, it also excludes from the mischief of flattery. But the absence of others' applause is generally supplied by the flattery of one's own breast.

XXXIV.

To the intellectual, solitude has its attractions because it allows most scope for freedom of thought; to the proud or the capricious, because it affords the greatest latitude to manners and actions. On the whole, a retired mode of life is connected with most independence. Society is founded on a voluntary sacrifice of liberty in some particulars, for the sake of advantage in others.—The observation holds in regard to communities, as well as individuals. The natives of Switzerland, a secluded and scattered population, have ever been noted for their love of freedom: so the Arab tribes of the Desert, and the inhabitants of most mountain regions, who are separated by the natural barriers of their situation. It is in densely peopled territories and crowded cities that tyranny finds its readiest instruments and victims.

XXXV.

It is with our affections as with bodies under the influence of gravitation; the nearer we approach the

objects of our regard, the more strongly are our desires attracted towards them. But in the opposite direction, the rule is commonly reversed, and affection increases with the distance. Thus in the opening lines of the Traveller:

> Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
> My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
> Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,
> And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.

"I find," says Burns, "the attraction of love is in an inverse proportion to the attraction of the Newtonian philosophy. Every mile-stone that marked my progress from Clarinda, awakened a keener pang of attachment."

XXXVI.

Friendship is more firmly secured by lenity towards failings, than by attachment to excellences. The former is valued as a kindness which cannot be claimed; the latter is exacted as the payment of a debt to merit.

XXXVII.

A smile on a melancholy countenance is like imagery in a grave discourse; or pictures in a volume; or a momentary gleam of sunshine on a dreary landscape; or the sudden appearance of a pageant, or group of rustic revellers, in a scene of still life.

XXXVIII.

Most persons, when placed beneath their circumstances or merits, act beneath themselves. Yet minds of the first order are less dependent on rank, or the estimation of others. Cicero, whose opinion of himself appears to have fluctuated with his fortunes, is a remarkable exception.

XXXIX.

A residence in the country has the advantage of securing from the ephemeral intelligence which circulates in a metropolis, and which produces excitation, for the most part without profit. "Our distance from the Capital," says Dr. Robertson, in one of his letters to Gibbon, "operates somewhat like time. Nothing but what has intrinsic value comes down to us." On the other hand it may be alleged, that not being left to judge for ourselves what is deserving our notice, and what not, the advantage is more specious than real; especially as the same events striking different minds in a different way, information that some may deem worthless, others are able to turn to excellent account.

XL.

In argument, the last refuge of some persons is simply that they have lived so long; a plea calculated to inspire only contempt or indignation, that they

have lived so long without being cured of their folly. "It is easier to find monks than reasons," said Pascal, in relation to the censure of M. Arnauld, which had been effected by a mustering of the doctors of the Sorbonne: so it is easier to count years than to weigh evidence, and to adduce length of life than force of logic.

XLI.

It is commonly supposed that when those of the same profession speak in disparagement of each other, they are actuated only by envy or jealousy. The cause may as often be, that they are more competent judges on the subject than others. There is usually a reciprocal good feeling among professional men whose merits are indisputable.

XLII.

There is mostly some real, though often latent cause of unhappiness, in such as are addicted to severity and passion. Sometimes it proceeds from a tincture of insanity; more frequently from a temperament ill at ease; generally, perhaps, from the corrosions of disappointment or misfortune.

XLIII.

Generous natures will act the most honourably when treated with honour. It requires stern principle, or extraordinary elevation of feeling, to act

honourably under dishonourable treatment. Nothing is a more pleasing symptom of magnanimity and self-command, than moderation and freedom from resentment, in those who are the objects of unmerited conduct, yet armed with the means of its punishment. It was a noble saying which Pericles uttered on his death-bed, when his friends had been reciting his memorable achievements and triumphs. You have recounted, says he, only the things in which fortune may claim a share, and which others have performed as well as myself; but have omitted the chief glory of my character and administration, that I have never occasioned an Athenian citizen to put on mourning.

XLIV.

It is not true that variation of behaviour towards persons of different qualities and circumstances, is indicative of a temporising or disingenuous turn. To exhibit a uniformity of carriage to all without distinction, would argue a want of penetration, or a want of sensibility.

XLV.

The strange notion of Averroes, that the souls of all mankind are but a single spirit animating different individuals, has, like most fictions, its substratum of truth, or at least is capable of suggesting a very salutary one—that the easiest and most effectual way to become acquainted with human

nature is to study oneself. Our own hearts present us with a miniature picture of the race; and by knowing ourselves, we in a sense know all men. On this principle only can we solve the fact, that writers of genius often give so just delineations of characters far beyond the range of their own experience; and that some even in early years have produced sketches displaying so profound an insight into the springs of conduct, as would commonly be deemed the fruit of a long and intimate commerce with various classes.

It is worthy of remark, that while describers of manners are indebted for their success to contact with the actual world, those who have best depicted the inner qualities of our being, as Rousseau in passion, and Pascal in thought, have lived much alone. We should scarcely be correct in supposing that Shakspeare derived his principal materials from society, however sagacious an observer of persons and things. Certainly the mode in which he constructed his wonderful dramas appears to have been sufficiently independent; for, adopting some previous story as the groundwork of a piece, and aided in the filling up by the lights of experience, he drew chiefly from those fountains of reflection and inspiration which lay within. It is owing to the essential identity of man under all circumstances, that any genuine stroke of sentiment or humour, in poetry or prose, exacts a tribute of admiration from minds the most illiterate. Great authors differ from the rest of their species not so much in superiority of perception or imagination, as in the faculty of arresting and embodying those

impressions with which all are more or less conversant, but which pass away from the generality like shadows or confused dreams.

XLVI.

Life seems, on a deliberate retrospect, little better than an accumulation of errors. If spent without action, it is mostly vain; if diversified with events, it is commonly replete with folly. The book written by the honest and diverting, though brain-struck Dunton, called his *Life and Errors*, should be worth something, were it but as a motto reminding us of the association which the title expresses. How few are the meditative minds which, on scanning the whole compass of their career, can, except with a prospective reference, adopt the reflection with which Cato is represented as consoling himself in his old age: *Ita vixi ut non frustra me natum existimem.**

XLVII.

Organization, or physical peculiarity, is one great regulator of the inferior races. The hexagonal form of the cells constructed by the bee, is referred by some chiefly to the shape of the mandibles, the antennæ, and other organs employed as instruments of measurement; though by others, with perhaps equal probability, it is explained on the theory of a circular basis in the formation, the whole being

* Cicero de Senect. cap. xxiii.

ascribed to the mechanism of the insect, conjoined with an instinctive desire to excavate. Neither of these hypotheses, however, nor any other which has been propounded, seems adequate to account for the phenomenon, without the supposition of reason or design in some part of that curious operation. But whether instinct alone, or that in alliance with other faculties, may be deemed the cause, a certain configuration or corporeal adaptation appears essential to the result,—Huber having discovered that in the absence of the attennæ or feelers, the construction of the combs is never attempted. Of late too it has been ascertained, that the deposition of the cuckoo's eggs in the nests of birds of other species—a circumstance which so long puzzled naturalists—is owing to a weakness or deficiency in the vascular system, which almost forbids the process of incubation. It would be a remarkable deviation from analogy if, while the habits of the lower tribes of creation are materially dependent on their structure, the attributes and morals of man should be unaffected by his physical conformation.

XLVIII.

Women are little moved by argument, or the deeper qualities of mind; but are easily captivated by appearance, facility of manners, and kindness. Feeling, rather than intellect, is their world; though we might suppose that imagination, the sister of feeling, would be one of their chief attributes. But it is fancy, as distinguished from imagination, that

predominates in the sex; which would scarcely be able to supply materials for a tolerable counterpart to Johnson's Lives—a work which passes by the richest, if not the most brilliant period of our poetical annals, and to which, if we except Milton, and one or two others, we may apply the criticism of Godwin, who represents it as extending only from the decline of poetry in England to the date of the biographer.*

XLIX.

The greater part of current opinions are entertained by the majority without evidence, intellectual or experimental; being transmitted from one to another as an heir-loom, or any other tangible commodity, and differing, in fact, little from what may be called stereotype views of things. Most persons who hold truth, do so on the same principles that determine others in the adoption or retention of error, namely, education, fancy, connexions, interest, or the like; and the truths which they profess they are incapable of proving to be truths, however susceptible of demonstration. A result is, that many are willing enough to look at both sides of a question within certain precincts, but once touch their own sentiments or faction, and their seeming impartiality vanishes. The weakness appears sufficiently ignoble when contrasted with the spirit of the admirable Mede, in his learned and ingenious lucubrations. "If I have hit upon any truth," says he, "it is

* Godwin's Life of Chaucer, vol. i. p. 391 *et seq.* ed. second.

wholly to be attributed to my indifferency in such searches, to embrace whatsoever I should find, without any regard whether it were for the advantage of one side or other:"*—a memorable remark of that distinguished man in extenuation of his own abilities, which appear to have been as much concealed from their possessor as they were conspicuous to others. The observation may remind us of a saying of Sir Isaac Newton's, that if he had made any discoveries above the rest of mankind, it was owing to nothing but industry and patient thought. In general, however, men have so little patient or independent thought, that they are like travellers over a plain covered with snow, who if there be no track are bewildered, but if they find one, are too happy to slide into the footsteps already provided.

L.

It is not unusual for persons to spend a great proportion of their days amidst the turmoil of active scenes, yet to acquire scarcely the most superficial knowledge of human nature. They have beheld the fleeting aspects of society, and contemplated more or less of its modes and sentiments; but as to the real springs which give movement to the affairs of mankind, or the discriminative features of individual character, they are almost entirely in the dark. Others, on the contrary, as Colman in his Random Records has remarked of Goldsmith, have a knowledge of nature, but are ignorant of the world.

* Letter to Mr. Hartlib—Mede's Works, p. 881. ed. fol. 1672.

LI.

The custom prevalent in former ages of retaining a domestic fool or jester, was not so idle or contemptible as some may imagine. The genuine fool —to adopt something of his own vein, and talk in paradox—was only a counterfeit one, having in most instances no slight shrewdness, together with considerable powers of wit and fertility of invention. This might be inferred from his estimation among all the great of those periods; a buffoon being a favourite appendage in the court of the prince, the palace of the cardinal or bishop, the castle of the baron, as well as the residence of the inferior feudal proprietor.* He supplied in part the want of literature, politics, and other modern auxiliaries of conversation and entertainment. He was also the satirist of his day, at least in his particular circle, ridiculing follies as they arose, and noting affectations in dress or manners with a licensed freedom; so that utility

* Even his Holiness the Pope had his sanctitude enlivened by one of these household *arlecchini*. It is curious to read of Sir Thomas More's having a jester. The fact would not ill accord with the facetiousness of that extraordinary man, so strangely exhibited on the scaffold; though many, we may remember, have suffered death with a jest on their lips,—perhaps on the principle which made Cowper write his John Gilpin when in the depths of melancholy.

We have a not inexpressive trait of former times in a circumstance related of Wolsey, who in his progress to Esher after his fall, being overtaken by Sir Henry Norris with a ring and an assurance of kindness from the king, in the fulness of his gratitude recalled the messenger, that he might bear to his majesty what the sagacious cardinal knew would be an agreeable offering—a favourite fool.

was often blended with his sallies of jocularity. The ancients seem to have led the way in this remarkable usage. From the Symposium of Xenophon, as also that of Lucian, it appears that the γελωτοποιὸς, or *laughter-maker*, was a professional personage, in high request on occasions of private festivity. Among the Romans, the *scurra* or buffoon had a regular place assigned him at their *triclinium;* witness the following passage of Horace, who defends the freedom of his satirical pleasantry by the indulgence extended to these privileged banterers:

> Sæpe tribus lectis videas cœnare quaternos,
> E quibus *imus* avet quavis adspergere cunctos,
> Præter eum qui præbet aquam: post hunc quoque potus,
> Condita quum verax aperit præcordia Liber:
> Hic tibi comis et urbanus liberque videtur
> Infesto nigris—*

A collection of all the burlesque sayings or *bons mots* recorded to have been uttered by this singular class of men, in different eras and countries, would furnish a curious medley of amusement for a vacant hour. It appears that in England the office of court-jester was continued till swept away by the civil wars of Charles the First; though the practice was maintained in some private establishments till after the commencement of the last century.† The extinction of the order is little to be regretted. A malicious genius

* Serm. i. 4. 86.

† The story of Killigrew having been court-jester to Charles the Second, which rests on the respectable authority of Oldys, is without foundation; as appears sufficiently from the Memoirs of Grammont, and the notes to that work. See also Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare—Dissertation on the Clowns.

might perhaps insinuate, that the multiplication of real fools has superseded the necessity of fictitious ones. "You shall find," quoth the devil in Quevedo, "buffoons in all conditions; and in effect there are nigh as many as there are men and women: for the whole world is given to jeering, slandering, backbiting, and there are more natural fools than artificial."*

LII.

The temperament of some is to act only on the suggestions of their own minds. They are sure to oppose the views framed for them by others; but almost equally sure to adopt right ones, if the mere facts of the case are insinuated, and their judgments left to form a spontaneous decision. It was thus that Archbishop Usher evinced his dexterity in dealing with a person of speculative and subtle turn, attached to the Romish communion; for avoiding argumentation, and incidentally offering but a few hints for inquiry, he directed the curiosity of his friend to a course of reflection and examination, which issued in the voluntary relinquishment of his former opinions.

† The Visions of Dom Francisco de Quevedo Villegas, Knight of the Order of St. James. Made English by R. L. [Sir Roger L'Estrange] 4th ed. 1671. p. 195.

Juvenal sarcastically remarks, that the diversion of public spectacles was superseded in his day by the drama of human eccentricities and follies:

——— Ergo omnia Floræ
Et Cereris licet et Cybeles aulæa relinquas;
Tanto majores humana negotia ludi.
Sat. xiv. 262.

LIII.

The reason why intimate acquaintance seldom enhances esteem is, because the contemplation of character at a distance allows scope for imagination and kindness; a circumstance peculiarly exemplified in those of sensitive or poetical make. It is remarked of Lord Byron, that his friendships were uniformly most cordial and best sustained towards those with whom he had least personal intercourse. Nearness dispels the illusions of fancy, and forces truth, however unpleasing, on the mind.

LIV.

The most rapid motions are those which are not perceived; and the greatest changes, both in nature and life, are brought about by invisible causes.

LV.

It is possible to indulge too great contempt for mere success, which is frequently attended with all the practical advantages of merit itself, and with several advantages that merit alone can never command.

LVI.

The unhappy are frequently characterised by a disposition to self-indulgence, as if to compensate

themselves for the wrongs or sufferings which they endure. Pope, whose life was almost a continued disease, which no doubt gave pungency to his satirical vein, is described by Dr. Johnson to have been too much addicted to the gratification of the appetite, the reason probably being an impulse to beguile himself of a sense of uneasiness. According to the same writer, a similar propensity is observable in the earlier or milder forms of insanity. "Madmen," says he, "are all sensual in the lower stages of the distemper:" a remark which may be illustrated by his account of Collins, who, on the first approaches of the direful malady under which he sunk, was accustomed to seek the fallacious relief afforded by the pleasures of the table and the bottle.

LVII.

We might imagine that those of selfish temperament, or who most despise their fellow-men, would always be least agreeable in social intercourse; but several decisive instances may be adduced to the contrary. No one was more fascinating in conversation than the French wit and philosopher Fontenelle; yet according to his own acknowledgment he had not the least spark of philanthropy, and was utterly indifferent to the welfare of others.

LVIII.

There are two cases in which a person may endeavour to amplify his own merits or importance;

from motives of ostentation, or from a well-founded persuasion that he is not sufficiently appreciated. But in neither instance are his intentions likely to be accomplished; for in the one he is the object of contempt, in the other of compassion.

LIX.

Perhaps we are influenced by contracted and selfish views in ascribing so much importance to human life, which has ever been liable to great and indiscriminate waste, and for the preservation of which only the same general arrangements appear to have been made, as exist with respect to the inferior orders of the animated creation. The devastations inflicted on our race by war, pestilence, earthquakes, and the like, are speedily repaired; as the abstraction of blood from the veins is soon followed by a fresh supply. Of the multitudes that are cut off by an untimely fate, how few would have lived to any valuable purpose! how many would have died ere long in the course of nature! What has the world suffered from the destruction of all the myriads who have fallen victims to the sword, famine, plagues, or other desolating visitations? Perhaps a few discoveries or improvements have thus been lost to mankind; or some rising geniuses may have been quenched, that would have shed a lustre on their country, or adorned humanity itself. The regrets of all ages attend the premature death of Sir Philip Sidney; though less perhaps for his possible achievements, than his heroic qualities and actual performances.

But what can we think of particular or local ravages among the species, when generations themselves are but as characters traced upon the sea-shore, which are washed away with the returning tide?

LX.

The effect of most persons' pursuits is to feed the body, and starve the mind. A wise man would rather feed the mind and starve the body. The captive Hebrew prophet, as Dante pithily remarks, *dispregio cibo ed acquisto savere*—despised food and acquired wisdom. Perhaps the reader may recollect the graphic description of the Clerk, in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales:

> A Clerk ther was of Oxenforde also,
> That unto logike hadde long ygo.
> As lene was his hors as is a rake,
> And he was not right fat, I undertake;
> But loked holwe, and therto soberly.
> Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
> For he hadde getten him yet no benefice,
> Ne was nought worldly to have an office.
> For him was lever han at his beddes hed
> Twenty bokes clothed in blake or red,
> Of Aristotle, and his philosophie,
> Than robes riche, or fidel, or sautrie.
> But all be that he was a philosophre,
> Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre,
> But all that he might of his frendes hente,
> On bokes and on lerning he it spente,
> And besily gan for the soules praie
> Of hem, that yave him wherewith to scolaie.
> Of studie toke he most cure and hede.

The friars, it appears, were not so studious or self-

denying. Witness the following portrait of one of the fraternity:

> Ful wel beloved, and familier was he,
> With frankeleins over all in his contree.
> * * * *
> His tippet was ay farsed ful of knives,
> And pinnes, for to given fayre wives.
> And certainly he hadde a mery note.
> Wel coude he singe and plaien on a rote.
> Of yeddinges he bare utterly the pris.
> His nekke was white as the flour de lis.
> Therto he strong was a championn,
> And knew well the tavernes in every toun,
> And every hosteler and gay tapstere,
> Better than a lazar or a beggere.*

To this admirable picture of the Frere, that of the Monk may be considered a counterpart. No doubt the Reformation in England was essentially indebted to Chaucer's satirical sketches, as to those of Skelton and other of our old writers; somewhat, perhaps, as the downfall of the pagan superstitions had been accelerated by the pleasant ironies of Lucian.†

* Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.

† Chaucer was contemporary with Wickliffe, and is said to have imbibed the sentiments of that illustrious precursor of Luther. Even in the Provençal poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and in the literature of the middle ages generally, invectives on the clergy are not uncommon; while they abound in the tales of Boccaccio, as popular perhaps at the epoch of their appearance as in any subsequent period. No question the first waves of the Reformation had set out ages before they broke on the shore in the time of Leo's pontificate. A way indeed had been prepared for Protestantism not only by the causes just mentioned, but by the Mysteries or Moralities that originated with the Church herself, and by the earlier itinerant preachers of the Mendicant Order. The principles asserted in that

LXI.

It requires more philosophy than most philosophers can boast, to appreciate the effect of appearance. Cæsar, who had perhaps the most extraordinary, and, except Cicero, the most comprehensive genius of all the Latins, must have possessed the accomplishment; as may be inferred from his folding his mantle around him before he fell; an action, it is probable, less arising from any particular volition at the moment, than the natural result of his habitual reference to the eyes of others. So long as mankind are more governed by sight than by intellect, attention to external minutiæ can never be unworthy of minds the most expanded. On many occasions small things are more important than great ones; the maxim of Aristotle, in relation to the laws of a state, being applicable to a variety of other cases: *Δεῖ μάλιστα τὸ μικρὸν φυλάττειν*—importing that minor points should be guarded with special solicitude.

LXII.

With some persons, a sufficient inducement to espouse a sentiment, is its almost unanimous rejection by others; and a satisfactory motive for continuance in error, is its thorough confutation. If

great contest may be traced up, in fact, through the Waldenses, whose history is so remarkably interesting, to the orthodox sect of the Novatians, about the middle of the third century, who appear to have been the first that separated from the Romish communion on account of its corruptions.

such worthies ever listen to reasons, it is after the model of Croaker in the Good-Natured Man, who declared his readiness to do so whenever his mind was made up, as reasons, quoth he, could then do no harm.

LXIII.

Time sheds a softness on remote objects or events, as local distance imparts to the landscape a smoothness and mellowness which disappear on a nearer approach.

LXIV.

What the friar in Romeo and Juliet calls "adversity's sweet milk, philosophy," is to most a very sour, as well as meagre beverage. It was curious to see, on the frontispiece of an old book which I once had, containing some quaint allegorical portraits, the emaciated, woe-begone visage assigned to a figure styled EXPERIENTIA. There is a world of truth in the somewhat ludicrous device. Experience, which many affect to value so highly, is commonly the growth of disappointment or pain, and almost invariably comes too late to be of much practical service. But though we may have no opportunity in this life of profiting by the lessons of that stern preceptor, it is possible they may not be without advantage to us in a future existence. If man does not wholly or chiefly die at death, sufferings are not ill exchanged for right-minded views and self-com-

mand, the effect of which may ultimately be to render him, not, as Coleridge beautifully describes his Ancient Mariner, after the fantastic scenes and mockeries that he had passed, "a *sadder* and a wiser man," but a happier as well as wiser being. Our education only commences in the present state.

LXV.

The inhabitants of cities perceive things in their generalities; those of the country, in their individual aspect. A power of observation or description may be employed with much more effect in the latter sphere than in the former; though some facts appear to contradict the opinion, as several of our greatest poets and novelists, those best kinds of painters, are well known to have produced their chief works in cities. But in such instances it will commonly be found, that the images or manners portrayed were originally borrowed from remote or insulated scenes, which, having long floated in the fancy, required but a certain combination or colouring to form living pictures in literary delineation.

LXVI.

Concealment of purposes and feelings is so natural to some minds, that it is frequently adopted in cases which are absolutely indifferent. When indulged to excess, and without any assignable motive, it is often

but the manifestation of a morbid condition of the brain, whether followed or not by more definite aberration. Chatterton displayed the propensity from his earliest years, and thus gave presage of a career which ended in so unfortunate a manner.

LXVII.

There are myriads of illusions which it is not in the least desirable to remove. The whole of our present existence, indeed, is a prolonged illusion, or rather a succession of illusions ; and if mankind could always know to what extent their hopes are visionary, life would almost arrive at a stand, a great portion of its happiness be lost, and duty itself often remain undischarged.

LXVIII.

Fickleness in friendship, or in a good cause, is sometimes combined with the negative advantage of fickleness in resentment, or in the pursuit of unworthy objects.

LXIX.

Hogarth may be considered as occupying a similar position in the fine arts, to that of Fielding in literature. Both these eminent geniuses, who flourished about the same time, appear to display, in their respective provinces, almost equal skill in the anatomy of the heart and character of man. I

would rather have one of Hogarth's pictures than all the Cartoons of Raffaelle, matchless as these may be in their kind; but which, besides being sometimes incongruous and absurd, are fancy pieces on subjects on which fancy seems to border on profanation; while Hogarth's performances, taken from life, are admirable illustrations not only of the manners and costume of the periods to which they relate, but, what is still better, of human nature in every period. Those who disparage Hogarth on account of his subjects, must disparage also Shakspeare; for both are depicters of man as he is, not as he might be under some ideal system.

LXX.

There is perhaps no occasion on which a person feels so desirous to know the thoughts of another, as in a case of undisclosed love.

LXXI.

One principal impediment to extemporary public speaking might be obviated, or at least diminished, by the simple reflection, that the largest audience is only an assemblage of units; for what man of ordinary abilities finds difficulty or embarrassment in expressing his ideas on any subject with which he is familiar, before a single individual? Nor is the facility to be despised which arises from the greater probability of success in addressing a multitude; the observation of Herodotus being com-

monly true, that it is easier to persuade many than one.*

LXXII.

Village influence is greater than what is exercised in towns and cities, whether for good or evil. In capitals you have the substantial advantages attending a concentration of all kinds of talent and commodity without, however, much opportunity of personal display or consequence. The fortune which in the country would make a splendid, or at least considerable appearance, is lost amidst the multitudes, and wealth, and magnificence of a metropolis.

LXXIII.

The style of half jest half earnest is seldom adopted in cases of unlimited confidence. It runs through the speeches of Hamlet, after the disclosures of the apparition; his brief colloquy with Horatio before

* Such is his sagacious remark on narrating the attempts of Aristagoras to excite resistance to the Persian domination; who, having urged the king of Sparta without effect, succeeded in arousing the enthusiasm of the assembled Athenians. The incident is memorable as the first decisive outbreak among the Grecian states against the formidable power of Persia, about five hundred years before the Christian era. *Πολλοὺς γὰρ οἷκε εἶναι εὐπετέστερον διαβάλλειν ἢ ἕνα εἰ Κλεομένεα μὲν τὸν Λακεδαιμόνιον μοῦνον οὐκ οἷός τε ἐγένετο διαβάλλειν, τρεῖς δὲ μυριάδας Ἀθηναίων ἐποίησε τοῦτο.*—*Hist.* lib. v. cap. 97. The exaggeration in the number here mentioned does not of course affect the position, afterwards so pithily expressed also by Cato the Censor, in his comparison of the Roman people to a flock of sheep, which a man can more readily drive than a solitary one.

the play-scene opens, and a few other instances, excepted: and on whom else could Hamlet rely, so as to unfold the dark grief that was preying on his heart? In his subsequent interview with the Queen, where he also lays aside the tone of mystery which he had previously exhibited, we have but the private exposure of her guilt, under circumstances too that must have appeared sufficiently secure. The fact that on these occasions, as well as in his soliloquies, not a shadow of incoherence is perceptible, would alone be decisive, that the poet never intended to depict him as affected in his intellectuals; but that the wild sallies of expression, and eccentricities of behaviour, which incurred the charge of insanity, were merely assumed as a blind, under the mission which he conceived himself destined to fulfil: while the exuberance of fancy, and the comic transitions that sparkle so profusely in his conversation, may have sprung, in part, from the very intensity of his sorrow. Though little similarity can be traced, in the chief characteristics of mind, between Shakspeare and the author of Childe Harold, there is a curious resemblance between the air of banter, and abrupt, excursive wit, veiling however wonderful depths of philosophy, observable in the discourses of Hamlet, and the strain which abounds in several of Lord Byron's effusions, particularly his Journals and Letters, and most of all, perhaps, in his Don Juan.

LXXIV.

A spirit of resolution and perseverance is more dependent on physical composition, or muscular and

nervous texture, than on argument or self-interest. "The action of strong character," says Foster, "seems to demand something firm in its corporeal basis, as massive engines require, for their weight and for their working, to be fixed on a solid foundation."* It is not, as some may fancy, a theoretic dream, that climate, and even the transient vicissitudes of weather, exert some influence on tenacity of aim, or perhaps on disposition in general. One thing appears worthy of remark, that some of the finest geniuses on record have had no claim to the attribute of decision. Poets have not seldom been noted for the contrary feeling; while tyrants and men of war, like the ravenous beasts which they so much resemble, often display consummate energy and force of temper—a quality apt to be taken by the superficial for a symbol of greatness.†

LXXV.

The foolish are sometimes silent about trivial things from an idea of their importance; the wise from a proper sense of their insignificance.

LXXVI.

Intellectual superiority occasions little difference in manners or conduct. Nature guarantees a general

* Essay on Decision of Character.

† "A disorder in the digestive organs," says Sir Henry Halford, "renders a man irresolute, infirm of purpose, and both indisposed and unequal to enterprise of any kind."—*Essays and Orations*, p. 58, sec. ed.

similarity of action. Opinions and fancies, whether less or more within the province of human control, and an identity of which is not essential to the purposes of existence, admit of indefinite variety.

LXXVII.

If we can suppose that angels are at all acquainted with the interior minds of men, how ridiculous must appear the exorbitant ideas of self-importance which the generality entertain. People are chagrined or distressed if they fail to secure a certain position in society, or if their interests or reputations are rudely touched. Yet what are the interests or reputations of an ephemeral insect, or rather of an immortal being during its transient abode in a habitation of clay? Cities, empires crumble into dust; and shall an individual repine? Nothing more illustrates the inborn loftiness of Marius, than the magnanimity with which he was inspired, amidst his own broken fortunes, by the spectacle of Carthage in ruins.

LXXVIII.

We are always less concerned, in reality, with the past or the future, than with the present; yet the latter occupies fewest of our thoughts. Children alone, as Southey I believe somewhere in his Colloquies remarks, seem almost entirely absorbed with the present; and so far, it may be added, they approximate to the apparent condition of the lower

creatures. The time will perhaps come, when our immediate aims and our highest interests will be coincident.

LXXIX.

Topics of conversation among the multitude are generally persons—sometimes things—scarcely ever principles.

LXXX.

The imagination is often most deeply interested by those who exhibit appearances of general indifference or *nonchalance*, blended with partial and unexpected gleams of affection; as the unintermitted brightness of the moon is less picturesque than her occasional beamings from the margin or through the crevices of a cloud.

LXXXI.

If, as some have represented, the gods sport with the designs of mortals, it is to be hoped that they mingle at least a little pity with their merriment. The world is full of ruined hopes, and blighted feelings; but there is not heart to tell them, or language to describe them, or patience to hear them described. Horace Walpole informs us, that in his youth he had thoughts of writing a satire on mankind, but that in his riper age he was more inclined to take up his pen in their defence.

LXXXII.

A man seldom attaches much value to things in which he is indisputably pre-eminent, though he may love the concomitants of his superiority, as the fame, or profit, or friendship which it procures. The reason perhaps is, that the mind, accustomed to its own powers, and not rising above them in its performances, sees nothing wonderful in the result; remoteness, and the absence of familiarity, being in this case, as in others, essential to the existence of strong or lasting admiration.*

LXXXIII.

Right comes to most at last, but generally when the heart is withered, and contemns the boon. *Tout vient trop tard*, says Voltaire: we may except however, with Byron, our vices. The picture drawn by Spenser of the miseries of a court-suitor, copied no doubt from the poet's individual experience, is only a counterpart of the

* A train of thought somewhat similar, applied especially to Shakspeare, occurs in a delicious little volume to which I have more than once referred—Hazlitt's Conversations of Northcote. Of course no one, in praising a book, pretends to vouch for all the sentiments it contains; least of all a book which includes a variety of opinions on literature and philosophy, men and manners, as well as art; but on the whole I take it to be one of the best things of the kind we have had since the work of Boswell.

lot of multitudes in the more ambitious walks of life:

> Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,
> What hell it is in suing long to bide:
> To lose good days that might be better spent,
> To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
> To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
> To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
> To have thy prince's grace, yet want her peere's;
> To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
> To frett thy soul with crosses and with cares,
> To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs;
> To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to ronne;
> To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.*

As to the efforts of literary genius, whose chief rewards are of an ideal nature, which imagination can so well forestall, it may be some consolation to know, that all that is required, in order to conquer neglect or detraction, is patience and time. "Il est arrivé de cette piecè," says Racine, alluding to his tragedy of Britannicus, the most elaborate, and, except Athalie, perhaps the best of his compositions, but which had been vehemently decried on its first appearance, "ce qui arrivera toujours des ouvrages qui auront quelque bonté: les critiques se sont evanouies; la pièce est demeurée." Thus it has been in our own day with no inconsiderable part of the writings of Wordsworth, which are at length beginning to assume their proper station; as also those of Coleridge, his fine poem of Christabel included, every line of which is instinct with creative fancy and vigour.

* Mother Hubberd's Tale.

LXXXIV.

Our notions of magnitude, and in great measure of dignity and importance, are dependent on the mechanism of the eye. Certain differences in its natural lenses would have given it the effect of a magnifying glasss, or of a telescope. A difference of another sort would have reduced the apparent size of objects to a Lilliputian standard. It is difficult to avoid an impression of the pettiness of man and his affairs, on witnessing the diminutive aspect of his edifices and enclosures, as seen from a lofty and distant eminence. At the same time, a majestic landscape imparts a portion of its greatness to the imagination of the spectator; so that while the species dwindles or is forgotten, the individual is elevated in self-estimation. Charles Lamb relates, with his accustomed *naivete*, that on returning to his desk at the India House, after a visit to the Lakes of Westmoreland, he thought much less highly of himself than amidst the mountains and solitary grandeur of that magnificent country.

LXXXV.

The novelty of the present state is commonly dispelled, ere Death comes to change the scene. After the first flush of youth is over, the flower begins to fade, the elixir is quaffed, and little remains but a repetition of the same dull acts and still duller pleasures. Both the honey and the gall of life, its

best and its worst, are for the most part exhausted long before its termination. The monotony of such an existence, one should imagine, would be sufficient to divest the last enemy of his terrors. Man is naturally an inquisitive being, and for the sake of new scenes and occupations will often brave the utmost difficulties and perils. Why then does he shrink from dissolution, the precursor of the greatest variety? or feel no attraction towards those surprising and magnificent spectacles which eternity may disclose? Much is no doubt attributable to the operation of instinctive attachment to life; but more, perhaps, to certain melancholy or undefinable apprehensions respecting futurity. It is less what persons enjoy in this world, than what they fear in the next, that makes death so terrible to thousands.

LXXXVI.

Where there is real superiority, there is seldom ostentation; the consciousness of merit appearing to satisfy, without the reputation or eclat. Policy, however, will sometimes dispense with show; as where a person, occupying a precarious eminence, or agitated by a restless ambition, is fearful of provoking suspicion or envy. Thus it was with Sejanus, in his endeavours to usurp the Roman government; whom Tacitus describes as studying to escape the flattering crowd of suitors and visitants, in order that, the splendour of power being relinquished for the substance, he might lull to sleep

the jealousy of Tiberius, and augment his own authority.*

LXXXVII.

Those persons are commonly the most captivating in social intercourse, who have greatest dexterity in diversifying the mental trains, or relieving the mental vacuity of others, by introducing unexpected topics or images to their attention, and thus saving them the effort of providing for their own entertainment. It is in this way that a high flow of spirits, combined as it often is with versatility or readiness of allusion, has so much effect in opening an avenue to human hearts. The celebrated Count de Grammont, who however added wit to his other accomplishments, good, bad, and equivocal, was the idol of all his acquaintance; but the main secret is disclosed in a single remark of his biographer. "Un fonds inépuisable de bonne humeur et de vivacité lui fournissoit toujours quelque chose de nouveau dans les discours et dans les actions."† A considerable part of the follies, if not vices of life,

* Providebat . . . minui sibi invidiam, adempta salutantum turba; sublatisque inanibus, vera potentia augere.—*Annal.* lib. iv. cap. 41.

† Mémoirs du Comte de Grammont, par le C. Antoine Hamilton.—With the pursuits and character of the hero of this book, I am free to acknowledge my want of sympathy; but of the book itself, witty and vivacious throughout, though disfigured by too licentious traits, it is not the most trivial merit, that besides some curious continental sketches, reminding one at times of scenes in Le Sage, it gives a better picture of the court of Charles the Second than any history of the period.

may be traced to its tediousness, and the consequent search of variety. Mr. Sharp, in his ingenious little volume of Letters and Essays, quotes the statement of Cardan, that he used to apply burning wax to his arm for the sake of the excitement attendant on pain.

LXXXVIII.

It is an ordinary practice with biographers, as well as men in general, when they meet with a melancholy nature, to endeavour to account for it by the influence of circumstances or events; whereas it is commonly the result of constitution or temperament, and would probably have developed itself under a totally different order of circumstances. On what other hypothesis can we explain the fact, that misfortunes which sink some minds to the dust, are encountered by many, of equal pretensions and refinement, with heroic intrepidity and cheerfulness?

LXXXIX.

So far as we can perceive, or as any important purposes relating to the present existence are concerned, the greater part of mankind might as well have never been born. Some mystery must lie beneath the veil which hangs over the condition and destiny of the species, and which we are only baffled in our attempts to penetrate. The earth is full of the ruins of Time, and the spoils of Death; and we walk about insensible over the ashes of innumerable gene-

rations, once elate and active, that have left no vestige of their qualities or performances. But the myriads of the dead, though no trace can be discerned of their habitation or laws of being, are only in a state of temporary invisibility, like the Seven Sleepers of the ancient legend, whose subterranean slumbers were protracted near two hundred years, or like the prophetic Rhymer in his fabled retreat from the haunts of the living. What a magnificent moment will that be, when reviving worlds shall burst from the darkness of the grave, and when the dreams and obscurities of mortality shall be solved.

I was lately amusing myself with watching the bubbles made by the drops of a shower on a running stream; and, not perhaps without some unconscious reference to the proverb which Taylor has so eloquently amplified from Lucian, fell into a transient reverie on the striking emblem which they presented of the course and history of human life. Some of these minute circles disappeared almost at the instant of their formation; others sailed on a moment or two, and then burst; while a few that might be supposed of firmer make, or that rose in a less agitated part of the current, glided along in various eddies for a while, and then vanished. Alas! thought I, if the parallel is to end here. But no:—these frail bubbles which seem to perish, are only blended into the mass of waters, to be exhaled perhaps by the sun, and help to form those brilliant and variegated clouds that float along the firmament. Mind, at least, never dies; and possibly the fruits of mind, those thoughts and aspirations of which there is now so prodigal an

expenditure, are all treasured up, destined to conquer the oblivion which preys alike on our noblest and meanest things.*

XC.

Longevity is much dependent on the feelings and occupations of the mind. Except by the intervention of accident, or of sudden and formidable disease, a person will hardly die while his thoughts are engrossed, and his hopes expanded, by some attractive enterprise or project. There are not many instances of authors cut off during the composition of a favourite work. How seldom is it that statesmen die while stimulated by the ardour of official duty! unless of peculiarly sensitive temperament, as Canning, or engaged in a course of policy that appears abortive, as Pitt. It is not when soldiers are on the march, or in agreeable active service, that mortality most invades their ranks; but when encamped in listless despondence, or confined to the dull routine of barracks after a disastrous campaign.

XCI.

The situation of many compels them to seek enjoyment almost exclusively in their own resources. In that case who shall censure them with severity,

* For the story of the Seven Sleepers, see Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xxxiii.; and for an ample notice of Thomas of Ercildoune, surnamed the Rhymer, see Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, in Sir Walter Scott's Poetical Works, vol. iv.

although they acquire a tone of sentiment little characterised by expansive warmth, or form a habit of referring things to themselves rather than to others. It is a beautiful feature in the story of Silvio Pellico, that during his long imprisonment in the fortress of Spielberg through the tyranny of Austria, he lost none of the sympathies or virtues which become the most active commerce with mankind.

Some who are imbued with affectionate dispositions, exhibit a cold or repulsive demeanour, from an idea, of which they are perhaps scarcely conscious, that the indulgence or manifestation of deep emotion is a weakness in character.

Where feeling is the most intense, there is often little external indication of it, sometimes the appearance even of unusual apathy. The depth and strength of the current preserve unruffled calmness on the surface; while the confinement of sensibilities within the breast only serves, like the retention of waters by a dam, to augment their power. It has been said that the British, under a frigid exterior, are the most impassioned of people. Actors, who commonly but counterfeit emotion, seem to possess it in an extraordinary degree.

XCII.

We are apt to conceive that our views or attainments a considerable period since, were strangely immature or contracted, and to congratulate ourselves on account of the wisdom or superiority which we

fancy we now possess; little dreaming that at some future season we shall probably reflect on our present acquisitions and aims with equal indifference or contempt. Thus it may ultimately be with regard to the whole of life, which is only the dawn of our being, or the commencement of an endless series of progressions.

XCIII.

Persons of feeble memory or unsusceptible imagination are ever prone to exaggerate the present, whether advantageous or otherwise, and to miscalculate the past in proportion. To such, childhood often appears a dreary waste, because, when its colourings and undefinable hopes are vanished, fancy has not the power to recall them, or to revive the complex, enchanting visions which then revelled in the brain. Gibbon would scarcely have depreciated the happiness of early life if he had possessed much poetic sensibility, or the faculty of blending with the scenes of infancy the emotions which they commonly inspire.

XCIV.

It is generally supposed that uniformity characterises the operations and habits of the insect portions of nature. Perhaps the opinion is owing to the imperfection of our senses, which may be unable to discern the differences that actually exist. To the view of some other classes of being, whose organs

of perception may be accommodated chiefly to objects of considerable magnitude, it is not impossible that man may seem as diminutive as insects do to himself, and his actions and methods of life appear equally limited and uniform.

XCV.

A great mind is not less shown by the easy relinquishment of petty objects when attended with difficulty, than by the most determined pursuit of objects that are truly noble.

XCVI.

Why do we fancy that night was made exclusively for repose, since creation is then not unfrequently embellished with as much beauty, though not of the same description, as during the prevalence of day. At least it may be worth while occasionally to trespass on the customary order of existence, and not allow the bright stars and solemn clouds to hang over a slumbering world without notice. To live methodically for the sake of method is absurd.

XCVII.

The state of the dead is considered by some as a kind of slumber or repose. I should rather take life to be a slumber, from which, and from the dreams with which it is blended, we awake at death. The ancient Egyptians, according to Diodorus, regarding

the present existence as trivial, bestowed little care on the structure or embellishment of their houses, but decorated their tombs and sepulchral excavations with the most beautiful paintings, sculptures, and other ornaments; as if in his last abode only, man attained to full vitality, and the proper condition of his being.

XCVIII.

Short-lived as man undoubtedly is, he in many instances survives himself. His soul, his understanding, passions, fancy, remembrances, often die before his body.

XCIX.

Smiles may play on the countenance, while Hope and Joy lie mouldering in the heart beneath, like the moonbeams shining over a grave. When the mind is in a certain stage of progression, it turns for enjoyment in great degree to the past, as presenting what is most fixed, or exempt from fluctuation. In its ultimate or mature state, however, it builds its chief pleasures on what is to come. Its ordinary aspirations, or those relating to selfish and inferior objects, are dispelled; but nobler anticipations replenish the vacancy. Yet in the interval that passes before this re-occupation of the fancy with brighter images and prospects, the intellectual resources sometimes threaten to fail, and Melancholy spreads her wings over the soul.

C.

After high exhilaration, the spirits sometimes fall as rapidly as the sail of a vessel when the wind suddenly ceases. The contrast to the imagination would be scarcely more remarkable, if a person were transported from the vivacity of a brilliant assembly in the metropolis, to the solitude of such a scene as the Grande Chartreuse, or that of the Great St. Bernard, where, however, the hospitality and cheerfulness that reign within, go far to compensate for the wild and wintry desolation around.*

CI.

A residence in capitals and cities is every day becoming less necessary, in consequence of the multiplication of facilities for travelling, and for the circulation of intelligence and improvements. In

* Of the sublime and magnificent, though appalling and disconsolate scenery of the Grande Chartreuse, a famous convent among the mountains on the borders of Savoy, the reader will find an admirable sketch or two in Gray's Letters; and a description still more vivid and poetical, intermixed with several curious particulars, in those of the author of Vathek. The Hospice of St. Bernard, situated near the summit of one of the most dangerous Alpine passes, is celebrated not more for its sagacious and wonderful breed of dogs, than for the friendly entertainment it affords to the weary pilgrim; realising in this particular what Ariosto says of Vallombrosa—*cortesa a chiunque vi venia.* There is a beautiful tribute to this monastic institution in Rogers's Italy.

time, we may hope, this will help to blunt the force of Voltaire's witticism, that people in the country are like mile-stones, on whose aspect may be read their distance from the metropolis.

CII.

It is often melancholy natures that make the most noise in the world, and that are the most prolific in vices, or in distinguished virtues or enterprises. There have been three men who from small beginnings attained the highest historical notoriety, who may be cited in illustration. The first is Cardinal Wolsey, who was not perhaps singular in uniting to a fondness for pleasure a complexion deeply tinged with the saturnine. Another is that strong-headed, sagacious despot, Oliver Cromwell, whose rigid tone of feeling required no heightenings from religious austerity. A third, more illustrious than either, was Napoleon Bonaparte, described by an acute and inquisitive observer, Madame de Stael, as seeming to look down with contemptuous superiority not only on the instruments he employed, but the world in which he played so conspicuous a part; and who, amidst the brilliant pageant of his coronation, when fortune had raised him to her summits, appeared lost in pensive or gloomy abstraction. To these names might be added another extraordinary actor of his time, Dean Swift, whose high intellectual powers were ultimately overthrown by that sombre temperament which darkened the greater portion of his existence.

CIII.

People are not to be regarded as hypocritical, because their conduct exhibits a deviation from their former professions or behaviour. Perhaps there are few hypocrites in the world; but men are themselves deceived, alter their own opinions, or become the victims of unforeseen temptations.

CIV.

The littleness of man is seldom more conspicuous than amidst his attempts to appear great, as on occasions of public display or pageantry. The pomp may astonish the multitude, but will lead the wise to reflect or sigh. How different the impression produced by the unpretending magnificence of nature, as seen in the lofty mountain, the extended and diversified landscape, the ocean, above all, the sky, especially when filled with the solemn luminaries of night!

CV.

Loquacity is not so idle or frivolous as some may imagine. The French, one of the most intelligent and refined nations in Europe, are loquacious. The Turks, the most ignorant and barbarous of any community with pretensions to civilization, are noted for taciturnity. Of the Spartans, that most narrow-minded and least intellectual of the Grecian states,

the *laconic* habits are proverbial; and the Bœotians, a pastoral, and therefore scattered population, among whom little discussion or mental collision could have place, were reproached for dulness; while the Athenians, unmatched in all the efforts of genius, were inquisitive, restless, and talkative. Among the agricultural classes in our own country, there is less conversation than among the artificers or tradespeople, who are in the main proportionally more enlightened and acute. The lower indeed we descend in the scale of humanity, the fewer traces shall we commonly find of colloquial habits. Savages have little oral communication with each other.*

CVI.

Perhaps the controversy whether the notes of the nightingale are plaintive or lively, is to be determined by the state of individual feeling at the time. If the listener is in a melancholy mood, the strain will probably be thought sad; if in a cheerful temper, the reverse.

* The taciturnity which characterized the inhabitants of the New World, at the period of its discovery, is thus described by Dr. Robertson. "When they are not engaged in action, the Americans often sit whole days in one posture, without opening their lips. When they go forth to war, or to the chase, they usually march in a line at some distance from one another, and without exchanging a word. The same profound silence is observed when they row together in a canoe." —See the observations connected with the passage in the History of America, book iv. sect. 9. A similar trait has been remarked as distinguishing one of the most abject varieties of the human race, the Endamênes, found in New Guinea, of which they are supposed to be the aborigines.

CVII.

It is necessary to have some surer basis of repose than humanity, a very limited knowledge of the world being sufficient to show, that persons in general care little for their professed friends or acquaintances while living, and soon forget them when dead. The author of the Odyssey relates of Ulysses and his companions, that whoever tasted the fruit of the lotus, at once became unmindfnl of kindred and country. We may witness something of the phenomenon without the fable; or the produce of that oblivious tree may be gathered on every shore. It is a remark of the excellent Francis de Sales, complaining that we do not sufficiently remember our dead, that *leur memoire perit chez nous avec le son des cloches.* As to the promiscuous multitudes that move around us, our exit would be utterly unperceived, or occasion no deeper impression than the flight of an arrow through the air. I think it is Pope who expresses a sort of plaintive regret, that London would be as busy and lively the morning after his death as before. It is perhaps true, however, that no individual, whatever his station or merits, is wholly uninteresting to all of his kind, or dies without leaving an image of himself in another's breast. By some unknown hands, the grave even of a Nero was strewed with flowers.*

* This token of gratitude, or affection, or whatever it may be deemed, appears to have been frequently repeated. "Et tamen," says the biographer of the emperors, after relating the joy that was diffused through

CVIII.

If we can extract a portion of pleasure or benefit, though small and transient, from the objects of our possession, and which are considered as our own merely because placed under our control, our expectations from them should be satisfied. Some minds appear to disdain advantages or gratifications of a trivial or fleeting nature; yet what is life, with its complication of interests, but a succession of frivolous and ephemeral things?

CIX.

It is possible for feeling to usurp the sway of intellect for a season; but in the long run, intellect asserts its supremacy over feeling.

CX.

Ambitious spirits rarely concern themselves deeply with the affairs or curiosities of ancient times; and those who provide materials for history, often know little of history themselves. Theirs is the living world, which contains scope for their activity, and supplies the elements of their advancement. It is chiefly persons of passive character who are most interested by the researches of antiquarian lore.

the city by the monster's death, "non defuerunt qui, per longum tempus, vernis æstivisque floribus tumulum ejus ornarent."—*Suet. in Vit. Ner. cap.* 57.

CXI.

The brightest things in life minister to those which are the least refined or most ordinary. The mind waits on the body; and fancy and literature are often made subservient to the vulgar strifes and passions of men. A stranger spectacle is perhaps presented when genius becomes enslaved by those of qualities utterly beneath itself, as Pope was by Martha Blount; a woman not only without talents or accomplishments, but ugly and ill-tempered. It is less surprising that Voltaire should have been held in chains by Madame du Chatelet, who was gifted with superior attractions, mental and personal, though gross in her manners, and dissolute in her conduct.

CXII.

It is sometimes a misfortune, though occasionally no doubt a main cause of superiority, to have energetic minds with contracted spheres of operation. Yet more persons have scope for action who are destitute of the impulse, than such as have the impulse without the scope. The reason perhaps is, that where the means of activity abound, there are commonly the means of self-indulgence or luxury; in consequence the love of pleasure conquers the love of enterprise.

Swift was not a little misplaced in the peaceful and confined situation of a clergyman. His talents seem to have fitted him eminently for state intrigue, in

which indeed he had no inconsiderable share; but especially for a career of military ambition. He possessed all the qualifications of a great commander; intrepidity, comprehensiveness, promptitude of decision, equal fertility and readiness of resources, with a temperament to which repose only was a burden. He required perhaps but a certain opening or combination of circumstances, to have been the Napoleon of his day. It is curious that William the Third, whether through his friendship for Sir William Temple, the relative and patron of Swift, or from whatever cause, offered him the post of captain in the army. All speculations on such points are of course vague, but it is not impossible that had the overture been accepted, the fortunes of England and of the world might now have been essentially different. That it was not so, is at least a happy thing for letters; his works, which are a library in themselves, and a perfect storehouse of entertainment, being the result, for the most part, of the restless vigour which could find no other outlet; while the incidents of his life, himself apparently without a tinge of romance, are invested with a deeply romantic and almost tragical interest.

But if the Dean of St. Patrick's was, with regard to his capabilities and aptitudes, not in the most appropriate sphere as an ecclesiastic, he was infinitely more so than in later times was that prince of diplomatists, Talleyrand, when a bishop; or probably than Lord Clive would have been, had he worn out his days in the civil capacity in which he first went out to India. It is remarkable, that after retiring from scenes of excitation and bustle to the ordinary walks of

life, neither Clive, nor another famed oriental leader, Warren Hastings, exhibited much token of the ability which had won them celebrity. Not so the illustrious exile of St. Helena, who, though his position there was but a species of entombment, in comparison with his former eddy and brilliance of affairs, retained his sleepless activity of intellect to the last, employed in commenting on the great events of his career, and dictating memorials of them for the service of posterity.*

CXIII.

If a person has self-confidence, or only its appearance, few will question his pretensions; while most will be ready to distrust him who seems to distrust himself. The test however is unfair. Nothing shows so ill as conceit in a book: nothing will go farther in actual life—audacity even being enumerated by Lord Bacon among the qualities that contribute to fortune.

CXIV.

It may appear singular, that while so many professedly aim at the acquisition of wealth, scarcely

* Speaking of Swift I may remark, that while Ireland can boast few distinguished authors, the few she has produced are of first-rate merit. I need but mention, in addition to this extraordinary man, the names of Berkeley, Sterne, Goldsmith, Burke, and Sheridan. Of the living writers that are a credit to the Emerald Isle, it is not my business to speak; but perhaps I may be pardoned for specifying two as not unworthy to be classed, and whom posterity will assuredly class, with the eminent geniuses just enumerated—Maria Edgeworth and Thomas Moore.

any make friendship a specific object of pursuit; but that in most instances it is the offspring of secondary or incidental circumstances. The explanation may be, that the advantages of friendship are not sufficiently palpable to satisfy the ordinary class of feelings. Perhaps it is also supposed, that the search would generally be unavailing in the absence of wealth or influence; and that riches being once attained, it will be easy to purchase friendship, or what may supply its place.

CXV.

Some express themselves more strongly in disapprobation than they deliberately think; others think with more severity than they choose to speak. Of the two descriptions, the former are much the less unpleasing; and of them it may be said, as of Oldbuck the Antiquary, that their "bark is muckle waur than their bite." The real benevolence which often lurks under appearances of rigidity, is no way exaggerated in Goldsmith's humorous description of the Man in Black.*

CXVI.

Artifice is an attribute of weakness, prevailing most in those who feel themselves inadequate to accomplish their designs in a direct or compulsory manner; as tyrants and usurpers, who have much

* Citizen of the World, Letter xxvi. The admirable sketch which follows, there seems little reason to doubt, is substantially a delineation of the poet himself.

less power, and far more restriction, than is vulgarly supposed. To these may be added, women—and certain classes of those affected with insanity. The cunning of half idiots and monomaniacs is often indeed remarkable. Sometimes, however, the practice appears to be selected merely for the purpose of affording play to a busy and versatile fancy. To some such origin, many perhaps would be inclined to refer the literary forgeries of Chatterton; but the chief cause more probably is to be found in a taint of the madness to which indisputably that prodigy of genius owed his melancholy end.

CXVII.

If we wait for what we may conceive the most favourable season to engage in any enterprise, or till the time when we imagine we shall be best qualified for successful exertion, life will probably be spent with little effect. It is a remark equally sound and important of Lord Bacon, that "a wise man will make more opportunities than he finds." Perhaps too he shows his wisdom as much in embracing them when offered, as in seeking them when absent. The Greeks represented Occasion with a razor in her hand, to signify that if we would avail ourselves of her presence, we must cut off intervening obstacles.

CXVIII.

Men are brought much less closely into connexion with each other in populous and crowded places, than

in small towns or villages. Numerous as are the advantages of a residence in the country, they are all perhaps counterbalanced by the separation which a metropolis usually affords from petty criticism, petty resentments, and petty notions. A passage in Boswell supplies an admirable comment. Speaking of London he observes, "The freedom from remark and petty censure, with which life may be passed there, is a circumstance which a man who knows the teasing restraint of a narrow circle must relish highly. Mr. Burke, whose orderly and amiable domestic habits might make the eye of observation less irksome to him than to most men, said once very pleasantly in my hearing, "Though I have the honour to represent Bristol, I should not like to live there; I should be obliged to be so much *upon my good behaviour*."* What would he have said to the idle, gossiping inquisition of a rustic and secluded neighbourhood? There is one decisive recommendation of capitals, that in them only the affairs and distinctions of humanity are estimated by a correct relative standard. In all provincial communities, local and private interests are vastly overrated.

CXIX.

The transition, in habits of life, from what is natural, to that which is artificial or scientific, is constantly increasing; although in many respects the change is little gratifying to an unsophisticated taste. There is something, for instance, much less

* Life of Johnson, vol. vii. p. 250. ed. 1835.

picturesque in judging of the weather by means of the barometer, while we sit immured in our habitations, than by the methods in use among our ancestors, who formed their conjectures, on the whole perhaps nearly as correct, from the flights and appearances of birds, from observation of the clouds, winds, cattle, or other external phenomena. The progress of arts and refinement is every day shutting us out more and more from nature.

CXX.

How many are there who die before attaining what to them appears the chief end of existence! but how many more, alas, without having attained the true end!

CXXI.

Physicians are like the general class of friends, plausible where their aid is not required, and somewhat serviceable on occasions of minor exigence, but of trifling utility in circumstances of real and urgent necessity. The order, however, is sure to flourish in proportion to the increase of opulence and luxury; while in less polished conditions of society it has not been without its sway, if we may believe Idomeneus in Homer to have uttered the sentiment of those semi-barbarous times called heroic, though he seems to be speaking rather of the surgical race, naturally enough appreciated in epochs of violence and slaughter:

Ἰητρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιος ἄλλων.

It was a malicious speech of Pope Adrian the Sixth, that physicians are good for a populous country, to keep down the number of the inhabitants. Disparagement of the medical profession as a whole, is a pretty decisive token of contracted or illiberal views; notwithstanding the apparent exceptions in the case of some illustrious names, as Montaigne, Boileau, Moliere, Le Sage, and latterly Napoleon and Byron. Hundreds too who declaim against the regular practitioner, are duped by the pretensions of the quack; as though education, and the careful study of anatomy, physiology, and other branches of the healing art, were absolute disqualifications; or as if the more a person had investigated a subject, the less he was competent to undertake its management.

CXXII.

The sentiments of many who pretend to judgment of their own, are more influenced by what others approve or oppose, than by any deference to reason. They are independent in their notions; but it is the independence of pride, not of discrimination. They differ from others, not because others are wrong, but because they hate to be led, though Truth be the conductor.

CXXIII.

A much smaller portion of interest is connected with journeys in England at the present time, than must have existed in more ancient and uncultivated

periods. The remotest places are now pretty accurately known: travelling is also marked with less of adventure and variety, as there are no extensive forests or pathless commons to be traversed, and seldom any romantic incidents to entertain the imagination: to which may be added, that a considerable uniformity in point of appearances, manners, and language, begins to prevail in every part of our island.

CXXIV.

If there is any one attribute common to man which is engrafted on his original nature, and entirely the growth of circumstances, perhaps that attribute is prejudice. To meet a person altogether exempt from its influence, may be pronounced, if not impossible, at least one of the most difficult things in the world. It is not easy to say whether prejudice resides most in mansions or in cottages; in courts or in camps; among the clergy or the laity; philosophers or the vulgar; authors or their readers. The forms which it assumes vary with each individual understanding, and are almost as numerous as the several opinions of mankind: and what seems remarkable, those whom it most sways are generally least conscious of its operation.

CXXV.

There are many to whom incentives of a mere literary kind would be presented in vain, but whose

talents are drawn out and invigorated by dangers and difficulties. In this class may be ranked perhaps Napoleon, certainly more entitled to the epithet Great than most sovereigns who have received it, except Alfred of England, and Peter the First of Russia; but whose genius, unfitted for the calm pursuits of letters, appeared, though not to languish, yet to chafe from the corrosions of unabsorbed energy, when not stimulated by military or political enterprise.

CXXVI.

Some who are themselves addicted to censure, arrest the censure of others, and seem desirous of monopolizing the privilege of disparagement. The trait was often amusingly exemplified by Johnson, especially in his treatment of Goldsmith, to whom he dealt some of the heaviest blows which that guileless poet received, but whose part he very manfully defended, and on the whole no doubt with sincere good-will, when assailed by others.

CXXVII.

Perhaps each person in the world is now feeling the consequences of events which happened many thousand years ago; and those events, it is not improbable, will continue to operate till the consummation of all things. There is something in the intellectual and moral systems analogous to what Mr. Babbage represents as existing in the physical; namely, a perpetuity of result throughout all time

from the minutest impressions on material nature.* —The remote influence of circumstances may be compared to the effect occasioned by throwing a stone into a lake, where the circle produced is multiplied, and in each successive undulation enlarged, although with diminished strength in proportion to its circuit, or its distance from the central point of commencement. Of some incidents, however, the more extended the reach, the more powerful is the agency, which may then rather be likened to a small stream swelling into a broad and magnificent river.

CXXVIII.

No wise man is proud, but many wise men are vain; and many also occasionally assume the appearance of pride, to escape the encroachments of petulance or affectation. Nearly allied to such a trait is the feeling which Swift attributed to himself,

> That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride—

a not unfrequent associate of distinguished mental power. Swift was about twenty-six when he drew this lineament of the future satirist. The fire of genius had probably been long smouldering in his breast, though it had not broken out into any decisive coruscations.

* See in the "Ninth Bridgewater Treatise"—a work replete with ingenious speculation—the very striking remarks, chap. ix., "On the permanent Impression of our Words and Actions on the Globe we inhabit."

CXXIX.

It is astonishing what a spirit of profound apathy pervades certain orders of mind, at least in cases which make no appeal to their senses, or their immediate secular interests. Almost any calamity in the least degree remote is contemplated with indifference; and death itself is commonly encountered with a kind of sullen insensibility. The fact is, their range of vision is so limited, and their faculty of picturing the absent and unseen so obtuse, or deadened by the hard realities of existence, that distant effects or possibilities are neither discerned nor appreciated.

CXXX.

If the history of the activity displayed by the most eminent characters in various periods and nations could be accurately traced, its origin would often be found in some bodily ailment or early misfortune, which has created a restlessness of spirit demanding tumultuous scenes or busy efforts for its occupation. It is impatience of repose and of the monotony of life that furnishes the elements of success to the enterprising and ambitious. The most renowned generals, princes, statesmen,—those who have most distinguished themselves in any department or profession, have commonly been of an impetuous or versatile nature, which could ill brook a state of tranquillity, and never seemed to flourish but in circumstances of commotion.

CXXXI.

It is difficult to determine which produces more ravages on the frame, the wear of thought, or the wasting influence of passion. Both are great enemies to beauty. Among the tribes that are acknowledged to present the finest specimens of the human form, as the Georgians and Circassians, there is little or no mental activity; and in more civilised communities, eminent personal attractions are seldom found apart from considerable repose of intellect. Look at the portraits of the most reflecting geniuses, of whatever epoch or clime, and you will generally find the countenance more or less emaciated or withered, however expressive. The workings of any strong feeling or impulse, that of love in particular when its "course runs not smooth," though enhancing the force of expression in its milder, happier sway, soon commit depredations on the physiognomy; either by impairing fulness of contour, so essential a constituent of finished beauty, or by effacing the higher graces of feature. It is supposed that the ancient sculptors, aiming at the utmost perfection of form, omitted in general the representation of passion, from its interference with that object. Shakspeare, with his accustomed penetration, makes Cæsar distrustful of the lean aspect of Cassius, as betokening too energetic and ambitious a brain:

> *Cæsar.* Let me have men about me that are fat;
> Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o'nights:

Yond' Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.
Antony. Fear him not, Cæsar, he's not dangerous.
He is a noble Roman, and well given.
Cæsar. 'Would he were fatter:—But I fear him not:
Yet, if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music:
Seldom he smiles; and smiles in such a sort,
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.*

A similar fancy is introduced by Dryden, in his celebrated description of Lord Shaftesbury:

A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.†

Physiology may serve to elucidate the phenomenon. It is a law of our nature that the organ which is most exercised requires the largest supply of blood. The organ by which the mind works is the brain; consequently where mental operations are vigorous and almost incessant, the blood, which should circulate freely to the various parts of the system for their support, is absorbed chiefly in feeding the brain, while the rest of the body is empoverished for want of its appropriate nourishment.‡

* Julius Cæsar, Act i. scene 2. † Absalom and Achitophel.

‡ See an ingenious little work by Dr. Brigham of America, entitled, "Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivation and Mental Excitement upon Health," with notes by the late Dr. Macnish.

CXXXII.

Society appears to require something which may be a kind of substitute for the practice of auricular confession among the Catholics; chiefly, however, as an expedient for disburdening the heart of its emotions, without the apprehension of farther disclosure. Friendship might in some measure suffice, but it is too rare, and in most instances too feeble for the purpose. How few indeed are there to whom, except in the case supposed, a person would feel confidence in laying open the interior movements of his mind! Authors have an advantage in this particular; those at least who deal with fancy, or the more refined sensibilities of our nature, as poets, and writers of fictitious narratives. The fire and mental fermentation of genius would be liable to produce insanity, were it not for the outlet afforded by composition. Byron often speaks of the relief he obtained in this way; and Chatterton, gloomy from a boy, is said to have become more cheerful from the time that he wrote verses. There is one resource accessible to all, but too sacred to be blended with inferior associations—converse with the Great Invisible.

CXXXIII.

Love nurtured amidst grief is often of the deepest order; because affliction tends to soften the feelings, and to infuse a spirit of sensibility,—the element in

which love breathes and flourishes. The discovery seems to have come upon the enamoured Julie with all the force of surprise. "Dis-moi, mon ami, mon doux ami!" she writes to the object of her passionate attachment, "sens-tu combien un cœur languissant est tendre, et combien la tristesse fait fermenter l'amour?"* With allowance for exceptions, the remark of Shakspeare about the course of true love never running smooth, may be somewhat reversed; that the love is true *because* its course is not smooth.

CXXXIV.

The number of things considered remarkable in any particular age or nation, gradually diminishes with the lapse of time, so that ultimately few characters or events that once commanded attention remain known or conspicuous; as the objects and colours of a landscape disappear, or fade away to the eye, in proportion as they are left behind in a journey.

CXXXV.

There is so trifling disparity between the great and the little of human life, that almost all its pursuits are equally important, or rather equally insignificant. If the curiosity be interested to the same extent, the chase of butterflies is perhaps as wise as the chase of wealth or distinction. It is not improbable that angels regard most of our occupations and

* La Nouvelle Héloïse.

amusements, as we do the sports and passions of children.

CXXXVI.

A person is not to estimate his influence by the degree of external deference which he obtains. A better proof of influence is undesigned imitation, or the adoption of a line of conduct in unison with his maxims or practice.

CXXXVII.

I sometimes entertain myself with fancying the condition of a man entirely debarred from the conversation and sight of his fellow-creatures, and living under the persuasion that he shall never emerge from this state of perfect solitude. How different would be his pursuits and ideas from those that commonly prevail! Suppose him furnished with the materials of luxury and the appendages of refinement, how few of them would he actually employ! The greater part of the knowledge and accomplishments which mankind value so highly, would to him be utterly useless. Intellectual occupations would almost certainly be abandoned, even if they had before been the objects of his fondest attention; as there would be no person to whom he could communicate his sentiments, none with whose powers or attainments his own might be brought into comparison or competition, and no prospect of fame or of recompense to stimulate his efforts. In point of mind, he would

perhaps descend almost to a level with the least civilized portions of the race; and with respect to enjoyment, would probably be inferior to the brutes. It is somewhat remarkable, that among all the singular cases which the records of the human species afford, none should be found exactly parallel to the one supposed, which might have served to elucidate the extent to which man is influenced by man, in the formation of his opinions, tastes, character, and happiness. The fabulous history of Robinson Crusoe comes the nearest to the hypothesis, and is valuable as exhibiting a philosophical portraiture of human nature under extraordinary circumstances.

CXXXVIII.

There is more affection in the world than friendship, more friendship than philanthropy, and more philanthropy than candour.

CXXXIX.

Men often cease to admire or to hate, not because reason or justice interposes its authority, but because they grow weary of having their reflections running without variation in the same channel. Warren Hastings was no doubt chiefly indebted for his acquittal to the tediousness occasioned by the protracted discussion of his case. A large proportion even of cultivated minds appear to be in perpetual fluctuation of sentiment; as the leaves of the forest

are bent by the prevailing breeze. For a season opinions before considered as unquestionable are rejected with contempt, perhaps because some subtle disputant or daring innovator has attacked them without ceremony. In time, however, the understanding becomes impatient for a change in its habitudes of thought, and a way is thus prepared for some fresh speculator to arise and revive the exploded notions, which having now the force of novelty are easily embraced. There are few persons whose speculative extravagance it is not superfluous to refute. If let alone for a while they will probably refute themselves, either by recanting their former absurdities, or by espousing new ones.

CXL.

Attention to minor circumstances of a picturesque nature, so far from betokening the possession of superior comfort, is not seldom the indication of a vacant or unsatisfied breast. A cottage with roses and woodbines twining around it, may be a pleasing object to the sight; but the reason why so much care has been expended on its decoration is, possibly, because the owner has more leisure than he can otherwise employ, and little that is substantial or dignified to engage the thoughts. Who would attribute the displays of landscape gardening, and the assemblage of varied beauties with which Shenstone adorned his seat at the Leasowes, to a redundance of happiness in the poet? Persons most study niceties of arrangement, or ornamental appearances,

when detached from more interesting or lucrative occupations. Yet perhaps it is as wise to spend time in the cultivation of flowers, or the embellishment of scenery, as in the pursuits of wealth or ambition.

CXLI.

It is pleasant to read about rural occupations and pastimes, but different to be engaged in them, unless the mind be neither sophisticated by artificial habits on the one hand, nor debased by grovelling or avaricious views on the other. Virgil, in his description of the benefits of a country life, intimates that they may be possessed without being appreciated or enjoyed. The ordinary class of husbandmen, indeed, are too little refined in their sentiments to relish properly the advantages of their situation:

> O fortunatos nimium, *sua si bona nôrint,*
> Agricolas! quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,
> Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus.

The contrast which he proceeds to draw between the splendour of the great in cities, and the simple enjoyments which rural life affords, is almost enough to make one feel in love with the country. What pleasing images are presented to the fancy in the following verses:

> At secura quies, et nescia fallere vita,
> Dives opum variarum; at latis otia fundis,
> Speluncæ, vivique lacus; at frigida Tempe,
> Mugitusque boûm, mollesque sub arbore somni,
> Non absunt.———

Almost all great men seem to have felt the attraction of similar scenes and delights. Cowley, in his admirable Essay on Agriculture, has noticed the attachment of poets in particular to the seclusion and tranquillity of the country. It is worthy of remark, that those of the satirical order have often been the most lavish in its commendation, as well as the most skilful in portraying its charms. Nothing, in the main, can be more picturesque or agreeable than the account which Boileau gives of his employments and recreations at Hautîle:

Ici dans un vallon bornant tous mes désirs,
J'achète à peu de frais de solides plaisirs:
Tantôt, un livre en main, errant dans les prairies,
J'occupe ma raison d'utiles rêveries:
Tantôt, cherchant la fin d'un vers que je construi,
Je trouve au coin d'un bois le mot qui m'avoit fui:
Quelquefois, aux appas d'un hameçon perfide,
J'amorce en badinant le poisson trop avide;
Ou d'un plomb qui suit l'œil, et part avec l'éclair,
Je vais faire la guerre aux habitants de l'air.
Une table au retour, propre et non magnifique,
Nous présente un repas agréable et rustique:
Là, sans s'assujetter aux dogmes du Broussain,
Tout ce qu'on boit est bon, tout ce qu'on mange est sain;
La maison le fournit, la fermière l'ordonne,
Et mieux que Bergerat l'appétit l'assaisonne.
O fortuné séjour! ô champs aimés des cieux!
Que, pour jamais foulant vos prés délicieux,
Ne puis-je ici fixer ma course vagabonde,
Et connu de vous seuls oublier tout le monde!*

To these sentiments we find a counterpart in the writings of Horace,– a poet in many respects of kindred genius and taste. What an assemblage of

* Epitre à M. de Lamoignon.

exquisite pictures is contained in the ode including the beautiful stanzas—

> Libet jacere modo sub antiqua ilice,
> Modo in tenaci gramine.
> Labunter altis interim ripis aquæ;
> Queruntur in sylvis aves;
> Fontesque lymphis obstrepunt manantibus,
> Somnos quod invitet leves.

Well might this accurate observer of life and manners rank himself with the *ruris amatores*, "lovers of the country;" not only as his works abound in its praises, but because he could prefer his Sabine retreat to an honoured residence at the court of Augustus. The applauded bard, and welcome visitant of princes and nobles, sought his chief satisfactions in sources open to all:

> ———Ego laudo ruris amœni
> Rivos, et musco circumlita saxa, nemusque.

One of the most delightful treatises that antiquity has transmitted to us, is the Œconomics of Xenophon, in which the pursuits and pleasures of husbandry are described in that unostentatious and beautiful manner which best befits the subject.

I subjoin to these desultory reflections a passage from the Essay of Cowley before mentioned, illustrative of the facilities afforded by rural retirement for that intermixture of active and contemplative existence which so many desire, but so few attain. "To be a husbandman is but a retreat from the city; to be a philosopher, from the world; or rather, a retreat from the world as it is man's, into the world

as it is God's. But since nature denies to most men the capacity or appetite, and fortune allows but to a very few the opportunities or possibility of applying themselves wholly to philosophy, the best mixture of human affairs that we can make are the employments of a country life." Who can help feeling regret that the fondness for rural comfort so pleasingly developed in these observations, should not have been met by correspondent circumstances? It was the misfortune of Cowley, as it is of multitudes besides, to achieve a settlement in the country too late for the extraction of its pleasures. At all events, Johnson's sneer at the disappointment of the amiable bard is entitled to little weight.

CXLII.

None but those who spend considerable time in the open air, and possess a habit of watching the landscape with attention, can form proper ideas of the ever-varying hues and appearances produced by the vicissitudes of our climate in the scenery of the earth and sky. It is worth while occasionally to endure the darkness and buffettings of the storm, to behold afterwards the sweet breakings out of the sun, and the rollings of the clouds. The gipsy mode of life, were it combined with sensibility or taste, would be most favourable to observations of this kind. It was by such minute and patient inspection of nature that Claude Lorraine, who not unfrequently passed the hours from sunrise to

sunset in the fields, acquired his inimitable skill in landscape.*

CXLIII.

I can never think of the ancient practice of archery, in which our forefathers were so eminently skilled,

* That fascinating medley of sylvan and antiquarian description, Gilpin's Forest Scenery, amidst the multitude of ingenious remarks which it comprises, adverts to the variations of colour and aspect here mentioned. After noticing the prospect from a particular spot in the New Forest in Hampshire, he observes "If, then, so great a variety of incidents arise from the few circumstances of landscape which are found at this place, with what variety may we suppose landscapes of a larger size, and composed of more complicated parts, may be attended—particularly extensive distances, which are of all others attended with the greatest variety of incidental beauty! Every landscape, indeed, hath something peculiar to itself, which dispose it more or less to receive the incidents of light and weather in some peculiar manner. An open sea coast one should think of so simple a construction, as to be little liable to receive any change; and yet I have stood upon a sea coast, on a sunshiny cloudy day, when the wind has been rather brisk, and have, in less than an hour, seen the whole picture under a dozen different forms, from the varying of the lights in the sky, on the horizon, on the surface of the water, or on some part of the coast. The conclusions from all these remarks are, that every landscape is in itself a scene of great variety—that there are few landscapes which have not, at some time or other, their happy moments—that a landscape of extent and beauty will take the full period of a year to show itself in all the forms it is capable of receiving—and that he who does not attend to the variations of the atmosphere, loses half the beauty of his views."—*Remarks on Forest Scenery and other Woodland Views, by the late William Gilpin, A.M.* vol. ii. p. 247, 248, new edition, 1834, by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, Bart.—The sentiment appears to have been a favourite one with this very delightful author, who expatiates upon it at large in the preface to his Observations on Picturesque Beauty relative to the Lake country.

without a feeling of regret that, as a popular pastime, it is now almost extinct. It comprises most of the recommendations, apart from the disadvantages of other active amusements; diverting the attention without enfeebling the intellect, and promoting health without leading to cruelty or vice of any sort. Roger Ascham, who thought that all should be brought up to "the book and the bow," seems to have been among the last who pursued the recreation with the keen zest of the genuine old Englishman.

CXLVI.

Inventions have in numerous instances proceeded from persons not professionally conversant with the subject, but who, endowed with acute understandings, have had them casually applied in that direction. The opinion is now pretty well exploded that Roger Bacon, the brightest philosophic luminary of the middle ages, and the harbinger of the revival of letters, was first acquainted with the composition of gunpowder. But a brilliant discovery in naval tactics, the method of breaking the line of the enemy, is properly attributed to the late Mr. Clerk of Eldin, a Scottish advocate, afterwards a Lord of Session, who had never made a single voyage by sea. The steam engine has been ascribed, and so far as its essential principles are concerned, with apparent justice, to a Marquis of Worcester, who lived about two hundred years ago:—and the modern practice of stereotype printing was planned and introduced by

an ingenious goldsmith of Edinburgh, William Ged. For the power-loom, and other important contributions in the arts, we are indebted to Dr. Cartwright, a clergyman and man of letters, who up to his fortieth year had been unconscious of any aptitude for mechanical departments. Jacquard, the inventor of the loom which bears his name—one of the most beautiful of automatic contrivances—was a manufacturer of straw hats. Examples might be multiplied in almost every branch of scientific and practical ingenuity. They whose familiarity with any pursuit is derived from habit or constant occupation, are seldom distinguished for much originality of views about the matter; in part because the mind is without the stimulus inspired by novelty, but chiefly, perhaps, because it is too engrossed with details, or the technical portion of the process, to speculate on principles.

ON HAPPINESS.

I.

There are three principal sources of happiness; the imagination, the affections, and the understanding or judgment. The first is casual and fugitive; the second liable to counteraction or failure; the last is the most certain and durable. A combination of all, in connexion with religion, would form the summit of human felicity.

II.

The mind must already be somewhat happy, before it is open to miscellaneous sources of gratification. Persons, accordingly, with diseased bodies, or of unfortunate circumstances, fix attention chiefly on things the contemplation of which is calculated to increase unhappiness; as, their own distresses, or the vices and calamities of others. The satirist is

commonly created by illness, melancholy, or disappointment. On the other hand, one pleasure frequently begets a thousand, by putting the mind into a state which leads it to extract enjoyment from a multiplicity of sources.

III.

Had the Almighty appointed man to subsist on the spontaneous products of the earth, vice and misery would have been much more prevalent. They who have to pursue some daily occupation for a livelihood, seldom imagine that they are happier than they probably would be, if their time and amusements were more at their own command. It is the principal aim of fashionable life to provide a substitute for a business or profession.

IV.

A ruling passion excludes from a number of incidental or secondary delights, although the want of them is not felt. Unless certain pursuits or scenes, which to a person exempt from the influence of that propensity would be so many springs of satisfaction, have a bearing not very remote on the object in view, they are slighted and neglected. If therefore a ruling passion be not gratified, a man is less happy under its control than without it; perhaps so even when gratified, unless the object be very noble and commanding.

V.

When we are unfit for action, we are generally unfit for enjoyment.

VI.

Cheerfulness originating in buoyancy of disposition, is more graceful and more permanent than such as arises from the reception of particular benefits. The latter may be compared to a sudden gush of water, which is soon exhausted or dried up. The former is like a perennial fountain, and equivalent to the effect occasioned by the continual reception of benefits each time augmenting in value; for nothing less would maintain in cheerfulness a temperament naturally phlegmatic.

VII.

The most rigid philosophy, and the most careless mirth, are intimately related, insomuch that the latter is frequently but the offspring of the former. The one discovers the vanity of human pursuits and wishes; the other seizes present enjoyment to compensate the calamity. A mixture of the two composed the essence of the Epicurean system. It has been the fortune of many a contemplative and melancholy genius besides Swift, to adopt for motto, *Vive la bagatelle.*

VIII.

At almost every successive stage of being, mankind are looking forward to something ulterior, or endeavouring to provide for the happiness of a future period; but in the meanwhile the current of life ebbs away, or the susceptibilities of enjoyment become extinct. If we cannot be happy now, there is little probability that we shall ever be so. "Il faut rire avant d'être heureux," says La Bruyère, "de peur de mourir sans avoir ri."

So far as the complexion of the mind is concerned, those are perhaps the happiest who blend more of the Epicurean in their nature, than of the Stoic or the Cynic; who are free from immoderate ambition, especially the ambition of fame; and disposed to partake the gifts and pleasures of Time as it passes. Lucian, in his Dialogues of the Dead, inculcates a like sentiment in the advice given to Menippus, who, distracted by the conflicting opinions of philosophers, and the strange aspects of human affairs, had sought a solution of his perplexities from Tiresias in the shades below. After affirming a private existence to be the best, the sage exhorts his interrogator to abandon all the subtle and ambitious speculations of the schools, and regarding the generality of things with a smile, to limit his chief concern to a right management and use of the present.*

* Ὁ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν ἄριστος βίος καὶ σωφρονέστερος· ὡς τῆς ἀφροσύνης παυσάμενος τοῦ μετεωρολογεῖν, καὶ τέλη καὶ ἀρχὰς επισκοπεῖν, καὶ καταπτύσας τῶν σοφῶν τούτων συλλογισμῶν, καὶ

IX.

To be pleased with trivial things, is a sure means of attaining considerable satisfaction. Yet in proportion as the understanding becomes enlarged and refined, it is less disposed to receive gratification from minor causes, or to entertain itself with the rippling of waves on the shore, when accustomed to the depths and magnificence of the ocean. If we look at facts, we shall perhaps discover reason to suspect, that the most gifted minds are often the least happy. Mental eminence sometimes does little more for its possessor, than debar from a multitude of subordinate pleasures. In such a case we may be tempted to exclaim, with the blind prophet in the Œdipus Tyrannus of Sophocles, *Φεῦ, φεῦ· φρονεῖν ὡς δεινὸν, ἔνθα μὴ τέλη λύει φρονοῦντι*—"Alas! how dire a thing is wisdom when it yields no profit to its owner." It reminds one of the stories respecting the old necromancers, as Faust and Michael Scott, who, with all their skill in occult science and their power over evil spirits, were the most wretched of mortals. But assuredly it is a man's own fault if intellect contracts the circle, however it may abate the ardour of his enjoyments.

τὰ τοιαῦτα λῆρον ἡγησάμενος, τοῦτο μόνον ἐξ ἅπαντος θηράσῃ ὅπως τὸ παρὸν εὖ θέμενος, παραδράμῃς γελῶν τὰ πολλὰ, καὶ περὶ μηδὲν ἐσπουδακώς.—*Luciani Opera*, tom. i. p. 339, 340. edit. Græv. Amst. 1687.—The doctrine is perhaps somewhat too indulgent to human indolence, but embodies no small portion of practical wisdom.

X.

Every man that would have peace, must be content to let the world go on in its folly. Yet he who would not have his better nature mastered by selfishness, must often make a sacrifice of peace, and do good to others in spite of themselves. Leo the Tenth well illustrated the species of maxim which governs the generality, when, being urged with the necessity of correcting the abuses of the Church, he pointed to a crucifix, exclaiming, Behold the fate of reformers! It has been remarked by a writer who was no less distinguished for sagacity than poetic genius, that the Romance of Don Quixote is the most melancholy of tales; the views of the hero being entirely disinterested and praiseworthy, yet contempt or opposition his reward. The observation, though embodying a truth which all history confirms, that mankind are little apt to appreciate efforts into which the mercenary or ignoble does not enter, appears more cynical than correct. It is not so much the beneficent aims of the worthy Knight of La Mancha, as the eccentric and absurd methods of their display, which occasion the ridicule associated with his name. Sismondi, from whom probably Lord Byron derived the fancy, has been, though not the first, at least among the most conspicuous, in misrepresentation of the purpose contemplated by Cervantes in the composition of his immortal work.

XI.

It is a main thing in happiness whether the follies of men excite mirth or irritation, ridicule or regret. Of the two philosophers of antiquity, Democritus, who laughed at human vanities and cares, and Heraclitus who wept over them, there can be little doubt which had a preponderance of agreeable feeling; though neither would have displayed less philosophy, to say nothing of philanthropy, if they had endeavoured to mitigate the evils which they contemplated in so dissimilar a manner. These worthies scarcely differed more from each other than Fontenelle did from both; a unique genius who, living till the patriarchal age of a hundred, professed never to have either laughed or wept. He had the merit, however, by the brilliancy of his wit and colloquial talents, of making many others laugh.

XII.

When I part with anything to which I have long been accustomed, I part with associations belonging to it, which to me are perhaps far more valuable, in point of interest, than the object by which it is replaced, though in itself much superior. I recollect a considerable time back reading the plays of Shakspeare, several of them again and again, in a common, almost paltry edition of six or eight pocket volumes, yet which gave the text on the whole faithfully, with brief marginal explanations of the obsolete phrases;—

the way, by the by, in which our old poets, as Chaucer and Spenser, ought to be annotated, except where more extensive elucidations are required. I have since furnished myself with a far more beautiful and correct edition, enriched with ample glossarial notes and other matter; but though I may incur the imputation of weakness, I own that I have much less satisfaction in perusing these immortal fictions in their present attractive shape than in the former; partly, no doubt, from the greater novelty attending the previous perusal, but chiefly, I incline to think, on account of the fondness we imbibe for the minutest accompaniments of a high-wrought pleasure. Ornament is a poor substitute for utility, and to feast the eyes, or even the understanding, a less powerful charm than to regale the imagination. In turning over the newer copy, my thoughts insensibly revert to its predecessor, the loss of which I almost feel as that of an old and agreeable companion.

XIII.

It is astonishing with how few external resources a person may live in a state of comfort and intellectual progression. The catalogue of human *desiderata* is certainly not very extensive, if we are to admit the opinion of Alphonsus, the wise king of Arragon, who, as quoted by Sir William Temple in his Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning, was accustomed to say, that among the various things which mankind either possess or seek, all are baubles except "old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to con-

verse with, and old books to read." The Roman people in the times of Juvenal, somewhat like the Parisians at present, required only *panem et Circenses.* As a general rule, where there is much physical satisfaction or repose, there are not many complicated or artificial wants. The inhabitants of sunny and delicious climes are usually satisfied with a small number of gratifications; for if the body be at ease the mind is commonly so too; while most of the pursuits and cravings of people in colder countries arise from the necessities imposed by their local situation. It demands no trivial fortune, expended on the accommodations which ingenuity can procure, to overtake the luxurious independence of those who live in a benign and cloudless region.

XIV.

If all would abstain from what they evidently can avoid, namely, injuring others in their persons, property, reputation, or feelings, nine-tenths of the unhappiness of life would vanish. The miseries which man wilfully inflicts on man, constitute the principal part of human suffering. It is related in the Life of Philip Henry, respecting a certain minister of whom little else is recorded, that it was a maxim with him to "make no one angry or sad." The rule is not always practicable; but a mind which could conceive and carry out such a principle was deserving of a better memorial than a transitory notice. The universal adoption of the sentiment would transform the face of the world.

XV.

I can hardly conceive it possible for a person, with right views and feelings, to be altogether free from melancholy. Byron supposed that the sentiment is common to men in general, but remarked only in the remarkable. Perhaps he was not far wrong; the wise, if from no other cause, being melancholy from reflection—the rest from sensation.

XVI.

A private individual, possessed of competence, taste, and an interest in others' friendship and affection, has more independence, and the materials of more enjoyment, than the highest minister of state, or than princes themselves. To say nothing of the multitude of cares that commonly beset an elevated station, as the winds and clouds most assail the loftiest mountains, the chief pleasures of the great are always of an ordinary, and often of a very simple kind. There is no royal path to felicity; and sovereigns in quest of the boon pursue the same courses as subjects. Perhaps the wisest selection was made by the Emperor Marcus Antoninus, who, without neglecting the avocations of practical duty, addicted himself to study and philosophic contemplation. King René, surnamed *le Bon*, derived his favourite gratifications from the poetry and minstrelsy of the Troubadours, and from the fine arts. The late Ferdinand of Naples was absorbed, to his dying day,

in the sports of the field; while the principal amusements of George the Fourth were those of the turf, to which were latterly added, building and angling. Some monarchs have been antiquaries; others agriculturists; some noted as critics, poets, chess-players, musicians, or astronomers. In the whole circle of human delights, not one is peculiar to a crowned head, or to conspicuous rank. Let us hope, while remarking such a community of pleasures in the contrasted walks of society, that among persons the most exalted by adventitious causes, a charm of existence is found, more frequently than many suppose, in the cultivation of those moral tastes and habits which often form almost the only solace of the humble and obscure.

XVII.

In seasons of temporary dejection, it is perhaps undesirable to seek relief in occupations or scenes that generally administer delight, lest their effect should be impaired for the future by association. There are times when I should be afraid to take up certain authors, who never fail to diffuse a sunshine on my ordinary moments.

Swift recommended diverting books as a remedy for melancholy; but for the deeper forms of the passion, at least, I should prefer a close piece of reasoning or speculation, such as may be found in the volumes of Berkeley or Malebranche. For though it is more difficult to get the mind interested by such disquisitions at first, yet that once attained,

they hold it with a firmer chain; besides tending to allay the sensibilities, which are apt to be fostered by the allusions or the contrast suggested by a work of amusement.

XVIII.

So fantastic is the mind of man, that when surrounded with a profusion of resources, it will sometimes abandon them almost entirely, and seek its entertainment in some minor indulgences, on which fancy or caprice has bestowed an artificial value. Yet it does not follow that in the absence of such profusion, the choice would have been the same; for often the sole effect of access to numerous gratifications, is the latitude which it affords to select those which are trivial. A person is seldom allured by secondary or factitious pleasures when no others are at his command.

The phantasy is not less curious in cases of a different kind. Xerxes wept when in the zenith of his glory: I question whether he had much melancholy after the discomfiture of his forces.

XIX.

Goethe, one of the most prosperous of literary geniuses, and far enough removed from the querulous tribe, acknowledged in his old age that existence had been to him little else than weariness and unrest—"the eternal rolling of the stone."* All men, whe-

* See Mrs. Jameson's Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada.

ther occupied with the pursuits of letters or not, secretly feel that life is full of perturbation and disquietude; yet the assertion of the fact, except by those whose eminence supplies materials for envy, is commonly distasteful, because the mind is ever in search of something to divert it from a sense of its unhappiness.

XX.

People often refer their discomfort to unpropitious events, when the true cause is more properly the state of the atmosphere, or some physical distemperature; a feeling of satisfaction being occasioned less by the accidents of fortune, than by circumstances which operate on the material structure or the senses. The natives of Andalusia, living in a delicious clime, and conversant with tranquil and picturesque scenes, are strangers not only to fretful discontent, but to that undefinable species of uneasiness which, without any perceptible derangement of health, embitters the enjoyments of multitudes in less favoured regions. Mr. Walker in his Original speaks of the sensations produced by the climate of Italy as almost enchanting, and utterly indescribable. Nothing more tends to soothe and recreate the imagination than a beautiful prospect on a fine summer's evening, when the sun gilds every object with his parting beams, while a few solitary clouds travel slowly along the sky, and all creation smiles before sinking into repose.*

* The characteristics of a scene almost wholly the reverse, namely, one of wild desolate grandeur, and its impressions on the feelings and

XXI.

The gratification of fancies and foibles is often productive of more pleasure than substantial benefits afford. People must be allowed to be happy in their own way; though the wantonness of caprice in the matter is sometimes sufficiently amusing. Goldsmith would probably have been more elated by admiration of the fantastic finery in which he delighted to array himself, than by the legacy of a hundred a year. Jus-

fancy, have been exquisitely painted by Dr. Beattie, in his sketch of the Highlands of Scotland and the superstitions of the inhabitants. "Long tracts of mountainous deserts covered with dark heath, and often obscured with misty weather; narrow valleys thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices resounding with the fall of torrents; a soil so rugged, and a climate so dreary, as in many parts to admit neither the amusements of pasturage, nor the labours of agriculture; the mournful dashing of waves along the friths and lakes that intersect the country; the portentous noises which every change of the wind, and every increase and diminution of the waters, is apt to raise, in a lonely region, full of echoes, and rocks, and caverns; the grotesque and ghastly appearance of such a landscape by the light of the moon:—objects like these diffuse a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occasional and social merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a native in the hour of silence and solitude."—*Essay on Poetry and Music*, Part I. ch. vi. sect. 3.

Observations of a general kind, however, must usually be understood with some restriction. The natives of Iceland, as those of Zetland and the Faroe Isles—regions the most inhospitable and dreary that can well be conceived—are distinguished not only for industry, intelligence, and home-bred virtue, but for great cheerfulness and contentment. The conclusion merely is, that disadvantages of climate and scene are susceptible of counteraction by intermixture with certain adjuncts or circumstances; a conclusion by no means at variance with the remarks in the text.

tice however may add, that his satisfaction would have been higher from an opportunity of performing a generous action to a friend, or even an unfortunate stranger.

XXII.

Fame, and an accumulation of outward advantages, are feeble securities against melancholy; in part because the mind is capricious, and turns from enjoyments when lavished upon it in profusion; in part because possession leaves no scope for ideal embellishment, and to intellects of the noblest order suggests the disparity which ever subsists between their acquisitions and their capabilities.

XXIII.

It is much easier to purchase intellectual than physical gratifications. The former are also infinitely more diversified, as well as susceptible of more frequent repetition. "No entertainment," says Lady Wortley Montagu, "is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting." "If relays of eyes were to be hired like post-horses," she writes in her old age, and when living amongst foreigners, "I would never admit any but silent companions." The pleasures of reason and the understanding have this recommendation, that they constantly increase with time; while those of fancy, friendship, and the senses, are porportionally impaired by the same cause.*

* The Letter to the Countess of Bute (Jan. 28, 1753), in which the former of these citations occurs, is perhaps one of the best

XXIV.

Whatever may be the real aspect of different objects or circumstances, they produce on some minds only a saddening impression; as the clouds, however variegated or beautiful, reflect on the earth but one melancholy shade.

> With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky,
> How silently, and with how sad a face!

So sings the author of the Arcadia, investing with the hues of his own feeling or fancy, a spectacle which Homer and other descriptive bards represent as filling the beholder with joy. But the pensive and gentle Sidney, romantic in his poesy as in his life, and unfortunate in love, could blend with one of the most exquisite of scenes a strain so touchingly plaintive.

Who however has not felt at times that there is something melancholy, as well as soothing, in the sight of the moon shining brightly on the earth, as if the world contained no mourners? as there is something that pierces the spirit with awe on looking up to the heavens, in the dead of night, when all the universe seems asleep but the stars.

epistles in the collection, containing some admirable hints on female education, expressed with the usual vivacity and force of the accomplished writer. By the by, there is more philosophy scattered through the correspondence of her Ladyship than superficial wits may conceive. No wonder that Pope was enamoured of so extraordinary a woman, whose beauty was surpassed only by her genius.

XXV.

They who are most impetuous in the pursuit of happiness, commonly meet with the severest disappointments. Happiness enters most freely into the heart which is the most tranquil in its desires. The ancient Stoics, one would imagine, who bent so much effort to acquire the mastery of passion, must, even with aims but imperfectly successful, have been no strangers to the rare privilege of calm contemplative serenity. Such, I am willing to believe, was the case with not a few of the monks and anchorets of former times, notwithstanding the trite aphorism about the world filling the thoughts in cloisters as in cities; and such, I doubt not, is in many instances the attainment of those belonging to the Society of Friends, with whom it seems a principle to repress all tendencies to the indulgence of strong emotion. There is something in the very name *Sans Souci*, given to one of the palaces of the Kings of Prussia, that soothes the imagination; for though the reality may little correspond to the title, yet the mere suggestion of ideas of placidity and repose is pleasing; as to turn away the eyes from a desolate or troublous scene, to a painting of rural peace and beauty, is not without a charm, though the landscape be but a picture. Mr. Charles Lamb, in one of the delightful Essays of Elia, informs us that the sight of a quakeress, beaming with the purity and cheerfulness often so conspicuous in the fair sex of that community, never failed to enliven him for the rest of the day.

XXVI.

Good humour is not the product of philosophy, but of temperament or of fortune. Reason may superadd or modify, but nature must contribute the essentials, in a case relating more to the physical than the intellectual—to the nerves, circulation, and digestive apparatus, than to reflection or the operation of judgment. Irritability of feeling is always connected with weakness or disorder of the material system. One means of taming the ferocity of wild animals is to furnish them with a plentiful supply of food. A similar regimen is often applicable to the human animal. I have read of a person who used to say, that he avoided abstinence because it rendered him peevish. The Moslems of Egypt, during the month of Ramadan, or Lent of the followers of the Prophet, are, contrary to their usual disposition, morose while fasting through the day, but very cheerful after their evening meal.

XXVII.

In a rural and sequestered walk, amidst the stillness and beauty of a summer's day, the mind will sometimes extract exquisite delight from the most trivial circumstance—from watching perhaps the shadows of the clouds move noiseless across the landscape. It is at such moments that the pettiness of life's cares and fascinations is strikingly evinced,

as they are found capable of being conquered by the simple charms of nature.

XXVIII.

A plenitude or perfection of enjoyment appears to render death an object of indifference, sometimes almost of desire. Dr. Franklin is reported to have said, that on discovering the success of his experiment to draw down the electrical fluid from the clouds, his exultation was so intense, that he could willingly have died that very instant. Why should the conception of death have entered at such a moment? Perhaps from contrast; dissolution being generally considered as the greatest of evils. Its terrors however were abolished, because the soul, entirely filled with one emotion, that of gladness, has no room for another, especially such a one as fear.*

* Miss Martineau, in describing a storm that she encountered in the Atlantic, speaks of the excitement attending the spectacle as producing a similar triumph over the apprehension of death. "The only thing," she says, "that surprised me much was, that there was so little terrific about it. . . . . The vessel is so obviously buoyant, that it appears impossible to overwhelm her; and we were a thousand miles from any rocks. In the excitement of such an hour, one feels that one would as soon go down in those magnificent waters as die any other death."—*Retrospect of Western Travel*, vol. i. p. 30.

The reader may remember how Othello, on meeting his Desdemona after the perils of his voyage to Cyprus, gives vent to the impulses of an overflowing heart:

> If it were now to die,
> 'Twere now to be most happy; for, I fear,
> My soul hath her consent so absolute,
> That not another comfort like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate.—*Othello*, Act ii. scene 1.

XXIX.

It is because we have but a small portion of enjoyment ourselves, that we feel so little pleasure in the good fortune of others. Is it possible for the happy to be envious?

XXX.

The union of pride with affectionate feeling, a circumstance by no means uncommon, often occasions considerable uneasiness to its subject. The former assumes the appearance of sufficient internal or personal resources; while the latter requires the sympathy or attachment of others, which is liable to be chilled or repelled by that appearance.

XXXI.

It is not in the midst of long-continued suffering that the mind is most conscious of its severity. Familiarity with pain diminishes its acuteness, by blunting the sensibilities; or depth of sorrow, by absorbing the feelings, prevents any lively apprehension of a much happier state. The partial return of enjoyment, suggesting ideas of contrast, occasions a more accurate estimate; as the shining of the sun after a temporary obscuration, produces a more vivid impression of the previous darkness.

XXXII.

The amount of sensible pleasures is perhaps pretty equal among the several orders of mankind; for in proportion to the paucity of these pleasures is commonly the zest which they afford. The case is otherwise in regard to those of the understanding, which are enhanced by multiplicity and variety. The great difference in men's respective shares of happiness lies in points which relate to fancy, opinion, friendship, and intellect in general.

XXXIII.

Present feelings, of whatever nature, are apt to be overrated, and the importance of prior feelings to be disparaged in proportion. The bliss of a few moments is sometimes regarded as a compensation for a thousand pains; or a brief paroxysm of sorrow, as a counterbalance to a thousand pleasures. Yet former happiness was not the less valuable because it is now succeeded by misery; nor was former misery the more tolerable, because it is now replaced by happiness. The illusion, which is one of sentiment rather than reflection, seems owing to that principle of our constitution which forbids the coexistence of strong opposite emotions in the same mind; the weakness being where the transition from one state of feeling to the other occurs without adequate reason. Cicero could represent the day on which the senate and people of Rome welcomed his

return from exile, as worth an immortality. To a mind of independent resources, or not blind to the inconstancy of fortune, such a circumstance, we might imagine, would have appeared sufficiently trivial, compared with the accumulated sufferings—the griefs, the perturbations, the agonies, which had attended his banishment. The same cause, however, which made him at once pusillanimous and wretched while absent from his country, occasioned, no doubt, so exaggerated an appreciation of the honours that crowned his return.

XXXIV.

We frequently extract most enjoyment, sometimes also most benefit, from things which cost us the least effort or expense. The remark, so far as the former particular is concerned, receives abundant confirmation in cases where a taste for external beauty, and the variegated phenomena of nature, has been acquired. Augustine, in his celebrated work *De Civitate Dei*, has some excellent observations, enlivened by a strain of poetic enthusiasm, when descanting on the multiplied displays of divine benignity observable in the objects and vicissitudes of the material universe. In a chapter in which he seems to have anticipated the track so ably pursued by the natural theologians of modern times—an honour, however, which he shares not only with Lactantius, Cyril, Theodoret, and others of the Christian Fathers, but with Socrates as exhibited in Xenophon and Plato—after noticing the struc-

ture of the human frame, as well as the endowments and capabilities of the mind, as evincing benevolent contrivance, he adverts to that combination of utility and embellishment which appears in every part of the visible creation, and which forms the source of so many refined and agreeable emotions.* The passage reminds me of an admirable paper by Bishop Berkeley in the Guardian, illustrative of that unbounded variety of cheap pleasures which is every where open to a grateful and unsophisticated mind.

XXXV.

A person of an avaricious or repining temper, connects in his mind his economical gains with his occasional losses; and is apt therefore to cherish dissatisfaction, from an idea that the former are useless. A man of better mould connects his economy rather with the pleasures which it assists him to procure, and is in consequence less affected by the occurrence of unavoidable disasters. So different an effect, with regard to happiness, is produced by a difference in the association of ideas.

XXXVI.

An excess of joy, as well as an excess of sorrow, renders the eye insensible to the attractions of beautiful scenery and the like. Both these extremes of

* De Civit. Dei, lib. xxii. cap. 24.

feeling, when occasioned by unexpected or extraordinary reverses of fortune, endanger the stability of the intellect; but a rapid influx of good fortune is more perilous than the reverse. It is related of those who were concerned in the South Sea speculation, that a greater number became insane from acquiring immense riches on a sudden, than in consequence of sustaining the wreck of their all.

XXXVII.

He is but a spendthrift in happiness who squanders away feeling in unrestricted indulgence, which is sure to leave the heart wasted and empoverished. The tide that rises the highest will sink the lowest, and leave but a naked and desolate scene behind. A moderate influx of pleasure is best for man, whether he consult his interest or his duty.

XXXVIII.

The repose of many is considerably dependent on the favourable opinion which they entertain of their mental character. If that opinion is not injurious to others, why attempt its removal, since happiness is so rare a commodity? The reader may remember the instance of *monomania* described by Horace, of a person who used to fancy himself present at the representation of the most admirable tragedies. His friends, who exerted their good offices for his recovery, and at length succeeded in driving away the distemper with hellebore, were reproached as having

ruined instead of cured him, by robbing him of so agreeable an illusion:

> ———Pol, me occidistis, amici,
> Non servâstis, ait; cui sic extorta voluptas,
> Et demtus per vim mentis gratissimus error.

It is related of Clennell, the engraver of the exquisite wood-cuts in some of the earlier editions of Rogers's poems, that during the melancholy prostration of his powers, amounting to absolute fatuity, which marked so long a course of years before his death, besides making verses of the most incongruous kind, with which however he seemed charmed, he employed himself in occasional sketches and engravings, which, though indicating but the wreck of his faculties, he regarded as models of art. The Goddess of Delusion, moved perhaps by Pity, often lulls with similar dreams her favourites, unscathed with any special visitation; the difference between their case and Clennell's being, that with the artist imbecility had to be produced—with them it is innate.

XXXIX.

The circumstances which most contribute to a man's happiness, usually make the least figure in his history or general reputation. Happiness is dependent on *ordinary* things, which have nothing therefore conspicuous or brilliant about them; on a number of minute influences constantly acting in immediate proximity; on feeling, in short, rather

than intellect. A person eminently happy would be the worst subject possible for biography; a fact of which novelists and poets seem to be aware, for after conducting their hero to the summit of felicity, they commonly leave him.

XL.

There are numerous things the want of which is painful, but of which the possession is scarcely at all productive of enjoyment. This is particularly the case with things to which we have long been habituated. What a formidable evil would be the loss of light! yet its presence is accompanied with only a moderate degree of gratification.

XLI.

The illusion of joy is diminished by minute examination of its ingredients or causes. The reason is, that feeling or emotion predominates in pleasure; intellect, in the discrimination of its elements; and emotion must of course be somewhat dissipated, ere the faculties can acquire the coolness necessary for investigation or analysis. The latter observation may elucidate the fact, that persons of metaphysical or speculative genius, accustomed to scrutinise and decompose their sensations, are seldom remarkable for warmth of sensibility. In their case feeling no sooner arises than, arrested for the purpose of analytic inspection, it subsides or expires under the process.

XLII.

Beware of letting your comforts become means of pain; nor make yourself miserable for the sake of being happy.

XLIII.

Among the many influences which contributed to those singular events the Crusades, I doubt not that the limited, undiversified existence both of barons and their vassals was one of the principal. The dead calm of the soul is less tolerable than its tempestuous agitations. It is not very easy, in a complex condition of society, to estimate the attraction of adventure and travel to those whose ideas and experience have been confined within the narrowest bounds. Commotion and excitement, even when pernicious, are sources of pleasure, because life is stamped with so much monotony. Few of the revolutions which have overturned thrones and new-modelled the face of nations, can be adequately appreciated without reference to this circumstance. Hence also the chief interest of dramatic representations, and of the narratives of history and fiction. To a similar cause is attributable the passion for gaming, which prevails not only among the idle and luxurious classes in civilized communities, but among various savage tribes. It was a favourite pastime, or rather a serious pursuit, with the ancient Germans, and with the aborigines of

America.* If noblemen and other wealthy land-owners, instead of abandoning their estates to the sole management of a steward, would take a more active concern in their superintendence—a species of care which Lord Burleigh, though immersed in as multitudinous affairs as ever perplexed statesman, could practise to an amusing extent—they would introduce a little salutary variety into their habits, and save themselves from *ennui*, the parent of so many expensive and ruinous vices.

XLIV.

Our feelings, whether agreeable or painful, vivacious or melancholy, depend more on the constitution and state of the body, than on circumstances, or any influence purely mental. By the administration of certain medicinal substances, may be awakened almost every passion of which the human breast is suscep-

* Aleam (quod mirere) sobrii inter seria exercent, tanta lucrandi perdendive temeritate, ut, cum omnia defecerunt, extremo ac novissimo jactu de libertate et de corpore contendant.—*Tacit. de Germ.* cap. 24. —For the trait as exhibited by the inhabitants of the New World, see Robertson's History of America, book iv. sect. 8.

Whatever may be the evils of gaming, of which it would be difficult to speak in terms of too great severity, there is not the shadow of truth in a remark of Landor, that the practice belongs only to mental mediocrity, and is incompatible with genius. I do not know whether he would class Roger Ascham, or the late Mr. Colton, among men of genius; but the names of Goldsmith and of Guido, the latter of whom was passionately devoted to play, would alone be sufficient to refute his opinion.—I feel the less hesitation in offering this minute criticism, as relating to an author whose works are among the most beautiful of modern literature, and who is indisputably one of the best writers of the age.

tible—joy, sorrow; benevolence, hatred; tranquillity, solicitude; exhilaration, despair. Yet it seems a degradation to have some of our most exquisite emotions referred chiefly to physical causes.

The wonderful effects of artificial stimulants on sensibility, and power of imagination, are depicted in a very striking manner in the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater;" a work of which there is every reason to believe the main particulars authentic. The phenomena it records are no doubt to be ascribed principally to undue excitation, and consequent disordered action, of the brain. A remarkable illustration is also furnished by Coleridge, who composed his fragment of Kubla Khan in a sleep occasioned by an anodyne.

XLV.

It is commonly supposed, that there is a general equality of happiness; but this would be at least contrary to analogical presumption. Health, beauty, strength, intellectual endowments, influence, are all distributed in endless proportions. Besides, only let two persons be placed together in contrast, one of whom has a countenance lighted up with cheerfulness and gaiety, the other an aspect in which a settled melancholy reigns. Is it possible to imagine that both possess an equal share of enjoyment?—It may however be admitted, that rank or circumstances occasion little difference in happiness, which seems for the most part dependent on bodily constitution.

The question is principally one of nerves, blood, and temperament. There is much truth in the lively remark addressed by a foreign lady to Boswell: *Ma foi, Monsieur, notre bonheur dépend de la façon que notre sang circule.**

XLVI.

Man appears fated to experience more pleasure in the partial denial of his wishes, than in their complete gratification, which affords no latitude for the indefinite exaggerations of hope or fancy. What Hesiod says in praise of temperance, applies emphatically to ideal enjoyments—πλέον ἡμισυ παντός—"half is more than the whole." If you wish to see a person in his most agreeable mood, it should be when he is about to obtain some object of his desire; seldom or never afterwards, when reality is substituted for imaginative aspirations.

XLVII.

Which may be considered the more natural to man, melancholy or mirth? In general perhaps the former. Mirth is frequently but the effervescence or cheat of a perturbed and fantastic brain. It has been alleged, that if a marriage procession were to meet a funeral train, the hilarity of the one party would merge in the sadness or decent sobriety of the other.

* Life of Johnson, vol. ii. p. 107, ed. 1835.

XLVIII.

There is something at once magnificent and entertaining in the hypothesis, illustrated by Bishop Watson in his Chemical Essays, that the whole vegetable world is endowed with a portion of sensation and enjoyment. The sentiment, at least as existing in the sympathy of a poetical nature, is beautifully presented in the lines on Early Spring, by the author of the Excursion:

> Thro' primrose tufts in that sweet bower
> The periwinkle trail'd its wreaths;
> And 'tis my faith, that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes.
> * * *
> The budding twigs spread out their fan
> To catch the breezy air:
> And I must think, do all I can,
> That there was pleasure there.*

In one sense the notion, viewed as an article of philosophical belief, may derive plausibility from the observations and experiments of recent naturalists, which seem to show that all vegetable as well as animal substances are for the most part aggregations or masses of living beings. It is a theory which has not been without supporters, that every

* Wordsworth's Poetical Works, vol. v. p. 13, edit. 1837. See an exquisite critique on his poetry in the *Quarterly Review*, No. civ., where the sentiment pervading the stanzas above cited, is noticed as a frequent characteristic of his muse.

particle of matter is composed of innumerable animalcules.*

XLIX.

Were no intervals to elapse between the gratification of our different desires, the resources of the present state would speedily be exhausted; and if the enjoyments which it comprises were lavished upon us as rapidly as we are capable of receiving them, a

* The Bishop extends his hypothesis also to the mineral kingdom. See, in the fifth volume of the Essays, the paper "On the Subjects of Chemistry, and their general Division." It is remarkable that, in the substance of the speculation, he appears to have been anticipated not only by the mystical and eccentric Paracelsus, and by Campanella, who held the theory in its utmost latitude, making even the heavenly bodies, the firmament, the light, subjects of a conscious pleasure; but, so far as vegetation is concerned, by at least one illustrious genius of antiquity, Plato. For Paracelsus, who died in 1541, and whose views in this particular were adopted by the celebrated Cardan, see Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. p. 541—543; where the reader will find an able, though perhaps somewhat too disparaging notice of the character and occult philosophy of that extraordinary man. In the same work also (vol. iii. p. 145—148) is a brief but beautiful summary of the imaginative tenets of Campanella. A list of authorities in favour of the perceptivity of plants, including, with the names just mentioned, those of Ray, Spallanzani, and Dr. Percival, is given by the Bishop in a preface to his disquisition.

Whether the existing matter of our globe is animated or not, it seems to be the opinion of some eminent physical inquirers that it has been so. "Probably," says Dr. Mantell, "there is not an atom of the solid materials of the globe which has not passed through the complex and wonderful laboratory of life."—*Wonders of Geology*, vol. ii. p. 670; an excellent compendium of the principles and discoveries of the subject, uniting scientific accuracy with great clearness and beauty of illustration.

very few years would suffice to sum up the date of mortality.

L.

The character if not the degree of a man's happiness depends in no slight measure on the colour and force of his imagination. It argues little wisdom to cultivate with so much assiduity the more mechanical principles of our nature, or the mere arts of advancement in life, while the fine faculty which often determines the whole aspect of our being is allowed to run waste, without the least effort at training.

LI.

Man is so singularly constituted, that he sometimes experiences the most vivid and sublime pleasure under the excitement occasioned by circumstances of imminent danger, as amidst the tumult and perils of battle. This is particularly the case with persons of genius, who in general are more susceptible of deep emotion than others, and whose imagination can picture more powerfully the romantic associations or the moral results connected with stimulating scenes or occurrences.

LII.

They who have only chance pleasures to depend on, obtain perhaps, on the whole, an equal amount of delight with those who draw from more uniform

and permanent sources. The reasons are numerous: 1. No great care or difficulty is required for the attainment of casual gratifications. 2. Their suddenness prevents the mind from exhausting them by anticipation or fancy. 3. They commonly include a wider range and larger variety. 4. Their zest is enhanced by the intermixture of less agreeable circumstances. Gipsies, whose longevity bespeaks something on the point, appear not less happy than the mass of our artificers or peasantry; as the Neapolitan lazzaroni, who subsist on the merest trifle, acquired in whatever fortuitous manner, are well known to pass their days in perpetual gaiety. It may be doubted whether Fielding and Goldsmith, amidst the chequered and often bitter scenes of their lot, had not snatches of bliss which more than counterbalanced an exemption from the fluctuations of fortune. The wandering, adventurous life of a Scottish mendicant seems to have presented no trivial charms to the poet Burns; as a similar course did to the famous Bamfylde Moore Carew, whose history, it has often struck me, would have formed an excellent theme for the pen of Scott. It is remarkable that a taste for a roving, desultory existence, with its comparative idleness and independence, is hardly ever, when the practice has once taken root, abandoned for the most tempting opportunities of settlement in a more creditable way. The pastoral Laplanders, like the Tartars of the Asiatic plains, who continue the same migratory habits which have been transmitted in unbroken succession from their Scythian ancestors, would not

easily relinquish their nomadic condition, diversified as it is by change of scene, attention to their flocks, hunting, and fishing, any more than the Bedouin Arabs could be readily seduced from their deserts, to follow the pursuits of men in cities.* Even Lord Edward Fitzgerald, when rambling among the forests of America, could question, what few now-a-days will be inclined to dispute, the preponderance of civilized over savage life, with respect to enjoyment.† The fascination of adventure and hazard certainly forms one of the most powerful spells on human feeling; a fact strikingly illustrated in the frequent confession of the chamois hunters of the Alps, that with the full prospect of death before them, they are unable to forego the prosecution of their perilous sport.

LIII.

Misanthropy is sometimes the attendant of Genius, but is never without Misery for its companion. Man is so dependent for comfort on the sympathies of others, that he who hates his fellow-men is perhaps

* Æschylus's description of the ancient Scythians is an exact sketch of their descendants the Tartars of the present age:

> *Σκύθας δ' ἀφίξει νομάδας, οἵ πλεκτὰς στέγας*
> *Πεδάρσιοι ναίουσ' ἐπ' εὐκύκλοις ὀχοις—*
>
> *Prom. Vinc.* 734.

It must be acknowledged that a space of two or three thousand years is a tolerable proof of attachment.

† See the beautiful biography of that unfortunate nobleman by Mr. Moore, vol. i. p. 91—103.

of all beings the most deserving of compassion. In calculations however on pleasurable resources, it may be well to omit, or reckon as of little consequence, those not mainly concentrated within ourselves.

LIV.

If nature is full of designs and contrivances for the promotion of happiness, the world is replete with evidences of the counteraction of those designs, which appear to apply rather to another order of existence than the present. We seem indeed to be living amidst the ruins of a system, of which the object, though substantially benevolent, yet in consequence of the altered condition of humanity, is now rarely attained; as when we behold the ornaments and curious workmanship of a dilapidated palace, we trace intentions and arrangements for the production of pleasurable effects, but feel that all this apparatus had reference to a prior and a vanished state of things. The system of nature contains a munificent provision of means for enjoyment; the system of life and of society in great measure nullifies that provision. In nature are the materials of happiness; in man, the elements of misery.

LV.

The possession of numerous and varied desires indicates a portion of mental enlargement, as the most contracted minds have always the fewest

wishes, however importunate. It also implies the participation of some degree of enjoyment; for to sorrow or despondency, desire is almost unknown. The same circumstance, however, is an evidence of partial unhappiness, because it presupposes the existence of real or imaginary wants. In heaven, happiness is perfect; yet are there desires in heaven?

LVI.

As happiness is to be measured, not by years, but by the number, extent, and refinement of the pleasures received, it is probable that many who die early, have a much larger amount of enjoyment than the greater part of those who linger to the extremity of old age. Who indeed that is wise, would hesitate in choosing between a short life filled with delight, and a long one darkened with suffering? The sentiment expressed in an ancient poetical fragment is not less true than melancholy: *Κρεῖσσον τὸ μὴ ζῆν ἐστὶν, ἢ ζῆν ἀθλίως*—"It is better to die than to live in misery."

LVII.

However cynical or monastic the notion may appear, perhaps the most desirable condition is that which brings us least into intimate contact with mankind. It seems more conducive to happiness to take a distant survey of the species, remarking the phenomena presented by the varying aspects of society, than to investigate its interior mechanism, or enter into nice examinations of human conduct.

It is such a meditative, panoramic view of scenes and characters, which Lucretius represents as possessing so great a charm to minds that occupy the summits of wisdom:

> Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
> Errare, atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ;
> Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
> Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
> Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.
>
> *De Rer. Nat.* ii. 9.

A passage of which the spirit is well conveyed in the beautiful lines of Cowper:

> 'Tis pleasant, through the loopholes of retreat,
> To peep at such a world; to see the stir
> Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;
> To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
> At a safe distance, where the dying sound
> Falls a soft murmur on the' uninjured ear.

I doubt not that Goldsmith's Citizen of the World, abounding in pictures drawn from a general perspective of humanity, and embellished with the sparkling touches of wit and genius, has in numberless instances afforded more pleasure than was ever derived from personal intermixture with affairs. It is to a like cause that poetry, fictitious or dramatic sketches, narratives of voyages and travels, and the delineations of history, all relating to the absent or remote, are indebted for no small portion of their fascination.

LVIII.

The melancholy attributed to the contemplative, is perhaps less than is commonly supposed; but

after all reasonable deductions, it will probably be found considerable. One reason may be, that there are so many chasms in their existence to be filled up. A mechanic or labourer has constant occupation, divided between the mind and the body; but it is placid, and does not weary the thoughts. The studious man has vigorous occupation, which is solely or chiefly intellectual, and cannot be without intermissions. In these intervals, the reflections are often desultory, which, from previous application, or the uninteresting nature of surrounding scenes, become not unfrequently tinctured with gloom.—The facts also unfolded to deep thinkers, in the prosecution of their inquiries, are sometimes little adapted to nourish cheerfulness. Superficial contemplations of men and things may not, indeed, occasion much pain; but those speculations which are the most penetrating and profound, usually comprehend a number of mysterious or bitter truths, altogether concealed from the shorter vision of common minds.—Besides, expansion and variety of thought are indirectly calculated to foster melancholy, by suggesting the contrast arising from the absence of corresponding progression in other respects. The soul may wander over the universe, and triumph in the consciousness of its strength, but feels amidst all that it is allied to dust, and that while its attainments and capabilities are multiplied, its performances are insignificant, and life itself is stationary. On the whole it is scarcely incorrect or paradoxical to affirm, that to be wise we must be unhappy; and

that philosophy, which removes the colourings of fancy, and detects the realities of things, is often the parent or nurse of sadness. "In much wisdom," says one who in the attribute was pre-eminent, "is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Although, as Bacon so nobly contends in the introduction to his Advancement of Learning, it is owing to some defect or misdirection of knowledge if it ever become the instrument of ill, yet as the same may be said of all things not intrinsically evil, and man being so frail, and examples of literary unhappiness so frequent, the main position is not much affected by the circumstance.

LIX.

To a susceptible and fanciful nature, the slightest circumstance will sometimes convey an undefinable impression of melancholy; as the sight occasionally witnessed of fruit-blossoms and flowers clustering beautifully on the walls of a house which is deserted or in ruins; or the distant sound of the village passing-bell, while the birds are twittering sportively in the air as though nothing had occurred. Yet how much more has happened than the return of clay to clay!

ON FANCY AND IMAGINATION.*

I.

Fancy has an extensive influence in morals. Some of the most powerful and dangerous feelings in nature, as those of ambition and envy, derive their principal nourishment from a cause apparently so trivial. Its effect on the common affairs of life is greater than might be supposed. Naked reality would scarcely keep the world in motion.

II.

The predominance of imagination would be one of our noblest distinctions, were our moral sensibilities

* These terms are used in the present section agreeably to their ordinary and popular acceptation, as almost synonymous. A distinction however has been made, and with apparent propriety, between them. Those who may seek to investigate the point will find some pertinent remarks in Stewart's Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. i. p. 286—288 ; and a number of observations, more exquisite and illustrative, in Wordsworth's preface to the collective edition of his Poems.

unperverted, and ourselves less conversant with rude or unpropitious scenes. A state is conceivable in which the faculty cannot be too vigorous in its exercise, and where its brightest embellishments are only reflections or modifications of reality.

III.

Many declaim against fancy, who little dream that they are subject to the enchantment themselves, only in its less refined and more sordid manifestations. Intellectual fancy, or fancy expatiating in the regions of mind, they despise; but unconsciously obey its power when attaching a fictitious lustre or value to some inferior object or debasing pursuit.

IV.

It is a fortunate circumstance that sensibility and imagination are commonly deficient in cases of severe or long-protracted suffering.

V.

Philosophy delights in analysis; poetry, in combination. The former represents things as they are, for its leading object is instruction; the latter as we would wish them to be, for its principal design is pleasure. Philosophy is concerned chiefly with causes; poetry, with effects. The one gives scope to the exercise of judgment; the other, of imagination. Philosophy presents us with an anatomical dissection; poetry

exhibits the object clothed with flesh and blood, and animated with passion. The element of philosophy is argument; that of poetry, feeling. Between philosophy and poetry there is no essential contrariety; for poetry implies, not the rejection, but the use of philosophy. It includes, however, something which philosophy alone cannot reach; and the portion of it which it employs, it disguises by art. On this account, poetry is often, but without justice, deemed incompatible with philosophy.

As an example of the noblest gifts of fancy, united to extraordinary powers of discrimination and reasoning, may be cited the name of John Milton. Of the invention and sublimity displayed in the poetical productions of that majestic genius, it is unnecessary to speak; but his Prose writings, which remain comparatively unknown, are replete with specimens of the most acute and brilliant argumentation.

VI.

When Reality becomes a foe, it is not unwise to seek a friend in Fancy. Some of her most beautiful creations have been owing to the defeat of hope, or the influence of melancholy. It was the feeling which dictated to Burns an Ode on Despondency, that gave birth to the exquisite lines,—

> How blest the Solitary's lot,
> Who all-forgetting, all-forgot,
> Within his humble cell,
> The cavern wild with tangling roots,

Sits o'er his newly gather'd fruits,
  Beside his crystal well!
Or, haply, to his ev'ning thought,
  By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
  A faint-collected dream:
    While praising and raising
      His thoughts to heav'n on high,
    As wand'ring, meand'ring,
      He views the solemn sky.

It is not unpleasing to reflect, how much this romantic train of imagery may have contributed to soothe the mental bitterness of the gifted bard. The reason why Spenser made so many excursions into the land of faerie was, perhaps, the rigour which he had to encounter in the actual world.*

* The Faerie Queene, written at the castle of Kilcolmen, which Spenser had obtained with extensive estates by grant from Elizabeth, was conceived, and in part executed, in the more dependent and less prosperous period of his fortunes.

"When my way," says Sterne, "is too rough for my feet, or too steep for my strength, I get off it, to some smooth velvet path which Fancy has scattered over with rose-buds of delights; and, having taken a few turns in it, come back strengthened and refreshed."—*Sentimental Journey—Versailles.*

The benign influence of this faculty on ordinary perception and feeling, is scarcely less remarkable. It would be difficult to select, from the compass of English literature, a finer passage than that of Addison, in one of his admirable Essays on the Pleasures of Imagination, intended to illustrate the artificial brightness which it produces, and the effects that would result from the cessation of its embellishments. He is referring to the theory, then lately admitted among philosophers, that colours exist only in the mind. "We are every where," says he, "entertained with pleasing shows and apparitions; we discover imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the earth, and see some of this visionary beauty poured out upon the whole creation: but what a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and the several distinctions of

VII.

A greater portion of unsophisticated enjoyment is produced by imagination, which many affect to despise, than by the discoveries of science, or the facts of history. Where is the treatise, however correct or profound, that is read by the generality with so much pleasure as the Deserted Village? In estimating or devising means of happiness, imaginative delights should ever receive no inconsiderable prominence. Plato may banish the race of poets from his Republic; but not all the philosophers and legislators in the world can banish the love of poetry from the human heart. There is no small shrewdness in the saying which Fletcher of Saltoun quotes from one of his friends, though it may be more applicable to an early than to a highly civilized condition of society, that if a person had the making of the ballads of a nation, he need not much care who had the making of its laws.

VIII.

The influence of an active fancy on the practice of oratory, is perhaps on the whole unfavourable; for

light and shade vanish! In short, our souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion, and we walk about like the enchanted hero in a romance, who sees beautiful castles, woods, and meadows; and, at the same time, hears the warbling of birds, and the purling of streams; but, upon the finishing of some secret spell, the fantastic scene breaks up, and the disconsolate Knight finds himself on a barren heath, or in a solitary desert."—*Spectator*, No. 413.

though it may supply with metaphor, enthusiasm, or the like, yet unless combined with no common judgment and self-possession, it will be liable to exaggerate the difficulties of the subject, or to weaken the effort by dwelling on its concomitants or remoter consequences. In like manner, a person who can picture to himself the collateral interests of a battle, and whose sensibilities are open to the moral impressions or results of the scene, will not be the most likely to meet the danger with the greatest intrepidity. There have been few poets who were either great orators, or what the world calls brave men.

IX.

When the mind is excluded from external pleasures, it is most apt to revel in those of imagination. The reason why solitude nourishes so many fantastic dreams is, because it is deficient in matters of practical interest to feed the thoughts. We may adduce perhaps, in illustration, the curious collection of tales called the *Gesta Romanorum*, which, besides enlivening the sage instructions of the pulpit with a variety of marvellous narrative, are said to have cheered the baronial halls and the fire-sides of multitudes in the darker periods of European history; and which, however blended with oriental or other fictions, may doubtless be referred, in great measure, to the seclusion and monotonous existence of the monks, so favourable to ideal wanderings and the inventions of fable. What a contrast, by the way, between the superstitious, and not unfrequently

perhaps poetic, reveries of the cloister, during the middle ages, and the all-engrossing, mechanical, money-getting pursuits of the present era.

X.

A lively imagination tends to disqualify a person for narrowness of fortune; yet the same attribute begets impatience of the means which may be necessary to escape or conquer the inconvenience. Goldsmith, rich in the brightest endowments of intellect, but whose life was a tissue of penury and improvidence, affords a melancholy exemplification of the remark. It is a curious instance of distribution of what the world deems the sovereign good, that while that matchless writer, whose works will delight and profit mankind to the latest generations, had to struggle for a precarious subsistence, the cook to a gambling house* can obtain a salary of one thousand guineas per annum; and that an opera singer† has been able to realise above ten times that amount by a few months' professional exertions. For my part I despise the sentiment occasionally broached, that because genius possesses the magnanimity to soar above the sordid motives that influence the generality, it has no reason to complain if poverty be the reward of its labours; and because it is stimulated in its captivating though toilsome exertions by the prospect of celebrity in future times, it ought to be content with ignominy in the present: for who knows

* Mons. Ude, head cook at Crockford's establishment.

† Madame Catalani.

not that in a commercial, aristocratic country like our own, indigence and ignominy are synonymous?

XI.

Reading a poem or fictitious performance to others, affords less scope to fancy than the private perusal. The very circumstance of their presence, and the mental reference incidentally made to the impressions which they receive from the piece, divide the attention; while the want of adequate pauses and of occasional repetition precludes any successful attempt to fill up the outlines of the characters or scenes portrayed. A person always glides slowly over a description or narrative, when his own faculties are in operation.

XII.

The most imaginative minds are the most liable to disappointment; not only as prone to cherish views altogether chimerical, but because of those objects which they anticipate, and which they ultimately attain, they generally form too minute a picture beforehand.

XIII.

A beautiful landscape sleeping calmly on the bosom of a lake, is like Reality as reflected in the mirror of the youthful fancy. But the magic of the scene is quickly dissolved, and its visionary charms

sometimes fade away as rapidly as the brilliant appearances of the *Fata Morgana*, or the fantastic and magnificent piles of clouds which are suspended in the firmament on a summer's day, resembling gothic towers and pinnacles, or mountains of snow illuminated with the rays of the sun, but which are mixed together and dispersed on the rising of the wind.

XIV.

In matters of fiction, a vivid imagination renders you independent of the aid of painting, as well as of dramatic representation. "For my part," says Dugald Stewart, in whom perhaps the faculty of picturing ideal objects was not the most conspicuous endowment, "I have never received from any Falstaff on the stage, half the pleasure which Shakspeare gives me in the closet; and I am persuaded that I should feel some degree of uneasiness, if I were present at any attempt to personate the figure or the voice of Don Quixote or Sancho Panza."*

We may hence appreciate the practice of embellishing fictitious or poetical performances with supposed illustrations of the scenery or characters. There is one decisive objection to such attempts—they interfere with the sketches which the mind has already formed for itself; so that if in the abstract more just, they are less pleasing as an

* Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. i. p. 493.—For an expansion of the sentiment, I feel happy in referring the reader to an admirable Essay of Charles Lamb, "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare, considered with Reference to their Fitness for Stage-representation."

apparent violation of the truth. In most instances, however, they are no doubt far inferior to the conceptions which they are intended to assist. The power of mental portraiture is never so great as when least supplied with artificial appliances. The best periods of our poetry were those in which few or none of these pictorial accompaniments had place. It will often be found, that the less men love Nature herself, the more they admire imitations of Nature. Engravers and painters flourish, or are most numerous, and most prolific in works of mere decoration, when imagination decays.

XV.

Imagination is the ruler of our dreams—a circumstance that may account for the peculiar vividness of the impressions they produce. Let Reason be the ruler of our waking thoughts.

XVI.

In a newly-planted colony, or a nation of recent establishment, there is small power of association or genuine fancy; as in such cases few materials exist for the exercise of these principles, which are in consequence too much depreciated. I may refer to America, which, with little exception, is barren in romantic or poetical works of note. Antiquity and dimness supply the principal nutriment of imaginative feeling. I can never see one of our ancient cathedrals, or the remains of religious

houses which add so much interest to our country, without a picture rising to my mind of the days that have long since vanished; or think of the fine old Catholic hymn, *Dies iræ, dies illa,* without images of midnight tapers, and monks chanting to the solemn organ some requiem or pious strain which peals along the arches.

XVII.

Imagination is one of the great nourishers of affection. If Poesy be the Daughter of Love, Love is at least sustained and cherished by Poesy.

XVIII.

As, in the progress of nations, poetry is born before science, so it bids fair to outlive it; for the chief interest of science arising from the pursuit itself, when facts have been discovered they will be more or less slighted; while poetry, depending on ideal and fugitive combinations, will never lose its power of fascinating the mind.

XIX.

The imaginations of some are so sensitive, or so open to the operation of melancholy, that reluctance is sometimes felt even to pluck a flower, because of the pain which may arise from beholding it wither and die.

ON AUTHORS, STYLE, AND LITERATURE.

I.

The words of a language resemble the strings of a musical instrument, which yield only uninteresting tones when struck by an ordinary hand, but from which a skilful performer draws forth the soul of harmony, awakening and captivating the passions of the mind.

II.

It is possible for subjects to receive too much illumination, as a landscape commonly appears less beautiful and attractive amidst the full brightness of day, than when seen through a veil of mist, or by the mellow light of the moon. The intricacies of fiction are usually more interesting than their developement, and mysteries than their solution. Were the obscure parts of a story to be left without

explanation, the impression of the piece would frequently be heightened. The history of the Man in the Iron Mask, though still a tale of considerable curiosity, will never inspire the sentiments it awakened when an impenetrable enigma. Perhaps the powerful effect of several of Lord Byron's performances is attributable, in no slight degree, to the ambiguity in which he has chosen to envelope his principal characters and incidents. A subject may be rendered as transparent as an icicle, while it is still as cold.

III.

I question the maxim that works of genius are characterized by a power of universally pleasing. This is improbable; for the productions, no less than the capacities of some, are quite above the sphere of the multitude. That which would delight beings of understanding superior to men's, might fail to be comprehended or relished by human intellects of the first magnitude. Who could dispute the genius of Butler's Analogy? Yet how few will ever be able to master the speculations of that incomparable performance! The generality are struck only with the most obvious beauties, and are utterly incapable of appreciating the more refined species of merit. It is a very inaccurate notion that only poetry, or subjects of imagination, are adapted to the exercise of genius; a variety of works, in other departments, displaying invention and mental excellence of the highest order.

IV.

What are called original thoughts are often nothing more in substance than ideas which have passed through the minds of myriads before; though without being so firmly grasped, or so forcibly if at all expressed. The impressions and modes of judgment which distinguish the wise and contemplative in particular, are in all ages so far akin as not rarely to coincide in result; somewhat as the general strain, or recurrence of certain notes, in the variations of an air. In reading the philosophical pieces of Cicero, for instance, we might almost fancy ourselves engaged with the disquisitions of some living writer, were it not for the differences of allusion and language. Montaigne represents himself as not displeased to find, that observations which he had put down as the fruit of his own reflection, were frequently but the opinions or views of eminent authors who had flourished in preceding periods.*

* Even where one thought has been derived from another, the reproach of plagiarism cannot always be affixed. It is curious to notice a disparagement of the sort which has been cast on the poet Gray, by a writer who was himself the subject of similar imputations, but who knew how to estimate their legitimate worth. In Dante's Purgatory is a well known and beautiful description of the moral effects of evening:

Era gia l'ora che volge l'disio,
  A' naviganti, e'ntenerisce il cuore;
Lo di ch' han detto a' dolci amici a dio;
  E che lo nuovo peregrin' d'amore
Punge, se ode Squilla di lontano,
  Che paia 'l giorno pianger che si muore.

V.

Perhaps some of the finest sentiments and imaginations that the mind has produced, have never been

Thus exquisitely rendered by Byron:

> Soft hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
> Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
> When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
> Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
> As the far bell of vesper makes him start,
> Seeming to weep the dying day's decay.

After quoting the original in a note, his Lordship adds: "This last line is the first of Gray's Elegy, taken by him without acknowledgment." Gray is not one of those writers who need fear minute criticism as to the history or sources of their productions. In the first place, it is not fair to represent the line as *taken* from Dante. The idea was no doubt suggested by the passage of the Italian poet, but is so modified by Gray as to assume the aspect of an image almost entirely his own, having undergone that fusion or transmutation which Genius effects in the materials submitted to her operations. But in the next place, it is wholly incorrect to affirm that the line was taken without acknowledgment, the words of Dante being expressly cited in the later editions printed by Gray. I can account for the remark of his Lordship only on the supposition of his copy of the Elegy not containing the notices of imitations, which Gray had inserted "out of justice," as he says, "to those writers from whom he happened to take the hint of any line," (Letter to Beattie, Feb. 1, 1768), but which, since the work of Mason, who introduced them, with other explanatory particulars, in the form of an appendix, have been commonly omitted or transferred to the end.—I may here advert to a phrase in the same poem, "the desert air," as apparently a literal version from Pindar, who has φαεινὸν ἄστρον ἐρήμας δι' αἰθέρος—Olymp. i. 9. In this instance, which has been already observed, I believe, by Gilbert Wakefield, the poet has made no reference to his authority; probably because he deemed the circumstance too trivial, as Wordsworth may have done in employing more than once the expression, "comfortless despairs," which belongs in priority to the author of the Faerie Queene.

exhibited to the world. The best conceptions lose much of their brilliance, or more evanescent graces, when embodied in language.

VI.

One pernicious effect of amplification is, that it allows no opportunity for the understanding to pursue a separate train or process of its own. It is also excessively irksome to persons of enlarged and rapid apprehension, to whom those authors are the most instructive as well as agreeable, who suggest only leading ideas, omitting subordinate remarks and illustrations. Barrow had other merits besides that copiousness or exuberance which even in him sometimes borders on prolixity, and which elicited from Charles the Second the complaint that he was an unfair preacher, leaving nothing for others to do after him: but however this may be, it has been well said, I think by Fontenelle, that to exhaust a subject is to be very tedious. The best excuse for spreading out thought over a wide surface seems to be, that to the majority, intellectual, as natural, food is most nutritious when presented in a somewhat bulky form; few minds, as few stomachs, being able to digest what is highly concentrated.

VII.

Political economy is an excellent subject to give precision and conciseness to style. It is chiefly in works of fancy or luxury that so much affectation

and verbosity prevail. Adam Smith would have written well on any topic; but nowhere is the perspicuity or force of his language more apparent than in his treatise on the Wealth of Nations. Compare, in some of our literary journals, the articles on matters of taste or morals, with those which discuss a question of finance or practical legislation. You will find, that while the former are not seldom diffuse, inflated, or jejune, the latter as often display a simplicity which goes directly to the point, producing a result correspondent to Swift's definition of a perfect style, proper words in proper places.

VIII.

In the present state of education and letters, there can be little doubt that nearly as many persons might be found with qualifications to excel in the walks of invention or research, who have never communicated a single piece to the world, as those who have attained distinction in the capacity of authors. The *cacoethes scribendi*, much as it seems to have increased of late among our countrymen, is far more rife in Germany, where, it is said, not fewer than two thousand writers, and six thousand new works, exclusive of an immense number of new editions, annually make their appearance.* Perhaps, agreeably to the candid observation of the elder Pliny, not one of these performances is wholly destitute of

* See Strang's Germany in 1831.—According to Menzel, the number of volumes published annually, including new impressions as well as new works, is at least ten millions.

merit, while some, we may readily believe, display conspicuous talent: but what will be the issue of a state of things in which even a moderate selection would more than satiate the most determined *helluo librorum?* The fact that amidst the present fertility of the press, innumerable works of an excellent kind already exist, demonstrates the inadequacy of the check proposed by Lord Bacon—the making of good books to have the effect of Moses' rod in swallowing up bad ones; though many, no question, have been devoured in that way. The mental appetite of multitudes resembles the natural appetite of certain animals, which is best satisfied with husks or offal.

IX.

In general the less attention a person pays to the dress or adventitious accompaniments of literature, the better. A fondness for elegant typography and splendid embellishments may supersede a regard to the ideas themselves; and a fastidious predilection for those editions which are eminently correct, may be attended with a similar result. The really valuable contents of almost any production may be appropriated from a very inferior edition. In these days, it is true, cheapness is combined with accuracy, and beauty with utility. I would rather have a copy of Shakspeare such as may be purchased for a few shillings, than Boydell's imposing folios: the one would stand a fair chance of being read; the other would probably sleep on the shelf, too magnificent

or too ponderous to be used. Among the higher grade of bibliomaniacs, indeed, as the late Mr. Heber and Sir Egerton Brydges, there is commonly something better than a taste for the mere rarities or ornamental adjuncts of letters.

X.

Though no one can justly complain of a paucity of valuable books in our language, in any department of wit or learning, yet to receive the highest advantage and pleasure which they are capable of imparting, an acquaintance with the literature of antiquity is necessary. The compositions of our best English writers are much impregnated with classical allusions, and with the style and imagery of the ancient models.

XI.

There seems no great wisdom in the modern practice of reprinting the works of authors entire. Voluminous writers generally comprise much that is worthless; and life being so short, and excellent books so numerous, only the best productions of the best authors should be presented to the public. At all events there is little sense in raking together all the trifling pieces ever thrown off for the purpose of the moment, and annexing them to editions which are styled the best, chiefly, it would seem, because they contain the greatest quantity of inferior matter. Nor will the method, so much in vogue at present,

be long tolerated, of appending to the posthumous editions of poets especially, a mass of notes and criticisms not at all required for the elucidation of the text, and which seldom fail to break in upon and sully the pure stream of the narrative or fable. It is an approximation to the old *variorum* plan of dealing with the classics, which have been well-nigh buried under the lucubrations of critics and commentators. I question too the desirablenesss of introducing, at least beyond a sample or two, the first sketches or various readings of particular passages. No doubt it is curious, and sometimes instructive, to witness such traces of the laboratory and the *limæ labor* of genius; but these are precisely the things which the writer would have been most anxious to conceal; as a sculptor who has wrought out some exquisite specimen of his art, would hardly care to have the rude models and successive shapes exposed which preceded the beautiful result. There is a danger also of the mind blending by association the rough draught with the finished picture, and thus weakening the impression intended to be made.

XII.

Rules for composition are of very questionable utility, being apt to fetter the mind, and seldom do more than preserve from blemishes. All the directions that seem necessary for acquiring a good style are, to read only the best authors; to select for memory their most expressive terms; to cultivate the taste in general; to compose frequently; and to

revise with care. It is amusing to find Bishop Pearce, at the end of his edition of Longinus on the Sublime, recommend to the reader a frequent perusal of the treatise, that he may learn to become a great writer himself. A great writer is not formed by the agency of critical canons and illustrations. To produce anything strikingly original or lofty, there must be an absolute freedom from the trammels and the fear of criticism. It has sometimes struck me, that the superlative ease and grandeur of the Cartoons were owing in part to the boldness assumed by the genius of the painter, from the consciousness that he was not attempting a laborious or minutely finished work, but only sketches on paper to be wrought into tapestry.

XIII.

The most brilliant passages in any writer have commonly been struck off under a certain impulse of impatience, or with rapidity produced by enthusiasm. So often entire pieces or continued sketches; though in this case the subject has usually been well meditated or familiar beforehand. "The things that I have written fastest," says Pope, "have always pleased most. I wrote the Essay on Criticism fast, for I had digested all the matter in prose before I began upon it in verse."* Dryden is said to have penned the Ode on St. Cecilia's Day at a sitting, though not less than a fortnight appears to have been spent on the correction; the sole time which the Merry Wives of Windsor is reported to have

* Spence's Anecdotes.

cost Shakspeare. The author of Waverley assures us, that the portions of his romances which elicited most applause had flowed from his pen with the greatest facility *con amore*. We need hardly be surprised, however we may be amused, at a saying of Luther, intended to justify the severity of his polemical invectives, that he always wrote best when in a passion. It is not a little remarkable, that several first-rate performances in their kind have been executed under the influence of profound melancholy; some of them, as the ballad of John Gilpin, of the most facetious order; others the reverse—witness a considerable number of Lord Byron's, and part at least of the Gerusalemme Liberata of Tasso. Examples of this description would not ill accord with a quaint observation of old Burton, who himself concocted his far-famed work to escape the feeling which it anatomises, that "melancholy advanceth men's conceits more than any humour whatever." I verily believe that a certain distemperature of brain, or of the system in general acting on the brain, has originated many a bright poetical or philosophic conception; as pearls are said to be an effect of disease in the fishes that produce them. It would be easy to support this opinion on physiological grounds; a disordered condition of the brain, and sometimes of other parts, occasioning, by the irritation which it excites, a more abundant flow of blood to that organ, the instrument of thought.*

* Since the preceding passage was written, I have met with the following remarks in a work of which the interest is by no means

XIV.

Except in the abstract sciences, few publications will live of which the principal interest is not founded

confined to the professional reader, being distinguished by its clear analytic exposition of principles, and by a range of varied reflection, applied to illustrate one of the most beautiful of sciences. "The energy of the brain appears, in general, to bear a relation to the quantity of arterial blood which it receives. I know a literary man who, in the ardour of composition, exhibits all the symptoms of a kind of brain fever. His face becomes red and animated, his eyes sparkling; his carotids pulsate violently; the jugular veins are swollen; every thing indicates that the blood is carried to the brain with an impetus, and in a quantity, proportioned to its degree of excitement. It is, indeed, only during this kind of erection of the cerebral organ, that his ideas flow without effort, and that his fruitful imagination traces, at pleasure, the most beautiful descriptions. . . . . A young man of a sanguineous temperament, subject to inflammatory fevers, which always terminate by a profuse bleeding at the nose, experiences, during the febrile paroxysms, a remarkable increase of his intellectual powers, and of the activity of his imagination."—*Richerand's Elements of Physiology*, with Notes by Dr. Copland, ed. 1839, p. 229.

In Sir Henry Halford's Essays and Orations, are some striking accounts of extraordinary clearness of perception supervening on a turn in certain disorders, and which, not having been preceded by sleep or any other favourable symptom, was correctly interpreted as a prognostic of approaching mortality. Such a phenomenon, which has often been observed to present itself a little before death, can hardly be explained by the subsidence of the passions, there being many instances of disease in which their action is suspended, or for the time destroyed, without that result; but must be owing, we may suppose, to a previous agitation or excitement of brain, occurring not unfrequently in the disturbance of the material fabric antecedent to its dissolution, and the effects of which seem to have encouraged the notion, entertained by some in ancient as in modern times, that the dying are endued with a species of prophetic illumina-

on human passions, sentiments, or manners. Nor will any work be a lasting favourite with the people at large, which is not considerably tinctured with vernacular and idiomatic phraseology. The two most popular books in the language, Robinson Crusoe and the Pilgrim's Progress, are all over racy with the unadulterated expressions of our Saxon English.

XV.

Merit may sometimes sigh at the unattainable excellence of superior minds; but Folly need never blush for want of examples in her favour. The best writers would feel a distaste to their own performances, were it only for the tedium occasioned by repeated shaping and revision. The subject thus becomes old, vapid, and mixed up with disagreeable associations. Some noted authors, indeed, as Richardson, have been delighted with their own effusions; but in that case composition has usually been rapid, with little or no subsequent correction.

tion. See in particular the paper of Sir Henry on the Καυσος of Aretæus.

A curious fact may be mentioned in the present connexion. Sir Walter Scott found his intellect and his powers of comprehension sensibly stimulated by a fall of snow. Was this augmentation of energy occasioned by the blood being driven from the surface, and rushing therefore in greater volume and force to the brain? The circumstance may suggest, to a humorous fancy, what is related of the North American maple-tree, that its juices flow out most copiously when the ground is covered with snow, or after a night of hard frost. I have heard of a person who used to say, that his mental faculties were always most active when he was sitting without a fire in his study in winter, and with his extremities cold.

XVI.

The style of our old writers is in general highly figurative and masculine; while that of most among the moderns, though smooth and accurate, is as destitute of expression as their character or manners. The progress of refinement has introduced the almost exclusive use of abstract terms, which, however desirable in metaphysical or argumentative compositions, are little adapted to such as appeal to the imagination or passions.

XVII.

Let the controversy respecting the comparative merit of our elder and more recent authors be decided by the circumstance, which few perhaps will be disposed to question, that the former display more attention to thought than to style; the latter, to style than to thought. It is certain that the graces of language, at least as regards prose, received little cultivation before the time of Dryden. Our earlier geniuses have struck out the statue; their successors correct or polish the lineaments or drapery: which are the better artists? With all our efforts too at refinement, the diction of most books exhibits a degeneracy from the nervous, racy, unaffected simplicity of our ancestors. That undefinable charm, whether in writing or conversation, which the French call *naïveté*, and which appears so beautifully in Isaak Walton's pleasant volumes, as well as in most of the

fictions of De Foe, is banished from a great part of our literature; so that what a profound critical scholar remarked, in his Prælections on Theophrastus, delivered near two hundred years ago, may be repeated, in some respects with stricter justice, at the present period: "Veteres et vitæ et vocis simplicitatem nobis tradiderunt? nos utramque corrupimus."* This depravation of speech has resulted in part from the over-laboured care of some; in part from the self-satisfied facility of others; but above all from the vicious taste of the ordinary tribe of scribblers. There is a curious passage in the Schloss Hainfeld of Captain Basil Hall. The Countess Purgstall, the heroine of the work, who had mingled in earlier life with the wits and philosophers of Edinburgh, and was quite a genius in her way, had been settled for a long tract of years in Lower Styria, having married an Austrian nobleman whose family chateau was situated in that district. Though retaining a fondness for British literature, and mistress of a pure English, which her letters and other pieces attest, she complained that she had forgotten her mother tongue, because, in turning over recent publications, she encountered so many uncustomary words, or words with uncustomary significations. In truth, it was not her Ladyship's memory that had failed, but the English language which had become corrupted.† If we find difficulty here and there in comprehending

* Jac. Duporti in Theophr. Char. Prælectiones, cap. 3, p. 242, ed. Needham, 1712.

† See "Schloss Hainfeld, or a Winter in Lower Styria:"—a charming narrative, though tinged with a melancholy interest.

the phraseology of Shakspeare, no doubt, could he rise from the dead, he would be nonplussed with our modern innovations and jargon.

XVIII.

It is not the most impassioned parts of writing that live the longest in remembrance, but those which exhibit touches of humour, or striking delineations of character, scenery, or manners. There is something, indeed, more attractive in pictures of quiet life, when drawn with fidelity, than in the most animated descriptions of feeling or events. In any poet, the passages to which memory reverts the most frequently, and with the greatest delight, are such as contain placid and agreeable images. Of this kind, for example, is the following night-piece from Tasso, which is a beautiful imitation of Virgil:

> Era la notte, allor ch' alto riposo
> Han l'onde e i venti, e parea muto il mondo.
> Gli animai lassi, e quei che 'l mare ondoso,
> O de' liquidi laghi alberga il fondo,
> E chi si giace in tana, o in mandra ascoso,
> E i pinti augelli, nell' obblío profondo,
> Sotto il silenzio de' secreti orrori,
> Sopian gli affanni, e raddolciano i cori.
>
> *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Canto ii. 97.

Or take some of the admirable stanzas at the opening of Thomson's Castle of Indolence:

> Was nought around but images of rest:
> Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between;
> And flowery beds that slumberous influence kest,
> From poppies breath'd; and beds of pleasant green,

Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime unnumber'd glittering streamlets play'd,
And hurled every where their waters sheen;
That, as they bicker'd through the sunny shade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmer made.

Join'd to the prattle of the purling rills,
Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,
And flocks loud-bleating from the distant hills,
And vacant shepherds piping in the dale:
And now and then sweet Philomel would wail,
Or stock-doves plain amid the forest deep,
That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale;
And still a coil the grasshopper did keep;
Yet all these sounds yblent inclined all to sleep.

The whole landscape and its accompaniments, the very diction in which the poet's fancies are clothed, appear "slumberous," presenting only emblems of softness and repose: yet what battles or dramatic incidents in Homer, or any painter of tumultuous scenes, acquire so captivating an influence over the imagination? Nothing can be more exquisite than the lines which follow:

Full in the passage of the vale, above,
A sable, silent, solemn forest stood;
Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move,
As Idless fancy'd in her dreaming mood:
And up the hills, on either side, a wood
Of blackening pines, ay waving to and fro,
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood;
And where this valley winded out, below,
The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer-sky:

There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hover'd nigh;
But whate'er smacked of noyance, or unrest,
Was far far off expell'd from this delicious nest.

Spenser is remarkably profuse, and almost unequalled, in these sketches of calm solitary beauty. His "Bowre of Blis" is scarcely matched by Milton's Eden, disclosing among its varied embellishments,

The painted flowres; the trees upshooting hye;
The dales for shade; the hilles for breathing space;
The trembling groves; the christall running by.

As the knight and palmer approach, they are entertained with the sweetest and most enchanting harmonies:

The ioyous birdes, shrouded in chearefull shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet;
Th' angelicall soft trembling voyces made
To th' instruments divine respondence meet;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmure of the waters fall;
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all.

The objects and sounds here so vividly represented by this most picturesque of English bards, Chaucer perhaps excepted, conspire to lull the imagination into a pleasing reverie, rather than awaken impetuous emotions in the breast. It is such passages as the parting of Hector and Andromache—the fine description of moonlight in the account of the Trojan watch-fires—the similes drawn from rural

life or nature—and those delicate touches which often in a line or two give the story of a life—that most endear as well as immortalise the author of the Iliad. Byron was quite out of the common order; otherwise strains such has, though impregnated with a fiery living vigour, will hardly, whatever their peculiar and unapproachable merits, remain so fondly in the recollection as the calm, mellow effusions of Goldsmith. We feel controlled by the one; we imbibe a lasting affection for the other. A pervading characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry is gentleness; but few writings speak so touchingly to the heart, or form the groundwork of more intimate and delightful associations.

Some may conceive that the question is one of temperament; as if the placid were most captivated by pictures of a placid order, and *vice versa*. But so far as temperament is concerned, the rule is rather the reverse; the restless or ardent being often most soothed by descriptions of tranquillity and beauty, while those of cooler disposition find an agreeable contrast or stimulus in the more vehement delineations of things. It is a curious though well authenticated fact, that the younger in particular of the fraternity which is almost proverbial for equanimity and mildness, seldom prefer the less passionate kinds of poesy, as that of their own Barton or of Cowper, but rather the bolder and more energetic strains of Byron, Scott, and Burns.*

* So we are informed by William Howitt, in a very entertaining piece on "The Society of Friends," in Tait's Magazine for October, 1837.

XIX.

Written language, though a valuable medium for the conveyance of fact, is very inadequate in matters of passion, which often depend on something undefinable in looks, tone, or general demeanour. In representations of things addressed to the eye, and especially for the seizure of the momentary effect, painting has, to all minds not eminently gifted with the imaginative faculty, a decisive advantage over verbal description. But in cases which speak more directly to that faculty, words, being only dead symbols, do not, like painting or sculpture, tend to bound its operations, but rather set it upon the weaving of its own wondrous spells.

XX.

In literary concerns, few things are done well that do not emanate spontaneously from the writer's fancy. To act on the advice or views of others, is almost a certain presage of failure. Where there is not genius or inclination to devise, there is seldom ability or patience to execute.

XXI.

If each individual were to contribute but one new idea, in any province of speculation or science, the general stock of knowledge would be rapidly augmented. But most persons, those not excepted who

have been decently educated, leave the world without having accomplished so much.

XXII.

There appears little reason to doubt, that the moderns possess incomparably more intellectual wealth in their own productions, than the whole range of antiquity can furnish. For my part I should be tempted to prefer the English works of the last century alone, to all the remains of the classic ages; not excepting, though with reluctance, the Iliad and Odyssey, the scholar's bible, or the magnificent dramas in which the genius of Greece shone out so resplendently. That period of our literary history, which some critics have affected to disparage, comprises a noble list of authors in almost every department:—in polite and miscellaneous learning, Addison, Swift, Johnson; in poetry, whether descriptive, humorous, or contemplative, Pope, Thomson, Collins, Young, Akenside, Gray, Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, Beattie; in profound and comprehensive reasoning, Bishops Butler and Berkeley; in the walks of fiction, Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, Sterne; in historical composition, Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon; in criticism, and moral or theological research, Campbell and Paley; in philosophical and political disquisition, Adam Smith and Burke. The letters of Cowper, with those of Swift, Gray, and Lady Montagu, may surely be placed in the balance against the epistles of Cicero and Pliny. The Essays of Hume, so unhappily tinctured with

scepticism, are almost unrivalled for acuteness and ingenuity of reflection, and for the union of dignity with unaffected elegance of style. To the preceding names might be annexed a multitude of others, whose performances, replete with information, or embellished with fancy and taste, are entitled to distinguished encomium. Who but pedants would exchange the compositions of these illustrious geniuses for the relics of Greece and Rome; or hesitate in deciding which are the more calculated to expand and nourish the mind? Yet this enumeration does not include the most brilliant ornaments of our country, Shakspeare, Milton, and Bacon; nor any of the imaginative and prolific writers, in poetry or prose, whose names adorn the earlier annals of our literature. I would not readily give the biographical work of Boswell, especially annotated and enriched as in the recent editions after Croker, for many a goodly tome of antiquity.

XXIII.

Were not the practice occasionally useful, and almost necessary, the employment of words expressive of general subjects, as religion, theology, medicine, philosophy, had better be avoided. It is often far less satisfactory to argue for certain positions as truths in particular departments or sciences, than as truths in themselves. Discussions should ever assume the shape, not of endeavours to support the tenets of a system or party, but of inquiries into fact.

XXIV.

Many of the ancients appear more original than they would be deemed, if preceding and contemporary works were still extant. This is no doubt true in the main with regard to Homer himself, of whom it were idle to suppose that he was without predecessors or models in the walks of poesy. In like manner various current ideas and metaphors are employed by some modern authors, who, in case the productions of other writers were to perish, might seem to posterity invested with no mean claims to originality and invention. Sir Walter Scott will ever stand on his own pre-eminent merits; but it is astonishing what a number of ready-coined phrases, and figures in ordinary circulation, have been adopted by this prince of romancers. Perhaps however he was in the right, in works replete with dialogue and narrative, and calculated for popular effect. There is a magic in words, as in scenery or notes of music with certain associations. Shakspeare did as much; and most of those remarkable for the raciness of their English have pursued a similar course.

XXV.

Language is properly the servant of thought, but not unfrequently becomes its master. The conceptions of a feeble writer are greatly modified by his style: a man of vigorous powers makes his style bend to his conceptions; a fact compatible enough

with the acknowledgment of Dryden, that a rhyme had often helped him to an idea.

XXVI.

Scenery and events are often more interesting in description than in reality. When actually witnessed, there is commonly an intermixture of some feeling or circumstance which diminishes the pleasure. But in reading a well-written account of them, no toils or privations are imposed; the essence of what is striking or agreeable is extracted; and the range of imagination is not bounded by fact.

XXVII.

The later we live in the history of the world, the more scope and materials there are for the exercise of genius.

XXVIII.

A writer of talent, who intermeddles with controversy of a local or fugitive nature, acts a part little characterized by wisdom. In the first place, he fetters his own powers, which might expatiate in the wide realms of intellect, instead of contracting themselves to some insignificant topic. Next, he invests the objects of his notice with unmerited importance, which he may ultimately feel to his cost. Lastly, he impairs his reputation with the public and with posterity, who cannot be supposed to enter into

his personal prepossessions or animosities. Pope would have stood higher at present, if not as a poet and man of letters, yet certainly in point of magnanimity and temper, had he despised those pitiful assaults which he chose to retaliate with so much acrimony, and of which, while they embittered his repose at the time, he has only immortalised the memory by his satire. In literary affairs, as well as in the conduct of life, a most valuable prudential maxim is comprised in one word—Neglect; a maxim which even Cervantes appears to have been on the brink of forgetting, in more than once exposing the spurious continuation of Don Quixote by the Arragonese author.

XXIX.

It can suit only a very limited or very elevated order of minds, to have the chief pleasures dependent on authorship. There is no deficiency of examples in the former kind; but few perhaps have been more remarkable in the latter than Godwin, who not only lived for authorship himself, but, what is curious in one accustomed to look far below the surfaces of things, entertained an extra or instinctive species of respect for whoever had appeared in print.

XXX.

The observation is sufficiently familiar, that men of genius are addicted to melancholy.* But it is

* The words of Cicero, quoting the authority of Aristotle, present the maxim without qualification or exception:—*Omnes ingeniosos*

perhaps somewhat more remarkable, that many of the most celebrated authors, whose writings in general are by no means tinctured with that disposition, appear to have felt at seasons no inconsiderable portion of its influence. Who would imagine that Virgil, treating on such a subject as the rearing of cattle, would introduce the plaintive sentiment expressed in the following verses:

> Optima quæque dies miseris mortalibus ævi
> Prima fugit: subeunt morbi, tristisque senectus,
> Et labor et duræ rapit inclementia mortis.
>
> *Georg.* iii. 66.

The muse of Shakspeare is supposed to have found its appropriate element and occupation amidst the scenes of comedy; yet some of his most beautiful passages are those which are pervaded by a melancholy tenderness. Even Horace, the Roman Anacreon, the merry votary of wine and pleasure, frequently blends with his most sportive strains notes of the deepest sadness. If he celebrates the return of spring, he alludes to the shortness of its duration, and to that of life:

> Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam:
> Jam te premet nox, fabulæque manes.
>
> *Od.* lib. i. 4.

He dissuades from anxious pursuits and travels, because of the brief date assigned to mortals, and

melancholicos. In the passage of the Stagyrite, however, the position, though equally comprehensive and more specific, is less absolutely conveyed:—*Πάντες ὅσοι περιττοὶ γεγόνασιν ἄνδρες, ἢ κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν, ἢ πολιτικὴν, ἢ ποίησιν, ἢ τέχνας, φαίνονται μελαγχολικοὶ ὄντες.* One of these classes, the poets, have commonly been eminent for the feeling.

the intermixture of care with every ambitious enterprise:

> Quid brevi fortes jaculamur ævo
> Multa? quid terras alio calentes
> Sole mutamus? patriæ quis exsul
> Se quoque fugit?
> Scandit æratas vitiosa naves
> Cura; nec turmas equitum relinquit,
> Ocyor cervis, et agente nimbos
> Ocyor Euro.
>
> *Od.* lib. ii. 16.

He meets with a disastrous accident, and takes occasion to moralize on the shortsighted views and the presumption of man:

> Quid quisque vitet, nunquam homini satis
> Cautum est, in horas.
>
> *Od.* lib. ii. 13.

Throughout the writings of this incomparable bard, his mirth and his philosophy, his pleasure and regret, go hand in hand, so that images and scenes in themselves the most agreeable, appear to have awakened in his mind some pensive reflections:

> Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens
> Uxor; neque harum, quas colis, arborum
> Te, præter invisas cupressos,
> Ulla brevem dominum sequetur.
>
> *Od.* lib. ii. 14.

Such passages, detached from the Epicurean dogmas with which in Horace, a true disciple of the school, they are commonly interwoven, are by no means unpleasing, as they find an echo in every bosom.

XXXI.

Why is history for the most part a record of cruelty and crime? Because it is badly written. The subject is chiefly interesting for the biographical sketches, or the domestic incidents and manners which it embraces; yet all the more picturesque and placid scenes and occurrences are usually passed over in silence. Satire, or romance, often gives a fairer insight into the social, and therefore real condition of nations, than historical recitals. We have more of the customs and characteristics of the Roman people in Juvenal, than in any professed narrative of the period. It is astonishing what a mass of curious information, what lively summaries and portraits, are comprised in his powerful invectives. Where is the book of annals which contains so just or vivid a representation of the economy and habits of the ancient Spaniards, as Don Quixote or Gil Blas? Our own countrymen of the middle ages are better delineated in Strutt's Sports and Pastimes of the People of England, than in Hume's History, though in point of mind, and as a composition, by far the best that has been produced.*

* Perhaps it may be affirmed with truth, that the spirit or interior state of a people can better be discovered even from its national music, than by a chronology of its outward fortunes. I beg to cite here an observation of one who unites in himself the rare qualities of a picturesque, and a profound philosophical historian. "Les paroles des chansons nationales," says Aug. Thierry, "dans lesquelles l'Irlande a consigné ses longues souffrances, ont péri pour la plupart; la musique seule s'est conservée. Cette musique peut servir de commentaire à

XXXII.

The greatest poets, whether of ancient or modern times, have adopted or followed no particular profession; and it is worthy of remark, that they have commonly ranked with the laity. It may be sufficient to specify, among our own countrymen, the names of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Collins, Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, Beattie, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Rogers, and Scott. We might have supposed that the recluse habits of ecclesiastics, and the lofty, mysterious themes which invite their meditation, would have been peculiarly favourable to the creations of phantasy: but if you take any collection of British poets, you will scarcely find ten names, not more than four or five conspicuous ones, belonging to the sacerdotal order. Leaving out those still alive, we could point to none of much mark, except Giles and Phineas Fletcher, Churchill, Young, and the late George Crabbe. Donne may fairly be omitted, because, whatever his merits for wit or pithy force of sentiment, the muses will hardly own him for a favourite. On the other hand Jeremy Taylor should fairly be included, though he happened not to give his rich poetic fancies the form of verse. In general

l'histoire du pays. Elle peint l'intérieur des âmes aussi bien que les récits peignent les actions; on y trouve beaucoup de langueur et d'abattement, une tristesse profondément sentie, mais vaguement exprimée, comme la douleur qui se retient parce qu'on l'observe."—*Dix Ans d'Etudes Historiques.*

the prize in the imaginative walks of literature, the dramatic almost of course, has been won by laymen. Even in the more elaborate departments of study, there are not a few of this class who stand at the head of their respective provinces. Almost all our great historians, scientific discoverers, and metaphysicians, the splendid instance of Berkeley in the latter kind being specially excepted, have been laymen. Yet the profession of divinity has been immensely serviceable to the interests of learning, especially in its scholastic, antiquarian, and more speculative branches. This has been owing partly to the large number of those who have sustained the clerical office; partly also to the comparative seclusion in which they pass their days: for where the mind is formed of good materials, solitude is calculated to generate deep and original thoughts.

XXXIII.

It is a remark of Cicero that there was no sentiment so absurd, which had not been maintained by some of the ancient philosophers.* However that may be, it would be difficult to find specimens of more absurd and even puerile notions, than are contained in the writings of the Christian Fathers. Should any one doubt this, let him turn to the allegorical modes of criticism in which most of them indulged, and the crudities they have hazarded on different passages of Scripture, and his scepticism

* Nihil tam absurde dici potest, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum.—*De Divin.* lib. ii.

will at once vanish. A harmony of extravagance would be no great compliment; but never was task more hopeless than that of Peter Lombard, who in his once famous Book of Sentences, attempted to reconcile the contradictions of these ecclesiastical worthies.

XXXIV.

Our national literature appears to be verging towards the state in which minute analysis, and subtle distinctions, take the place of bold and imaginative ideas. So far as genius and its nobler accompaniments are concerned, we have little reason to congratulate ourselves, compared with our remoter predecessors. In certain walks of intellect, or branches of research; in essays, criticism, biography, historical and epistolary composition, and in general in the lighter effusions of taste and fancy, we may perhaps legitimately claim the pre-eminence. But in point of deep and varied learning; of pure, masculine, and expressive diction; of profound, vigorous, and comprehensive thought; of original and vivid imagery; it would be vain to search, among the existing generation of authors, for parallels to the great luminaries of former days. The race of lofty and gigantic minds seems to have vanished from the land. Not to insist on the matchless poets or dramatists of preceding centuries, where are our Bacons and Barrows? our Taylors, Howes, Cudworths, and Butlers?—Yet are the invention and capacity of the present period by no

means to be despised. In Sir Walter Scott we may boast the best novelist, and with the exception perhaps of Goldsmith and of Voltaire, the best miscellaneous writer that has ever appeared—a universal genius, whose performances alone would redeem the literary pretensions of the age from contempt.* We have also a number of recent works, in various departments and styles, which display acuteness, versatility, elegance, and no mean compass of reflection. Nor is it denied that our later productions are on the whole best adapted to the circumstances and the mental demands of the majority of readers. The topic under notice is not, however, a question of utility or adaptation, but of comparative intellectual rank.

XXXV.

I would rather be the author of one original thought, than conqueror of a hundred battles. Yet moral excellence is so much superior to intellectual, that I ought to esteem one virtue more valuable than a hundred original thoughts.

XXXVI.

A proposition expressed in the form of an aphorism, communicates more pleasure, or more dislike, than

* It is needless to remark, that these observations were penned before the death of this illustrious ornament of his species; who, like Prospero, seems to have buried deep the wand by which so many magical wonders were wrought.

when delivered in a different shape. If approved, its compression, and consequent separation from extraneous ideas, increase its force, and enhance the delight which it imparts. But if disapproved, its condensation only renders it the more repulsive. Had the same sentiment been conveyed in a less concentrated manner, it would have been mingled with other reflections, or with gleams of fancy, some of which might have served to divide attention, if not to gratify. Or the very attempt to exhibit it in a favourable light, or to connect it with argumentation, would have diminished the offence, by the deference and compliment thus indirectly conceded to its opponents.

XXXVII.

The principal advantage afforded to literature by fame in war or politics, is the opportunity which it furnishes for introducing notices respecting private history or manners. On the interest which the celebrity has awakened, may be engrafted a large portion of amusement or instruction. Otherwise the ordinary tracks of existence supply more genuine developements of nature, and abound in materials of wider application. Hitherto we have had lives of illustrious commanders, statesmen, lawyers, philosophers, and so forth:—we now require lives of the poor, the unlettered, and obscure. Something of the sort is occasionally attempted in poetry—witness the admirable Tales of Crabbe—and in the lighter kind of prose works; but the sketches thus

offered are rather specimens of a class, mixed up with many fictitious accompaniments, than individual portraits or memoirs. The biography of the common people is a mine which yet remains to be worked.

XXXVIII.

There is this circumstance deserving of notice respecting abstract as well as practical truths in general, that they are capable of being separated from their authors, and transmitted or diffused through secondary channels. With most other species of mental production the case is different. A person can hardly enrich himself with the ingredients of a poem or romance, without perusing the composition itself. Works of taste and imagination are identified with the writer: works of science or philosophy, though distinguished by the highest merit, may soon incur neglect, because the principles they deliver are susceptible of conveyance in a multitude of other forms.

XXXIX.

It is scarcely surprising that the bulk of mankind, who are occupied with laborious or active pursuits, should be lost to every thing intellectual, when even the votaries of learning are apt to sink into supineness without excitement.—There is not perhaps an example of greater literary devotion than Bayle, whose productions are the fruits of the most untiring

industry, animated and controlled by sagacity and genius. His miscellaneous writings, as well as his Critical Dictionary, I find an inexhaustible source of entertainment; for even where the topics or information may be considered obsolete, or the views erroneous, he has always something worth perusal. Of his indecencies, so remarkable in one whose personal morals were pure,* it were perhaps as difficult to offer an explanation as a defence; but his doubts, which are sown so thickly through his performances, and which have perplexed and irritated not a few who dislike to have their easy confidence of assent disturbed by the inquisitions of a speculative wit, are often more valuable than the professed elucidations of others. For myself I do not object to the medley of quotations occurring in his Dictionary: like those scattered so profusely in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, they serve to give a taste of various subjects and styles, besides bringing in review authors of almost every age and country who made a figure in their day, and with many of whom you would not be likely otherwise to have any acquaintance. Bayle's extracts, it is true, are not seldom inferior to his own remarks, contrary to the usual order, in which the

* The trait however, though sufficiently curious, is not the most rare: we have an instance of it in the great poet of Italy. "The tone of the Aminta," says Mr. Hallam, "in strange opposition to the pure and pious life of the author, breathes nothing but the avowed laxity of an Italian court."—*Literature of Europe*, vol. ii. p. 349. There is a theory, perhaps the true one, for anomalies of this sort, in the Conversations of Northcote; latitude of expression or speculation being traced in such cases to the freedom inspired by actual restriction of conduct.

citations are the best parts of a book; but then there is the comfort, in turning over works of any description, that what you do not like you can skip.

XL.

Exact analysis, whatever ingenuity or penetration it may exhibit, is not calculated to ensure its own immortality, as we are apt to neglect whatever is reduced to its simplest and most elementary principles. Where no scope exists for diversity of opinion, or additional investigation, the understanding turns insensibly to subjects more or less complex and doubtful. But matters which relate to the feelings or imagination can never lose their interest with the mind, because they are for the most part undefinable, and depend for their effect on individual association. It is usually more pleasing to see great truths presented in a combined form, than with a dissection of their constituent parts, or an analysis of their causes.

XLI.

Antiquity seems the more wise that its follies have not descended to later times. Inferior capacities and productions abound in every period, but die their natural death. The present generation would no doubt appear very distinguished, if only the best works of the age were to reach posterity.

XLII.

To a contemplative mind, few things are more obvious than the imperfections of biography. The principal events of the life may be narrated, but all the finer thoughts and impulses of the soul are necessarily omitted. This is the case, partly because the mental impressions are usually unknown to all but the person himself; partly because they vanish away so rapidly from his own remembrance; but still more because they are so complex and indefinite as to elude the nicest powers of discrimination. Yet the history of the intellectual changes is the most important, and indeed the only proper history of the individual. We need a class of writers who will attempt in the delineation of real characters, what Shakspeare has effected in portraying fictitious ones; that is, lay open the springs of human nature, and the transient varieties of passion or sentiment, whether as self-evolved, or influenced by exterior agencies; in distinction from the mere annalists, as well as from those who, like Ben Jonson, deal chiefly with humours or demeanour.

XLIII.

A great mind, if tolerably exempt from ambition and vanity, is more disposed to entertain itself with the mental products of others, than to augment the mass of literary performances by any lucubrations of its own. The pleasure derived from appropriating the stores of erudition or fancy, is perhaps nearly equal

to that of invention itself; and certainly the process of composition, except with writers whose style is beneath criticism, is not a little painful and laborious. How then do we account for the multitude of distinguished works that enrich every department of letters? The solution appears to be, that possessors of genius become authors just as the generality of persons become lovers; that is, in spite of themselves.

XLIV.

The sculptor, whose grandeur of genius earned for him the same eminence in his own art that Raffaelle attained in his, if any art can be called his own whose powers seem to have been almost as versatile as they were distinguished, uttered nothing remarkably sage in the lines which would represent himself as not forming the statue, but only extricating it out of the block of marble. What should we think of the proposition, that a number of beautiful essays or poems existed in the English tongue, prior to the composition of a single literary work? Yet the assertion would be equally correct; for in writing a poem or essay, the author only joins artificially, not makes, the letters of the alphabet, or rather the words of the language.*

* In the verses above mentioned, which it must be almost unnecessary to state are those of Michael Angelo, the illusion of the thought is perhaps favoured by the beauty of its expression:

Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto,
Che un marmo solo in se non circonscriva
Col suo soverchio, e solo a quello arriva
La mano che obbedisce all' intelletto.

XLV.

It is singular that while the poetry of Cowley and George Herbert is in general characterised by the most incongruous and puerile conceits, their prose compositions should be distinguished by so much amenity and grace. The prose of Herbert, in particular, has never been sufficiently appreciated for its chaste and unaffected simplicity.

XLVI.

Philosophy abounds more than philosophers, and learning more than learned men.

XLVII.

Compilation is a task of far greater difficulty than the production of what is original; though there is no comparison between their intellectual merit or their praise, whatever may be the case as to their respective utility. It is in literature as in life; the

The idea is at least as old as Cicero, who in his treatise on Divination, alluding to a story about the form of a certain person's head being found in the cleft stone of a quarry, makes one of the interlocutors say: "Quasi non potuerit id evenire casu; et non in omni marmore necesse sit inesse vel Praxitelia capita: illa enim ipsa efficiuntur detractione; nec quidquam illuc affertur a Praxitele; sed cum multa sunt detracta, et ad lineamenta oris perventum est, tum intelligas, illud quod jam expolitum sit, intus fuisse."—*De Divin.* lib. ii.

The present appears to be one of those instances in which a sentiment, imposing by an air of originality or brilliance, dwindles on examination into a paradox or a truism.

most laborious departments are the most necessary, yet often the least appreciated or lucrative.

XLVIII.

The satellites of genius are commonly of so indifferent a mould, that their own folly is reflected on their master, rather than his lustre reflected on them. This is one of the few instances in which contrast, occasioned by juxta-position, is injurious to one party, without being at all serviceable to the other. Boswell, though one of the most respectable of the tribe of literary danglers, is scarcely an exception. He had just sufficient intellect and acquirements to preserve a tolerable footing of his own; while his obsequiousness and ready adulation towards the Leviathan of his idolatry, were precisely adapted to the despotic temper of Johnson, and formed in fact the main secret of their friendship. In general it may be affirmed, that no real genius can play a secondary part, even with minds of a much superior stamp.

XLIX.

Compression of style is the effect of compression of thought. But a wide disparity usually exists between the space which a subject occupies in the understanding, and that which it fills when embodied in words; resembling in the former case the Genie of the Arabian tale while shut up in the copper vessel; in the latter, the monster when he had emerged in the shape of an enormous mist.

L.

If the merit of books is to be determined by the test of new or vigorous ideas, there are few which deserve much attention. The omissions of some writers are more instructive than the remarks of others. Of the majority of works, the essence might be reduced to the compass of a few pages. Leave out the trappings, the obvious or admitted truths, and the repetitions, and what will remain? It is necessary, at least for men of letters, to peruse the ordinary class of performances in the way attorneys examine deeds of law, who only glance at the leading points of a document, to ascertain its purport and general provisions; a method similar to that adopted by Magliabecchi, the famous Florentine librarian, who was accustomed to inspect the title, preface, and principal chapters of a volume, and then, except on rare occasions, when he scrutinized the treatise or some particular part with care, lay it aside, assured that he was in possession of its contents. What Goldsmith remarked with so much humour respecting the authors of his day, has lost none of its significance by the lapse of nearly a century. "The body of the learned," says that most ingenious and entertaining of essayists, "may be compared to a Persian army, where there are many pioneers, several sutlers, numberless servants, women and children in abundance, and but few soldiers."* Any work has merit which brings the

* Citizen of the World, Letter xx.

faculties of the reader into play; but tame, unimpeachable commonplace, which only puts them to sleep, is one of the worst forms that dulness can assume. A bad book is like a bad engraving, where nothing stands out prominently.

LI.

To the products of genius, much more is contributed from within than from without. Some of the best things in almost every branch of literature have been constructed with the fewest external helps, supplying curious confirmation of the axiom, that in composition the subject is of little consequence compared with the writer. It is remarked I believe by Lord Hervey, in a letter to Lady Wortley Montagu, that while Boileau could produce on the subject of a Desk, a poem (*Le Lutrin*) which fascinates after repeated perusal, Blackmore, with the Creation for his theme, was unable to indite a piece that can be tolerated. Catullus's verses on the death of Lesbia's sparrow are reckoned his masterpiece. Of Byron's performances, the fable is often sufficiently meagre or improbable; and even the Iliad of Homer would appear not remarkably attractive, if divested of the machinery and decorations.

LII.

Our language may be considered as having attained its summit of perfection; so that whatever change it

may receive will probably be for the worse.* It has for some time been stationary, rather than progressive; and as far back as a century, or a century and a half, we may discover specimens of English prose rivalling in accuracy and grace the most finished productions that have subsequently appeared. The principal effect of the lapse of years has been the diffusion of correct phraseology, not any perceptible improvement in the structure or idioms of our tongue. The diction of Dryden has been equalled, if not surpassed, by numbers of writers who have flourished since the age of Addison. Yet it was a strange notion of Horace Walpole, which seems to have been also the opinion of Johnson, that every body now-a-days employs a good style. A good style is much rarer than genius. The compositions of some, though very few of our living authors, exhibit a union of almost every excellence; ease blended with dignity, and perspicuity enhanced by refinement and vigour. In general also decent and intelligible writing is a matter of ordinary occurrence.

LIII.

Although to the immense advantages resulting from the present facilities for publication, is joined the evil of myriads of worthless performances, it is not the wise

* One of its greatest masters, Dryden, supposes it to have reached this acme in Beaumont and Fletcher's performances, now more than two hundred years old. (Essay on Dramatic Poetry). He seems however to be speaking rather of the vocabulary of our tongue, than of absolute perfection in its employment.

who suffer from the circumstance. They take effectual care to preserve themselves from the infection, and reap the benefit while they escape the injury. Such a one, inspecting a large collection or catalogue of books, would perhaps remember the saying of an ancient philosopher on witnessing a display of costly articles, and be ready to exclaim, though with a feeling somewhat different from a philosophic contempt of acquisitions, How many things are here which I do not want!*

LIV.

Competence of fortune, and a mind at ease, have in thousands of instances given the death-blow to literary ambition and success. Except in extraordinary cases, if a person feels himself happy in the enjoyments and elegances of private life, or in the excitation of affairs, he will take small pains to acquire happiness from other sources, especially when it has to be purchased at no less costly a sacrifice than labour of the brain, employed in the walks of solitary contemplation. Swift acknowledged that his efforts at intellectual eminence from boyhood, were but to supply the want of wealth and a title, or to secure such distinction as is usually awarded to the possession of a coach and six. The world, it is probable, would never have been enriched with Paradise Lost or Regained, if the author had not been despoiled of his offices and comforts by the

* Socrates, in pompa cum magna vis auri argentique ferretur, 'Quam multa non desidero!' inquit.—*Cic. Tusc. Quæst.* lib. v. cap. 32.

Restoration; nor Defoe have produced his Robinson Crusoe and other works of permanent attraction, had he not encountered a similar fate. Even where a prosperous career has not impaired activity of intellect, adversity has commonly rendered it more prolific in lettered results. Lord Bacon wrote a considerable part of his works during the few years that followed his exclusion from public employments; and Machiavel composed his celebrated political treatises, The Prince, and The Discourses on Livy, under circumstances of the like description. In countries where plenty is most widely diffused, and a general equality of social condition prevails, few writers of eminence ever arise; as neither the pressure of want, nor the stimulus arising from hope of appreciation or advancement, incites to exertion.

LV.

We get the quintessence of men in books, the best of which are much more interesting and agreeable than their authors; being beautifully described by Milton as "the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."* It may nevertheless be questioned whether such men as Sheridan, Mackintosh, Coleridge, and Dr. Parr, however brilliant in authorship, were not better talkers than writers, as Johnson is acknowledged to have been by Burke. Lord Bacon too is said to have been more distinguished among his contemporaries for his colloquial powers than for

* Areopagitica: a Speech for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing.

his productions. On the other hand, if accounts be true, Goldsmith supplies a marked illustration of the general aphorism; though no doubt more pearls were scattered in his conversation than his literary associates seem willing to own. It is not a little remarkable, that while speaking with so much disparagement of what they represent as his luckless observations, most of those which they record evince the highest merit. Of Charles the Second it has been affirmed, that he never said a foolish thing, and never did a wise one. With others the proposition may be reversed: but though Goldsmith did many things, and perhaps uttered some, that were not over-wise, he never *wrote* a foolish thing.

LVI.

As the progress of style is an index of the progress of a nation, and in less cultivated ages in particular, the most striking features of character and manners are transfused into composition, I should prefer studying the intellectual and domestic history of a people through the medium of its terms and idioms, chronologically arranged, and illustrated with apposite remarks and anecdotes, than in any more direct and elaborate dissertation. Some contributions towards such a picture of our ancient countrymen have been furnished by the erudition and taste of the late Rev. Jonathan Boucher, in his Glossary of Archaic and Provincial words—a publication which seems to be still in suspense—and with regard chiefly to a certain period of our history, by the excellent Glos-

sary of Archdeacon Nares. Richardson's Dictionary also, which, notwithstanding some blemishes, appears to have been constructed with equal diligence and sagacity, supplies no trifling materials for a continuous sketch of the sort.

LVII.

Collision of sentiment among men illustrious for their parts or knowledge, has a tendency to keep the generality, who are swayed by other minds, in a decent and tolerably correct medium. Yet this tendency is seldom carried out, most persons being fonder of extremes than of moderation, uninfluenced too by the fact, that in some cases the middle path is far from the right one. For while it is correctly enough said, *in medio tutissimus ibis*—a maxim, however, suited rather to the pusillanimous or servile, than to the fearless inquirer after truth—it cannot so well be said, *in medio rectissimus eris*. Nothing, by the way, can be more unsatisfactory than the position laid down by the founder of the Peripatetic school, that virtue consists in a mean between two extremes. The proposition, to be of practical avail, must imply the existence of some standard to determine what constitutes an extreme; and the recognition of such a standard would of course nullify the definition.

LVIII.

We judge of the merits of style much more by the subject and the thoughts, than by the choice or

collocation of the words. It is an amusing circumstance which Coleridge related of Klopstock, that he endeavoured to persuade him the German is a musical language, by reciting a piece which merely contained soft and agreeable images. Perhaps it was not so much on account of any intrinsic superiority that the Attic dialect came to be considered the standard of Greek, in purity and elegance, as because it could boast a number of the finest writers in history, poetry, philosophy, and every branch of polite letters.*

LIX.

It can scarcely be questioned, that even if Lord Bacon had never lived, or never composed his *Novum Organum*, the advancement of science and philosophy would have been certain and rapid. Some other master spirit would have supplied his place; or the general diffusion of facts and habits of investigation, consequent on the invention of printing, would speedily have demolished both the authority of the scholastic system, and the ancient absurdities of opinion. No doubt the genius of Bacon accelerated the crisis, as that of Luther did the Reformation, which would have been effected ere long without his intervention. It is a curious circumstance, that the fundamental principle of Bacon's philosophy, the necessity of exploring truth

* Bentley pronounces that it was this which brought the Attic into fashion—Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris, p. 355, 438, Dyce's edition of his Works.

by induction or experiment, had been laid down with the utmost clearness about a century before, by that wonderful and versatile genius, Leonardi da Vinci, in a piece which has but lately come to light.* The same doctrine also occurs repeatedly in the writings of Bacon's illustrious namesake, who preceded him more than three centuries; and what may to some appear remarkable, traces of it are distinctly perceptible in the works even of Aristotle, to whom the English philosopher and statesman has often strangely enough been set in contrast.—With regard to the ecclesiastical revolution of the sixteenth century, one prognostic among a thousand, indicative of the coming change, may be specified in the splendid though abortive effort at reform made by the Church herself, at the council of Constance in 1414.

LX.

The views or pursuits of a person whose character has attained maturity, are less influenced than is often supposed by the earlier parts of his history, however the incidents or fancies of that period may be blended with his riper reflections, or worked up into his maturer efforts. To most individuals of gifted understanding, there seems to occur a period when the faculties receive a sudden and decisive expansion, and it is from that epoch chiefly that the impressions are worth recording.

* See Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. p. 303, 304, and the very interesting note that follows.

LXI.

The charm of Swift's style consists rather in a perfect freedom from affectation, in perspicuity, and an easy flow of words, than in any remarkable vigour, copiousness, or variety. Its excellences are chiefly negative, but these are very numerous; and in composition, an assemblage of negative excellences argues no contemptible merit.—The intellectual character of this celebrated man has been differently estimated, according to the predilections, habits, or associations of his critics. By some it has been placed above that of any of his contemporaries; and Addison himself is said to have inscribed, in a book which he presented to Swift, the flattering eulogium, "To the greatest genius of his age." The modesty of the donor, added to the refined sensibility which would unconsciously shrink before a nature cast in so stern a mould as Swift, not to lay much stress on the score of compliment or friendship, may considerably detract from the weight of this encomium. To claim for the Dean of St. Patrick's so eminent a distinction among the wits of an age which has been styled the Augustan of English literature, and which boasted the illustrious names of Addison, Pope, Berkeley, besides a train of brilliant and accomplished writers in various walks, may well be pronounced a somewhat hazardous undertaking. For my part I should be disposed to concede to Addison the palm of superiority over Swift. If the latter possessed more readiness and facility, more

passionate energy of invective, with keener faculties of satirical observation and sarcasm, the former exhibits equal originality or invention (witness the number of beautiful apologues and allegories which his fancy has constructed); a finer vein of humour; more sublimity and pathos; richer varieties of illustration; and ten thousand times more graces and embellishments of language. If there are some performances of Swift which Addison could not have produced, though less from any inferiority of talent than from dissimilitude of taste and intellect, there are not a few pieces from the pen of Addison which no one could imagine Swift capable of writing; for example, the Essays on the Pleasures of Imagination, and more especially the short but exquisite moral fable, the Vision of Mirza.

LXII.

If we are to credit the accounts which have come down to us of the ancient philosophers, several of them were no doubt radically distempered in their intellects. What other supposition can we entertain when we read of Diogenes and his tub? or of Heraclitus retiring to the mountains, and living on wild herbs? or of the methods he employed to recover the health which he had lost by his infatuation? It is time that these personages should be divested of the title of philosophers, which nothing but ignorance, or a blind veneration for antiquity, could have conceded, and receive their appropriate denomination of enthusiasts or madmen. The annals of monachism

could furnish no instances of more absurd demeanour than was exhibited by many of these pretended sages.

An extraordinary mixture of sense and folly is discernible in some of them. The contrast between the practical sobriety and the speculative incongruities of Xenocrates, is a topic of no little curiosity. A contrast of an opposite kind appears in Heraclitus, whose writings, in the judgment of Socrates, were far from contemptible, though his conduct was so ridiculous. The subject of Xenocrates, with that of most of these antique worthies, has been treated by Bayle, with his accustomed sagacity and research, in that wonderful and entertaining medley of learning, ingenuity, and acuteness, the "Dictionnaire Historique et Critique."

LXIII.

Not so many errors are afloat in the decline of a nation's mind, as when the greatest originality and vigour prevail. In seasons which produce but few authors, we commonly find the best. The period of English literature most remarkable for the invention and brilliancy of its performances, will perhaps be deemed that extending from the later years of Elizabeth through a considerable portion of the reign of James; in which were contemporary, during some part of their career, Shakspeare, Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, Lord Bacon, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Forde, Daniel, Browne, author of Britannia's Pastorals, Drayton,

of the Poly-Olbion, that rich storehouse of descriptive imagery, Giles and Phineas Fletcher, besides other rare gifted geniuses. Yet the number of writers in that era was as nothing compared to those who have appeared in the barrenest parts of our history. What swarms of publications are constantly issuing from the modern press! yet how many which bear the stamp of immortality? During the earlier epochs of intellectual power, imagination and creative thought most abound: conceptions are bolder, but mistakes are numerous. In later and more refined periods, superficial accuracy is an ordinary characteristic. Time naturally corrects and modifies opinions.

LXIV.

A secret in rich significant diction, is the employment of figurative terms and language in a blended or continuous form, in distinction from the employment of separate metaphors. Let the whole texture of the composition be imbued with imagery, instead of sprinkling a few detached similes over a generally meagre and barren style. It has been said of Shakspeare, by no less a judge than Gray, that "every word in him is a picture;" a remark which applies with perhaps greater force to Homer. It may be said of many, if we may be pardoned a grotesque application of a passage, itself somewhat grotesque, though with infinite effect, that their diction resembles the fool's brain in As You Like It—"as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage."

LXV.

It is a favourable symptom in our national taste, that the pretended poetry of Donne, Cowley, and others of the class which Johnson calls the metaphysical, has long sunk into oblivion. Of Cowley however, in particular, there are several pieces, both original and translated, that are well worthy of being rescued from neglect.

LXVI.

Few sentiments perhaps would be more readily admitted, though few appear to be less understood or practically regarded, than that of Plato—Τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐν βραχεῖ κεῖσθαι—"Truth lies in a small compass." Philosophers have long alleged that no limits can be assigned to the compressibility of matter; and the theory of Boscovich is now pretty well established, that the constituent portions of the densest objects in reality never touch each other; a circumstance which at first seems more curious than the fact, that neither the waters of the sea, nor those of fresh rivers or lakes, ever come in contact with their living tenants. The reflection however is not less true than wonderful, that the particles composing the most solid masses, as the hardest granite or marble, are separated by interstices which nothing but the structure of our organs prevents us from regarding as in a sense equivalent to the space occupied by oceans or continents. Analogy may lead us to conjecture that the products or

thoughts of the mind, though bearing so great a multiplicity of forms, are susceptible of indefinite condensation, or capable of being resolved into a few primary and comprehensive principles. Thus the whole phenomena of the material universe, as well as those presented by the world of intellect, may resemble the infinitely varied appearances exhibited by the kaleidoscope, all of which are dependent on the simplest mechanism and laws.

LXVII.

It is the minute things of life on which the feelings chiefly turn. The poem therefore, or other species of literary production, which deals mostly with its generalities, will seldom affect the imagination agreeably, or for a long period. Goldsmith's Traveller, containing a rapid sketch or philosophical estimate of the principal nations of Europe, will never, though embellished with so many exquisite graces of sentiment and diction, be so captivating to the popular fancy as the Deserted Village, which is composed almost entirely of individual pictures, borrowed from those scenes of humble existence which appeal with irresistible force to the heart.

LXVIII.

One of the most pleasing and valuable books of the kind in our language, is Herbert's "Country Parson." It deserves this encomium, not because it is of universal adaptation, being designed only for a

particular order of ministers, and implying the existence of several customs which are now obsolete, and could not be revived with advantage; but because it combines the rare merits of simplicity, conciseness, depth, and originality. It displays incomparably more thought and genius than modern productions of a similar nature, which are generally mere compilations, abounding with minute details apparently as much calculated to perplex and encumber, as to afford any substantial assistance.

LXIX.

If prose were better written, poetry would be less in request. In several important respects, prose possesses a decided superiority over poetry. For the most part it is less difficult to comprehend; it is a better vehicle for conveying the precise sentiments of the writer; and is likewise susceptible of much greater variety. Who does not prefer Scott's novels to his metrical romances? yet both are substantially alike in subject and materials; in all, in fact, except the form, as versified or not. The best poetry indeed may be better than the best prose; but the average of each style being taken, the advantage will probably be found with the latter.*

* It is curious what a difference verse or prose makes with some people, who can admire Sir Walter's Lady of the Lake, Marmion, and other poetical fictions, but object to his prose ones as romances; a casuistical distinction not unworthy of those who anathematize novel-reading as a sin, yet devour with great avidity the religious novel ycleped Paradise Lost.

LXX.

Might there not be a kind of intellectual dialect, or algebra of speech, to be confined of course to intellectual men, which should include little more than the leading conceptions, in as few words as possible? In this case, would not the subject be more vigorously grasped than when spread out into a wider space? and might not such a compression of sentiment and diction be especially serviceable in argumentative essays, by keeping the attention fixed on the demonstration, without being diverted by the phraseology? The substance of Edwards on the Will—one of the closest and most compact logical pieces ever produced, and from which a philosophic reader would hesitate in wishing a single sentence subtracted—might thus perhaps be presented, advantageously for the purposes of comprehension, whether before or after perusal, within limits remarkably concise. Some such process, in fact, is performed internally by every discursive and powerful intellect, which resolves, concentrates, and reduces to manageable dimensions, the materials submitted to its examination, operating in matters of thought somewhat as an inverted telescope in perspective, by which the largest object, or a landscape itself, is embraced within the compass of a point.

By the way, some of the finest specimens of *reductio ad absurdum* in our language, are contained in the treatise on the Freedom of the Will. The effect is often as ludicrous as to the popular eye

would be the broadest exhibitions of humour—the jocose antics, for instance, of the Knight of La Mancha, in his self-inflicted penances—so that a mind capable of following out the train of argumentation, and open to the pleasantry of mental incongruities, would be able to extract more genuine mirth from a grave metaphysical performance, than from any collection of professed jests.* Dr. Brown, with all his merits as a profound and consecutive reasoner, is far inferior to Edwards. The productions of the former are not a little tinctured with a quality bordering on parade. He commonly, at least in his Lectures, ushers in a sentiment with an air of pomp, and amplifies it with a flourish of rhetorical declamation. Nothing of the sort is observable in the American metaphysician, who is both a more candid and more masculine disputant.

LXXI.

Perhaps we are mistaken in supposing that our ancestors, a century or two ago, were little accustomed to the practice of reading. If we take into account the difference of population, together with the larger size of most works then published, we shall possibly be disposed to reverse the opinion, and conclude that the readers of books in former days were not only numerous, but certainly more

* A remark in some degree similar, confirmed by several apposite quotations from the writings of this eminent genius, occurs in the able and acute Essay prefixed to the recent edition of his Works.

indefatigable than the generality of readers in the present age. A great proportion of our older productions, though mostly elaborate and voluminous, passed through several editions. Few persons now-a-days read any thing besides newspapers, critical periodicals, and the lighter performances of literature.*

LXXII.

It is the province of mediocrity to remove common-place thought from ordinary apprehension, by parade of expression. It is the province of genius to bring down elevated thought to vulgar apprehension, by simplicity of expression. Certain classes of works, extolled perhaps as ingenious or profound, display nothing but trite sentiments in masquerade; their reception being calculated to remind one of the order of things in Egypt, where the greatest respect is awarded to those who, crazed or deficient in their intellectuals, abound in contortions and extravagance. The reason, it seems, of this strange obliquity, which venerates the wildest freaks, is, that the souls of such persons are conceived to be absorbed in

* According to old Robert Burton, there was no lack either of number or variety of works issued in his time, now a couple of centuries ago; as he enumerates, among the ten thousand curiosities that assailed the people of that era, "new books every day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues of volumes of all sorts, new paradoxes, opinions, schisms, heresies, controversies in philosophy, religion, &c."—*Democritus junior to the Reader.*

devotion.* Would that a similar extenuation could be pleaded in behalf of our tinsel and Babylonish writers, who however, like Escobar and his fellows immortalised by the inimitable irony of Pascal, are caterers of pleasantry in spite of themselves.

LXXIII.

Though literature is in small request in times of war or political convulsion, it is then often that the national mind receives an impulse which issues in the noblest achievements of intellect or fancy. The seeds of many of our best works were sown during the last Civil Wars, the over-flowings of which, notwithstanding the desolations occasioned for the moment, left a rich sediment behind; as it was shortly afterward that several of our greatest geniuses arose, or shone with redoubled brilliance. To that epoch may be referred Milton's Paradise Lost and Regained, besides nearly all his prose performances; Butler, Hobbes, Barrow, Dryden, Locke, Howe, who were followed by the galaxy of wits that adorned the reign of Queen Anne. Splendid as were the names that France could boast immediately before her first Revolution, they have perhaps been more than matched by the number of admirable writers she has produced since the peace of 1815. Our own literature derived, from the agitations of the late protracted war,

* See Lane's Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians.

and the circumstances in which it originated, a richness and vigour that have not yet died away.

LXXIV.

The poetry of Lord Byron contains no pleasing pictures of human life or manners; none of those quiet, innocent, domestic scenes, which shine so beautifully in the productions of Thomson, Goldsmith, and Cowper. He is not, nor is he likely ever to become, the poet of the people; as, with some exceptions, his writings would fail to be understood by an uneducated, or relished by an unthinking or unpolished mind. But neither is Spenser, nor Dryden, nor Milton himself, though surrounded with so much glory, the poet of the people. Byron however can fairly claim a much loftier title than that: he is the poet whom Genius, Taste, Feeling, will ever acknowledge as a distinguished favourite. His power is most conspicuous in delineating the darker workings of the brain, or the movements of passion; but these, as depicted by the pencil of the noble bard, are generally of an unusual order, either as to their causes or their intensity. Perhaps his most appropriate appellation would be that of the Poet of the Soul; for in describing its inmost thoughts and deepest emotions, he has incomparably surpassed all his poetical contemporaries, Wordsworth perhaps in certain points excepted. The leading qualities of his compositions are evidently pathos, fire, and imagination, blended with the highest degree of elegance and refinement. To these pre-eminent merits

he has united the utmost poignancy of wit and satire; so as in the former to rival Butler, in the latter to excel Pope. On the whole, he may safely be pronounced the most vigorous, if not the most original poet that has appeared since the author of Paradise Lost.

His temperament was singularly unfortunate. With much generosity and elevation of spirit, added to a disdain of the attributes by which petty or exclusive natures are characterised, his own was remarkable for the absence of moral restraint and culture, without which the most brilliant talents and most favourable situations contribute very slightly to happiness. His melancholy, though in part no doubt attributable to constitutional causes and to circumstances, was chiefly owing to the want of self-discipline and of religious influences, which are never, except in the case of extreme physical disorder, or partial insanity, found permanently dissociated from enjoyment.*

LXXV.

As youth is the period for exaggeration, and susceptibility of external impressions, the opinions which persons of genius may at that season have formed respecting the merit of works then in a meridian of

* Since writing the above, I have turned over afresh the principal of our modern poets, as Scott, Crabbe, Wordsworth, Coleridge, &c.; but, with no abatement of admiration for these masters of song, and notwithstanding some recent attempts to enthrone this or the other, I shall stick to Byron as immeasurably superior to them all.

popularity, are entitled to little deference. The contagion of admiration is then easily caught, and the feeling once imbibed is often fondly retained through life. It would be affectation, or blindness, or worse, to deny the extraordinary talents of Gifford, wanting as he was in the finer perceptions of fancy, and in those generous impulses which warm to original worth, associated with whatever creed or party, or even with strange anomalies and eccentricities; —but to hear the reverential terms applied to him by the author of Childe Harold, we might almost imagine that the late editor of the Quarterly was one of the brightest luminaries the world of letters ever saw. A more remarkable instance, perhaps, is to be found in Hall's extravagant eulogy of Mrs. More, a lady whose moral excellences were doubtless pre-eminent, and whose writings display no mean portion of intellect, but of whom it would be idle to affirm that, in a literary or critical estimate, she cannot bear comparison with Miss Edgeworth or Joanna Baillie, not to mention Mrs. Radcliffe, or the late Miss Austen, whose truth and delicacy of colouring, and feminine graces of composition, have never been adequately appreciated. Madame de Staël was a foreigner, and therefore need not be brought into the present controversy; otherwise her wit and philosophic brilliance would far eclipse any rival pretensions of Mrs. More. Several female writers however of our own country, besides those just named, would have no occasion to shrink from the competition. I may mention Mrs. Barbauld; Mrs. Hamilton, authoress of the "Cottagers of

Glenburnie;" Madame d'Arblay; Mrs. Jameson, a contemporary of whom we have reason to be proud; Mrs. Hemans; Miss Aikin; and, not to swell the list, as might easily be done with a number of living names, the late Miss Jane Taylor, whose performances indeed are not numerous, but quite equal in their way to anything of Mrs. More's. The celebrity of this lady seems attributable in great degree to her acquaintance with Johnson, and her consequent appearance in Boswell. She afterward became the *protegée* of a class possessing considerable influence and repute: and distinction once secured, with special feeling enlisted in its support, applause is as much a matter of course as a man's arrival in London when he is a passenger for it by the railway.

LXXVI.

Our present dictionaries are of comparatively small utility. We require one purged from the multitude of words which are neither harmonious nor expressive, and rarely to be found in any classical writer; although their occurrence in the very best would be no sufficient reason for their adoption. Separate works might contain vocabularies or glossaries of antiquated terms and phraseology. A considerable proportion of the authorities in Johnson, every man of taste and literature would at once refuse to acknowledge; while a number of appropriate words employed by many of our standard authors, especially by

such as have appeared since the publication of the great lexicographer, are wanting in that and all similar compilations.

LXXVII.

Criticisms on etymological points, and on the ancient significations of terms, are of trifling service in the application of language; and will no more contribute to form a master of style, than accurate acquaintance with the political constitution and usages of our remote ancestors, will make an able statesman of the present period.

LXXVIII.

Some of the most cynical authors, as Swift, Boileau, and Pope, whose writings are occasionally tinctured with the bitterest invective against mankind, have enjoyed the largest portion of popularity. On what principle is the fact to be reconciled with men's extravagant notions of their personal worth or consequence? One explanation is, that each individual has too lofty an opinion of his own qualities to apply the satire to himself, but sufficient ill-nature to admire it as applied to others. Such is the solution offered by the first of these writers. The cause however may as often be, a mere taste for pleasantry, or the delight experienced on discovering the incongruities of thought, or the unexpected and ludicrous combinations of images, by which satirical performances are usually characterised.

LXXIX.

The productions of an opulent mind commonly bear but a slight proportion to its variegated but undisclosed treasures. This is true even of the most voluminous writer whose capabilities are pre-eminent, as of Lope de Vega, who, besides innumerable poetical pieces, composed, according to his own acknowledgement, above fifteen hundred plays; but the remark applies especially to a certain class of authors. The name of Coleridge will readily suggest itself as a specimen. What a world of curious thought and splendid imagery must have been familiar to a brain that could invent the fine fiction of Vathek!*

LXXX.

On the following points erroneous and disparaging sentiments have perhaps been too prevalent: 1. The literary, if not religious obligations due to the Catholics. In forming an estimate on this head, besides the multifarious and profound lore displayed in the works of the Benedictines, we must not omit the

* For the astonishing list of Lope's extant performances, see Lord Holland's Account of his Life and Writings. The report which attributes to him upwards of two thousand plays is hardly supported by sufficient evidence. By the way, the most extensive writer on record, Albertus Magnus, preceded what is called the revival of letters, having died in 1280. Of his works, which have been published in twenty-one volumes folio, a considerable part, as might be conjectured, consists of compilation.

contributions of the Jesuits to the cause of education and learning. 2. The mental utility of the metaphysical speculations of the schoolmen. However barren as to their immediate aims, these studies could not have failed to exert a powerful influence in sharpening the faculties, and preparing the way for subsequent improvements; as the pursuits of the alchemists, though futile with respect to the object proposed, were not unattended with advantage. "Under the scholastic discipline," observes Sir James Mackintosh, "the understanding of Europe was educated; and, from its first operation, probably acquired much of its peculiar character." It was not without reason that Lord Bacon recommended the study of the schoolmen to promote subtlety of intellect.* 3. The degree of intelligence and civili-

* A passage which I here give presents some interesting views entertained by one of the great thinkers of our day, the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "He said that during a long confinement to his room, he had taken up the schoolmen, and was astonished at the immense learning and acute knowledge displayed by them; that there was scarcely any thing which modern philosophers had proudly brought forward as their own, which might not be found clearly and systematically laid down by them in some or other of their writings. . . . . He afterwards stated, that in a History of Speculative Philosophy which he was endeavouring to prepare for publication, he had proved, and to the satisfaction of Sir James Mackintosh, that there was nothing in Locke which his best admirers most admired, that might not be found more clearly and better laid down in Descartes or the old schoolmen; not that he was himself an implicit disciple of Descartes, though he thought that Descartes had been much misinterpreted."—*Table Talk*, p. 315, second edit. Allowance perhaps should be made, in reading this passage, for Coleridge's well-known dislike to the philosophy of Locke, Paley, and their followers. It is remarkable that Baxter, hardly inferior to any of our divines in vigour of genius, and author of

zation which marked the period of the middle ages. With regard to the last of these topics in particular, we meet with numerous incidental notices decisively opposed to the general opinion respecting those times; during the greater part of which, we are to remember, the art of printing was unknown; a circumstance that will account for the oblivion into which many things may have fallen, indicative of no very contemptible state of understanding or manners. To enable us to arrive at some definite conclusions respecting the intellectual and social character of the middle ages, it would be desirable to collect under one view the leading results or achievements of the period, whether in science, letters, arts, legislation, economy, or the like. Several of these practical criteria have been specified by the elegant critic just quoted. "The inactivity of the human mind," says he, "was very far from being alike in all the portions of this long period. During the darkest part of it, which extends from the fall of the Western empire to the beginning of the thirteenth century, the numerals called Arabic were introduced. Paper was fabricated from linen. Gunpowder and the compass were discovered. Before its termination,

some of the best practical and devotional theology in our language, was a great admirer of the schoolmen, and had a fondness bordering on excess for the niceties of speculative disquisition. It is easy to trace in his multifarious performances, especially those of the controversial kind, the influence of Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and others of the same class. He appears indeed, from his own account, to have made himself familiar with an immense mass of this curious but now forgotten erudition. See the excellent work of Orme on the Life and Times of Richard Baxter, with a critical examination of his writings.

oil painting, printing and engraving closed this series of improvements, unequalled in use and brilliancy, since those first inventions which attended the rise of civilization, and which therefore preceded history."* To the particulars here enumerated, which are distinct from the literary efforts of the time, including romances, picturesque chronicles, poems—some of them of the highest rank, as Dante and Chaucer's—metaphysical and theological treatises—those of the schoolmen and of Wickliffe, for instance—besides a number of dramatic and miscellaneous compositions; may be added the unrivalled specimens of architecture, the exquisite ornaments of missals and other books, performances in sculpture, tapestry, and various departments of ingenuity, by which the epoch, especially in its later portions, was distinguished. A fair review even of the feudal system, with the amusements and domestic manners which it admitted, more particularly in our own country, would sanction deductions less unfavourable than some may imagine.

LXXXI.

It is a common fault with biographical writers to describe the closing scenes of life with too great minuteness. The subject itself is mournful, even if we admit some exaggeration in the remark of Swift, that "the last act of life is always a tragedy at best." Add to which that the feelings then experienced

* Review of Stewart's Introduction to the Encyclopædia—*Edin. Rev.* vol. xxvii. p. 178.

depend more frequently on disease than on character; and that the views entertained amidst the failure of the faculties, and the pressure of a situation so mysterious and affecting, are at least as likely to be ill balanced or erroneous, as those which attend the full vigour of health, bodily and intellectual. It is melancholy to think how often the latter days of great men are darkened with misfortune. Some indeed set like a star; but most, I fear, rather as the sun amid gathering mists and clouds.

LXXXII.

Of ten thousand reflections that arise, and for a while perhaps absorb the mind, not one may be entitled to the slightest record. Even in a professed treatise or dissertation, it is rare to find more than two or three prominent ideas, which may be considered as the basis of the production, and to which the other parts are only subordinate. In most instances those ideas might be comprised in a remarkably brief space; but to give them a certain form, they are generally mixed up with much connecting or extraneous matter, are elucidated or expanded, supported by arguments, protected against objections, or compared with collateral topics, so that out of few particulars as at first conceived by the fancy, a book is at length elaborated. It has been alleged by an acute philosophical critic, that the whole system of Reid is presented in a page of Pascal, and Beattie's Essay in one sentence: "L'unique fort des dogmatistes, c'est qu'en parlant

de bonne foi, on ne peut douter des principes naturels."* Bishop Butler's Analogy, which none will accuse of extraordinary diffuseness, appears to have been suggested by a remark of Origen quoted in the preface, and which certainly contains the germ of the performance. In like manner Brown's views on causation, to which he has devoted an entire disquisition, and which tincture most of his metaphysical speculations, had been substantially expressed by Edwards in a single sentence.† The

* Memoirs of Sir James Mackintosh, vol. i. p. 410, ed. 1835. The reasoning to which so much merit is here attached, occurs in the Second Part of Pascal's Thoughts, Article I.

† "Cause is that, after or upon the existence of which, or the existence of it after such a manner, the existence of another thing follows."—*Edwards's Works*, vol. i. ed. 1834. *Appendix to the Memoirs*, p. cclviii. This definition would seem to have been penned by Edwards about the commencement of his college life, or in the former part of last century. The circumstance therefore may be added to the instances enumerated by Dugald Stewart, in which the doctrine commonly ascribed to Hume respecting necessary connexion, had been anticipated by other writers. See Stewart's Introduction to the Encyclopædia, and especially Note C in his Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind. Among the examples there mentioned, those of Malebranche and Hobbes must have preceded Edwards by a considerable period. The same may be said of Berkeley; for the passages quoted by Stewart are taken from the treatise called Siris, published in 1744; whereas the following remarks, containing similar views on causation, occur in a much earlier production, the Principles of Human Knowledge, which appeared in 1710, when Edwards was only seven years old. "This consistent uniform working, which so evidently displays the goodness and wisdom of that governing Spirit whose will constitutes the laws of nature, is so far from leading our thoughts to him, that it rather sends them a wandering after second causes. For when we perceive certain ideas of sense constantly followed by other ideas, and we know that it is not of our own doing, we forthwith attribute power and agency to the

latter author's celebrated work on the Will consists chiefly in the developement and application of two simple principles; that in moral inquiries necessity is another word for certainty, and inability for disinclination.

LXXXIII.

The prose compositions of antiquity, especially the ethical and miscellaneous writings of Xenophon, which detail the opinions and discourses of Socrates, are in general distinguished by vigour of thought, simplicity of style, and modesty of argumentation; qualities that appear in striking constrast to the flippant and decisive tone assumed by some modern pretenders to criticism and philosophy. We may boast however not a few illustrious specimens of

ideas themselves, and make one the cause of another, than which nothing can be more absurd and unintelligible. Thus for example, having observed that when we perceive by sight a certain round luminous figure, we at the same time perceive by touch the idea or sensation called *heat*, we do from thence conclude the sun to be the cause of heat. And in like manner perceiving the motion and collision of bodies to be attended with sound, we are inclined to think the latter an effect of the former."—*Principles*, sect. xxxii. In the same Essay he also observes, "The connexion of ideas does not imply the relation of *cause* and *effect*, but only of a mark or *sign* with the thing *signified*. The fire which I see is not the cause of the pain I suffer upon my approaching it, but the mark that forewarns me of it. In like manner, the noise that I hear is not the effect of this or that motion or collision of the ambient bodies, but the sign thereof." —*Ibid.* sect. lxv. Such views indeed were an essential part of the Bishop's theory, according to which all sensations or perceptions are but ideas immediately imprinted on the mind by the Author of our being.

a juster taste. With no doubt some tincture of prepossession, hardly to be detached from humanity, one of the best and fairest of critics, in any age or language, was the late Dugald Stewart, whose matchless felicity of diction is perhaps among the least of his merits as an expounder of conflicting theories and arguments. If the model in that kind could be surpassed, we should scarcely err in assigning the palm to Sir James Mackintosh.

LXXXIV.

Directions to men of genius concerning the subjects or departments on which their efforts should be employed, are in great degree misplaced. The mind is the most competent judge of its own aptitudes and powers, and should therefore be left to follow the bias of its inclination. Perhaps there is not an instance on record, of splendid success in any province of research or fancy, where the writer has not acted from his own unfettered impulses. Paradise Lost was the spontaneous offspring of the author's invention. Paradise Regained, though replete with beauties, exhibits the impress of its origin as a performance suggested by another. The nearest approach to an exception seems to be the "Merry Wives of Windsor," which Shakspeare is said to have written in compliance with the wishes of Elizabeth to see the character of Falstaff continued, and represented in love.

LXXXV.

Historical are much less exceptionable than fictitious misrepresentations of character or opinions. The mere narration of facts does not much operate on feeling. Besides, fact is of a tangible nature, and is easily confronted with fact. But the case is different when satire, imagination, incident, and the countless variety of influences which romance is capable of exerting, are enlisted on the side of prejudice or falsehood.

LXXXVI.

In several of the remoter parts of our island at the present time, we meet with vestiges of our language as it obtained a considerable number of centuries ago, or even in the days of the Anglo-Saxons; that is, we may notice certain terms, or terms employed in certain significations, some of which are not to be found elsewhere, others only in a few of our ancient writers or in glossaries. The circumstance is curious as illustrating the uniformity of ideas and the primitive seclusion which must have prevailed in those districts. It is observable that native and idiomatic phraseology ever survives the longest among the lower classes of the community. Alfieri is said to have frequented the market-place at Florence, that he might become familiar with the genuine old Tuscan dialect.

LXXXVII.

The effusions of genius are entitled to admiration rather than applause, as they are chiefly the effect of natural endowment, and sometimes appear to be almost involuntary. Whether or not it is instinct, as many deem, which governs the lower creatures in the finest of their works, as the bees in the structure of their cells, it is something very like instinct that occasions the noblest emanations of the human faculties.

LXXXVIII.

It might be desirable, could the fancy be realised, to collect, in some concise and definite form, the substance of what may be regarded as undoubted knowledge, omitting of course all extraneous or obscure points, and illustrations. Let this repertory constitute the standard of human attainments; and any additions which the stock of science may progressively receive, be incorporated with the collection. In this manner would be constructed a kind of general text-book of education; and the accumulated wisdom of preceding ages being appropriated from this source, the attention might be directed to the unexplored or unconquered regions of inquiry.—It would then be discovered how little information mankind in reality possess, notwithstanding the lapse of so many generations; and consequently how small a portion of truth is essential to

the interests or happiness of life. The field of study would also be greatly circumscribed, and the number of authors and publications materially diminished.

LXXXIX.

The pleasure of composition, and that of communicating ideas in discourse, may be viewed as substantially the same; namely, what arises from releasing the mind of its contents. Accordingly the delight is felt even where there is no intention or expectation of benefiting others, although the prospect of such a result may considerably enhance the gratification. Much that is commonly referred to pedantry may be explained in a similar manner, as originating rather in the indescribable charm which the understanding experiences in recalling and applying its acquisitions, than in any motives of literary parade.

XC.

If a person were not acquainted with the commercial and scientific character of the English nation, he might form a pretty correct opinion of the fact from the use of certain metaphors and phraseology observable in the ordinary dialect of our country. The language of current writers and speakers, and even of our Parliamentary debates, begins to be strongly tinctured with the technical peculiarities of science, commerce, and the arts. It is a curious circumstance which has been

remarked respecting the passion of the ancient Greeks for field-sports, that while apparent in the metaphorical parts of their writings in general, it is nowhere more perceptible than in those relating to philosophy.*

* See a learned note in Mitchell's excellent edition of the Clouds of Aristophanes, p. 85.

By the way, if technical phrases, or those belonging to any class or profession, are adopted in ordinary speech, it is but fair to expect that they be used in their proper signification. Yet we occasionally meet in authors of credit with the most notorious violations of this rule; with the phrase 'at fault,' for example, in the sense of in error or in the wrong; though the expression, taken from the chase, denotes merely to be nonplussed, or at a loss which way to proceed, being applied to the hounds when they have lost the scent. The mistake could hardly seem less barbarous to the sportsman, than to the classical scholar would appear the employment of the Horatian precept, *Sæpe stylum vertas*, to inculcate a frequent variation of style, instead of a frequency of blotting or correction, the style being the instrument pointed at one end for writing on wax, and flat at the other for obliteration. It can scarcely be necessary to notice a common perversion of another phrase in the same poet, *omne tulit punctum*, as if intended to describe a writer who has succeeded in every particular, not one who has gained universal applause, literally, carried every suffrage, the allusion being to the method of counting the votes at the Roman comitia, by affixing a point or dot to the name of the candidate approved. It would seem as if the bard of Venusium was destined to be more frequently misapplied than most others of the fraternity. I once heard a medical practitioner quote to one of his patients the well-known passage, *Neque semper arcum tendit Apollo*, to dissuade from too close application to study; a citation just as pertinent as if he had stated, that times of severity or punishment on the part of Heaven are succeeded by those of benignity; which the connexion shows to be substantially the meaning of the words, the divinity not always shooting his arrows, that is, wreaking his anger or exercising displeasure, but, as described in the Carmen Sæculare—*condito mitis placidusque telo*—sometimes awaking the lyre, or exhibiting a placid and favourable disposition towards mortals.

XCI.

As the ear may be a nice discerner of sounds, yet the voice not sufficiently flexible to preserve a correct modulation; so in literary and other affairs, the judgment and taste may be pre-eminent, while the powers of execution are of an inferior description.

XCII.

Books scarcely answer their legitimate end, when appropriated to the ephemeral contests or passions of mankind. One of the most delightful effects of literature is to beguile the imagination from the passing scenes of existence, and replenish the understanding with abstract subjects or contemplations. An influence of the kind forms a special charm of our older writers in general, especially the dramatists, with Shakspeare as the chief; and to specify an instance from our own era, of that genuine admirer of their exhaustless treasures, the late Charles Lamb. A similar observation applies to another disciple of our ancient worthies, the author of the Sketch Book and the Tales of a Traveller. Reading productions of this description, after those of a controversial or fugitive nature, is like turning away from the dust and noise of a great city to the fresh fields and pure air of the country. The mixture of politics with literature, a union which has introduced so much of human distemperature into the latter department, is not traceable to a very remote origin.

XCIII.

In the speculations of the ancient philosophers and moralists, except perhaps those of Plato or Aristotle, it would be vain to seek a parallel to the depth, acuteness, and comprehensive range of reflection, which characterise the writings of Lord Bacon. Most of the illustrations and arguments employed by the sages of antiquity, are taken from the simplest objects or most familiar occupations, indicating a state of society little advanced in the career of refinement; in which circumstances extensive views, or profound and discriminating observations on nature and manners, are rarely produced. The Essays of Bacon, exhibiting no attempts at curious analysis, present the essence of philosophy in its results; and while not deficient in imagery or embellishment, abound, perhaps more than any performance of equal compass in our language, in general and diversified practical truths.*

* A passage of Addison which delineates the merits of Bacon is entitled to eulogium, not only on account of the chaste simplicity and elegance of the diction, but as furnishing on the whole a faithful sketch of that remarkable person: "A man," says he, "who, for greatness of genius, and compass of knowledge, did honour to his age and country; I could almost say to human nature itself. He possessed at once all those extraordinary talents which were divided amongst the greatest writers of antiquity He had the sound, distinct, comprehensive knowledge of Aristotle, with all the beautiful lights, graces, and embellishments of Cicero. One does not know which to admire most in his writings, the strength of reason, force of style, or brightness of imagination."—*Tatler*, No. 267.

XCIV.

Correct mediocrity will succeed better, at least for a while, with the public at large, as well as with a certain class of critics, than the most distinguished merit, combined with some conspicuous foibles or peculiarities. Witness Bentham in politics and legislation; in poetry, Coleridge and Wordsworth. Landor, with all his fine original observation, and the touches of beautiful feeling that gleam through his writings, seems at present under a cloud; though he will assuredly, as Southey long ago predicted, emerge into the notice which his accomplishments so well deserve. Time of course must elapse before the crowd will prefer a piece of antique sculpture to the figures in a show of wax-work; or the refinements of Attic wit to the grimaces and buffoonery of puncinello. I may add to these names an eccentric and unfortunate genius, the late Percy Bysshe Shelley, whose views in the range of social and economic science I have no wish to criticise, interwoven as they were with deep goodness of disposition; but whose poesy, its ethereal and sometimes fantastic or hyperbolical points apart, is imbued with as much of Shaksperian beauty and force of expression, as almost any compositions since the epoch of the great dramatist.

XCV.

The productions which breathe a spirit of melancholy often obtain the strongest hold on the

imagination, because the tone accords most with man's conscious feelings of misery. Il Penseroso is by most critics, and I believe by most readers of sensibility, preferred to L'Allegro; yet it would be difficult to find a reason for this preference in any superiority of invention or description exhibited by the former of these exquisite pieces.*

* It has been suggested, with every appearance of probability, that in composing Il Penseroso, Milton, besides being indebted to the work of Burton, aud to other sources, has borrowed a hint or two from the following beautiful song, which occurs in Beaumont and Fletcher's Nice Valour, or Passionate Madman. The praises of melancholy have never been sung more sweetly:

Hence all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly;
There's nought in this life sweet,
If men were wise to see't,
But only melancholy,
O sweetest melancholy!

Welcome folded arms, and fixed eyes,
A sigh that, piercing, mortifies:
A look that's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound.

Fountain-heads and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves;
Moonlight walks, when all the fowls
Are warmly hous'd, save bats and owls
A midnight bell, a parting groan,
These are the sounds we feed upon
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley:
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy.

See Dr. Drake's very elegant and entertaining Essays on the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian, vol. i. p. 238.

XCVI.

Grammarians commonly object to the blending of different metaphors; but in certain cases it contributes essentially to vigour and beauty of style. It abounds in the writings of Shakspeare, imparting an undefinable charm to many of his sweetest and noblest descriptions, whose rich poetic diction all can admire, though few understand the secret of its power.

XCVII.

The ancient Greek tragedy was in some respects perhaps more adapted to its appropriate ends of pity and terror, than the efforts of the tragic muse among the moderns. In the former instance, the calamities portrayed were usually referred to the sole appointment of destiny or the gods. This circumstance would tend to produce in the spectators an undefinable impression of sublimity, arising from the obscure and impenetrable nature of the doom; and consequently could not fail to excite the emotions of terror and awe. At the same time the innocence, and the helpless condition of the unfortunate victim, were suited to awaken the tenderest feelings of sympathy and compassion.—It is true that with us the result would be different, because we are happily free from the mythological and erroneous tenets on which the classical drama was grounded; but then we are to consider what

would have been the probable case with those who yielded a firm assent to the doctrines of their fabulous theology. The ancient tragedy therefore was more vivid in its effects; that of the moderns, in which the catastrophe is brought about by the influence of passion, and the agency of men, without reference to the dim, shadowy operation of fate, is more just and instructive. The former was built on superstition and fancy; the latter is founded on nature and the laws of ethical propriety. Of all the plays of Shakspeare, Macbeth, in which something of the mystic power gleams forth which was supposed to control the ruler of Olympus himself, exercises perhaps the strongest spell on the imagination.*

XCVIII.

It is chiefly the literature or works of the passing day by which the sentiments and taste of the generality of readers are moulded. Only men of letters, or the superior class of cultivated persons, are much conversant with the immortal productions of preceding ages.

XCIX.

The perspicuity by which some compositions are distinguished, invests them with a trite or superfi-

* The Œdipus Tyrannus of Sophocles in particular, one of the most sublime and touching of dramatic fables, and especially that magnificent effusion of genius, the Prometheus of Æschylus, offer some illustration of these criticisms respecting the ancient tragedy.

cial character in the apprehension of sophisticated judges, to whom simplicity, and total freedom from obscurity, are evidences of subordinate genius. Among the celebrated persons whose writings are open to this species of captious disparagement, may be mentioned perhaps the name of Dugald Stewart. It seems to be the fashion of late to depreciate the speculations of this most elegant and accomplished author, whose conceptions are so transparent, and so accurately defined, as to appear common-place or frivolous to minds which are ever most attracted by the mystical or inflated. Perhaps he has not extended the boundaries of intellectual science, or made any particular discoveries in that department of inquiry; but whatever may be the amount of his contributions to the subject, his works abound with ingenious and beautiful reflections, expressed in one of the most chaste and captivating styles that our literature can boast. He is the Virgil of philosophy; and if his performances be estimated with that enlightened and comprehensive discrimination which they so eminently display, he will be deemed perhaps as likely to attain immortality as any metaphysical or critical essayist in our language.*

* We should hardly be guilty of impropriety in applying to this distinguished ornament of letters an observation which he has made respecting the two perhaps most elegant prose writers of France and England. "The reputation of Fenelon as a philosopher would probably have been higher and more universal than it is, if he had not added to the depth, comprehension, and soundness of his judgment, so rich a variety of those more pleasing and attractive qualities, which are commonly regarded rather as the flowers than the fruits of study. The same remark may be extended to the Fenelon of England, whose

C.

Angels as exhibited in paintings and engravings, or in written descriptions, whether poetical or prose, are commonly insipid personages. There is something in them so ethereal, or so little allied to our sympathies and habits, that most attempts to delineate that class of intelligences have been unsuccessful.

CI.

The beautiful illuminations of missals and other books before the invention of printing, are supposed to have originated in the necessity, during those periods of comparative ignorance, of recommending knowledge by an appeal to the senses. But if the union of adventitious embellishment with literature be an evidence of the mental darkness of the times in which it prevails, we have lamentable proof of the benighted condition of the present era; for never were exterior attractions so numerous, or so much an object of study, in published works, to whatever order of the community addressed. The truth is, there is a natural fondness in the mind for pictorial and similar ornaments, whether society be refined or illiterate. But what with us is deemed a symptom of taste, is reckoned, with regard to our forefathers,

ingenious and original essays on the Pleasures of Imagination would have been much more valued by modern metaphysicians, had they been less beautifully and happily written."—*Dissertation on the Progress of Metaphysical Philosophy*—Introduction to the Encyclopædia.

a demonstration of barbarism. The opinion just quoted is a specimen of the palpable injustice and absurdity by which remarks on the state of the middle ages are frequently characterized.

CII.

No poet or descriptive writer has ever had the images or scenes which he has endeavoured to portray, conveyed to the perceptions of another exactly as they appeared to his own. The pictures have varied according to the peculiar history and associations of each individual, and received a new form or colouring from every imagination to which they have successively been presented. In the mere recital of a poem or tragedy may be elicited beauties of sentiment wholly undesigned by the composer. It is related in Grimm's Correspondence, that on the admirable performance of a particular character in one of Voltaire's dramas, the author who was present was scarce able to recognize his own production; so different and improved a conception of the part was exhibited in the representation. Mr. Hallam quotes an acute opinion of Bayle respecting the younger Scaliger, that his abilities and learning impaired his merits as a commentator, leading him to fancy, in the volumes which he professed to illustrate, a significance and a variety of allusion which they did not possess.* Pope is said to have been surprised and delighted at the interpretations affixed by Warburton to portions of the Essay on Man. The

* Literature of Europe, vol. ii. p. 48.

assertion is sometimes made, that the more you examine certain kinds of works, the more you discover in them; but the observation is in great degree illusory, the fact rather being, that by limiting the attention to a particular piece, you excite the meditative faculties, and thus occasion those ideas or images that seem to be derived from the book, but which are in reality the offspring of the brain.—These remarks are not inapplicable to the criticism of painting and statuary. Canova, the matchless sculptor of modern days, who would be likely to introduce as much expression into his figures as an artist could wish, had often to disclaim the refinements of meaning which connoisseurs were fond of discovering in the products of his chisel.

CIII.

There are several compositions of recent origin, in little esteem among our literary antiquaries, but which display a force and variety of thought that would quite enrapture them if expressed in quaint phraseology, and believed to have been produced at the distance of two or three centuries. What interest was excited among the black-letter class of critics by the poems of Rowley, so long as the circumstances of their origin were unknown! but those effusions, beautiful and vigorous as they are, have long since been abandoned, except by minds that can appreciate the fruits of genius in whatever form. It is the practice of some, however, to praise the old writers, but to read the modern.

CIV.

The ability of a book to communicate pleasure, depends more on the ideas which are brought to its perusal, than on those which it furnishes. There is sometimes as much difference in the notions conveyed to different minds by the same piece, as there would be in the case of one who knows merely the title of the work called "Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry," and another who, having read the work itself, remembers its varied incidents, its graphic sketches, its scintillations of wit, and its touching pathos. A wise man extracts more benefit from an inferior performance, than a fool from one of superlative merit. In the earlier stages of progression, the votary of letters, possessing few materials for amplification or embellishment, is prone to be hypercritical or fastidious in his tastes; but in general the older and more intelligent he becomes, his capacity of receiving improvement and gratification from literary sources is increased in proportion. For a person's own sentiments or fancies being blended with the contents of the productions which he examines, a copious accumulation of intellectual stores has the effect of diversifying the aspects of subjects, and multiplying the elements of association, contrast, and agreeable mental emotion. On this account the more the understanding is replenished and enriched, the greater will be the number of publications from which it can derive entertainment or instruction. Hence also the re-perusal of an

author after a considerable interval, often presents the attraction of novelty, in consequence of suggesting reflections or images which the former perusal failed to occasion; because, though the work is the same, the mind is different, and brings to the contemplation the new facts or ideas with which its resources have been augmented.*

CV.

Fictitious compositions, when skilfully managed, may be rendered the vehicle of the most interesting parts of general literature; as, sketches of character,

* Some confirmation of the views here suggested may be drawn from the account which Gibbon, in the Memoirs of his Life and Writings, has transmitted respecting his own intellectual history. "In the infancy of my reason I turned over, as an idle amusement, the most serious and important treatise: in its maturity, the most trifling performance could exercise my taste or judgment; and more than once I have been led by a novel into a deep and instructive train of thinking."—*Miscellaneous Works*, vol. i. p. 67.

I add the following remarks from Lockhart's Life of Scott: "His propensity to think too well of other men's works sprung, of course, mainly from his modesty and good-nature: but the brilliancy of his imagination greatly sustained the delusion. It unconsciously gave precision to the trembling outline, and life and warmth to the vapid colours before him. This was especially the case as to romances and novels; the scenes and characters in them were invested with so much of the 'light within', that he would close with regret volumes which, perhaps, no other person, except the diseased glutton of the circulating library, ever could get half through."—Vol. vii. p. 416.

The case is similar with respect to observation of character. A man of acute powers, who has been accustomed to mix much with the world, will detect innumerable traits of a peculiar or amusing kind, in persons whom the generality regard as totally uninteresting and common-place.

scenery, and manners; antiquities and tradition; the leading features of history; opinions, usages, &c. Biography may include, with no slight fund of miscellaneous knowledge, many of the popular discoveries in science, as well as the principal maxims of domestic economy. Besides poetry, there would then remain only one great branch of letters, namely, that comprised in essays or dissertations, comprehending of course criticism, and philosophical disquisition. This method of blending fact with fiction, or mingling together a considerable variety of subjects, appears preferable to the usual mode of exhibiting topics in a separate and meagre form. Our literature has been accustomed to partake, more than seems requisite, the principle of the division of labour, which, however commodious in attempts to establish or enlarge the boundaries of any specific department, is little desirable for the purpose of communicating ascertained information.

CVI.

The Bible is unquestionably the richest repository of thought and imagery, and the best model of pure style, that our language can boast. It would be difficult to discover in its pages a single instance of affected or bombastic phraseology; a circumstance probably arising from the subdued and chastened tone of feeling with which the translation was executed, and a remarkable specimen therefore of the influence exerted on diction by the moral qualities of the writer. Yet its very simplicity and unos-

tentatious character are attributes which render it distasteful, in a critical point of view, to sophisticated and pretending minds.

CVII.

The civilization and intelligence of the English nation are greatly owing to the decencies, and the species of literature, diffused by means of Sunday and its observances, which operate in a powerful, though silent and imperceptible manner, like the dew or the sunshine.

CVIII.

There appears to have existed considerable affinity between the intellectual character of Byron and of Johnson. Both display consummate vigour and manliness of thought. The understandings of both were evidently of a practical mould, and little inclined to matters of pure speculation. From the writings of the former, in poetry and prose, may be extracted a large body of sound reflection, joined to no ordinary knowledge of human nature. Both present the pith of philosophy, without the system or the details. Byron was of a deeply melancholy temperament; so was Johnson. The question indeed of their poetical merits suggests some curious points of comparison—the author of Rasselas scarcely ranking with the tuneful fraternity, while the noble bard unites to his lofty imagination and pathos the same masculine vein of sentiment which pervades the metrical com-

positions of Johnson. In political and religious tenets also they differed considerably; but with regard to the former, the difference was perhaps more apparent than real,—Byron ever retaining a strong predilection in favour of his order, but, ranking with the nobility, he could easily afford to patronize popular claims; while Johnson, who was born a commoner, aspired to assert the dignity and prerogatives of the aristocracy.

CIX.

Books were well described by the ancient Egyptians as ψυχῆς ἰατρεῖον—"medicine for the mind."* There are few intellectual diseases for which they do not afford a remedy or an alleviation. It may be added, that they are often also a person's best comforters and friends, supplying the place of almost every other gratification. But they are now perhaps employed for too great a variety of purposes, as many things in the departments of science and letters might be acquired with much more effect from observation or discourse. To certain subjects in particular the Spanish proverb is applicable, that conversation is better than reading. Socrates would seem to have adopted the colloquial and interrogative method of instruction, in preference to the written, that his disciples, while obtaining a fuller grasp of his meaning, might have their faculties brought more directly into exercise.

* Such, according to Diodorus, was the inscription over the first library of which we have any account, erected by Osymandyas, a remote king of Egypt—denoting literally, a *dispensary for the mind.*

ON SOCIETY, GOVERNMENT, AND POLITICS.

I.

If I were to select a person the most competent to give an opinion on any great national question, it would not be a man officially engaged in the administration of the state. He is too much occupied with his own department, or with local and personal considerations, to form views otherwise than circumscribed and partial. It should be the individual who combines the philosopher with the man of the world; who looks on life as from a distant eminence, witnessing the movements and aspects of men and events without feeling their influence.

II.

The epochs in which intellect flourishes most, are not always those of the greatest public happiness.

In England, for example, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may perhaps be viewed as the seasons most distinguished for the vigour and luxuriance of the national genius. Yet the political aspect of those periods was marked by despotism on the one hand, and commotion on the other; while the paucity of comforts among the people at large suggests little in favour of their social condition.

III.

It would scarcely be correct to affirm, that modern times do not produce so many specimens of physical hardihood and strength as remoter and less civilized periods, although we have perhaps many more persons of feeble constitutions. Owing to improvements in medical science and modes of life, thousands are now reared who would have sunk under the rigorous circumstances of former days. Mr. Lawrence, in his very able and entertaining Lectures, has completely disproved the supposition, that savages are more robust than cultivated tribes.

IV.

With several disadvantages arising from separation between the higher and lower classes, there is at least one benefit; their respective vices and follies are less known to each other. Perhaps this circumstance may illustrate the fact, that the most violent opponents of popular pretensions have not seldom been persons originally sprung from the body of the people.

V.

The boundaries between civilized and savage life are much narrower than certain speculative reasoners would have us to suppose. No small proportion of the people in cultivated states appear to be much on an equality with the most advanced of those nations that are commonly regarded as barbarous. A considerable number, situated in remote districts, receive scarcely the slightest tincture of the passing improvement. With respect to sense and ingenuity, multitudes among savage tribes equal or surpass our peasantry; and are probably considered as belonging to an inferior race, merely because their language and manners, and perhaps their colour, differ from our own.*

VI.

It is a relief, in perusing the narratives of the wars and devastations by which all countries have at one period or other been afflicted, to recollect

* As a curious illustration, derived from antiquity, of the slowness with which any thing new, however important or valuable, is adopted in rural and sequestered places, we may refer to the origin of the word pagan in its present acceptation. It is derived from *pagus*, a village: hence *pagani*, villagers or countrymen. The term came at length to signify heathens or idolaters, because, for centuries after Christianity had been established in the principal cities of the Roman empire, the inhabitants of the country, the *pagani*, or *paysans*, were still addicted to the rites of their ancient superstitions. See the Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations, chap. x.; also an elaborate note in Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xxi. *sub finem*. Happily our own era is beginning to supersede the reproach of provincial barbarism.

that in general only the surface of society is touched by any great national convulsion. The deep undercurrent of human interests and passions moves on much alike amidst every variety of political fortune.

VII.

In estimating the comparative evil of one oppressing many, or many oppressing one, we are to take into account the influence of tyranny on the mind by which it is exercised. The result might perhaps lead us to suspect, that in the latter case there is a preponderance of evil; for the indulgence of wrong dispositions is more to be deprecated than the sacrifice of personal rights or comforts. On the other hand it would be unfair to overlook the pernicious effects which oppression commonly produces on the moral feelings and character of the oppressed.

VIII.

Perhaps it is doubtful whether the invention of fire-arms has increased the destruction of human life. The probability seems to be in favour of the more pleasing hypothesis, according to the brief but philosophical remarks of Hume on the employment of artillery at the battle of Crecy.* Intellect bears the sway, and would shortly obtain the supremacy under any other system or discovery.

Some scepticism, it is true, may naturally arise on considering the wars which have raged in Europe

* History, chap. xv.

since the date of the invention, especially those originating in the French Revolution, and which, up to the peace of 1815, are supposed to have occasioned the loss of not fewer than two millions of our species. Where is the period of equal extent in the annals of our race, that has been signalised by so terrific a waste of life from a similar cause? It seems indisputable also that had the ancient modes of warfare continued, there would have been much less havoc committed by Europeans among the natives of savage or half-civilized countries, whose incapacity to resist aggression has chiefly arisen from the formidable powers of this apparatus, and from the terror inspired by its novelty. Would the Spaniards, for instance, have been able otherwise to perpetrate their dreadful enormities in the New World, or Cortes not have been driven from Mexico, and Pizarro from Peru, with the discomfiture which those ruthless marauders merited?

IX.

A frequent cause why the state of things in preceding times is applauded to the disparagement of contemporary usages and manners, is nothing but a contracted unphilosophical spirit, which is open to passing circumstances or annoyances, but incapable of penetration to any thing remote. The disadvantages of the present epoch are considered great, because they are felt; those of former periods are overlooked or depreciated, because they are but matters of history. For my part I can heartily

subscribe to the sentiment avowed by Ovid, when reviewing the changes which had occurred to Rome and its inhabitants :

> Prisca juvent alios : ego me nunc denique natum
> Gratulor : hæc ætas moribus apta meis.
>
> *De Art. Amat.* lib. iii. 121.

A similar feeling appears to have been entertained by the author of Waverley, who somewhere expresses himself to the effect, that he preferred his own age to live in, though by-gone ages for the employment of imagination or the pen.

X.

It would be easy to draw such a picture of the laws and institutions of almost any country, as without including a single circumstance decidedly incorrect, might induce a person unacquainted with the actual particulars of the case to imagine, that scarcely the slightest grievance or misery existed among the community. The suppression of some facts and a certain arrangement or colouring in the exhibition of others, may have all the effects of positive falsehood in misleading the judgment.

XI.

The military, though so often the dependence of princes, have commonly been the chief instruments in their deposition or overthrow. Witness the changes of dynasty effected in the times of the Roman emperors by the prætorian guards ; the convulsions

which the Ottoman government used to sustain from the Janizaries; the subversion of the English monarchy and constitution under Cromwell; and the events connected with the French revolution of 1789.

XII.

One period or race is so linked with another, that extensive political or ecclesiastical reformations are always accomplished slowly. The taint of national prejudice, like the colour of the darker tribes who have intermarried with the white, is effectually removed only after transmission through several generations.

XIII.

In general, quite as much talent is requisite for the management of private and ordinary affairs, as of those which relate to a whole community, and which are frequently, though in some respects without justice, considered the most important. The Chinese maxim which identifies the government of a state with that of a family, is not without force as to the amount of intellect required. According to Tacitus, one branch of domestic rule merely, that of control, is commonly more difficult than the regulation of a province.* Thucydides delivers it as his opinion, that men of moderate capacity are best suited for administrative functions; and per-

* "Domum suam," he remarks of Agricola, "coercuit: quod plerisque haud minus arduum est, quam provinciam regere."—*Agric. Vit.* cap. xix.

haps Cervantes was of the same mind, for he makes Sancho, with nothing but a decent share of mother-wit about him, an excellent governor of the island of Barataria. The reader may remember the reply of the Swedish chancellor Oxenstiern to his son, who had expressed some fears respecting his qualification for a certain diplomatic appointment: *Nescis, mî fili, quantula sapientiâ gubernatur mundus;* a remark however which indicates rather what is than what should be. In truth, both households and empires demand a much larger portion of wisdom than is usually employed in the superintendence of either; which is one reason why each department exhibits so many instances of failure. If the latter may boast a preponderance of ability, this is too often counterbalanced by vacillation, or the want of disinterested, high-minded principle.*

XIV.

We have few or no examples of permanent republics founded on monarchies, but many examples

* Voltaire seems to have thought even successful statesmanship a very equivocal test of mental capacity. Speaking of Cardinal Mazarin he observes: "Le vulgaire suppose quelquefois une étendue d'esprit prodigieuse, et un génie presque divin, dans ceux qui ont gouverné des empires avec quelque succès. Ce n'est point une pénetration supérieure qui fait les hommes d'Etat, c'est leur caractère. Les hommes, pour peu qu'ils aient de bon sens, voient tous à peu près leurs intérêts. Un bourgeois d'Amsterdam ou de Berne, en sait, sur ce point, autant que Séjan, Ximenès, Buckingham, Richelieu ou Mazarin: mais notre conduite et nos enterprises dépendent uniquement de la trempe de notre ame, et nos succès dépendent de la fortune."—*Siecle de Louis XIV.*, chap. vi.

of permanent monarchies founded on republics. I omit the states of ancient Greece, which, besides that they merged in oligarchies rather than democracies, were for the most part but cities with a small adjacent or dependent territory; in other words, municipal corporations, not what is understood in modern phrase by regal institutions. They were in fact no more monarchies than the Venice of recent ages, with the Doge at its head, was: add to which that both the Grecian and Italian states were ultimately absorbed by a kingly power. A republican form of polity seems most agreeable to a rising and frugal nation; a monarchical one, to a nation which is wealthy and luxurious. It is remarkable that Washington himself, according to Jefferson who knew him intimately, entertained a belief that the American government would ultimately subside into something resembling the British constitution; and to make the transition less abrupt, favoured pomps and pageants on public occasions.*

XV.

It may admit of dispute whether any of the martial exploits of antiquity equal, in point of skill, the celebrated ones of modern times. Most of the illustrious battles of the Greeks, for instance, from Marathon to the campaigns of Alexander, were fought with effeminate people, or with undisciplined barbarians. Naval tactics were no doubt very superficially understood by the ancients. The art of

* See Tucker's Life of Jefferson, vol. ii. p. 386.

breaking the enemy's line, and concentrating the main attack on the detached forces—a method of combat not peculiar to maritime warfare, but often adopted in land engagements, being in fact the great secret of Napoleon's victories—is of recent introduction.*

XVI.

Men of comprehensive and penetrating genius are often more vehement in reprobating erroneous or foolish acts of legislation than to others appears necessary. The truth is, they have a deeper insight into the absurdity or pernicious tendencies of what they oppose, than the generality dream of.

XVII.

In a civilized community, the laws and judicature decide on men's actions. It may be doubted whether the consequent neglect of appeal to individual feeling may not have rendered the moral perceptions less acute and active.

* The famous action of Lord Rodney, in which this mode of encounter was first systematically employed at sea, took place April 12, 1782. So far as invention is concerned, the honour seems indisputably due to Lord Eldin. A scheme of the sort would appear to have been understood and attempted by land, at least four hundred years before the Christian era: witness the following passage from Xenophon. *Ἐν τούτῳ Κῦρος, παρελαύνων αὐτὸς σὺν Πίγρητι τῷ ἑρμηνεῖ καὶ ἄλλοις τρισὶν ἢ τέτταρσι, τῷ Κλεάρχῳ ἐβόα, ἄγειν τὸ στράτευμα κατὰ μέσον τὸ τῶν πολεμίων, ὅτι ἐκεῖ βασιλεὺς εἴη· "κἂν τουτο," ἔφη, "νικῶμεν, πάνθ' ἡμῖν πεποίηται."*—*De Cyri Expedit.* lib. i. cap. 8.

XVIII.

The chief qualification of a great statesman is not minute accuracy, but general expansion of views; an accomplishment equally remote from headstrong precipitance, and from tardy vacillation.

XIX.

There is scarcely any species of polity or administration that may not boast some peculiar excellences or beneficial results. An array of these alone would furnish a plausible defence of the most obnoxious establishments; and in such unfair methods of argumentation, Paley, though with consummate ability, has too much indulged in his political speculations. Admitting that some of the worst institutions or forms of government in theory, are combined with several advantages in practice, and that some of the best theoretically are connected with considerable practical evils, we are not left without a principle of selection. The question occurs, Which has a *preponderance* of recommendations in its favour? Though men are perhaps more apt to modify systems than systems to influence men, yet certain systems afford least scope or inducement to the perverting operation of humanity. The maxim introduced by Johnson towards the close of Goldsmith's Traveller, that the happiness of nations is little affected by their laws or political constitution, may justly be classed with those poetic

illusions which, however agreeable to the fancy, a slight acquaintance with fact, apart from reasoning, would be sufficient to dissolve.

XX.

We seem to be arrived at that state of society and the arts, in which there is so great a disproportion between the necessaries and the luxuries of life, that the former are very dear, and the latter very cheap.

XXI.

There is only one description of persons that know the vanity of titles and distinctions; not in general those who are accustomed to them, but such as possess superiority of lights. The effect of names and external badges of dignity is to amuse the vulgar; but wise men grasp at the substance, and despise the shadow.

XXII.

Dependence is mostly in vain, where the union of many for a considerable period is requisite. Almost all failures in political confederacies, as well as private associations, have been owing to the dissensions or jealousies of their members.

XXIII.

It is usual to ascribe gradual and imperceptible changes to Time; but this is only another name for

a variety of complex or unknown causes. Such is the interpretation to be applied to the celebrated aphorism of Lord Bacon, about Time being the greatest of innovators—*novator maximus tempus*—a remark simply importing that the changes produced by minute and complicated influences during a long period, surpass those which arise from any sudden revolution or catastrophe. It is the prerogative of few to estimate the operation of common and tranquil events, which are not decyphered by the generality till the appearance of some extraordinary crisis, when surprise is awakened, similar to that of Rip Van Winkle at the mutations which had occurred during his memorable sleep.

XXIV.

The separation of men into distinct parties, which seems to be an effect of the exercise of judgment, is more frequently occasioned by impatience of that exercise. It is much easier to adopt the opinions, or rather the watchwords, of any particular body in the gross, than to think for oneself, or to select truth out of different bodies.

XXV.

All systems and institutions, whether civil or ecclesiastical, which are incapable of moving along with the tide of general improvement, will sooner or later be swept away by its progress. The alleged infallibility and unchangeableness of the Romish

Church, constitutes the principle of its destruction. Many of its leading tenets and observances were framed for times of barbarous ignorance, and can never bear the test of advancing civilization and knowledge.

XXVI.

It is commonly minds of an inferior though active character, that are most concerned in great political agitations. Genius, so well fitted, one should imagine, to control the tide of events, and regulate the stormy passions of men, dwells in a calmer and loftier sphere, and is mostly a passive spectator of public commotions. Even the kind of intellect inseparable from such affairs often lurks behind the scenes; as Lady Wortley Montagu informs us that in Turkey the *effendis* or men of letters are the contrivers, and soldiers the agents, of revolutions.

XXVII.

One of the firmest supports of princes and statesmen is the general distribution of moderate wealth, and the multiplication of domestic comforts among the members of the community. It is chiefly this circumstance which has hitherto kept together the heterogeneous materials composing the American population; as to the same cause may be attributed in no small degree the tranquillity that has so long prevailed in China, containing, according to the most authentic accounts, above three hundred and sixty millions of inhabitants. The whole course of

things, in modern society and politics, seems tending to a comparative equalization of property, and other external advantages.

XXVIII.

He is little qualified to rule the minds or the affairs of men, who on every slight embarrassment or opposition, is so pusillanimous or resentful as to abandon the reins.

XXIX.

The dignified superiority of the ancient Roman senate, which made the ambassadors of Pyrrhus describe it as a venerable assembly of kings, and which seemed to give its members the appearance of heroes and demi-gods, was not owing to a greater separation than prevails in modern times between the higher and the lower ranks of society. In the fortune, manners, and pretensions of those who constituted that august council, there was little to distinguish them from the generality of private citizens. The rustic occupations of Cincinnatus, and the cottage with the modicum of land which formed the sole possession of Fabricius, are only examples of the patriarchal simplicity common to those primitive periods. During all the earlier ages of the republic, the artificial barriers which divide the different classes of a community advanced in civilization and opulence, were for the most part unknown. It was in consequence of the introduc-

tion of the Twelve Tables that the marriage of a patrician with a plebeian became illegal. Nor can education, with its ennobling influences, account for the phenomenon, literature having been held in contempt till about the sixth century from the foundation of the city. The causes, which are perhaps numerous, require to be sought in the sentiments peculiar to a people emerging from a condition of comparative barbarism; inured to hardship, self-denial, and poverty; unacquainted with social refinements, and therefore exempt from the seductions which they create; more habituated to enterprise than speculation; and whose currents of feeling, restricted to a few simple channels, flowed in a stream proportionally more deep and steady. When riches, the parent of luxury, had increased, and objects of public ambition were blended with motives of individual aggrandizement, the majestic and imposing character of the senatorial body gradually disappeared.

XXX.

The science of government, and the principles of rational freedom, have perhaps made greater progress within the last two centuries, than during all preceding ages. M. Guizot, with some appearance of justice, refers the highest proficience in these respects to the eighteenth century, notwithstanding the convulsions with which it was attended. The elements then at work, however, were but a revival of those which had agitated Britain a century before; while these may be considered as the mere extension to

politics of principles which had operated in matters ecclesiastical at the period of the Reformation.*

* It would require no small hardihood or prejudice to deny the extraordinary advancement of America in free institutions, though it will be time enough for her to boast when she has cleared herself of the plague-spot of slavery—the stigma that vitiates the pretensions of the antique states to the genuine love of liberty, which was demanded with sufficient vehemence by a certain class called citizens, but denied to the rest of the population, who were kept in a condition of the most ignominious servitude. It is melancholy, though to some it may appear invidious to record, what however the magnanimity due to the failings of heroic worth should not lead us to overlook, that George Washington himself, the founder of the American republic, lived and died a slaveholder; a fact which the panegyrists of that great man seem to pass by in oblivion.—Heaven knows how little reason we in Britain, till lately affected with a similar blot, have to plume ourselves; among whom, to say nothing of various practical grievances, which the candid of all parties would acknowledge to exist, the right for which Milton, in the general strain of that most eloquent of performances, the Areopagitica, contends, is but a name,—prosecutions for speculative opinion still disgracing our courts of law.

Locke is sometimes represented as the first who asserted the doctrines of religious freedom; but several preceding authors had expressed substantially the same views; in particular Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia*, though the concessions for which he pleads are contradicted by his subsequent conduct and writings; some of the earlier Independents or Brownists—a sect acknowledged by Mackintosh (Preliminary Dissertation) to have led the way in proclaiming the rights of conscience—the incomparable Cudworth; Jeremy Taylor in his Liberty of Prophesying, published in 1647; Dr. John Owen in a piece on Toleration annexed to his Discourse before Parliament the day after the execution of Charles the First, and Milton in his Treatise of Civil power in Ecclesiastical Causes. An advocate of similar principles also appeared, so far back as the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, in the person of that best and most learned of the Latin Fathers, Lactantius. Even the emperor Julian, whose character has been so bitterly assailed by ecclesiastical historians, was not less explicit in avowing the like sentiments, which he also practically maintained. In a letter to the inhabitants of Bostra, quoted in Mandeville's Fable

XXXI.

It is more easy for a minister of state to retain his office in seasons when he has to grapple with momentous or extraordinary affairs, than amidst the uniformity of common and tranquil occurrences. The reasons are, partly because the affairs themselves are apt to fill the imagination of the public, more than the manner of their execution; partly because, if splendid, he receives a portion of their lustre by reflection; if disastrous, their magnitude and difficulty suggest grounds of apology, as well as diminish the desirableness of occupying his sphere. It is said of Cardinal Richelieu, that apprehending the decline of his influence with Louis the Thirteenth, he contrived to bring about the loss of a battle, that the exigence of the case might re-establish his ascendency. During the late continental war, there were few changes of administration; now, when peace has long prevailed over the greater part

of the Bees, he says, "It is by discourse and reason, not by blows, insults, or violence, that men are to be informed of truth, and convinced of error." The merits of the English philosopher on the point in review are well described in the following passage from a writer of no mean authority: "Locke, whose praise is less that of being bold and original, than of being temperate, sound, lucid, and methodical, deserves the immortal honour of having systematised and rendered popular the doctrines of civil and religious liberty." I quote from the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, a work which is now in great degree neglected, though interspersed with a variety of acute philosophic reflections, and which in argument and profound statesmanlike views far more surpasses the production which it was intended to answer, than the latter is superior in exuberance and profuse brilliancy of rhetoric.

of the world, they are so frequent as to excite no surprise.

XXXII.

Of the many vicious or absurd principles that marked the institutes of Lycurgus, perhaps the most vicious, to which even the odious system of Helotism appears to have been but subordinate, was the exclusive devotion of the citizens to a military life. The main labours of existence should ever be for periods of tranquillity, as these form the rule, and seasons of disturbance or war the exception. The Chinese seem to have acted most steadily on this axiom, their chief energies having been directed for ages to the cultivation of the arts of peace. It is not without reason that among this extraordinary people, the civilians or men of letters take precedence of the profession of arms.

The productions of mind display the dignity, the pursuits of war the degradation of man.

XXXIII.

By long familiarity, men become so attached to the existing order of things, that any alteration, however advantageous in the end, has almost the effect of tearing away the fibres of the heart. It may reconcile us to some of the evils attendant on political revolutions to know, that with the subversion of several things truly valuable, is commonly connected the overthrow of many vain idols of the mind.

XXXIV.

The spectacle of modern Rome is an epitome of all history, exhibiting the grandeur, the degradation, the nothingness of man. In contemplating her dilapidated temples and amphitheatres, her ruinous arches and prostrate columns, we naturally heave a sigh at the remembrance of her vanished glory. Yet her later cultivation of arts and letters may surely be regarded with more complacency by the philanthropist or the philosopher, than her ancient encroachments and wars, her triumphal processions, and idolatrous rites. It was remarked concerning Rome of a former epoch, that she had more pictures and statues than inhabitants. This, one of her proudest boasts in days when her lustre was but little dim, is a distinction which she may still perhaps claim, though the arts themselves are now almost extinct in their once favourite abode. Yet while we may apply to this storied spot what Cicero said of Athens, that wherever we place our footsteps we tread on some memorial of the past,* the voices and relics of the dead will ever vindicate the appellation of the Eternal City.

XXXV.

Great national changes and revolutions are accomplished principally by those who reside in the capital,

* Literally, on some history. "Quacunque ingredimur, in aliquam historiam vestigium ponimus."—*De Finib.* lib. v. cap. 2.

or at the seat of government. The mass of the population are in most cases indifferent or passive. The fortunes of France, and in no slight degree of the other European states, during the memorable era of her first Revolution, were dependent on the movements of a few small juntos at Paris.

XXXVI.

The effect of political party resembles that of the division of labour; the merits and defects of a measure being more fully developed in consequence of different minds employing attention on the one or the other, than if all were equally occupied with the consideration of both.

XXXVII.

In the estimation of a wise man, the single judgment of a superior intellect on any question of state policy, would possess more weight than the determination of the largest and most able deliberative assembly. No one who adverts to the general decisions of Parliament during the last century or century and a half—undoubtedly the brightest period in its annals—or who reflects on the inaccurate and absurd notions frequently expressed by many of its members, can entertain extraordinary reverence for its opinions. Though the British Parliament is perhaps the first legislative body in the world, in point of rank, talents, and opulence, it usually combines, with its more sterling quali-

ties, a large admixture of inferior elements. The consequence is, that in abundant instances its wisdom is overpowered by its folly, or, what is worse, by a reckless defiance of principle. It was a remark of Cardinal de Retz, that every assembly above a hundred is a mob; an extent which the Storthing or parliament of Norway, by some deemed one of the best constructed national councils ever devised, is not permitted to attain.*

XXXVIII.

Few circumstances are more likely to bring on a political crisis, than alarming representations of its approach.

XXXIX.

It requires only two or three wise heads in certain situations, that is, the principal thrones of Europe, to preserve the greater part of the civilised world in a state of constant tranquillity.

XL.

Mankind are naturally mechanical and stationary. Without some external impulse, they will move on in the same monotonous manner, and continue to occupy the same local sphere to which they have been habituated. The numerous emigrations therefore

* See Laing's Journal of a Residence in Norway, p. 115 *et seq.*

which occur, together with the smaller but frequent changes of residence, connexions, and modes of life, indicate some disruption in the native feelings of our countrymen. "In these days," says Southey, "there is not perhaps one man in a thousand (except among the higher families) who, if he lives to manhood, is buried with his fathers."* The reflection is surely somewhat melancholy, whatever may be the necessity or the incidental advantages attaching to such vicissitudes. It is the contrast to the modern hurry and dissipation of affairs which constitutes one of the charms belonging to the portraiture, in the Doctor, of the quiet, unsophisticated existence of the family of the Doves, who scarcely looked beyond their secluded village of Ingleton, cultivating in remote succession from father to son the same small hereditary farm.

XLI.

There is much less expenditure of life in naval than in land battles. It is computed that in the memorable engagement of Waterloo, the number of the slain on both sides was near fifty thousand. At the action of the Nile, though so bloody and decisive, the carnage was not one eighth that amount. The humanity as well as policy of Britain therefore, dictates the importance of directing her chief energies to the maintenance of the strength and superiority of her wooden walls, which are at once her bulwark

* Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, vol. ii. p. 169, second edit.

and her glory. Notwithstanding all the lights which political science has of late received, and which have served to dissipate so many prophetic chimeras, the observation of Sir Walter Raleigh respecting the dependence of Britain on her marine, is substantially correct; "a land," says he, "which can never be conquered whilst the kings thereof keep the dominion of the seas."* "Whosoever," he remarks in the same treatise, "commands the sea commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself." The eminence of the principal Grecian states, that of Attica in particular, had its foundation in their naval force, which was equally necessary to the security as to the rise of their grandeur. What British heart will not respond to the sentiment embodied in the well-known verse of Campbell, which the most accomplished of modern critics has pronounced "one of the noblest stanzas of English lyric poetry?"

> Britannia needs no bulwark,
> No towers along the steep:
> Her march is on the mountain wave,
> Her home is on the deep.

Let us hope that the time is not far distant when our maritime superiority, hitherto so much an object of national pride on military grounds, will be not less so as employed exclusively for the purposes of peaceful communication, and no longer made tributary to the senseless game of war.

* A Discourse of the Invention of Ships, &c.—*Raleigh's Works*, vol. viii. page 325.

XLII.

A government conducted by a single individual would invariably be most efficient, if his possession of talent and integrity could be ensured. The only instance of rule absolutely perfect, that of the Deity, is sole and unrestricted; so that in the abstract we might admit the somewhat startling paradox, that the highest model of administration would be a pure despotism—a maxim which may form the basis of a practical system whenever rulers, by any miraculous transformation, approach the character of gods, instead of being, as they too often are, but sorry specimens of humanity.—The consultations of an assembly embarrass and weaken. Yet a distribution of the legislative functions into the hands of many is ever the most desirable; for what is lost in promptitude and vigour, is gained in security and public satisfaction.

XLIII.

The statesman most fitted for the superintendence of affairs, is not perhaps one who may boast the most accurate or extensive political knowledge, but he who possesses that particular kind or portion of it which is nearest akin to the genius and circumstances of the age in which he happens to live. It was remarked by the wisest legislator of antiquity, in a saying which is sometimes absurdly enough quoted in defence of acknowledged abuses, but which in reality justifies even questionable innovations when loudly and gene-

rally demanded, that in framing laws he had prepared not those which were abstractedly the best, but such as the Athenians were best able to receive; on the same principle, we may presume, that a skilful physician, instead of recommending always the most nutritious diet to his patients, prescribes that which is most adapted to their digestive capabilities.

XLIV.

Public reformations are sure to arrive, sooner or later; but who can estimate or atone for the countless sufferings occasioned by the delay? or answer for their effectual operation after they have so long been delayed? It is too late to repair the house when crumbling into ruins.

XLV.

Were the wisest systems of polity, national or domestic, to be established, they would be only of brief duration: changes would inevitably arise, because mankind are changeable; and their restlessness alone will ever ensure an abundance of innovations. Are we therefore to lament, because the mutations incident to mortal things attend also laws and public institutions? Only in this respect, that men appear more disposed to encroach on what is good than what is evil. Abuses and inanities are allowed to continue long without molestation; while arrangements adapted for beneficial purposes are soon displaced or impaired.

XLVI.

The French nation was perhaps as far advanced in general refinement of manners and language, in the age of Louis the Fourteenth, as the English at the present period; though it is remarkable that in civil freedom the priority has been with ourselves. While the struggle for liberty, begun by Hampden and his fellow-patriots, was in progress, that selfish monarch was wielding a despotic government, which continued unrelaxed till the fiery outbreak of the Revolution.* But in matters of external polish, we have ever been considerably behind our neighbours; just as in the revival of letters Italy outstripped us by more than a century. Perhaps the tardiness of our progress has been owing in great degree to our insular situation, which has occasioned, with several of our proudest distinctions, some at least of our minor disadvantages. It is an observation of Cæsar respecting the ancient

* Boileau little dreamed, when pouring out his invectives against the British under Cromwell, that he was depicting his own countrymen of the close of last century. The summons to arms is particularly striking, as descriptive of the aims which determined us in the late Gallican contests:

Arme-toi, France; pren la foudre.
C'est à toi de réduire en poudre
Ces sanglans ennemis des lois.
Sui la Victoire qui t' appelle,
Et va sur ce peuple rebelle
Venger la querelle des rois.

Ode contre les Anglois.

inhabitants of Britain, that those who resided on the sea-coast were more civilized than such as dwelt in the interior, the former having more frequent communication with the natives of the continent.* The prolonged barbarism of Africa has been deduced, among other causes, from the small extent of coast compared with the mainland, and from the natural barriers that exist to the vast territories within; Egypt, the only part which ever rose to eminence, being intersected with the Nile, as well as otherwise favoured with facilities for intercourse.

XLVII.

The opponents of national or political innovations are commonly those who are equally adverse to alteration in the state and sentiment of their own minds. A person will hardly dread the thought of exterior or public change, whose ideas in general are undergoing a process of incessant change or augmentation. Yet this is certainly the case with every thinking or disciplined mind; for what is intellectual advancement but a series of intellectual innovations? It is natural that they whose understandings are stationary should wish politics to be so, and in consequence deprecate all attempts at progression or improvement.

* It is to the inhabitants of Kent, the part of Britain nearest to the French coast, that this eulogium was paid. Ex his omnibus longe sunt humanissimi, qui Cantium incolunt; quæ regio est maritima omnis; neque multum a Gallicâ differunt consuetudine. Interiores plerique frumenta non serunt: sed lacte et carne vivunt; pellibusque

XLVIII.

In an estimate of the middle ages, and of the Catholic system of those times, it would be disingenuous not to notice the frequent utility of ecclesiastics in softening the ferocity of the barons, and appeasing or mitigating the quarrels between princes and states. In those emergences the pope, the bishops, the clergy, were often successful mediators.

XLIX.

One cause of political party is the ideal connexion with distinguished characters or events by which the multitude of subordinate adherents beguile their imagination. They who possess no personal importance, and who have no method of communicating notoriety or effect to their individual sentiments, may in a sense attain all by proxy; for the adoption of a certain system of politics gives them an imaginary identity with its most eminent partizans, and a kind of participation in their success or glory. The circumstance may explain the fact, that while most persons like to hear their private friends disparaged, few bear with equanimity disparagement of their own faction. Of the former they are a sort of rivals; of the latter they constitute an integral portion.

sunt vestiti.—*De Bello Gallico*, lib. v. cap. 14. The reason of the superiority is also noted in another passage: Cantium, quo fere omnes ex Galliâ naves appelluntur.—*Ibid.* cap. 13.

L.

The claims of Edward the First to the crown of Scotland, and of Edward the Third to that of France, have been productive of more rancorous animosity, if not bloodshed, than almost any other contest in the annals of our country. The enmity thus excited has been perpetuated from age to age, besides having occasioned, or contributed to exasperate, many of the foreign wars in which the English have been engaged; while the effects of those unjust and absurd pretensions are not yet perhaps entirely obliterated from the feelings or circumstances of the respective nations. A similar antipathy, not wholly extinct, between the French and Germans, has been traced to a much more remote, if not more trivial origin—the conflicts preceding the separation of Germany and France at the peace of Verdun in 843, when the vast empire of Charlemagne was dismembered under his three grandsons.

LI.

I question whether affairs were not conducted as wisely, at least as successfully, in times of antiquity, when auguries and oracles, events of an accidental nature, or the decisions of individual opinion, formed the rules of procedure, as in the present epoch, when political skill and deliberative counsel are the ostensible directers of government. Under any species of administration, it is seldom that both intellect and

integrity have a predominating sway; and in the transactions of empires, success is often attained not so much by well-adjusted schemes, as by a happy concurrence of fortuitous incidents. With regard however to the ancient practice of divination, it is but fair to mention that those to whom it was chiefly intrusted, as among the Romans the college of augurs, the haruspices, and the interpreters of the Sibylline prophecies, were usually persons more or less connected with the government or magistracy, and whose explanations therefore were in great measure determined by reasons of state. The oracles in particular, it is well known, were often bribed by those who consulted them; so that both auguries and oracular responses were less influenced by chance than might at first be supposed.

LII.

To a person of patriotic disposition, it is perhaps more consolatary than mortifying, that no individual is of much consequence in the system of society. Whatever juncture arises, there need be little apprehension of a deficiency of talent to carry on the affairs of nations or communities; for either those affairs will exact but moderate abilities, or the circumstances that require will also create a superiority of mental qualification, the supply of which is commonly regulated by the demand. There is no dearth of genius among the ordinary mass of men, as appears in times of great public commotion, when a number of pre-eminent minds are usually developed,

that otherwise might have slumbered on in obscurity, or died in embryo.

LIII.

Mankind appear to be in league against their own interests, and betray the same spirit in matters of secular concern as in those of religion. Let a wiser and better course of things be exhibited ever so clearly, or enforced with the utmost cogency, no practical alteration is admitted, or only after repeated struggles against its adoption. The battle with error or apathy must be fought again and again; and often those who make the most strenuous efforts in the cause, never live to witness its triumph, or reap the fruit of their exertions. Fox, Sheridan, Grattan, Romilly, expired amid contests which then seemed all but hopeless. It was with no little difficulty, and in no short time, that Frederick the Great of Prussia, though an absolute monarch, was able to extinguish servitude in his dominions; being opposed not only by the lords of the soil, but by the serfs themselves, who entertained a morbid dread of the innovation, though their condition was so wretched that they could neither marry, nor possess any kind of property, without the consent of their feudal superiors.*

* See Lord Dover's Life of Frederick the Second, vol. i. p. 433.

In affairs of legislation and politics, there is often the same antipathy to change as among the least civilized orders in reference to their untutored habits; such a repugnance, and for reasons about as substantial, as is so well delineated in the "Cottagers of Glenburnie," a work that exhibits a picture of manners not yet extinct in other classes besides those of the peasantry, whether Scotch or English.

LIV.

The remains of political prejudice ever linger the longest in remote towns and villages, where the possession of only a moderate degree of intelligence, added to a prevalent system of dependence and exclusion, is apt to nourish sentiments of servility on the one hand, and of assumption on the other.

LV.

The architecture of the middle ages, as displayed in our old cathedrals, churches, and bridges, and in the ruins of monasteries and other religious edifices, is one proof among a multitude of others, that the knowledge and acquirements existing in those periods were not so scanty or contemptible as some would represent. These structures are illustrious monu-

"Man," says Mr. Hallam, "who, speaking of him collectively, has never reasoned for himself, is the puppet of impulses and prejudices, be they for good or for evil. These are, in the usual course of things, traditional notions and sentiments, strengthened by repetition, and running into habitual trains of thought. Nothing is more difficult, in general, than to make a nation perceive any thing as true, or seek its own interest in any manner, but as its forefathers have opined or acted. Change in these respects has been, even in Europe, where there is most of flexibility, very gradual; the work, not of argument or instruction, but of exterior circumstances slowly operating through a long lapse of time."—*Literature of Europe*, vol. i. p. 498.—Argument and instruction however, operating in a thousand imperceptible ways, have some influence, not only in awakening attention, but in creating or shaping those outward circumstances that are here represented as the sole causes of change in national habits of thought and action.

ments of inventive genius, scientific attainments, and mechanical skill. It would be difficult to make a reflecting and independent mind believe, that the times which could produce such specimens of architectural beauty and splendour, were characterised by gross ignorance or barbarism.*

* Of the taste and exquisite workmanship often conspicuous in the sculptures and minor ornaments of ecclesiastical buildings erected in the periods above mentioned, it would not be easy to find a more just or picturesque illustration than is given by Sir Walter Scott in his Lay of the Last Minstrel, when describing the appearance of a window in Melrose Abbey, as seen by moonlight :

The moon on the east oriel shone
Through slender shafts of shapely stone,
  By foliaged tracery combined;
Thou would'st have thought some fairy's hand,
'Twixt poplars straight the ozier wand,
  In many a freakish knot, had twined;
Then framed a spell, when the work was done,
And changed the willow-wreaths to stone.
The silver light, so pale and faint,
Show'd many a prophet, and many a saint,
  Whose image on the glass was dyed;
Full in the midst, his Cross of Red
Triumphant Michael brandished,
  And trampled the Apostate's pride.
The moon-beam kiss'd the holy pane,
Aud threw on the pavement a bloody stain.

Canto II. 11.

Such exhibitions of antique tracery and embellishment may suggest to an imaginative mind the graceful figures represented on the Grecian vases—the Portland for example—or what, though open to every eye, is perhaps unparalleled for chaste delicate beauty —a tree, the silvery birch especially, with its multitudinous assemblage of minute branches standing out in high relief against a clear sky in winter.

LVI.

It is the details of politics that absorb the generality, and preclude attention from leading principles, or the operation of systems as a whole. It is thus that centuries pass away with so little improvement. Legislation is still in its infancy.

ON YOUTH AND OLD AGE.

I.

The reason why old persons so well remember youthful scenes and events, while they often forget affairs that happened but yesterday, is resolvable in part into the dependence of memory on attention. We attend most, for instance, where there is the greatest inducement or pleasure. In youth, pleasure is particularly felt, the faculties or capacities of enjoyment being then very strong and susceptible. In old age, sensibility is considerably impaired; less pleasure is therefore experienced, and less attention is exercised; consequently there is a fainter recollection of recent circumstances. Besides, we are perhaps so constituted as to remember pleasing things more than painful. Accordingly, the aged seldom dilate on the disagreeable incidents or feelings of their earlier days. To these considerations

it may be added, that during so long an interval fancy has frequently reverted to the particulars retained, which have thus become blended with a number of subsequent reflections or occurrences.

II.

Time appears long or short chiefly according to the multiplicity or paucity of ideas that pass through the mind. We may see, in one of the papers of Addison, a beautiful oriental fable illustrative of the point.* Something of the sort appears to have place in dreaming, where the rapidity of the mental operations is so great, that during a very short sleep a person may seem to himself to pass through the successive stages of a life. In that remarkable sensation called night-mare, which is seldom perhaps protracted beyond a few minutes, we often fancy ourselves struggling with an interminable series of perplexities and embarrassments.—One reason therefore why persons advanced in life concur in admitting its extreme brevity, is because they possess but few reminiscences of their past existence: it is only the more prominent facts in their history that memory has preserved. The notion may be illustrated by the case of a traveller looking back on the extent of territory which he has traversed in his journey: the distance appears short, because many valleys and other intervening spaces are out of sight.

* The Story of the Sultan of Egypt, Spectator, No. 94.

III.

In youth, the imagination is employed principally on the future; in old age, on the past. Of the former circumstance, a deficiency of experience is the cause; of the latter, an excess. In the one state, ignorance of life predominates; in the other, a growing insipidity of its joys. We generally look backward in misery, and forward in pleasure.

IV.

It seems unadvisable to attempt composition in early life, as the understanding is then almost wholly unfurnished with thought as well as expression, and not possessing the requisite materials for composing, would only waste in the effort the time and attention which had better be occupied with surrounding objects, or other sources of information. Milton might well censure as a "preposterous exaction," what he calls "forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which," says he, "are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head filled by long reading and observing with elegant maxims and copious invention."* The remark, though directed especially against juvenile essays in the learned languages, applies no less to similar attempts in our own tongue.

* Tractate of Education.

V.

Old age may deride or censure the buoyancy and thoughtless indifference of youth; yet there is more actual enjoyment connected with its careless levity, than can be acquired by all the prudential and calculating policy of riper years.

VI.

Premature developement of the intellectual faculties is generally succeeded by melancholy, in part because healthful exercises and pastimes are in such cases often neglected; in part because excitement and activity of mind oppress the bodily frame, at a time especially when its growth requires mental quietude and repose; in part likewise because novelty in the acquisition of ideas, so fertile a source of pleasure, is sooner exhausted.

VII.

The glow and artlessness of early feeling are so ill compensated by knowledge, that many with no contemptible capacities or accomplishments, would give all their literary attainments and superiority, to possess once more the unsuspecting confidence of childhood, and its facility of being pleased. Such, while sighing over delights that have vanished never to return, may find an echo, perhaps a solace

to their grief, in the beautiful language of the Minstrel:

> And give me back the calm, contented mind;
> Which, late, exulting, view'd in Nature's frame,
> Goodness untainted, wisdom unconfined,
> Grace, grandeur, and utility combined.
> Restore those tranquil days, that saw me still
> Well pleased with all, but most with human-kind:
> When Fancy roam'd through Nature's works at will,
> Uncheck'd by cold distrust, and uninform'd of ill.

How finely are the same touching regrets conveyed also in the following more impassioned and melancholy strain, written by one whose genius and experience were alike precocious:

> Oh could I feel as I have felt,—or be what I have been,
> Or weep as I could once have wept, o'er many a vanish'd scene;
> As springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish though they be,
> So, midst the wither'd waste of life, those tears would flow to me.

Effusions of this pensive cast, however, will appear to those who have never known poetic emotion—to the callous, the worldly, the dry dissectors of things, as enigmatical or idle vapouring; for some men's souls are like instruments of music never played upon, or struck only in single notes; or their fountains of sensibility lie so deep, that it would require something like the rod of Moses to make the rock gush with water.

VIII.

Few suppose, at least in their own case, that as life advances, understanding and sense may decline. Yet

it is certain that with multitudes, an increase of years brings only an increase of mental imperfections and frailties. Goethe, when near eighty, but with little diminished force of genius, had the candour to own, that it requires no small effort for those who are descending the vale, to be as wise and good as they once were. A wrong principle of judgment multiplies absurdities or mistakes in proportion to the period of its exercise. Flexibility of mind too, so powerful an instrument of improvement in the young, is abated by time. "I observe," says Jonathan Edwards, "that old men seldom have any advantage of new discoveries; because they are beside the way of thinking to which they have been so long used." Harvey is said to have declared, that he could never induce any one beyond forty to believe in the hypothesis which has immortalised his name. Such strange perversity however must be owing less to the mere inroads of decay, than to the neglect of sound habits of reflection during the dawn of the faculties, which, if rightly trained, bid fair to be as pliant in old age as in childhood.

IX.

Deep feeling is the companion of taciturnity. In the spring-tide of passion, youth is sparing of words, but absorbed in emotion. Afterward, when the day-dreams of love are vanished, words take their place.

X.

The aged frequently appear inferior, in an intellectual point of view, to the rising race; yet that appearance is in great degree fallacious. It is true, age has dropped several trappings, makes fewer attempts to please, and is less rapid in the flow or the expression of ideas; but the main stamina of mind and attainments, in any particular generation, are commonly equal to those of the subsequent one. The leaves and blossoms are gone—it is winter—but the trunk and branches remain.

XI.

To the juvenile apprehension, man and his affairs seem invested with a kind of shadowy, undefinable importance, especially if presented in the aspect of an object never to be realised. I recollect, on being overtaken with illness in childhood, and learning that there was little chance of my recovery, the kind of awe with which my imagination contemplated those who had arrived at adult age. It is not surprising that as the faculties expand, and the world becomes better known, the mists and colourings cast on the future by its remoteness, should in many instances be succeeded by too bleak and bald an appearance of things.

XII.

Youth possesses the vigour and fancy requisite for successful mental effort, but is mostly deficient in the

necessary judgment. Old age possesses the judgment, without the impulse or the fire. No general maxim however can be laid down, as to the season when the understanding attains its highest perfection, or when its powers begin to decline. Several of our distinguished authors have produced their most eminent works at an early period of life; while a considerable list of names might be mentioned, whose proudest achievements were the fruit of mature manhood or of old age. Some of the best compositions of Pope, Sheridan, and Byron, as well as all the exquisite effusions of Collins, were finished before the age of six-and-twenty. By about seven-and-twenty, Congreve had secured the first place, both in tragedy and comedy, among the dramatists of his time, having added to the number of his plays the last but one—the Mourning Bride. Newton had accomplished his leading discoveries in science by his forty-fifth year, though he lived till his eighty-fifth.* At thirty-three, Swift had given nothing to the world, nor, except to clear-sighted judges, exhibited any decisive marks of superior capacity; although the previous ripeness of his invention cannot be doubted, when we remember that about his thirtieth year he wrote the Tale of a Tub, so marked by originality, and replete with the pithiest and most meditative wit. Cowper was above fifty on the publication of his first work. The Essays and principal treatises of Bacon were the offspring of

* It would seem that his three most noted discoveries, relating to fluxions, gravitation, and light, were conceived before the age of twenty-four.

his full-grown faculties; the former not having seen the light till towards the age of thirty-five, the Advancement of Learning eight or nine years afterwards, while that wonderful monument of creative wisdom, the *Novum Organum Scientiarum*, which had occupied him more or less during the greater part of his career, and which he is said to have transcribed no fewer than twelve different times, was not published till he had reached threescore. Dryden's most imaginative and vigorous pieces, his Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, and his Fables, were his latest, being struck off a little before his death, when near seventy. It is affirmed that Chaucer, the prototype of Dryden in part of the Fables, was not less old on the appearance of the Canterbury Tales. Of some of our immortal luminaries, the intellectual brilliance has been almost equally conspicuous in youth and in age; though the most resplendent of them, and the greatest of human geniuses, Shakspeare, is scarcely an instance, —none of his earlier dramas ranking with his best, but his profundity and force of invention unfolding themselves most in his riper years. Before thirty, Milton had composed L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, Lycidas, and Arcades; while Paradise Lost was not completed till about his fifty-seventh year. Burke was more than sixty when he wrote his Reflections, the most eloquent and celebrated of his performances. On the whole it will scarcely be questioned, that a greater number of distinguished works have been executed after than before the age of thirty.

XIII.

The worldly wise and cynical are as mistaken in denying, as they are sometimes unfeeling in laughing to scorn, generous emotions in the youthful bosom.

XIV.

Comforts parting from old age are like the leaves falling from a tree that is destined to be cut down or blasted before the return of spring.

XV.

The sensitive regard of the youthful fancy to the opinions and tastes of others, is soon abated or destroyed by a more intimate acquaintance with men, which shows the folly of the grounds on which their predilections and antipathies are commonly founded.

XVI.

Deficiency of enthusiastic and refined impulses in old age, may be owing as much to decay of feeling in general, as to intercourse with the world.

XVII.

Youth abounds in friendships, as the trees put forth leaves in spring. But the year glides along, and the

trees shed their foliage: life also passes on, and man lays aside his friendships. Though scarcely a subject of philosophic regret, it is not a little touching to a melancholy imagination, that there are so few examples of intimacies contracted in the first stages of existence surviving to its close, or even to what Dante styles *mezzo camin*, its middle course. It is recorded in praise of Atticus, that his friendship with Gellius Canus, whose acquaintance he had shared in his school-boy days, grew stronger to the last.*

XVIII.

There are several reasons why entrance on active scenes and duties should commence at an earlier date than is customary. First, because of the shortness of human existence. Were our years like those of the antediluvians, the delay might well be prolonged till the age of thirty or forty; but by that time, alas! the best portion of our life is consumed. In the next place, there are energies and capabilities in the young, which should not be permitted to remain dormant or unappropriated. For certain purposes of utility, youth is better qualified than riper age; and though failures or defects may sometimes accompany juvenile efforts, sufficient allowance will commonly be made for them by candid minds, indulgence and good-will being almost universally conceded to the young. Besides,

* Hoc quoque sit Attici bonitatis exemplum, quod cum eo, quem puerum in ludo cognoverat, adeo conjuncte vixit, ut ad extremam ætatem amicitia eorum creverit.—*Corn. Nep. in Vita Attici*, cap. x.

the evil need not be of frequent occurrence, if those placed in immediate connexion were to afford the benefit of their friendly suggestions. But perhaps the most important consideration is the desirableness of avoiding the formation of opinions and habits too foreign to general feeling; a disadvantage almost inseparable from having the character and sentiments moulded in a sphere of comparative inactivity and seclusion. As it is, we seem too dilatory in all our movements. We begin to live when we should rather be learning to die; and the greater part of our days is spent in preparations for happiness, which never arrives, or only when too late. At the age of twenty-three, Pitt was prime minister of England; at twenty-six, Napoleon had the command of the army of Italy; and Augustus, when only twenty, was first consul of the Roman republic, and in effect almost master of the world.

The people of America are on the whole perhaps best circumstanced in these respects; the demand for most species of employment being there so ample, and the means of subsistence so abundant, that a person is rather forwarded than otherwise by the contraction of early domestic ties. There is something wrong, *prima facie*, in the prevailing usages of society among us, as interposing so many formidable barriers to the indulgence of a sentiment which nature has implanted, and of which she may fairly be considered the best interpreter with regard to time. Marry in thy youth, was a maxim inculcated by the ancient Persians. Franklin appears to have taken the right view of the subject, with his usual practical

sagacity, in one of his ingenious and valuable Essays. In several of the older states of Europe, feeling is often allowed to remain ripe so long that it falls from the tree.

XIX.

It is difficult, in mature age, even to conceive the depth of imagination and feeling which often prevail in the more early periods of their exercise. Illusion, it is true, often arises from associating the experience of a later day with the reminiscences of childhood; but that imagination lives and revels and works some of her strangest marvels, in the youthful brain, I cannot doubt for a moment. To what other influence can be ascribed the terror inspired in children when left alone in the dark, conjuring up and arraying in adventitious horror the phantoms they have heard of in story? Or how explain the awe that seizes them on beholding appearances resembling those of phantasmagoria, except as such phenomena are blended in the mind with ideal wonders created or moulded by fancy? To the operation of this mystic faculty also must be referred the extasy of delight extracted, in the dawn of existence, from the rudest toys or most simple incidents, which then exert a more wondrous though transient spell on feeling, than all the after pursuits of ambition.

XX.

Pride and impetuosity in youth, announce peevishness and discontent in old age.

XXI.

Sometimes the scenes and sensations of infancy and childhood steal over the fancy with all the freshness of their original existence; and for a moment or two all present circumstances, as well as those which have intervened, are annihilated in the absorbing impression. But the vision soon melts away, like the light which has broken for a few seconds between parted clouds.

ON FAME.

I.

The portion of fame which would intoxicate a vulgar mind, imparts little gratification to the true genius, whose views ever extend beyond reality, and who, by the very mental elevation which has won celebrity, discovers the insignificance of the acquisition.

II.

They who are most ambitious of the applause of posterity, are in general persons of strong imagination, which pictures the effect of living throughout subsequent ages, and combines present feelings and circumstances with future reputation. But it requires no discernment to perceive that all this is pure illusion, and that posthumous renown, though extending to the remotest periods, is not worth the sacrifice of

the smallest present comfort. The chimera however is often productive of advantage, by stimulating to achievements that would otherwise remain unattempted, as well as by administering a species of exquisite though ideal gratification. Were we restricted to enterprises and hopes from which the dreams of fancy are excluded, both our performances and pleasures would be few and inconsiderable.

III.

The maxim received from antiquity, and sometimes quoted in modern times, that fame resembles the shadow, which retires when pursued, but follows when shunned, is rarely supported by facts. If a man chooses to let fame alone, fame will be very content to let him alone.—A pretty metaphor will often give currency to falsehood.

IV.

It is remarkable how few of our eminent geniuses have had descendants, at least for any considerable space. Shakspeare's family has been extinct more than a hundred and sixty years, the latest survivor being Lady Barnard his grand-daughter. Milton's became so, in the same degree, about the middle of last century. Lord Bacon had no children; Barrow, Selden, Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, and Bishop Butler, none; Swift, Pope, Thomson, Collins, Gray, Cowper, Goldsmith, Hume, Johnson, Gibbon, none. All these, except Bacon and Johnson, passed a life of

celibacy; for Swift was but nominally married. Addison left only a daughter, who died unmarried. While the merely noble or wealthy often transmit their names through a long line of successors, Genius has frequently no other memorial than the vital progeny of the brain.*

V.

He who would live for future generations, must have his thoughts occupied, but his hands and his time free. He must be content to remain ignorant of many things which fill the ideas and conversation of the generality; to be neglected perhaps, or misrepresented, by his contemporaries; and to behold the superficial and flippant reap the distinctions which are the appropriate reward of merit.

VI.

There is something mysterious as well as melancholy in the circumstance so beautifully illustrated by Gray, of the slumbering faculties of the village patriot, or hero, or bard, whose destiny on earth is obscurity and oblivion. Yet the difficulty may in part be solved by the reflection, that minds which in this world have never been disclosed, or have

* A notice of the same curious fact appears, I find, in a recent article of the Quarterly Review, on "The Copyright Question;" but as to the passage above, I may be permitted perhaps to say, that it could plead the privilege of Horace's *nonum prematur in annum*, on the publication of that excellent and entertaining critique.

manifested themselves only in the bud, will no doubt be developed in a future state. It is not a little curious too that when the intellect has been drawn out to a certain extent, the exhibition of its full capabilities is often dependent on the most casual incidents. Though we can hardly suppose that Lord Byron would not have soared much above mediocrity, yet he might not have repeated his attempts at authorship, but for resentment inspired by the sneering criticism of the Edinburgh; as Carrel, the famous French journalist, might have continued his dry, vapid style of composition, unconscious of the resources that lay within him, had he not been appointed chief editor of the National, when he at once displayed an elasticity and a copiousness, a freshness and vigour, as inexhaustible as they are rare.

VII.

The greater part of mankind are no more remembered after death than the dreams of childhood, or the flowers of preceding summers. Homer's comparison of the generations of men to the leaves of successive years, is not more striking as a picture of human frailty and vicissitude, than as a memento of the oblivion that spreads its shadows over the tomb:

> Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
> Φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
> Τηλεθόωσα φύει· ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρῃ·
> Ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ, ἡ μὲν φύει, ἡ δ' ἀπολήγει.
>
> *Il.* vi. 146.

Like leaves on trees the race of man is found,
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground;
Another race the following spring supplies;
They fall successive, and successive rise:
So generations in their course decay;
So flourish these, when those are past away.

Pope.

Alas! it is not so much that we die, as that our memory dies with us, that makes the heart weep: for the tribes of humanity are almost as soon forgotten as the leaves; or, like the scenery of an oriental clime when the sun sets, are at once, or without the intervention of twilight, shrouded in darkness.—Even alliance to genius by consanguinity, with the distinction of social rank, will not always ensure remembrance with posterity. How many have heard of Sir Christopher Milton? yet he was brother to the poet, and a judge of the Common Pleas under James the Second. Between the mightiest of the dead, and the vestiges which they have left behind, there is little more connexion than between the foot-prints recently discovered in certain sand-stone, referrible to a remote epoch of our globe, and the animals that produced them.*

VIII.

A name is not less seldom preserved by indirect association with genius or enterprise, than by the most splendid achievements or personal qualities.

* See the curious facts related in Dr. Buckland's Treatise on Geology and Mineralogy, vol. i. p. 259—263; and the illustrative plates in vol. ii., no. 26.

The guide or attendant of a celebrated traveller is often linked inseparably with the adventures of his master; some of the companions of Columbus and of later voyagers having reached us in this manner. La Fleur has been immortalized by entering the service of Sterne. So Fletcher, the "staunch yeoman" of Childe Harold's Good Night, and Tom Purdie, the forester or factotum of Sir Walter Scott, may thus be carried down to distant ages.

The insignificance of fame, of whatever kind, is evinced by the fact, that it commonly depends on the most trivial or accidental circumstances; and that probably as many persons who deserve and might secure it, die without its attainment, as those who share the distinction. Had Chatterton not made so premature an end, he would perhaps have equalled any of his contemporaries not only in talents but in glory; and if his extraordinary endowments had been properly applied, our literature might have received some accessions worthy of its brightest epochs, the precocity of his genius being scarcely more remarkable than its fecundity and vigour.

IX.

The praise of oratory, like that of political, and especially of histrionic eminence, soon dies, unless sustained by the lustre of written performances. Had Sheridan not penned the School for Scandal, the Rivals, or any other of his dramatic pieces, what

would become of his rhetoric in Westminster Hall and the House of Commons? What indeed is already the fate of those displays, or will be a few years hence? Perhaps Fox will ultimately be better known, except in the range of party politics or history, as the author of a valuable fragment on the reign of James the Second, than as the most eloquent reasoner in the British senate. Burke has embalmed himself chiefly by his productions, and his magnanimous treatment of indigent genius, as of Crabbe the poet, and Barry the painter; though we must not omit the record of his conversations in Boswell's miscellany. Grattan, with all his exuberance, wit, pathos, and imagination, will scarcely join the phalanx of immortals, having bequeathed no adequate monument of his powers. Selden must have been a speaker far from despicable, as Lord Bacon appears to have been an excellent, almost a consummate one; yet the memory of both these illustrious statesmen would long ago have perished, had it rested solely on the like extrinsic accomplishments. How many persons would now be familiar with the name of Demosthenes, if his speeches had not been preserved? It is somewhat amusing to find, among the circumstances which elicited the gratitude of Dr. Priestley, that he had never been gifted with the faculty of oratory. While this may obtain a man eclat in his own day, or among a particular circle, a book of the right stamp will ensure him distinction throughout all time, and with every class of cultivated intellect.

X.

Some of the best and ablest men the world has produced, have lived in obscurity, and been scarcely mentioned after death. Others who once occupied the pinnacles of fame are brought down to its base. "Men," says Antoninus, "grow out of fashion, as well as language." The column of Trajan is surmounted by the statue of St. Peter. Time effects on human reputations what distance occasions in the apparent magnitude of bodies; and his progress, like that of a traveller, continually presenting new objects to the view, the nearest commonly seem the largest, while those long passed dwindle to undefinable specks, or are lost in dimness and shadow.

XI.

We might suppose *a priori*, that no one who has a knowledge of man could feel much anxiety about his applause. It is certain however that many who entertain the strongest passion for fame, possess a most accurate acquaintance with mankind, and indulge sufficiently contemptuous sentiments respecting their worth. The fact appears to be, the desire of distinction is an original principle of our nature, and generally the most ardent in those who are best capable of achieving the object. The perception of human insignificance or folly is a secondary attribute, often acquired rather late in life, and with which the former is not incompatible, because, during so long a

period, it has taken too deep a root to be easily eradicated.

XII.

After upwards of two thousand years, Epicurus has been exonerated from the reproach, that the doctrines of his philosophy recommended the pleasures of sensuality and voluptuousness as the chief good. Calumny may rest on genius a considerable part of a world's duration :—what then is the value of fame ?

XIII.

A man of letters or science, whose name is perhaps diffused to remote climes, is often scarcely known, or not at all conspicuous, in his immediate neighbourhood. His ordinary acquaintance, who see him in his every-day habits, imagine there can be nothing very wonderful about a person who in manners and appearance differs so little from the rest of his species. Such an opinion, we are told, was entertained of Agricola on his return to Rome, which the report of his exploits in Britain had filled with admiration.* There was not a literary man, hardly an intelligent person, in the kingdom, unacquainted with the eminent merits of Crabbe;

* "Tranquillitatem atque otium," says his eloquent biographer, "penitus auxit, cultu modicus, sermone facilis, uno aut altero amicorum comitatus; adeo ut plerique, quibus magnos viros per ambitionem æstimare mos est, viso aspectoque Agricola, quærerent famam, pauci interpretarentur."—*Tacitus, Vita Agric.* cap xl.

who however, on hearing of his own popularity in London, expressed much surprise, remarking, with his characteristic *naïveté*, "In my own village they think nothing of me."* The curiosity which leads visitants of the Lakes to inquire after the residences of Southey and Wordsworth, appears, I dare say, in many instances sufficiently strange to the parties interrogated.

XIV.

It seems fated that such as may aspire to an existence in subsequent times, shall not experience a superfluity of comfort in their own. If we turn to our greatest geniuses, whether poets, statesmen, artists, or philosophers, we shall find that in general they were more or less corroded with melancholy, or wasted with disappointment. It may be questioned whether many an unlettered peasant, who is forgotten as soon as dead, has not more enjoyment crowded into the brief span of life, than is usually allotted to those whose celebrity is immortal. How touching and simply beautiful is the following "Epitaph," written but a few months before the death of its gifted author:

> Stop, Christian Passer-by!—Stop, child of God,
> And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
> A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.—
> O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;
> That he who many a year with toil of breath
> Found death in life, may here find life in death!

* See the anecdote in his Life, p. 289, as quoted from a note to a recent edition of the Rejected Addresses.

> Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame
> He ask'd and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same?*

The lines may not unaptly suggest what appears in the inscription over the grave of another poet, the glory and disgrace of his country—Camoëns: *Viveo pobre e miseravelmente, e assi morreo*—"He lived poor and miserable, and thus died." Well might it be so said, for he died in an hospital, after a series of the bitterest hardships. No doubt some of the highest intellects have been endowed with a happy temperament as a counterpoise to every misfortune; and some, though but few, have had a smooth and sunny path assigned them. It is also to be remembered, that the sufferings of common minds may be overlooked or disparaged, because unblazoned by eloquence in poetry or prose.

XV.

Local esteem is far more conducive to happiness than general reputation. The latter may be compared to the fixed stars, which glimmer so remotely as to afford little light and no warmth. The former is like the sun, each day shedding his prolific and cheering beams.

XVI.

In the composition of their works, men of fertile capacity are perhaps impelled as much by a desire to

* Coleridge's Poetical Works, vol. ii. p. 152, ed. 1834.

disburden themselves of their thoughts, or by temporary considerations, as by the love of fame. At least it is indisputable, that several authors of preeminent powers have been sufficiently indifferent to the applause of future ages. Swift may be quoted as a memorable instance, writing most of his pieces for the purpose of the moment, and apparently deeming them of no further value. There is every reason to believe Fontenelle when he declares, that he was utterly unconcerned about his reception with posterity. A genius with whom no other can fairly be put in comparison, Shakspeare, betrayed the utmost negligence on that head, having never collected or published his immortal dramas, most of which were permitted to find their way into the world in any surreptitious or accidental manner, till some years after his decease. With regard to Junius, we are perhaps equally astonished at the philosophical self-command, the caprice, or policy, exhibited by the author of the Letters which pass under that name, in omitting to claim, *in propria persona*, the paternity of that performance, as impressed with admiration of the extraordinary talents it displays.*

* After the controversies and conflicting evidence respecting the authorship of these celebrated epistles, it may be somewhat hazardous to pronounce an opinion; but the accumulation of circumstantial proof as yet seems in favour of Sir Philip Francis, who died in 1818. That the handwriting was his almost admits of demonstration. For an able critique on the identity of Junius and Sir Philip, see the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxix.; and for an incidental but valuable discussion of the question, a very entertaining article that has recently appeared in the same Journal, on the subject of Warren Hastings.

XVII.

It requires more heroism for a person of enterprising nature to die in obscurity, than amidst the excitements of battle, or in any situation which attracts admiration or sympathy. Pliny speaks, with equal correctness and beauty, of Arria's suppressing her anguish for the loss of her son, that his father, then afflicted with a dangerous malady, might not be embittered by the intelligence, as a nobler effort than she afterwards displayed, when, to reassure the sinking courage of her husband, condemned to die, she plunged the dagger in her own breast, and presenting it to him exclaimed, Pætus, it gives no pain. In the latter case, as he observes, she might be sustained with the prospect of glory through all times, but not in the silent repression of sorrow, and the performance of duty under the severest calamities.*

XVIII.

It might not be amiss if a similar custom existed among ourselves, to that which was practised by the ancient Greeks, who on certain occasions called over

* Plin. Epist. lib. iii. 16. Præclarum quidem illud, ferrum stringere, perfodere pectus, extrahere pugionem, porrigere marito, addere vocem immortalem ac pene divinam, *Pæte non dolet.* Sed tamen ista facienti dicentique gloria et æternitas ante oculos erant: quo majus est sine præmio gloriæ abdere lacrymas, operire luctum, amissoque filio matrem adhuc agere.—See the whole of the beautiful epistle in which the passage occurs.

the names of their deceased ancestors, for the purpose of keeping them in remembrance. To a like cause may in part be ascribed the fact that so many different races, as the Moslem Egyptians, the Copts, the Chinese in particular, are noted for the punctuality and solemnity with which they repair to the sepulchres of their relations. The omission of such a rite is what makes the prospect of dying childless so bitter to the latter people. The *lares*, or household deities of the Romans, appear to have been the *manes* of their ancestors,* who were represented by small waxen images. A sacred regard to the memory of the dead is also stated to prevail among the Indian tribes of North America, who are described as visiting the tombs of their forefathers who have been buried more than a century.† The circumstance is remarkable as exhibiting a correspondence of feeling in the opposite state of civilization to that of the Greeks. We may conceive the effect on reminiscences of those now lost to human affection, as well as on the whole range of fancy respecting the invisible world, of the Romish mass for the dead, performed with the most touching strains of music, and sometimes amidst a sombre spectacle resembling a funereal array; a ceremonial which seems to have acted almost as a

* Assaraci larem, Æn. ix. 259.

† See a note to the second part of Campbell's Gertrude of Wyoming. —The sentiment above mentioned is well illustrated in the reply of a Canadian chief to certain Europeans who had proposed to him the cession of his territory: "Shall we say to the bones of our fathers, Arise, and go with us into a foreign land?" Voltaire quotes the sentence as equal to any of the fine sayings in Plutarch.—Œuvres, tome xvi. p. 36, ed. 1785.

spell on the imaginative author of Vathek, if we may judge from the admirable sketch which he has given of a service of the kind, on the eve of his departure from Portugal.

XIX.

A person of limited genius, incapable of forming a comprehensive view of things, especially in their remote tendencies, judges of them in the main by their present appearances or effects. His attention accordingly is occupied chiefly with local or passing objects or circumstances, on the interest of which he perhaps endeavours to build a reputation for himself; not considering that distinction arising from temporary causes is often indeed the most rapid in its attainment, but ever the most transient in its duration. The fame which bids fair to live the longest resembles that which Horace attributes to Marcellus, whose progress he compares to the silent imperceptible growth of a tree:

> Crescit occulto velut arbor ævo
> Fama Marcelli.
>
> *Od.* lib. i. 12.

Goldsmith's was of this sort, Wordsworth's still more so; and if we could trace the history of genius, we should commonly find that even those brilliant coruscations which sometimes startle the world like a sudden meteor, have been preceded by many partial, but momentary and unnoticed glimmerings,—by a number of literary efforts made in obscurity and solitude, with little knowledge or appreciation on the

part of the public. No long period however is essential to establish a renown of the most enduring description. Alexander had conquered the world at a period when the generality of great men have scarcely begun to live, his death having occurred before the age of thirty-three. It is with time as with space in the matter of immortality. Greece, which has filled all nations with the lustre of her exploits, comprised but about two hundred and twenty miles in length, and a hundred and forty in breadth: so a few years or months will sometimes suffice to earn a glory lasting as the stars.

XX.

If the votaries of celebrity knew how seldom the most conspicuous names form the subject of thought or discourse, they would scarcely be so eager in chase of the phantom. The highest and most renowned genius fills but an inconsiderable space in the reflections or feelings of his contemporaries. Suppose that a few minutes are devoted to him each day, which in general is all that could be affirmed even of Shakspeare or Milton, how insignificant is such a tribute, and how small the number of those who allot so much attention to the qualities or achievements of distant minds! The generality even of the admirers of intellectual greatness are for the most part engrossed with much more ordinary concerns; as, providing for the wants of life, maintaining the intercourses of society, getting or spending money. The minute but ever-recurring interests attaching to personal

situation or duties, afford little room for contemplation of the pre-eminence attained by others, whatever may be the fancy or self-consequence of the literary or ambitious.

XXI.

It would be easy to adduce several plausible arguments to show that Xerxes has not been fairly dealt with on the page of history. Neither his genius nor character, when judged by those minute traits which often speak more decisively than conspicuous appearances, will support the common representations on the subject. Of whatever follies or excesses he was guilty, we may find equal or greater in Alexander and other noted warriors, whose qualities and exploits have been sufficiently applauded. A remark or two may be offered in explanation. In the first place, the Persian monarch, though he had been triumphant in Egypt, was unsuccessful. This will go a considerable way to account for the disparagement attending his name, but still leaves a large mass of injustice unelucidated. Hannibal was unsuccessful, though not so rapidly or extensively as Xerxes. Pyrrhus, Mithridates, Pompey, were unsuccessful; as was Napoleon in most of his undertakings and battles after the Russian expedition. But, secondly, Xerxes was opposed to the Athenians and other states of Greece, who possessed so many writers capable of depicting their adversaries in the least favourable colours. All our information concerning Xerxes and his memorable campaign is derived from

his enemies; and what enemies so exasperated, or likely to be so unfair, as those whose territory has been invaded by the object of their delineation? This circumstance may also lead us to suspect some degree of exaggeration in the statements respecting the amount of Xerxes' forces.* His discomfiture appears to have been owing partly to the undisciplined state and the cowardice of his troops, but chiefly to the treachery of their leaders, Artabazus and Mardonius. That he was not wholly despicable may be inferred from the fact, that even after the action at Platæa, a friendly correspondence was maintained with him by Pausanias and Themistocles, the two most eminent Grecians of the period, and the most formidable antagonists that Persia had ever known. His reply to the Spartans who came to offer themselves as an expiation for the murder inflicted on the Persian ambassadors, would add lustre to the best ages of Roman virtue. Tell the Lacedæmonians, said he, that if they are capable of violating the rights of nations, I am not capable of imitating their example, or of taking away your life for the crime with which they have sullied themselves.

* Juvenal has a satirical allusion or two on this head:

——Creditur olim
Velificatus Athos, et quicquid Græcia mendax
Audet in historia: constratum classibus îsdem,
Suppositumque rotis solidum mare: credimus
Defecisse amnes, epotaque flumina Medo
Prandente, et madidis cantat quæ Sostratus alis.
Sat. x. 173.

The disposition to magnify was a prominent characteristic of the Greeks.

His weeping at the thought that the immense multitudes he was then surveying would soon be numbered with the dead, evinces a fund of sensibility and reflection not always to be discovered in princes. While it is the fortune of some historical personages to be extolled on very dubious or slender grounds, it is the destiny of others to be unjustly or extravagantly depreciated. Cornelius Nepos remarks that none of the ancient generals exceeded Thrasybulus in merit, though numbers had eclipsed him in celebrity. Some of the stories in circulation respecting Xerxes, as that he ordered the Hellespont to be lashed and fettered, are now deservedly exploded. His project we must acknowledge to have been magnificent, which was not the mere conquest of Greece, but the annexation of Europe to his vast dominions. If on some occasions he displayed consummate weakness and pride, a palliation at least may be found in his youth, combined as it was with an unbounded stretch of power, and the possession of the utmost personal accomplishments; for with regard to a full-proportioned and handsome form, no one, according to Herodotus, out of all the myriads constituting his immense train, was his superior.* On the whole, there have been few noted conquerors or monarchs who, if their merits were to be estimated by isolated acts, would pass the ordeal much better than Xerxes. Charles the Twelfth has been styled a madman; and by the same rule of judgment, the appellation might lengthen

* *Ἀνδρων δ' ἐουσέων τοσαυτέων μυριαδέων, κάλλεος τε εἵνεκα καὶ μεγάθεος οὐδεὶς αὐτέων ἀξιονικότερος ἦν αὐτοῦ Ξέρξεω ἔχειν τοῦτο τὸ κράτος.—Hist.* lib. vii. cap. 187.

the list of titles bestowed on the Macedonian hero, and others whose achievements have been most trumpeted in the ears of mankind. No man of sense, however, would dream of such a rule, much less apply it to a person like Alexander, who, if he had his warlike propensities and weaknesses, was also distinguished by capacious views, literary tastes, the faculty of command, and that noble generosity of spirit which is so often a characteristic of minds cast in a superior mould.

XXII.

In the case even of most who occupy the chief attention of their time, oblivion follows death as surely, though sometimes as imperceptibly, as the twilight and darkness succeed the day. Others have a kind of glimmering of fame through the night of ages, as when the moon or stars shed their light. But the dawn is approaching, when none will be any longer wrapped in obscurity.

ON RICHES AND POVERTY.

I.

On surveying from an eminence a spacious and magnificent landscape, I sometimes think within myself what slight reason there is to covet possessions in the wide world; how small a portion of it is held by the most affluent; and how little even of that small portion is actually enjoyed by its owner. In a condition the least favoured by fortune, we may appropriate to ourselves as much palpable good as will be advantageous, and of higher commodities almost as large a share as the wealthiest can command. The finest prospects, scents, air, the gratification of wants not inspired by curiosity or pride, the pleasures of kind feeling, intellect, and imagination, are cheap to all.

II.

Avarice seldom abounds in the ruder stages of society; but when luxuries have begun to multiply,

a desire is created for money as the means of their attainment. Afterwards, a desire for money as an instrument of purchasing pleasures, frequently degenerates into a passion for accumulation itself; the end being supplanted by the means, in consequence of the influence of habit.

III.

A thorough miser must possess considerable strength of character, to bear the self-denial imposed by his penuriousness. Equal sacrifices, endured voluntarily in a better cause, would make a saint or a martyr. It is a curious instance of the facility with which current maxims may be assailed, that avarice has received so specious a panegyric in one of the cantos of Don Juan. Priestley, in his Lectures on General History, makes out a very plausible argument in extenuation of war; and Talleyrand, whose sagacity and successful application of talent invest his opinions on practical affairs with no insignificant weight, is said to have proposed an emendation of the ordinary doctrine about procrastination, the sound one, according to him, being, never to do to-day what can be deferred till to-morrow.

IV.

Poverty and dependence have their train of vices, fully as numerous perhaps as those of opulence. The following are some of the principal:—selfishness, acquired or strengthened by the habit of receiving

without imparting; dishonesty; hypocrisy and adulation; improvidence and extravagance, or a disposition to seize present enjoyment without reference to the future, from an idea of the impossibility of sinking much lower—the poorest being usually the least economical, and persons seldom becoming frugal till they begin to accumulate—and as the result of these causes combined, a general laxity of morals.

V.

The possession of knowledge is less likely to foster vanity than the possession of riches. A man may abundantly augment his stock of ideas, yet have very little to show for his pains. Knowledge is apt to nourish pride rather than vanity; wealth, vanity rather than pride.

VI.

There is a general tendency in man's life to accumulation. Were life more protracted, the evils which frequently attend this circumstance would of course increase in proportion. Death, ending the process of gain, and dispersing treasures before too concentrated, is the natural remedy for overgrown fortunes.

VII.

I wish to be master of my possessions, not my possessions to be master of me. It has been

noted respecting Ptolemy, the affluent king of Cyprus, that he possessed not riches, but was possessed by them;* of which indeed he gave a memorable proof in providing for the safety of his jewels and gold when he destroyed himself. The philosophy is not to be despised which instructs us to consider the mind rather than the more palpable goods of existence, as one's estate; the former being not only the far nobler species of property, but susceptible of infinitely higher improvement. Such an estimate would at least be one of the best securities against the contingences and deprivations of fortune. "Certes," says the contemplative Montaigne, "l'homme d'entendement n'a rien perdu, s'il a soy-mesme."

VIII.

If you happen to be wealthy, you need not much fear the encroachments or impositions of the dishonest, as redress is at your command. If you happen to be poor, the only preservative is to avoid coming in contact with that class of character.

IX.

It is difficult to see why a reasonable man, possessed of a competence, should not be as much gratified with having houses or lands in picture as in reality. The effect of redundance is but like that of the spare money of the Vicar of Wakefield's daugh-

* Non possedit divitias, sed a divitiis possessus est.—*Valerius Maximus.*

ters, who had always a guinea in their pockets, but which they were never allowed to change.

X.

Privation and hardship are not always the most admirable preparatives for the enjoyment of opulence and prosperity, whatever influence they may sometimes have in stimulating to the successful pursuit of these advantages. They who have fought their way to riches by dint of plodding, unremitting industry, are not seldom of contracted or sordid intellect; while such as have been raised to affluence by some unexpected turn of fortune, are often distinguished for reckless extravagance, or tasteless expenditure. In the former case men are apt to become misers; in the latter spendthrifts. There is more wisdom than may at first appear in Martial's description of a happy life, where he enumerates among its ingredients, *res non parta labore, sed relicta.* It is a congratulation of Horace to his friend Tibullus, that the gods had given him with riches the *art* of enjoying them.*

XI.

If we were obliged to make a right use of all our acquisitions and resources, we should wish for a diminution of them rather than an increase.

* Dî tibi divitias dederunt, artemque fruendi.

To thee the gods a large estate
In bounty gave, with skill to know
How to enjoy what they bestow. *Francis.*

XII.

There is an ancient adage, "Learning is better than house or land." Whether the saying arose in times of comparative ignorance, when learning was rare, and therefore fetched its price, cannot now perhaps be determined. Certainly the maxim scarcely holds good in the present day, if it is to be understood as expressing the secular benefits of erudition; for the world in general appears to entertain little veneration for mere scholarship. The high and the low are alike worshippers of Mammon; nor do the learned themselves scruple to participate in the idolatry. If however the apophthegm is to be taken in another sense, that literary and intellectual pursuits are more prolific in enjoyment than riches or exterior possessions, the sentiment is correct; at least where mental occupations are conjoined with a tolerable degree of health, and exemption from vulgar cares. Then indeed the advantages of a taste for letters incomparably surpass those which opulence can procure. It is interesting to hear the historian of the Decline and Fall refer, with a species of enthusiasm, to what he denominates his "invincible love of reading, which," says he, "I would not exchange for the treasures of India."

XIII.

Perhaps as much pleasure is felt in the practice of economy, as in that of profuse expenditure. "The

very care and forecast," remarks Paley, "that are necessary to keep expenses and earnings upon a level, form, when not embarrassed by too great difficulties, an agreeable engagement of the thoughts." Certainly those of moderate incomes seem generally the most happy.

XIV.

Were we to consider the goods of life as temporary loans, which they are, rather than appropriate or permanent possessions, which they are not, we should be more likely to employ them in a manner profitable to ourselves and others.

XV.

Mankind would not be so eager in pursuit of money, were it not for deficiency of right feeling among their fellow-men. The motive to accumulation is commonly exemption from wrong, disrespect, or unkindness, rather than any accession of positive enjoyment. Old age, as talents and capabilities of ensuring influence die away, often clings to wealth as the only remaining instrument of power. Misfortune too, especially when allied with a distempered fancy, will sometimes produce a remarkable effect of the kind. Beethoven, that wonderful musical genius, who was noted in the earlier part of his career for a total indifference to lucre, yet when overtaken with deafness and other disasters, imbibed, we are told, all the self-tormenting propensities of a grasping

avarice. In Norway, where the non-existence of the law of primogeniture conspires with other causes to occasion the general diffusion of an ample competence; where the habits of expenditure are much alike among all classes; and any examples of riches above the common standard are connected with no political, and little social importance; there is a happy exemption from that immoderate thirst of gain which predominates in countries distinguished by the widest inequalities of rank and fortune,—where the means of luxurious indulgence command universal homage, and poverty is worse than crime.

XVI.

If, as some have represented, the principal advantage conferred by riches is leisure, many who are pennyless may already boast that advantage. To what purpose then the toilsome avocations to which multitudes devote themselves? Perhaps however we should be nearer the mark in saying that leisure, uncombined with literary tastes or mental excitation, is one of the direst ills that can afflict humanity. The *dolce far niente* of the Italians will not admit a rigid application even in their own voluptuous climate.

XVII.

Amidst the temptations to indolence and fashionable dissipation which affluence presents, it is scarcely surprising that the intellectual character of the wealthy should in general be sufficiently indif-

ferent. But it is not perhaps the owners of hereditary wealth who are most noted for a paucity or an inferiority of scholastic or elegant attainments. In our own country in particular, where mechanical inventions have so rapidly multiplied, and innumerable circumstances have lent so powerful an impulse to commercial enterprise, thousands who were born to poverty have amassed a considerable fortune; and as their whole attention has been occupied with the means of accumulation, they neither possess nor appreciate the advantages of literary distinctions or accomplishments.

XIX.

The comparatively small share of direct influence or of wealth allotted to mind in the general arrangements of life, will hardly appear surprising if we reflect, that moral worth has still less of these external accompaniments than mental.

XX.

For the most part mankind are struggling with indigence, and thus excluded from numerous gratifications; or if possessed of riches, are prevented from enjoying them by ill health, passionate or envious temper, or some other misfortune.

XXI.

Poverty is despised by few so much as by the poor, perhaps because they have a deeper insight

into its privations and indignities. Calamity and suffering, when habitual, seldom fail to inspire contempt. The Chinese, whom it might be well to disparage less and imitate more, seem almost the only people among whom learning and merit have the ascendency, and wealth is not the standard of estimation.

XXII.

Superiority of intellect is frequently a barrier rather than help to the attainment of riches. A man of expanded and philosophic views, or of imaginative temperament, is not the most likely to form exaggerated notions of the value of wealth, especially as compared with the sacrifices that may be requisite for its accumulation; nor will he be apt to descend to those petty artifices or ignoble expedients which avarice is so liable to engender, and which the mercenary often employ with so much success. He who aims merely to push his interest in the world, need concern himself little with the transactions of former periods, or bestow much labour on the acquisition of mental accomplishments or refinement. All that he has to do is to keep a steady eye on the object before him, and make himself familiar with passing events and characters. More wisdom is necessary to use than to realize a fortune; which may be secured or augmented in three several ways,—by descent, by exertion, or by gift. The last, which is perhaps the most gratifying method, was not unfrequent among the Romans, where those illustrious for their worth

or rank often became on that account heirs to considerable property. Thus Atticus, we are told, received a number of valuable inheritances solely as a tribute to his personal merits. It is related in commendation of Lucullus, that while proconsul of Asia he obtained many estates in a similar manner. And Cicero informs us, that by the bequests of friends he had come into possession of sums which even in the eyes of modern cupidity would be reckoned no insignificant treasure.*

XXIII.

It is a rare thing for avarice to prevail in the extremes of great opulence or great penury; but in all the intermediate gradations, it can flourish without difficulty.

XXIV.

Lost objects of affection often live longer in the feelings of the poor than of the rich. The former have few other resources or gratifications to fill up the void; the latter, a great number and variety.

XXV.

Poverty delights to revel in ideal scenes of wealth and splendour, in distinction from those which habit

* The amount, as stated by himself, was *amplius II. S. ducenties*, about two hundred thousand pounds.—See Philipp. ii. 16.; also Middleton's Life of Cicero, sect. xii.

has familiarised, or shown to be distasteful. This is perhaps one reason why the poems of Crabbe, so full of truth and nature, have never been eminently popular among the class whose merits and failings, sentiments and hardships, they depict with unrivalled pathos and skill. On the other hand, affluence and refinement delight in the contemplation of the simpler and more obscure walks of life. In each situation the mind feels its own barrenness of pleasure, and therefore turns from real dissatisfaction in what is known, to fancied happiness in what is unknown;—somewhat as in another case Scaliger appears to have done, who used to say that if he had twenty sons, he would not breed one of them a scholar. Had he not been himself a scholar, he would probably have been ready to envy the character in others.

XXVI.

If, according to the maxim of Socrates, and the natural signification of the term, only those things can be denominated the *goods* of a man which are instruments of his benefit, how few are the goods even of the most affluent! and what a disproportion subsists between the possessions and the goods of the generality of mankind!

XXVII.

There are three special foes to economy:—impatience; curiosity, or the thirst of novelty; and the gratification of revenge.

ON MISCELLANEOUS POINTS IN MORALS.

I.

The ancient codes of ethical philosophy, too refined and intellectual for the mass of mankind, exerted scarcely the smallest influence on the manners of society. It is only the Christian system which unites what is contemplative with that which is practical, and sufficiently intelligible.

II.

It is a beautiful trait in Virgil where Æneas, about to revenge himself on Helen, is reminded of the offices which he owes to his parent, wife, &c.* The best way to conquer the suggestions of improper feeling, is to attend to the obligations of present duty.

* Æn. ii. 567—603.

III.

Contemptuous views of mankind easily degenerate into aggressions on their rights or happiness, and are rarely combined with vigorous or persevering efforts for their melioration. There are some remarkable exceptions, to be sure; as for instance Swift, whom it would surely be unfair to impeach on the score of the motives that impelled him to his patriotic exertions. The bitterest cynics have ever been selfish in their disposition, and not unfrequently immoral in their conduct. The Stoics, so noted for their magnanimity, self-denial, and other virtues, cherished lofty notions of humanity. The Epicureans, who preferred a life of ease and gratification to active benevolence or usefulness, entertained disparaging sentiments of their species. The former endeavoured to raise men to an equality with the gods: the latter not only degraded the gods to the level of men, but seemed to aim at reducing men to an equality with the brutes.*

* It is perhaps unnecessary to remind the reader of the distinction between the tenets and practice of Epicurus himself, and those of his later disciples, to whom of course reference is chiefly made in the foregoing observation. The scheme of that illustrious philosopher was in substance equivalent to the modern theory which makes utility the determining principle of action; a theory which has often been as little understood as grossly misrepresented, and to which, neither in its ancient nor modern form, except as perverted, can be applied with justice the disparaging criticism of Cicero, *nil generosum, nil magnificum sapit;* expanded benevolence being an essential characteristic of a system of which the great object is the promotion of happiness on the most comprehensive scale. Is not this, in fact, a primary, if not the sole object of the Divine administration itself?

IV.

Some natures are so humble and diffident as almost to adopt the representations of falsehood and calumny against themselves. It would seem also as if, under extraordinary circumstances or excitement, man was susceptible of the most unfavourable impressions respecting his own character, even as to points on which he is at other times persuaded of his general innocence. We have a memorable illustration in the case of Warren Hastings, when impeached before the Lords; and who afterwards declared that while listening to the almost supernatural eloquence of Burke, he believed himself, during the space of half an hour, to be one of the most culpable beings on earth. Admitting that he had considerable reason for self-reproach, we can scarcely account for the production of so remarkable and vivid a sentiment, without making large allowance for what may be called instinctive sympathy with the orator's transport of passion, whose magnificent invectives appear to have subdued himself almost as much as his hearers. Strong emotion in others, especially when heightened by the colourings of rhetorical genius, has always some influence on our feelings, and for the moment perhaps on our judgments.

V.

It would be interesting to trace the process by which a mind, originally enthusiastic and generous,

becomes decidedly selfish and unimpassioned, through contact with selfishness and unkindness. Even the highest turpitude may be occasioned by the same hardening operation. Medea, as described by Euripides, was evidently endued with a disposition unusually affectionate; but unjust and dishonourable treatment impelled one of the gentlest of beings to an act of unparalleled barbarity.

VI.

Persons sometimes appear to have pride, but it is rather hypocrisy. In reality they are quite sensible of their own deficiencies; but wish to create the belief that themselves, at least, entertain a favourable opinion of their merits.

VII.

When overtaken with the night of adversity, remember that though the sun shines not on thee, he is shining on myriads of other creatures of God.

VIII.

Complaints seldom exceed suffering, as it would be idle to suppose that he who felt himself happy should be querulous. It does not however follow that the propensity is justifiable, for suffering is always inferior to desert; though it were often impolitic, as well as unkind, to restrain the expres-

sion of anxious or dissatisfied feelings, as in many instances no portion of ill-temper dictates their utterance, which is besides the most effectual means of their evaporation. Emotions of a merely sorrowful kind are better disclosed than concealed: those in any way wrong are better concealed than disclosed; the former being rather aggravated by silence, the latter often dying of themselves if not vented in words. It is related of Baxter, harassed as he was with a strange complication of physical maladies, added to the wear of mind, and the collisions of a troublous period, that while his complaints were frequent, his submission to the Divine will was entire.

IX.

A man of numerous and ardent desires is of all beings the most dependent. It concerns the proud especially to contract and simplify their wants, though it is ever the humble who are least troubled with the cravings of unsatisfied wishes. Never perhaps was the enlightened contentment of the real philosopher more pleasingly exemplified than in a saying of Tyndal—one of those heroic men who displayed virtues as magnanimous as their minds, and who united to the dignified self-devotion of Stoicism, the principles and sentiments of the gospel of Christ. "I desire of God to myself in this world," says he, "no more than that without which I cannot keep his laws."*

* Letter to Frith.

X.

Most persons, when censured, omit to inquire whether the reproof is just. The fact that they are censured is sufficient to provoke their animosity and resentment. It is some apology for leaving the faults of others without remonstrance, that so few can bear to have them touched upon, though in the gentlest manner, and not take a grudge against you in their hearts. I recollect that, reading when a boy the story in Gil Blas about the archbishop of Granada and his apoplexy, on coming to the dismissal of his protegé for critical blindness, I regarded the picture as a glaring caricature. Riper observation has convinced me that the thing is no fiction, and that without the intervention of disease, there are plenty of archbishops of Granada.

XI.

We sometimes meet with the remark, that such an action or enterprise could have been justified only by success. The assertion is incorrect. All that we have to govern us, in any particular case, is a preponderance of reasons at the time. If we act contrary to that preponderance, success is no justification; if in accordance with it, failure is no discredit. For neglect of this rule, without which the boldest exploits are but a species of gambling, sometimes lucky, sometimes the reverse, Nelson, at the battle of the Nile, gained a splendid victory and a peerage;

for adhering to it, Admiral Byng was disgraced and shot.

XII.

Conquer thyself, and thou wilt conquer fame, fortune, the privations of poverty, the malice of thine enemies, and the bitterness of death. Such are the heroic sentiments inculcated by the philosophy of the Stoics; a system which, with all its imperfections, is infinitely more calculated to form great men, than the indulgent and self-applauding maxims of the present age.

XIII.

Certain vices, when brought into connexion, neutralise each other's force; as avarice and vanity, or ambition and the love of ease; somewhat as in landscape gardening, the deformities of one tree are capable of correction by those of another in grouping. It may happen also that the operation of one powerful principle, though of exceptionable or equivocal kind, shall prevent the growth of many inferior qualities; as appears to have been the case for a time with Marius, whom Sallust reproaches with inordinate thirst of glory, but commends for a number of distinguished excellences—"industria, probitas, militiæ magna scientia, animus belli ingens, domi modicus, lubidinis et divitiarum victor, tantummodo gloriæ avidus." Were it not for the counteracting influence of different propensities in the

same subject, or of the vices of one person brought into collision with those of another, the state of society would be incalculably more deplorable. It was ultimately the misfortune of Marius and the Romans, that the aspiring temper of that great commander was not blended with some rival passion.

XIV.

We need only be brought into contact with men in cases where their duty, apart from their secular interest or their passions, is concerned, to be convinced of their immersion in folly and vice. The exclamation of Persius, who so well reproved the selfishness and grovelling propensities of his countrymen, presents a picture of human nature in every age:

O curvæ in terras animæ, et cælestium inanes!

It is no little praise of the Platonic system that it *aimed* at the subjugation of sordid, material tendencies; and, endeavouring to raise minds from the dust, instructed them to regard as the sole true good, the intellectual and divine. But what philosophy attempted, Christianity accomplishes; though with entire success only when she achieves her latest and proudest triumphs.

XV.

A great portion of the benefits which man receives are conveyed through the medium of his fellow man. The design may be to promote a spirit of mutual

kindness, justice, and moderation. Had angels been the sole or principal instruments of communicating good to mankind, the ties of reciprocal attachment among the members of the human family would have been much more feeble. Perhaps the happiness of heaven, though arising immediately from God himself, may be imparted chiefly through the agency of its inhabitants.*

XVI.

The sensitive in particular should guard against solitude and unrestricted thought; otherwise they will be liable to indulge a train of reflection calculated to nourish their peculiar temperament; that is, they will magnify the real or imaginary failings of others, and by the activity of fancy under the

* A passage in Chrysostom, whose writings, though tainted with the vicious rhetoric which disfigures so many of the ancient Fathers, are interspersed with ingenious and eloquent observations, represents the same object as contemplated in the distribution of peculiar commodities to each country, as well as in the special endowments of individual men. *Διὰ τῆς τῶν συναλλαγμάτων ἐπιμιξίας σοφῶς ἡμῖν τὸ φιλάλληλον ἐπραγματεύσατο. Καὶ πῶς, ἄκουε. Πολλῶν πλήσας τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀγαθῶν, ἔδωκεν ἑκάστῃ χώρᾳ πάλιν ἰδιάζουσαν ἐπιτηδειότητα καρπῶν· ἵνα διὰ τὸ τῆς χρείας ἀναγκαῖον πρὸς ἀλλήλους βαδίζοντες, καὶ τῶν περιττευόντων μεταδιδόντες, καὶ τῶν λειπόντων ἡμῖν ἀντιλαμβάνοντες, ἀγαπῶμεν τὸ ὁμόφυλον. Τοῦτο καὶ ἐφ' ἑκάστου πεποίηκεν ἀνθρώπου. Οὐ γὰρ πάντα πᾶσιν ἔδωκεν εἰδέναι· ἀλλὰ τῷ μὲν ἰατρικὴν, τῷ δὲ τεκτονικὴν, καὶ ἄλλῳ ἄλλην· ἵνα χρῄζοντες ἀλλήλων, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.—S. Joan. Chrys. de Sacerd.* —It is curious to trace, in the former part of this passage, the substance of the commercial principles maintained by the modern Economists; and to notice the harmony subsisting between the dictates of Christian benevolence, and the deductions of practical, comprehensive philosophy.

influence of self-love, discover abundant means of justifying themselves, even though in error. There is something truly melancholy in the circumstance recorded of Goldsmith, that he would sometimes retire from the company of his associates, to brood for hours and even weep over the supposed affronts or slights he had received. Such a trait might almost be adduced as an illustration of the alleged alliance between genius and madness.

XVII.

There seems to be a kind of moral sense, as well as a variety of moral qualities, in brutes, though more conspicuous in some than others. If there is ground to apprehend that they possess a species or degree of mind—a circumstance of which it appears difficult for those who possess a mind themselves to entertain a doubt—their existence in a future state can hardly be considered destitute of plausibility. This presumption would not ill accord with the hypothesis of a moral sense, and with the fact of their sufferings in the present life. Even Descartes acknowledges that if they think, they are immortal; a supposition which he denies, merely because he deems their immortality improbable; though it would not be easy to show on what other basis the improbability can rest, than our own ignorance of the purposes and ten thousand possible mysteries that may be comprehended in the invisible world, including, for aught that reason can allege to the contrary, a progressive series of changes, commencing

at death, which the lower creatures may undergo. Objections derived from the minuteness, or apparent insignificance or repulsiveness, of many of them, are worse than futile—they are puerile; all our ideas on such points being of course but relative and partial; to say nothing of the fact that, even in the present state, what is at one time an unsightly caterpillar, becomes at another a beautiful butterfly. To ascribe to them, as some do, an immaterial principle, yet to refuse them souls, is unintelligible; for we can conceive of nothing but as matter or mind. For my part I am persuaded that no arguments, except those deduced from Revelation, establish the immortality of man, which are not equally conclusive in favour of the immortality of brutes.

XVIII.

Why is it that of all kinds of insipid things, trite maxims in morality are the most insipid? Perhaps because every one knows and few care to practise them. As wrapped up in fiction they are much less repulsive; but then, except in the case of apologues, or brief tales like Crabbe's, the sentiment is apt to be lost in the story. When that is ended, who thinks of inquiring for the lessons which it teaches? "Je suis fort de votre avis," says Madame de Sévigné, "pour la préférence des fables sur le poëme epique; la moralité s'en présente bien plus vîte et plus agréeablement: on ne va point," she adds with her accustomed liveliness, "chercher midi à quatorze

heures."* "A moral," writes Charles Lamb, "should be wrought into the body and soul, the matter and tendency, of a poem, not tagg'd to the end, like a 'God send the good ship into harbour,' at the conclusion of our bills of lading."† The remark applies to the introduction of ethical axioms on most occasions after the nursery or the pedagogue.

XIX.

An interesting circumstance is presented in the contrast of stern intellect with the amiable affections. There are numerous occasions on which the latter appear, even to those who possess them least, incalculably superior and more commanding.

XX.

Man is in one sense a machine, moved by the hand of the artist. In another sense he is a perfectly free agent. We all, for instance, obey laws imposed upon us by nature, and which we should not otherwise have known; yet in doing so we are entirely voluntary. The concomitants of this arrangement are not a little curious. Nothing seems more arbitrary, or less capable of computation, than the decisions of the will, and the various complicated impulses of the heart; yet it is demonstrable that the Supreme Being has an accurate perception of

* Recueil des Lettres de Madame la Marquise de Sévigné, tom. iv. p. 258. Paris, 1775.

† Letters of Charles Lamb, by Mr. Sergeant Talfourd, vol. i. p. 133.

them beforehand, and therefore that none of them are matters of contingency or chance. An approximation to the same result, on a general scale, is attainable by human agency, though the process is in this case different. From the introduction of law, and the establishment of a certain structure in man, arises the knowledge which the Deity possesses of future volitions and acts; just as in the formation of a curious piece of mechanism, the contriver can calculate with precision on the production, in any given circumstances, of certain effects, or the appearance of certain phenomena. The *a priori* method therefore, which to us is so precarious a principle of judgment, is precisely that on which the certainty of the Divine prescience is founded. On the contrary, statistical research, or the method *a posteriori*, applied to a multitude of instances, is the safest guide to ourselves, in determining the average probability of certain intellectual or moral developements. Were this branch of philosophy conducted to that state of improvement of which it is susceptible, there seems ground to believe that the operations of reason, passion, and what appears caprice, might, with regard to communities or large bodies of men, become reducible to nearly the same calculation as the movements of the planets, or the working of the spinning frame.

XXI.

The separation of ethics from theology and Scripture, has ever been vain and pernicious. All the

great principles of the former science are derived from Revelation, or indebted for their force to its sanction. Theology is as necessary to ethics as a knowledge of astronomy to the art of navigation.

XXII.

Brutus might well say that he had found virtue but a name; for according to the notion he annexed to the term, the exclamation was just. But what was the notion? Evidently that virtue is something to which secular advantage or success is attached;—a maxim commonly instilled into the minds of ingenuous youth, but which, with other fictions inculcated as truths, they have soon to unlearn when they come abroad into the world.—Multitudes deceive themselves in a similar way, imagining that they love virtue when they love only its occasional concomitants.

XXIII.

I can hardly believe that a person who is unfair in argumentation will be honest in practical affairs, under circumstances of temptation. If it were not that ignorance, like age, has its privileges, and can play strange tricks, and that man, instead of being defined a thinking animal, might more properly be termed an unthinking one, it would be difficult to avoid the suspicion that the way in which some argue implies, as it assuredly tends to produce, an utter corruption of moral principle. There is nothing in

a course of dissipation, or religious negligence, that so blunts all perception of right and wrong, as the bigotry which will not open its eyes to evidence, and the sophistry that defends what reason has pronounced untenable.

XXIV.

For the mind to be rightly disposed, and rightly informed, is all that is necessary to ensure proper conduct. Yet of the two qualifications, the former will carry a person much farther in the right path than the latter. It is remarkable how often mere rectitude of aim will lead to sound intellectual conclusions; as plants in shady recesses thrust themselves, by a sort of instinct, towards the light, which is so needful to their vitality and health. "The integrity of the upright," says the Hebrew sage, "shall guide them:" he does not say, their perspicacity or illumination.

XXV.

There was little benevolence, whatever pleasantry, in Momus reproaching Vulcan for not having placed, in the breast of the human form which he had made, a window to disclose the thoughts and movements of the soul. Could such a fiction be realised, men would probably despise each other much more than they do; because, whatever unexpected excellences they might discover, they would seldom perceive, in their nearest

associates, an extraordinary portion of regard to themselves.

XXVI.

Many who have adopted a certain course from the impulse of their own inclinations, endeavour to find a good motive for it afterwards; somewhat as the mythological fictions of antiquity, which were probably in most instances the mere sport of fancy, or wrought up from very slender materials, without any recondite or ethical import, have since received a variety of allegorical interpretations, as though intended to convey truth through the medium of fable.

XXVII.

There are numerous fragments of life which, so far as action or enjoyment is concerned, might be subtracted without injury. Yet these very seasons may afford peculiar advantages for the cultivation of patience, which is often more important than either action or enjoyment.

XXVIII.

There is a tendency in men to become, or to continue, what they are thought to be. If the character of any one is wavering, an intimation of your distrust or aversion will probably fix it for the worse, as he will feel that, under any circumstances, he can but

be despised. It has been justly conceived that the ancient lustrations or purifications, which were deemed to absolve from prior guilt, and which placed the individual on a new footing with himself and society, could not have been without a favourable influence on morals.

XXIX.

If we look at mankind as they are, we shall perhaps regard exemption from positive faults as no trivial merit. But if we consider what they ought to be, such merit will appear very insignificant. The mixture of several minor blemishes with a number of eminent virtues or accomplishments, is preferable to mere negative worth. They who have passed their days undistinguished either by excellences or defects, are represented by Dante as those, *che mai non fur vivi*, "who never lived." Religious recluses may lay claim to this passive species of merit; also those in the condition of childhood, which has few or no vices, but none of the marked, praiseworthy qualities of mature years. The times most favourable to its growth are those of placidity and ease, civil convulsions or war ever abounding in examples of conspicuous goodness as well as depravity.

XXX.

All error, as well as all vice, is the offspring of imperfect views. It does not hence follow,

as some may insinuate, that there would be as much virtue in the world as knowledge, but that, in any particular case, virtue would be ensured by a clear and comprehensive discernment of the truth relating to the subject. "Certain it is," says Lord Bacon, "that *veritas* and *bonitas* differ but as the seal and the print: for truth prints goodness; and they be the clouds of error, which descend in the storms of passions and perturbations."

XXXI.

Were it not for our familiarity with death, we should consider it one of the most unnatural events in the world, but only in the sense in which we deem any innovation on the established order of things unnatural. For in philosophical strictness, it is no more wonderful to die than to live; to undergo the change called death, than the change effected at birth. Man exists before he is born, and ceases not to be when he dies. Death is but a kind of second birth; the close of an embryo state of being, and the commencement of a new and more enlarged existence. It is the last of the physical changes incessantly taking place in our vital material frame, all of which are, in the eye of reason, alike mysterious and incomprehensible. In truth, it is no more wonderful that the body dies than that a tree does; which, marked by the same process of waste and supply, ex-

hibits a corresponding developement, maturity, and decay.

XXXII.

How little honour is reflected on virtue, when her dictates are performed with cold precision, unmingled with grace or with kindly feeling! and how vain the fancy that her enemies will be conciliated, or her converts multiplied, by approximation to the ruggedness or invective of Diogenes! Rectitude without courtesy is sometimes less agreeable than error or vice with courtesy. If the chivalrous spirit corresponded to Burke's idea of its nature, there would scarcely be exaggeration in his remark, that it divested vice of half its evil, by robbing it of all its grossness. Confucius perhaps displayed as much sagacity as benevolence, in making politeness one of his five cardinal virtues.

XXXIII.

In point of benefit, whatever may be the case in point of comfort, the proximity of a critical or uncandid acquaintance is sometimes not undesirable, as it may constitute one motive, among others more disinterested or powerful, to pursue an upright and circumspect career. The removal of such an influence may not unaptly suggest the feeling expressed by the younger Pliny, on the death of an honoured friend: *Vereor ne negligentius vivam.*

XXXIV.

If we could look into the minds of our fellow-creatures, we should probably discover, even in those whom we account the most vicious, a freedom from some faults which we may be ready to impute to them; a mixture of something good with many of their real blemishes; as well as a few excellences unalloyed with any debasing quality. Perhaps in most instances mankind are as much the objects of pity as of censure.

One of the finest examples of Christian charity and moderation on record, was Saint Francis de Sales; a member of a religious community often deemed little favourable to the cultivation of the milder sentiments, but which has produced a host of benignant, self-denying men, adorned with all the lustre of unostentatious kindness. From his works, and the memorials which remain of his conversation and opinions, it would seem that his compass of thought was not less extensive than his candour and benevolence.*

* I do not refer to the theological candour of this distinguished ecclesiastic, which there is reason to fear was, like that of too many of his profession in all communions, not over-comprehensive. For some curious particulars respecting this ornament of the Romish calendar, including an assemblage of his choicest sayings and observations, see the compilation entitled, *L'Esprit de S. Francois de Sales;* which in its English dress supplied the materials of a very agreeable article in Leigh Hunt's London Journal (vol. ii. p. 33—36); a miscellany that, conducted by one of the raciest and most delightful of our modern prose writers, was but too soon discontinued.

XXXV.

What is taken for patience, is sometimes only brokenness of heart and despair.

XXXVI.

Pride is often fortified by abstaining from the investigation of difficult topics. When the attention is withheld from subjects requiring close or diversified reflection, no mental infirmity or incompetence is perceived, and self-complacency is therefore easily indulged. Niebuhr, the illustrious historian of Rome, is said to have escaped all feeling of the kind, from early years, by a thorough distaste to superficial research, as well as by the high models of excellence which had fixed his admiration. There have been few thorough scholars or deep thinkers who were proud. Bentley, and some other names, may occur as apparent exceptions to the remark; but in his case it will perhaps be found that a species of native asperity, added to avarice, ought to bear the chief blame; certainly not learning, which probably acted in mitigation.

XXXVII.

It is unwarrantable to affirm that a belief in the immortality of the soul is essential to correctness of conduct, however beneficial, in a moral point of view, such belief undoubtedly is. The lives of

several of the ancient philosophers, among others of Epicurus, who rejected the doctrine, would furnish a decisive confutation of the hypothesis. It is somewhat difficult to ascertain the precise opinions of Zeno and his followers, respecting the perpetuity of the soul. No doubt they differed in this particular among themselves; but though the sect in general appears to have denied the extinction of our being at death, their idea of immortality would seem to have respected only certain kinds of persons, and to have signified rather a prolonged duration, followed by ultimate absorption into the Deity, than individual existence without end. It is certain that the latter notion formed no fixed or necessary part of the Stoical creed. Cicero, after referring to a work of Dicæarchus, a famous peripatetic philosopher, in which he had endeavoured to establish the mortality of souls, *animos esse mortales*, proceeds to notice the sentiments of the Stoics on the subject. "Stoici autem usuram nobis largiuntur, tamquam cornicibus; diu mansuros aiunt animos; semper, negant."* If this account is to be received as of general application, the position above advanced would be amply confirmed; for who can refuse to acknowledge, that several among the Stoics displayed a constellation of virtues which might put many Christians to the blush?†

* Tuscul. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 31.

† See the article *Epicure* in Bayle; also the first of the *Ecclaircissemens* appended to the work, tom. iv. p. 617—619. ed. 1730.

XXXVIII.

They who can resort to obsequiousness and flattery, have commonly little or no principle. There is a curious affinity between the state of mind which prompts to adulation, and that which incites to calumny. The greatest flatterers are often the greatest slanderers. "I am of the number of those," says Howell, in one of his celebrated Letters, "that had rather commend the virtue of an enemy than soothe the vices of a friend."

XXXIX.

Mankind would not be near so depraved if they were much more happy; the miseries of life, especially such as create disparagement in the eyes of others, producing no inconsiderable proportion of the crimes that pollute society. I have sometimes thought, on observing in our courts of law the appearance of prisoners at the bar, that their history might be almost explained from their physical aspect; being not unfrequently noted for certain natural deformities or blemishes—maimed, stunted, irregularly shaped, or otherwise unsightly or repulsive. Such peculiarities, having perhaps occasioned them harsh treatment or contempt from the generality of their kind, may have impelled them to attempt reprisals on society, as well as led ultimately to the abandonment of self-respect, and to a species of reckless despondence, one of the most prolific sources

of practical immorality. It is remarkable that disregard of the nearest ties of kindred and friendship, and the perpetration of the grossest debaucheries, have usually abounded most in seasons of the direst public calamity—the plague in particular—as is strikingly attested among others by Boccaccio, in his account of the pestilence at Florence in 1348.*

XL.

Patriotism implies a higher tone of feeling than the exercise of the domestic affections. The latter seem resolvable into instinct and association; the former is the result of principle or expansive benevolence. Yet the advancement of science is ranked by Lord Bacon before patriotism itself, the empire of man over nature being justly represented as a nobler and more beneficial object than the good of any particular community.

XLI.

How much more pleasing do the qualities and actions even of a friend appear, if his course is attended with success than with disappointment! and how much more favourably do we think of ourselves in prosperity than in adversity! The latter is often an excellent casuist. It is when tasting the full bitterness of his unnatural daughters' conduct, that Lear not only compassionates those who have to "bide the pelting of the pitiless storm,"

* Introduction to the Decameron.

but is smitten with self-reproach for what probably neither himself nor any other had before suspected in him—a too great neglect of the wretched.

One reason why affliction is borne with tolerable equanimity is, because the mind is apt to sink in self-estimation in proportion to its sufferings. It would be impossible for some to endure the accumulation of calamities that befall them, if their proud feelings of conscious superiority continued in full operation in the season of their misfortunes. There may indeed be a kind of haughty inflexibility or recklessness, which, sustained by its own indomitable energy, bids defiance to the inflictions of fortune and of fate; a temper of which we have so magnificent a delineation in Milton's leader of the fallen spirits: but this is far different from that sense of unrequited worth which preys the most deeply on the noblest natures, such as seems often to have wrung the breast of the poet Burns, and to have had no slight share in hurrying him to a premature grave.

XLII.

Some ever feel most inclined to pursue a magnanimous or disinterested course, when destitute of the means or opportunity; but all their generous sentiments appear to vanish when an occasion for their exercise is conjoined with the ability;—something as in the story of the monk in the Sentimental Journey, against whom the purse was closed that had just before been waved as in search of objects on which it might be lavished.

XLIII.

He must possess a very contracted understanding, or a very callous heart, who is rigorous in censuring mankind for their ordinary aberrations, which are perhaps as much the effects of suffering as of depravity. Let us remember that they have the burden of mortality to sustain; that the generality are doomed to struggle for the bare means of subsistence, and to meet with ten thousand difficulties and vexations. And shall a fellow worm be prompt to denounce condemnation on the race, because, amidst the multitude of hardships which they endure, they sometimes go astray, or manifest a considerable portion of secularity?

XXIV.

The vices of men appear to be changed, rather than eradicated or essentially diminished, by the progress of civilization and refinement. Mankind, I fear, taken in the mass, are not much wiser or better or happier than they were four thousand years ago.

ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH RELIGION.

I.

It is fabled of the celestial divinities, who are said to have resided on earth during the golden age, that they forsook the world, and fled to heaven, in consequence of men's vices. But the Scriptures reveal God as coming down from heaven to earth, in order to save the race of man, and that too at a time when their wickedness was at its highest pitch.

II.

The eye is naturally delighted with beautiful prospects or objects. So the believer is delighted with the simple contemplation of God's attributes, which are to the eye of faith precisely what beautiful objects are to the natural eye. Hence the Christian, so long as he retains his distinctive character, would be happy in the sole perception of God's excellences, without receiving from him any positive communications.

III.

As Christ was to be an example, as well as a Saviour, it was necessary that he should appear in a station of life suited to the condition of all men. Had he appeared in the capacity of a potentate, or in some other distinguished rank, the majority of mankind would never have regarded him as a model of conduct; because sovereigns are deemed so elevated that the idea of imitation or resemblance is not entertained by the mass of the people. But Christ, by moving in an ordinary sphere, displayed those excellences which are needed by all, and adapted to the circumstances of all.

IV.

The enlightened men of antiquity differed from some modern ones in this remarkable particular, that instead of vilifying, they reverenced, at least externally, the prevailing systems of religion. Though the sect of Cynic philosophers may be judged an exception, yet their ridicule of the pagan mythology and rites was only occasional, in common with their censure of almost every thing else. In what manner, then, do we account for this circumstance? Was the ancient system of belief and worship more rational, or more deserving of veneration, than the Christian? This will hardly be pretended. Were the philosophers of antiquity less acute in the detection of absurdities? It is equally

incredible. The explanation seems to be, that the Christian religion is of a purer nature, and more severe morality, on which account chiefly it is hated and opposed.

V.

In the present state of being, those things by which man is most ennobled, are the least generally bestowed. Air, light, food, are enjoyed by all. The distinctions of intellect are allotted with a more sparing hand; those of grace with still stricter limitation. What a happy circumstance would it be, if the most valuable gifts of heaven were as common as the meanest! if grace were universal as the light.

VI.

With respect to earthly blessings, we commonly desire them in vain, or the possession of them is not combined with a relish. Desires for spiritual things are followed by possession, and possession is connected with appreciation and enjoyment.

VII.

Worldly goods, by long familiarity, are apt to grow insipid. The longer we are experimentally acquainted with spiritual objects, the more is their value discerned, and the more productive are they of happiness.

VIII.

According to Jewish writers, miracles had ceased for a considerable period before the incarnation of Christ. Was not this in order that the prodigies which he performed might be the more illustrious, as the stars disappear some time before the rising of the sun, and thus add to his splendour.

IX.

A strong motive to fortitude is presented in the example of Christ, whom nothing less than the concealment of his Father's love was able to move. It was under that visitation that he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

X.

In that which may be regarded as the chief good to man, the following qualities must unite. It must be, 1. Intellectual; otherwise the pleasure it affords will not be of a nature superior to that of the brutes. 2. Attainable by all, of whatever age, sex, or mental conformation. 3. Unimpaired by distribution. 4. Independent of the circumstance of time or place. 5. Incapable of participation to excess. 6. Composed of essentially the same elements as the good to be enjoyed in a future state. All these requisites are found in communion with God.

XI.

As the stomach, when healthy, is able to convert almost any kind of food into nourishment, and as the intellect, when healthy, acquires vigour from every object of its attention, so is the case in religion. A very pious mind will extract nutrition from an inferior system of means and advantages. It is in this instance somewhat as Montesquieu has remarked concerning the character of a nation, as affecting the operation, and almost the nature of its institutions. "Il y a peu de lois," says he, "qui ne soient bonnes lorsque l'état n'a point perdu ses principes;"* a maxim correspondent to an observation of Tacitus respecting the ancient Germans: "plusque ibi boni mores valent, quam alibi bonæ leges."†

XII.

When the Christian has to bear neglect or affronts, let him remember that they are nothing compared with those which God sustains every moment.

XIII.

It is sometimes remarked that signal mercies follow severe afflictions. One cause of the feeling may be, that the mind is softened by the

* L'Esprit des Lois, liv. viii. chap. 11. † De Germ. cap. 19.

previous calamity, so that a higher estimation is formed of common benefits. We should consider our daily and most ordinary blessings as unspeakably great, if our hearts were but in a proper frame.

XIV.

When I reflect on the feebleness of man, the vanity of his speculations and efforts, the short duration of his life, the vice that seems interwoven with his nature, and the misery which overspreads the earth; and when I recollect that successive generations exhibit only the same specimens of frivolity, crime, and wretchedness;—I am almost tempted to conclude that the world has been created in vain, and turn from the prospect with despondency and dread. But when I consider that there are some verdant spots amidst this scene of barrenness and sorrow; that myriads of immortal beings have participated, and will participate, the benefits of Christ's redemption; and that in all circumstances the perfections of God will be displayed and glorified; I rejoice in the whole of the divine administration, persuaded that it will ultimately secure the noblest and most delightful results.

XV.

In a worldly sense, it is well for men to consider, not what they have, but what they are; in a religious

sense, not simply what they are, but what they have, or may have, in Christ.

XVI.

At the creation, the gifts of heaven preceded and anticipated man's wants. The supply now follows tardily, and in most cases after repeated and laborious efforts. Revelation was not communicated at once, but in successive portions.

XVII.

There are two striking proofs of human depravity or feebleness. One is, that God has not left either the propagation of the species, or the sustentation of the body, to a sense of right and wrong, but to the influence of implanted feelings or appetites, as in the case of the lower animals. Natural theologians, indeed, correctly refer the pleasure attending the gratification of these feelings to the benevolence of the Deity, as the same ends might have been accomplished through a process or impulse of pain; but on that hypothesis also sensation, not reason or intentional compliance with a divine arrangement, would have been the determining principle of action.—The other is, that the most erroneous and pernicious forms of religion, as idolatry and Mahometanism, have attained more success, and exercised a wider control over mankind, than the religion whose origin is divine.

XVIII.

The small progress of men under the best religious instructions, need excite the surprise of no one who recollects the ignorance and mistakes of the apostles under the teachings of our Saviour.

XIX.

They who most deserve the blessings of this life commonly set the least value upon them, and are best prepared to leave them.

XX.

If religion in any case produces sorrow, it is a sorrow mingled with inexpressible joy. But if it were connected with little else than sorrow, that circumstance would furnish no legitimate argument against its claims; because, for aught that appears, there may be sufficient reason in our own state, or that of our fellow-creatures, for melancholy reflection; and also because it is better to mourn now, than to feel the anguish of self-reproach hereafter.

XXI.

In seasons when we cannot gaze on the sun, because of the brightness of his beams, we may behold the delightful effects of his influence, in the lustre and beauty of creation. It is thus in reference

to God, who dwells in the inaccessible light, but diffuses the rays of his benignity and love on a boundless variety of objects.

XXII.

The sophistry is very superficial which represents mankind as not responsible for their belief, because that, it is alleged, is dependent on reason, not on the will; just as if the degree of attention, and other circumstances that influence the operations of the reason, were not affected by the moral qualities of the mind. At the same time I hold, that there are not a few speculative peculiarities of opinion—errors if you please—which, not originating in causes of this nature, can never be considered matter of culpability.

XXIII.

To hate sin, yet to compassionate the sinner; to pursue the affairs of life with diligence, yet in subordination to the interests of the soul; and to attend assiduously on the exercises of religion, without being satisfied in the absence of that grace which they are designed to convey; are three eminent attainments, to which every Christian should earnestly aspire.

XXIV.

We form a kind of friendship with surrounding scenes, and with the objects that we have long pos-

sessed; but frequent separation from them, and introduction to new ones, though hardly the most pleasing circumstance, may not be unproductive of advantage, as suggesting the mutability of earthly delights, and the permanence of the state to which we are hastening.

XXV.

A regard to man is intermingled with most actions, and gives in fact movement to the world. A regard solely to God is rarely to be found, and never but in the true Christian. To be obsequious to man, yet insulting to God, is one of the commonest things in the universe.

XXVI.

There are two remarkable ways in which God punishes sin: First, when he prevents the gratification of those desires which, being cherished to excess, have been the principal occasions of sin. Secondly, when he permits the gratification, but annexes to it some circumstance which operates as a sting and a bitterness to the soul.

XXVII.

An excess of what is visible and ceremonial in religion, is adapted to man considered rather as the subject of senses than of reason. Absence or paucity of external rites is adapted to man considered rather

as the subject of intellect than of senses. Neither of these arrangements is accommodated to the actual constitution of man, who is a creature of reason and intellect, as well as of senses, passions, and imagination.

XXVIII.

The universe is replete with things apparently inexplicable. We may every where discover traces of the divine hand, yet that circumstance rather increases than dispels the mystery. An endless profusion of plants and flowers, displaying the most exquisite structure and beauty, flourish and decay without ever being noticed by the eye of man. Myriads of insects, on whose formation and embellishment understanding and taste appear to have lavished their resources, are born but to expire. A considerable proportion of human beings die in a state of infancy, and consequently before they can have answered any of the purposes of probation. Of such as arrive at maturity, the greater part remain destitute of Revelation; while most of those who participate the privilege, die without repentance, or preparation for a future existence.

XXIX.

The infallible truth of Scripture absolves from the necessity of caution or selection in the admission of its statements, which are therefore accommodated

to persons of the weakest understanding; while its sublime, diversified, and interesting facts and discoveries, afford exercise to powers the most vigorous and capacious.

XXX.

In the adaptation of the word of God to intellects of all dimensions, it resembles the natural light, which is equally suited to the eye of the minutest insect, and to the extended vision of man.

XXXI.

Christianity is certainly opposed to the sentiment, *Odi profanum vulgus;* and will never obtain general ascendency in the world till that sentiment be overcome. But it can achieve the conquest only by infusing a spirit of patience with ignorance, folly, prejudice, and perverseness.

XXXII.

Think not, O man! too basely of thyself, for thy body is the workmanship of God, thy soul is immortal, and for thee Christ has become incarnate. But let not pride have a seat in thy heart, for thy body is destined to the grave, thy soul is contaminated with sin, and the incarnation of Christ on thy behalf shows that thou art ruined and miserable without the interposition of his mercy.

XXXIII.

The spectacle of so much depravity among mankind encourages the hypocrite in his sins; but the same circumstance confirms the sincere Christian in his principles, and renders him more afraid of sinning. So while the votaries of dissipation pervert the shortness of life into a reason for yielding to its seductions, those who class invisible things among realities, view its brevity as a motive to self-denial, and devotedness to God. To-morrow, says the Epicurean, I may die; therefore let me live to-day, by rioting in the gratifications of sense. To-morrow, says the Christian, I may die; therefore let me live for eternity, and trample pleasures beneath my feet.

XXXIV.

It would be no slight service to the cause of Christianity, to trace the influence of experimental religion on intellectual character and happiness. It would also be curious, and not uninstructive, to reverse the process, by considering the operation of intellectual peculiarities, especially of the imaginative faculty, on religious character and experience. I know of no writer more capable of doing justice to such a theme, than the admirable author of the Essay on Popular Ignorance; one of those few divines who do not look at every thing through theological spectacles.

XXXV.

The whole system of life seems to indicate, that the present state is subordinate and introductory to another. Man has sufficient enjoyment to make life desirable, but not enough to render it happy. His circumstances are adapted to the ends of probation, not to those of reward. His hope is intermingled with fear, his joy with sorrow, his best efforts with imperfection. The paucity of his days, unless attended with special openings, or rapidly improved, affords opportunity for few distinguished achievements; while the longest and most prosperous career is only vanity and a shadow.

XXXVI.

Next to immorality, nothing is so odious as contraction and obliquity of mind. But of all kinds of mental contraction, that which is sometimes associated with religion is the least excusable and most hateful. It was this which checked, and occasioned to be kept in manuscript, the preparations of Cudworth for the completion of his noble work, the Intellectual System of the Universe; a work which was stigmatised by the bigots of the day as the offspring of atheism, though one of the most acute and learned attacks on the atheistic hypotheses of antiquity that theological literature can boast. The blindness which could mistake the very drift of the argument appears sufficiently remarkable, not

only from the general strain of the performance, but from several unequivocal explications of its object. "We hope," says he, "in our present undertaking to make it evident that atheists are no such conjurors as (though they hold no spirits) they would be thought to be; no such gigantic men of reason, nor profound philosophers, but that, notwithstanding all their pretensions to wit, their atheism is really nothing else but ἀμαθία μάλα χαλεπή, a most grievous ignorance, sottishness, and stupidity of mind."* Is it surprising that when such a treatise was defamed as the production of an atheist, the enthusiasm of the writer should have cooled, and his magnificent design have been left unfinished?† The charge however, it must be owned, was nearly as candid as that which made Bishop Butler a papist; and not inferior in sagacity to the imputations once cast on Sir John Leslie, for his views on causation; or to those which are sometimes brought at present against the patrons of geology.—It is imposible to say how many valuable speculations may have been lost to the world, on account of that wretched intolerance which, incapable

* Cudworth's True Intellectual System of the Universe, vol. i. p. 381. ed. Lond. 1820.

† It has been supposed, from the scheme of the work as laid down in the introductory portion, that the piece of the same author on Eternal and Immutable Morality, published by Bishop Chandler in 1731, and another on Liberty and Necessity, till lately in manuscript, as other writings of Cudworth still are, in the British Museum, were intended to form the second and third parts of the Intellectual System. In an age certainly not distinguished for penury of publications, it seems a reproach, if not a subject of wonder, that any performances of Cudworth, imbued as they must be with learning, and with views more or less profound, should be suffered to remain unprinted.

of appreciating what bears the stamp of originality, frowns on all who deviate from the common standard. I cannot conceive that the reflecting men who lived in the dark ages, and reflecting men they no doubt contained, were dupes of the mummeries then in the ascendant; but seeing it hopeless to stem the tide, they probably chose to indemnify themselves for outward acquiescence by secret contempt.

XXXVII.

I wish to familiarize to myself the idea of death as producing no essential alteration in character, but only a change in the mode and sphere of the soul's operations. What is it in reality but a change in the current of thought? and surely this is not greater than is experienced on falling asleep, or on awaking out of sleep. Thales, consistently enough with his tenet of immortality, maintained that between death and life there is no substantial difference. —To the servant of God, death is only a passage from an inferior and contracted, to a noble and elevated condition of being. It is a removal from a dungeon to a palace; from a narrow cottage to an open plain or lofty mountain, where the spirit, loosened from the dark tenement in which it had been lodged, is allowed free scope in the clear firmament. It is as a transition from some meagre and elementary volume, to a work enriched with the brightest treasures of fancy, and replenished with the most varied accumulations of thought. Why

should such a change be contemplated with dismay?

XXXVIII.

The object of prayer is, not that God may become acquainted with our wants, but that by thinking and speaking of them in his presence, we may feel sensible of them ourselves, and of our dependence on him for their removal.

XXXIX.

Mental sins are almost the only temptations to which some persons are particularly exposed.

XL.

To interpret the literal parts of Scripture allegorically, and the prophetic or figurative parts literally, betrays the same quality of mind, namely, dissatisfaction with simple truth, and a predilection for the marvellous or imaginary. Of the former of these methods, the Jewish mystics of Alexandria, forming the primitive Cabbalists, have been the great exemplars in their glosses on the Mosaic institutes and history; and with regard to the New Testament in addition, several of the early Fathers, especially Origen, who had been infected from that tainted Egyptian source. The latter mode of criticism is in special vogue with the modern millenarians, who, reminding one of Selden's account of transubstantia-

tion, that it is rhetoric turned into logic, seem mainly intent on turning metaphor into fact. It is but fair however to acknowledge, that this extravagance is no less conspicuous in many of the Christian Fathers, whom some appear so anxious to exalt into theological authorities. Distinguished as are the merits of Lactantius in a variety of respects, yet the chimeras he indulges on the subject of the millenium, are not surpassed by the wildest dreams of the wildest prophetic school of recent days,—representations that are purely symbolic being taken by him throughout in a strictly literal acceptation.*

That the Fathers should in general be but indifferent expositors of Scripture is scarcely to be wondered at, when we consider that in their time criticism, as an art founded on philosophical principles, was unknown; that most of them being converts from paganism, were naturally enough tinctured with the erroneous habits of thought engendered by the mythological and idolatrous systems which they had abandoned, or fell an easy prey to the rabbinical phantasies then in the ascendant, and which exercised so detrimental an influence on the tenets of the early Church. For my part, not referring to the genius or piety of these primitive worthies, but comparing them in judgment and sense with the better order of later critics, I esteem them Fathers in the sense in which, as Wordsworth says, "the Child is father of the Man."

* Those who have the patience or curiosity may see the explication of his views in the treatise *De Vita Beata*, lib. vii., cap. 14, *et seq.*

XLI.

The religion of the present times, viewed in connexion with that which prevailed two or three centuries ago, may be compared to the learning of the respective periods. Both piety and literature are now much more extensively diffused, but both are in general much less profound.

XLII.

Death, one of the most ordinary events in the world, answers several of the most important purposes. In the first place, by allowing scope for the multiplication of souls, it contributes to replenish the universe of mind. Suppose the number of the human race were stationary, while all the habitable portions of the earth were fully peopled; how small would be the aggregate of beings under such an arrangement, compared with the actual amount in successive generations. If we estimate the population of the globe at eight hundred or a thousand millions, and assign to each generation on the average about thirty years, we shall perceive that in so short a period there are regularly added to the intelligent creation so vast a multitude of disembodied spirits. This, it is evident, could be effected only by the removal of one race preparatory to the introduction of another. In the next place, a

powerful check is imposed by death on the immorality of mankind. It is impossible to ascertain the latitude to which human wickedness might proceed, were it not for the certain prospect of dissolution. Earthly possessions would assume a higher value, and in consequence present stronger temptations to avarice, injustice, and various corrupt practices. The habits of vice would also be strengthened by the prolongation of life. When this was at the longest, men were the most depraved. Death interposes, and arrests the progress of sin. Thirdly, a correspondence is thus maintained between character and its appropriate sphere. Brief as human existence undoubtedly is, it is not too contracted for the designs of probation; and if, during the whole of this period, the means and offers of religion, together with the discipline of Providence, are utterly unavailing, what reason would there be to anticipate a different result, though life were extended a hundred-fold beyond its actual limits? In the case therefore of the wicked, a protracted continuance in the present state would not accomplish the objects which introduction to it was manifestly intended to realise. On the other hand, before death comes to the Christian, he generally finds this world to be an uncongenial abode. His views, habits, and aspirations, would have infinitely more scope and gratification in heaven. The bonds which unite him to earth are become feeble, and a holier and happier region is the sphere for which he is fitted, aud for which he sighs.

XLIII.

There are many who cultivate appearances while they neglect the heart. There are others who cultivate the heart, but somewhat neglect appearances. Both are in the wrong, though the former are incalculably more so. I will endeavour to regard what is internal, so as to secure the approbation of God: I will so far pay attention to what is exterior, as not justly to incur the disapprobation of man.

XLIV.

When piety and genius are removed by death, the value of earth is diminished, and that of heaven increased.

XLV.

The world appears quite another thing to philosophers than to the vulgar—to the Christian different from what it appears to mankind in general.

XLVI.

Want of recollection is sometimes pleaded as an excuse for using the name of God with irreverence; but the apology contains its own refutation. On such a subject, the very want of recollection argues a state of mind highly culpable. "Consider well,"

says Howell, "what a dangerous thing it is to tear in pieces that dreadful name which makes the vast fabric of the world to tremble; that holy name wherein the whole hierarchy of heaven doth triumph; that blissful name, wherein consists the fulness of all felicity." Such are the expressions, approaching to the sublime, of one who, mixing in courts and the ranks of fashion, esteemed it no degradation to be religious; and who added to the accomplishments of a statesman, the devotion and practical virtues of a sincere Christian.*

XLVII.

Religion does that for us, in reference to worldly things, which science does in reference to the celestial bodies. It teaches us that many objects which seem the greatest and the brightest, are in reality neither the one nor the other; as the moon, which appears to be of so much magnitude and splendour, is shown by astronomy to be much smaller and less luminous than the minutest of those specks or stars which just twinkle to the naked eye.

XLVIII.

The lark which mounts so high in singing her hymn of praise, descends afterward to the lowest point, and settles on the ground. So the Christian who rises the most in aspirations toward God and

* Howell was Clerk of the Privy Council to Charles the First, and died in 1666.—See his Familiar Letters, Part 1. Letter cxviii.

heaven, sinks proportionally in his own esteem, and rests on the plains of humiliation and self-abasement.

XLIX.

It is evident that religion is intended to triumph over all opposite principles. There are several vices which appear susceptible of considerable palliation, merely from the strength and importunity of natural feeling. It would not be difficult to assign many plausible excuses for avarice; as the force of general example, the wrongs and sufferings of poverty, the influence of habit. But though in defence of moral aberrations, something may perhaps be advanced, infinitely more may be adduced in favour of rectitude; and Religion, which is only another name for Reason exercised on the highest subjects, demands of course obedience to the preponderating motives.

L.

Most expositions of Scripture have been constructed on a false principle, namely, that the whole of the Bible requires elucidation; whereas the greater part is perfectly simple, and easy of comprehension. The only effect of these attempts to explain what needs no explanation is, that you get the same sentiment in different words, but generally so impaired by amplification, that it has lost half its majesty and beauty.

Akin to this mode of dealing with Holy Writ, are endeavours to clear up what is impenetrable. Many

seem reluctant to admit that any phrase or proposition in Scripture can defy interpretion; while of passages which have baffled the keenest wits, they will tender a solution, or rather a number of contradictory solutions, which every unsophisticated judgment would reject with contempt. If scepticism is an evidence of impiety, facility in adopting the glosses of critics and expositors would in many instances involve an abandonment of reason. The crudities that have been hazarded on that mysterious and sublime comsition, the Apocalypse, are a scandal to the human intellect. Sir Isaac Newton acquired no increase of celebrity by his essays in the prophetic line. Well might Calvin, with his learning, and genius, and sagacity, make the honest avowal, that he offered no commentary on the Revelation because he did not understand its meaning. A writer who can discover in it the petty transactions of his own day, or fancy that he illustrates it by tracing in it something more than coincidences with events raked from remoter periods, illustrates nothing but his own folly, and Dean Swift's Art of Sinking; being calculated to remind one of certain visions in oriental fable, where, after a succession of gorgeous and wonderful scenes, the dreamer on a sudden awakes; but instead of celestial visitants, or enchanting bowers, sees only the dull chamber or bare cave in which he had been slumbering.

LI.

The higher the Christian rises in God's esteem, the lower he sinks in his own; and the more mercies

he receives, the more sensibly he feels his unworthiness of the least mercy. Prosperity, which elates an ignoble heart, fills a generous one with self-abasement. "When I have ascended before men," says Lord Bacon, in that most sublime and touching prayer which he composed a few years before his death, "I have descended in humiliation before Thee." Such a trait appears to have characterised another distinguished luminary of the law, Chief Justice Hale, who, with much of Bacon's comprehensiveness and acumen, maintained, amidst all his preferments and honours, an unostentatious meekness of deportment seldom equalled.

LII.

In experimental and practical divinity, the English language is richer than any other, or than all others, in the world. The theological writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in particular, besides wonderful stores of learning, often wastefully enough poured out, display a noble vein of Scriptural sentiment, a depth of devotional piety, with a vigour and manliness of thought and diction, unparalleled in the religious performances of recent times. In biblical criticism, indeed, we have made no trivial advances, balanced however by tendencies little to be desired. The over-refinements of this art, in certain works, bear some affinity to the subtleties and wire-drawn distinctions of the Schoolmen; and may suggest to an imaginative intellect the case of an artist professing to give an illustration of an

ancient cathedral, but who confines his notices to an account of the stones, timber, or other materials, or to its minuter appendages and time-worn inscriptions; while the general dimensions and magnificence of the edifice, its symmetry and decorations, and the solemn and enchanting spirit which breathes through the whole, are utterly overlooked. The German critics, above all praise for scholarship, acumen, and research, and from whom the generality of our own are humble compilers or translators, have not seldom done their best to dilute the significance, and mar the simplicity of Scripture; and by attempting to analyse or define every thing, have reduced a considerable part of the Bible to the form of a dry and meagre skeleton; not to mention that their speculations are often conjectural or absurd, and their criticisms more elaborate than correct.*

LIII.

National election, or election to external religious privileges, involves the principle of personal election, or of election to salvation. Nor, so far as the principle is concerned, can we consistently reject the

* The author is far from insinuating that the labours of these foreign writers are entitled to little regard; but readily allowing that in certain departments they are incomparable, and despising the unworthy prejudice that would stifle or dread the severest investigation of truth, he conceives that the importance attached to many of their lucubrations is greatly overrated, and that the style in which such inquiries are often conducted is more qualified to form verbal critics, or fanciful antiquaries of Scripture, than able or comprehensive interpreters of its truths.

doctrine of personal election, unless we are prepared to deny that there is any difference, in point of advantage, in minds, conditions of life, or climates.

LIV.

Monarchs may bequeath their crowns, nobles their patrimonies and titles, philosophers, poets, heroes, the celebrity of their names; but Christ bequeathed that in comparison with which crowns are but dust, and all earthly distinctions and honours a shadow. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," said he to his disciples. He can bestow the richest spoils of earth, its wealth, its pomp, the gratifications of sense, on his enemies; but it is only on the Christian that he bestows peace.

LV.

Some of the most powerful causes in operation are not subjected to the notice of the senses. Mind in general, which gives birth to all the diversities of human action, and the wind, though occasioning so great a multiplicity of changes in nature, are themselves invisible. In like manner the Deity, who created and who sustains the beautiful fabric of the universe, remains unseen amidst all the wonderful effects which he produces, and is to be discerned, not by the eye of the body, but by that of the soul.*

* Xenophon, in that political and ethical romance, the Institution of Cyrus, which embodies so many principles of the Socratic philo-

LVI.

There is little sanction for levity. The sun, moon, and stars are solemn; the ocean and all inanimate nature are solemn; the Son of God himself was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

LVII.

We are yet destitute of a philosophical system of divinity, though we possess abundant ma-

sophy, represents his hero, at the approach of death, as exhorting his children to act in a manner which may be gratifying to him after his departure; intimating that, although he will no longer be seen, he will not be in a state of annihilation; in confirmation of which he remarks, that the soul is now invisible, while its existence is demonstrated by its acts. *Οὐ γὰρ δήπου τοῦτο γε σαφῶς δοκεῖτε εἰδέναι, ὡς οὐδέν ἔσομαι ἐγὼ ἔτι, ἐπειδὰν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου τελευτήσω· οὐδὲ γὰρ νῦν τοι τήν γ' ἐμὴν ψυχὴν ἑωρᾶτε, αλλ' οἷς διεπράττετο, τούτοις αὐτὴν ὡς οὖσαν κατεφωρᾶτε.*—*Cyropæd.* lib. viii. cap. 7. Cicero has introduced the passage in his Discourse on Old Age. After reciting the views of several philosophers in favour of the immortality of the soul, he thus renders the speech attributed to Cyrus: "Nolite arbitrari, o mihi carissimi filii, me, cum a vobis discessero, nusquam, aut nullum fore. Nec enim, dum eram vobiscum, animum meum videbatis; sed eum esse in hoc corpore, ex iis rebus quas gerebam, intelligebatis. Eundem igitur esse creditote, etiam si nullum videbitis."—*De Senect.* cap. xxii. In the Memorabilia the same argument is pursued, and applied in defence of an Intelligent and Presiding Cause. I behold, says Aristodemus, none of those gods whom you describe as regulating the world. Nor yet, replies Socrates, dost thou behold thy soul, which however governs thy body.—*Xenoph. Memorab.* lib. i. cap. 4.

terials for the purpose. Theology should be treated as any other science; not topics introduced which involve no difficulty, but those points thoroughly explored which constitute the leading principles.

LVIII.

The trains of thought in the understanding are in no case arbitrary, but always regulated by fixed laws, so that any variation which occurs is owing to variation of circumstances. Thus, if we knew the exact qualities of the mind at any given period; the state of the body, so far as it would influence the mind; together with external scenes or circumstances; we should be able to determine what ideas would next arise in the mind. Now all these particulars, thus separately enumerated, God no doubt perceives at a single glance, or rather he foresees them from eternity. We may therefore conceive how volition can be free, yet the thoughts and feelings of the mind be known, or foreknown, to God. If freedom of will does not imply that the successions of thought are arbitrary, it can never be irreconcilable with the Divine prescience. Or the argument may be resolved into a question; Would volition be free, supposing for a moment that God did not exist? If so, his existence or foreknowledge can be no obstruction to the free agency or responsibility of man; the Divine Being only perceiving beforehand the various sentiments and affections of the mind, just as he perceives all the properties of

matter, and the changes which it will at any time undergo.

LIX.

The supposition that mankind acquire depravity from example, education, or circumstances, not from what is termed original sin, only removes the difficulty a single step, if we admit, what cannot be controverted, that they are actually depraved. The same objection might be urged against their introduction to circumstances which invariably occasion depravity, as against their inheritance of a corrupt nature from Adam. The whole difficulty, in fact, lies in the permission of moral evil, or its entrance into our world; for that once obviated, the perplexities attending the problem would be of comparatively easy solution; as, that one class should be involved in the consequences of behaviour not their own, since otherwise no system of general laws could be established, or if established, could not be continued without the frequent intervention of miracle.—It may however be submitted, whether any thing is gained by the position that human depravity is not owing to example or to circumstances. If it is conceded that men do in reality become depraved; if, though their depravity is ascribed to education, or the circumstances of life, those circumstances are acknowledged to be the effect of Adam's fall; what doctrine of Scripture, or what decision of reason, is infringed by the hypothesis?

LX.

It is sometimes alleged that as God is benevolent, and cannot be injured by sin, it will not be visited with punishment. But the argument is most futile. In the first place, it confounds the plain distinction between a physical and a moral injury, to the latter of which the Deity is of course as liable as any other being, and which it would require strange distortion or narrowness of intellect to represent as the more trivial species of wrong. In the next place, it does not follow, because God himself is, in the lower sense of the word, uninjured by sin, that it will pass with impunity. It may be injurious to the creatures of God; and who shall affirm, that having made the universe, and expended upon it so much wisdom and goodness, he is indifferent to its regulation and welfare? In the third place, why does the Almighty command and reward obedience? By that he cannot be benefited, any more than by sin he can be injured. Yet no one denies that virtue will be rewarded. Again, if sin deserves punishment, and God is a just Ruler of the universe, it is perfectly evident that sin will be punished; for it is the province of justice to treat according to desert. The objection, in fact, besides overlooking all the palpable instances in which God has actually punished sin, and involving a total rejection of the authority of Revelation, is chargeable with the grossest absurdities and contradictions. It implies that God does not, or should not, interfere in cases

where his own interests, in the grosser acceptation of the term, are not concerned; in other words, that he never has done, and never can do, any thing whatever; for by no circumstance can his own interests, in the sense explained, be affected, or his happiness impaired. It assumes that he is indifferent to right and wrong; otherwise it is difficult to imagine, that while he is able to carry into effect his sentiments of approbation or disapprobation, he should omit to do so, or should do so in one case and not in another. It supposes that he is not the Governor of the world, or else a passive or an immoral Governor; that sin is not an evil, or that God is not just; that he is without a determinate character, without authority, or without care for his creatures; in short, that he is not God.

LXI.

The idea of the process or means by which the improvement of our species will probably be accomplished, may be expressed briefly as follows. So far as exterior progression is concerned, the ordinary course of things supplies a tolerable ground of hope. Thus, the older the world grows, the principles of national and civil polity will be more fully developed, and more clearly discerned. The natural consequence will be, the adoption of the wisest and most beneficial forms of government and administration. Discoveries in science and art will facilitate the diffusion of whatever is valuable, throughout different countries. It is ascertained that the cultivation

of the soil essentially promotes the melioration of climate. To the advancement of medical knowledge and skill, scarcely any boundaries can be assigned; so that in time perhaps disease may be almost unknown. Combine these and similar advantages with a more extensive and copious effusion of spiritual influence, and such a prospect will be realised as reason approves, and Revelation does not seem to discountenance.

With regard to what is called the millennium, as frequently understood, comprehending substantially the dream of human perfectibility, I have no faith in any thing of the kind. That the expression, as used by the writer of the Apocalypse, is intended to be significant of something in fact, I see no reason to doubt; but what that something is, I am not able to determine, any more than I can decypher the generality of the mystic and allegorical visions which compose the chief contents of the work. It is remarkable that in no other part of Scripture is the subject at all mentioned; while the literal interpretation of the phrases in which it is presented would involve the most glaring absurdities. Whether the description, which is evidently symbolic, relates to what is past, as Professor Lee and others, I believe, maintain to be case with all the predictions of the book; or whether the claims of the book itself to apostolic authority be so unimpeachable as is generally taken for granted, I neither affirm nor deny: but this I will acknowledge, that to build on such a basis, or on any passages of Holy Writ, a theory implying the total regeneration of our race, and the

almost entire banishment of evil from the world, is to me but a proof how much stronger imagination, or acquiescence in traditionary views, is with many, than calm independent reflection.

LXII.

In the earlier stages of Christian experience, the mind is perhaps more influenced by religious principles as embodied in particular individuals, than by those principles in the abstract. Afterwards, when the views and character are more ripened, principles themselves assume a greater weight, and individuals are less regarded.

LXIII.

The assertion that human nature is totally corrupt, requires some qualification or explanation. If nothing more be meant than that man is so depraved that he will never of himself repent, believe, entertain genuine love to God, or from right motives practise his commands, the proposition is correct. But if it express that no kind or portion of moral excellence resides naturally in man, it is unsupported by Scripture, and decisively confuted by fact. Are not benevolence, filial and parental affection, pity, gratitude, generosity of disposition, the love of justice, in themselves morally good, and parts of the nature which God has communicated to mankind? Or are they peculiar to the renovated and religious character? Though man's nature is in

ruins, it exhibits many traces and fragments of its original beauty and magnificence. Nor does it follow, because the principles and feelings just specified are originally implanted in man, and exist independently of his own cultivation, that they are not intrinsically good. For though they contain nothing in the least meritorious, and though God has not annexed to them, but to faith in Christ, a promise of salvation, yet their very nature demonstrates their excellence. Perhaps it may be alleged that similar qualities are observable in the brute creation; but the fact would only serve to establish the probability, that the brutes are endowed with an intellectual principle, and in some instances display a sort of moral sense; a supposition which it may be much easier to ridicule than to confute.*

LXIV.

It might be satisfactory to know what species of evidence the advocates of infidelity would require to accompany a Revelation from God; for it is impossible to specify any kind which would be altogether free from objection.

* The ethical system of Bishop Butler proceeds throughout on the assumption, that vestiges of man's original rectitude are discernible in the present constitution of his nature; so much so as to furnish the means of determining the relation at first established between the several faculties of which it is composed. See in particular the delineation of his scheme in the first three of the Sermons preached at the Rolls.

LXV.

The interests of religion are little promoted by nice speculations about the precise order or elements of the mental emotions, at the commencement, or during the subsequent stages of piety.

LXVI.

Though no motives deducible from human merit can be supposed to influence God in election, it does not follow that he is not governed by reasons in the choice of some, rather than of others. Doubtless the Divine wisdom, as well as sovereignty, regulates the selection; agreeably to the language of the Apostle, who, after mentioning the predestination of believers, refers it to "the *counsel* of God's will."*

LXVII.

It is remarkable that while no book in the world contains so striking an exposure of men's vices and follies as the Bible, no book ever speaks of them with less bitterness or contempt.

LXVIII.

Whatever effects the Christian's endeavours to do good may have upon others, he is warranted to indulge the hope that they will not be without a

* *κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.—Eph.* i. 11.

beneficial influence on himself. If he cannot lead so many of his fellow-creatures to heaven as he would, let him rejoice if his own mind is in a state of discipline and preparation for that delightful abode.

LXIX.

Our pleasures, even those which come from a celestial source, are like the sunbeams passing through a cloud, and are divested of half their brightness by contact with our dark and distempered minds.

LXX.

How many are ready to acknowledge God as their beginning, who are not willing to make him their end!

LXXI.

Apart from the testimony of Holy Writ, it is by no means unphilosophical to suppose, that men sufficiently perspicacious on topics of general inquiry or speculation, may be blind to spiritual things, and therefore unable to estimate their legitimate impression on minds otherwise constituted or moulded. Who would affirm that persons devoid of a taste for poetry or music are competent to form accurate opinions on those subjects? In the case of poetry or music, however, the imperfection is organic or intellectual; but in the case of religious truth or experience, it is moral and culpable.

LXXII.

The conceptions of imagination are said to be the most vivid and luminous when the eye is closed to the sight of sensible objects; that is, internal vision is most powerful in the absence of that which is external. In like manner the eye of the soul must be closed to earthly scenes and attractions, if exalted or impressive views are to be attained of invisible and heavenly realities.*

* It was a beautiful maxim of the Platonists, which recommended the cultivation of the abstract branches of science, in order to promote the great object of their philosophy, the purification of mind from matter, or the dominion of reason over sense. The notion is well explained in the following eloquent passage of an old writer, whose Remains, though tinctured with the pedantry of the time, possess extraordinary worth, exhibiting a rare specimen of masculine discrimination, united to considerable brilliancy of genius. "Besides those *ἀρεταὶ καθαρτικαὶ* by which the souls of men were to be separated from sensuality and purged from fleshy filth, they devised a farther way of separation more accommodated to the condition of philosophers, which was their *mathemata*, or mathematical contemplations, whereby the souls of men might farther shake off their dependency upon sense, and learn to go as it were alone, without the crutch of any sensible or material thing to support them; and so be a little inured, being once got up above the body, to converse freely with immaterial natures, without looking down again and falling back into sense. Besides many other ways they had, whereby to rise out of this dark body; *ἀναβάσεις ἐκ τοῦ σπηλαίου*, as they are wont to call them, several steps and ascents out of this miry cave of mortality, before they could set any footing with their intellectual part in the land of light and immortal being."—*Smith's Select Discourses*—Prefatory Discourse concerning the true Way or Method of attaining Divine Knowledge, sect. 1.—The author, who was Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, must have been a prodigy of learning for his years, having died in 1652, at the early age of thirty-four.

LXXIII.

The death of the inferior animals is a difficulty, if so it can be called, not chargeable on Revelation, but equally mysterious on any system or hypothesis; in this respect standing on the same level with the origin of evil, which the infidel can no more explain than the Christian. That it is an effect of the fall, we have no sufficient authority to suppose. In itself it comprehends nothing inequitable, since life, in all its varieties, is a gratuitous donation, and in most instances no doubt comprises more enjoyment than suffering. The arrangement might have been originally established in anticipation of the altered circumstances of man; but was perhaps inseparable from the economy and destination of our world.*

* The reasons which induce me to reject the assumption that the event in question is owing to the first offence, are the following: 1. It appears to be unsupported by Scripture. In the passage which at first view may seem to sanction that hypothesis, the context shows that the Apostle is arguing respecting the effects of the fall on *mankind* alone. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all *men*, for that all have sinned." So far as his remarks may be considered applicable to the present topic, they rather oppose than countenance the supposition in debate; death being represented as universal because *transgression* is so. 2. Unless the condition of our atmosphere was essentially different from what it now is, death must have taken place in numberless instances *before* the fall; as it is indisputable that, the air being filled with countless animalcules, the destruction of living, organised forms is occasioned by each respiration. 3. According to the opinion under notice, there must have been a total and immediate change in the structure of endless millions of animated beings. The greater part of the lower races subsist on some species of sentient existence; and physiology

LXXIV.

Have we evidence for the assumption, that the state of external nature before the fall was considerably more benignant and beautiful than during the period which intervened between that event and the deluge? or in general during the ages which have elapsed since the occurrence of that catastrophe? The hypothesis is perhaps to be classed with the notion which attributes the ferocity and carnivorous habits of wild beasts to the sin of our first parents. It is almost superfluous to remark, that the qualities and food of animals are determined in great part by their structure; and the researches of geologists, assisted by those of comparative anatomy, have

demonstrates that while certain creatures, as ourselves, possess an organization adapted to both vegetable and animal diet, others are framed exclusively for the latter. 4. Even if it could be proved that the substances called vegetable were the sole articles of nourishment in the primeval age, the difficulty would in no way be lessened, since microscopical observations evince that all these substances are pervaded by objects endowed with vital energies. 5. We have the precedent, affording ground for analogical inference, of death occurring prior to the creation of man; the fossil remains imbedded in particular strata putting this point completely beyond controversy. Was the earth then inhabited by rational natures, and were they disobedient to the Creator? All researches into the physical history of our globe tend to prove, that it was peopled by no orders of intelligence before the human. Lastly, it is inconceivable that, if the world was intended to continue through a long series of ages, the law of dissolution and successive reproduction should not have attached to all the varieties of its inhabitants; as otherwise it must speedily have become overstocked, and death have ensued from the inadequacy of its resources.

demonstrated that beasts of prey, of formidable magnitude, existed on our globe ages before the formation of man, or the establishment of the present system. In every drop of water too are myriads of animalcules, the larger of which prey on the smaller, being furnished for that purpose with a particular set of organs. Can we suppose that this destructive apparatus, and the impulse to employ it, arose contemporaneously with the prime offence? It seems not improbable that the fancy respecting the original mildness and harmony of the brute creation, may be traced to the invention of the poets, embellishing, as in the fables respecting a golden age, the general fact of man's original happiness. Milton, in portraying the bliss of the Paradisiacal state, has taken care to include so agreeable a circumstance:

> —— About them frisking play'd
> All beasts of the Earth, since wild, and of all chase
> In wood or wilderness, forest or den:
> Sporting the lion ramp'd, and in his paw
> Dandled the kid; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
> Gamboll'd before them; the unwieldy elephant,
> To make them mirth, used all his might, and wreath'd
> His lithe proboscis.—
>
> *Par. Lost*, Book iv.

Such a fiction may suit well the colourings of poetry, but receives little countenance from theology or science.

I may notice here an opinion commonly entertained on another point; that all the various species of animated existences now dwelling on the earth were preserved in the ark of Noah; an opinion to which Dr. Prichard, following out a line of careful

investigation and argument, opposes the supposition, that the Scriptural narrative refers exclusively to "the stock of animals peculiar to the region inhabited by men before the deluge, which," he observes, "were perhaps chiefly the domesticated kinds, and the clean, or those used for sacrifice in the patriarchal institutions." Perhaps a theory in some respects similar is applicable to the creatures that received names from Adam.

LXXV.

An admirable code of maxims for the conduct of life, might be extracted from the writings of the ancient moralists and sages, who in this respect are perhaps too much depreciated. Their grand deficiency consisted in the want of adequate motives, which are supplied only by the great doctrines of redemption, the immortality of the soul, and an equitable distribution of future rewards and punishments. We may instance, on some of these accounts, the treatise of Cicero *De Officiis*, and especially the Meditations of the Emperor Antoninus, which display, with no mean compass of genius, a number of sublime and beautiful sentiments, yet without the requisite principle of animation. There is the Promethean image, but the ethereal fire is wanting.

LXXVI.

It appears to be a favourite practice with sceptics, to indulge in disparaging and contemptuous repre-

sentations of man. But the practical inference from this lowly estimate of humanity, they seem to have utterly neglected; namely, the propriety of so vain and ignorant a being exercising some portion of hesitation and diffidence, in pronouncing on the claims or the doctrines of Revelation.

LXXVII.

If there is no propagation of mind, how can there be of depravity? Certainly unless the soul be material, it is not propagated; if not propagated, it must be immediately created by the Almighty; whatever comes from the Almighty must be free from every taint of corruption: the least therefore that can be said is, that the soul, at the period of its creation, is in every moral respect a *tabula rasa*. Its subsequent contraction of defilement is a separate question; but the difficulty is not removed by assuming, with some theologians, apparent followers in the track of Plato, who referred the origin of evil to a certain intractability of matter, that the union of body with spirit *necessarily* occasions depravity; for if the necessity be a natural or physical one, where is the guilt? Besides, the supposition overlooks the examples of Adam in innocence, and of our Lord, to say nothing of glorified spirits after the resurrection.

LXXVIII.

At first view the opinion may seem very plausible, that the matter of the world is eternal, according to

the ancient aphorism, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*—"out of nothing, nothing can be produced." Yet on narrower inspection, scarcely any opinion appears more absurd, as resting on a maxim that assumes the very position which requires to be established, and which is decisively confuted by the admission of the Divine omnipotence. The aphorism indeed, in its oriental origin, had no signification of an atheistic nature, being only an expression of the principle that every effect must have a cause; a principle which, so far from proving the eternity of matter, involves the necessity of its production by some foreign power.—But while there can be no doubt that the earth has had a beginning, it is not improbable, as maintained by Aristotle, Pliny, and others, that in substance it will continue for ever, though certainly not in its present form. Hitherto it has not lost a single atom; and perhaps matter, once created, will be perpetual in its duration, in whatever part of the universe existing, or how numerous soever the chemical or other changes which it may undergo. Scripture contains nothing repugnant to the notion; for though it represents the globe as reserved for fire, the tendency of fire is to dissolve or separate, not to destroy. The same authority declares that the antediluvian world *perished*—ἀπώλετο—yet who supposes that a particle of matter was then annihilated?*

* See 2 Pet. iii. 6. In the next verse, a kindred word is applied to the punishment of the wicked at the day of judgment—ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Geology shows pretty clearly that the globe has existed in successive states during incalculable ages before the present system: why then should we suppose that this system will be the last? Though the

LXXIX.

In general, those ministers seem the most useful who possess most of the spirit of love, and who bring religious truth to bear on the affections and

notions of the Fathers differed respecting the antiquity of the earth, some, as Justin Martyr and Gregory Nazianzen, referring its creation to a period long anterior to the six days of Moses, while Lactantius, with no deficiency of assurance, maintains the opposite view; yet a belief in its renovation and continuance after the judgment appears in the writings of several of these ancient theologians; and in the following passage from St. Cyril of Jerusalem, is attempted to be explained and supported on Scriptural grounds. Speaking of the coming of Christ at the last day—*ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*—he says: *γίνεται γὰρ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου συντέλεια, καὶ ὁ γενητὸς οὗτος κόσμος πάλιν ἀνακαινοποιεῖται.* By the way, the Scriptures do not speak of the end of the world, *συντέλεια τοῦ κόσμου,* but of the end of the age or dispensation, *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος.* After applying to the final advent a passage, Matt. xxiv. 29, which sound criticism, I apprehend, must restrict to the destruction of Jerusalem, and which, with an hallucination common to the Fathers, he takes literally, he observes: *Εἱλίσσει δὲ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ὁ Κύριος, οὐχ ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ τούτους, αλλ' ἵνα αὐτοὺς πάλιν καλλίονας ἐγείρῃ. Ἄκουε Δαβὶδ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· "Κατ' ἀρχὰς σὺ Κύριε τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσὶν οἱ οὐρανοί· αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις." Ἀλλ' ἐρεῖ τις, ἰδὲ λέγει σαφῶς ὅτι ἀπολοῦνται. Ἄκουε πῶς λέγει τὸ ἀπολοῦνται· διὰ τῶν ἑξῆς δῆλον· "Καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται, καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἑλίξεις αὐτοὺς, καὶ ἀλλαγήσονται." Ὥσπερ γὰρ ἀπώλεια ἀνθρώπου λέγεται κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον, "Ἴδετε ὡς ὁ δίκαιος ἀπώλετο, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐκδέχεται τῇ καρδίᾳ," καὶ ταῦτα, τῆς ἀναστάσεως προσδοκωμένης· οὕτως ἀνάστασιν ὥσπερ προσδοκῶμεν καὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν.—St. Cyril Hier.* Cat. 15.

It is remarkable that the ancient Druids, according to Strabo, believed in the perpetuity of the material world, accompanied with an endless succession of changes from fire and water.

consciences, rather than on the reasoning faculties or the fears of their auditors. They who endeavour to win men to piety by dint of a rigid, exclusive dogmatism, or by a demonstration of the intellectual correctness of Christian principles, apart from all gentle influences which speak to the heart, and melt its obduracy; or who dilate on a round of performances not resting on a substratum of faith and love, act with little more wisdom than if they wasted their efforts in attempts to rear an inverted pyramid.

LXXX.

One cause of scepticism appears to be, undue restriction of thought on religious subjects in early life. The consequence often is, that when riper years claim greater latitude and independence of reflection, the mind having never been habituated to judge for itself, rushes into extravagance of sentiment. The notions which it has previously held are easily cast off, because they have been imposed rather than adopted, and because neither conviction, nor regard to consistency, is interested in their retention. It is in speculative affairs as in those relating to politics:—long submission to tyranny is followed by licentious outbreaks at the season of reckoning, not only from the effervescence occasioned by a feeling of triumph, but from want of skill in the exercise of a newly acquired power, as was strikingly exemplified in both these respects at the French revolution.

LXXXI.

Mistaken views of the Divine character, lie at the foundation of all error in religion.

LXXXII.

Instead of questioning whether the world contains any atheists, perhaps it would be nearer the truth to suppose, that the generality of men are of that description. At least it seems certain that they do not believe in the existence of such a God as the Scriptures reveal. The Apostle reminded the Christians at Ephesus, that they were formerly "without God;" in the original, ἄθεοι, *atheists*. These persons had not been without the acknowledgement of a divinity, for they were once notorious for the practice of idolatry; but they had possessed no accurate views of the nature or attributes of the true Divinity. If therefore idolaters may be regarded as atheists, the appellation may justly be applied to all who have no correct or religious sentiments respecting the Divine character; and in this sense may be extended to the great majority of mankind. The idea which most persons form of the Supreme Being, resembles the image that Nebuchadnezzar beheld in his dream; of which, though a certain portion consisted of gold, the greater part was composed of inferior or debasing ingredients. Some conceptions entertained respecting the Deity, may accord with the standard of Scripture and truth;

but those conceptions are commonly alloyed by others, which are the offspring only of imagination or desire. In strict language, therefore, none but real Christians can be considered as exempt from the imputation of atheism. Some acute thinkers would go further. "In all sins whatsoever," says Chillingworth, in one of those discourses which, like his matchless treatise on the Religion of Protestants, are replete with the eloquence of powerful, impassioned thought, "there is some quantity of atheism, though the sins be but of an ordinary size and rank."*—The present remarks would help us to decide, were there any inclination to dispute, another question. It has been affirmed that a nation of atheists could not exist; a proposition for combating which Bayle was assailed with the fiercest invectives, but whose falsehood is sufficiently apparent if the preceding representations be correct. Should it be alleged that the hypothesis relates to those who admit no kind of deities, we might still demand in what respect the superstitious and often sanguinary creed of pagans is conducive to social order; not to speak of the arguments which might be drawn from the structure of human nature, or the obligations imposed by the necessity of circumstances.

LXXXIII.

It is most unphilosophical to question the possibility, or in particular circumstances, the probability of miracles, which are nothing more than variations

* See this position admirably enforced in the third of his Sermons.

from the customary order of events. Now the general course of things is not the result of any natural necessity, but solely of divine appointment; in other words, it is only God's uniformity of operation, from which, undoubtedly, he can deviate whenever he pleases: and surely no one will affect to maintain, that an occasion can never arise when such deviation may be desirable. Hume's argument against miracles, from the alleged impossibility of proving by testimony what is opposed to general experience, is not only a complete *petitio principii*, but in absolute contrariety to the Baconian or inductive method of philosophizing, which in questions of fact regards all assumptions *a priori* as worthless. To attempt the disproof of miracles by asserting, as he does, that experience being set in array against experience would involve a contradiction, is absurd; for how often in ordinary life is the experience of one man contrary to that of multitudes; the experience of the scientific investigator, for instance, contrary to that of the rest of mankind! No antecedent presumptions therefore being admissible against the occurrence of miracles, all that is necessary, in any particular case, to establish their existence, is a certain amount of testimony.—Mr. Babbage, in his collection of fragments entitled "The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise," after explaining the doctrine of Hume to be, that miracles, being contrary to general experience, can never be substantiated by testimony, unless its falsehood were less credible than the facts it is adduced to support—a doctrine which, as thus expounded, may be acknowledged to be correct—has

demonstrated, by an elaborate series of calculations founded on the theory of probabilities, that even on the principle laid down by Hume, the chances in favour of the gospel miracles are all but infinite.

LXXXIV.

The depravity of man is shown, not only by the depth to which he is fallen from God, but by his endeavours to bring down the Divine character and government to the level of his own degradation.

LXXXV.

To reconcile the mind to the thoughts of death, philosophy can tell us, that it will afford exemption from sickness and pain; extinguish envy; diminish or destroy hatred; and deliver from the vicissitudes and uncertainty attending our mortal condition:—but what can all this avail the cold clay, or the disembodied spirit.

LXXXVI.

Origen had the sagacity to perceive, that the existence of evil is the most perplexing of problems:—to affirm that it has never received a satisfactory explanation, can hardly be deemed presumptuous. Dr. Williams's professed solution of the most difficult part of the inquiry, the entrance of sin into the universe, may fairly be pronounced an abortive attempt, however inge-

nious; since, besides resting on a gratuitous assumption, it fails to remove a particle of the embarrassment attending the subject. His theory, divested of its appendages, is substantially as follows:—that in all intelligences, possessed of freedom, there is a necessary tendency to depraved volition, or moral defection, which nothing can prevent but a positive influence on the part of the Creator. We naturally demand the proof of this hypothesis, but are furnished with none. Were it ever so valid, however, it would leave the whole mystery in its primitive darkness. There are two difficulties untouched by the assumption: one, *how* a mind perfectly holy *can* entertain volitions that are evil, especially as it is admitted that volitions are determined by the character of the mind; the other, why, if divine influence be essential to preserve from wrong volitions, that influence should have been withheld. Though its exercise cannot be claimed in equity, yet it is acknowledged to be compatible with liberty, and would seem to be required by benevolence. At all events, this is the very pith of the controversy, which Dr. Williams therefore leaves as unsettled as before. The point in which his argumentation appears to terminate is, that God has not seen fit to prevent the occurrence of evil; a fact which constitutes the main enigma to be unravelled, and for the discovery of which we might have dispensed with a long parade of logical reasoning. Were I to venture an opinion respecting the theological speculations of this writer, I should say that, although often displaying extraordinary acuteness

and scholastic subtlety, yet in general his views when correct are not new, and when new are worthless. His eternal play on what he styles "passive power," might almost be adduced as a specimen of metaphysical monomania.

LXXXVII.

He who professes to take part with religion, yet throws disparagement on its more pure and decided manifestations, is a greater enemy to its interests than he who is totally indifferent about the matter, or who makes no scruple to avow his scepticism or hostility.

LXXXVIII.

Religion gains little by that uncharitable temper which sometimes lurks beneath her garb, and which views with unbending rigour every trivial impropriety, every approach to hilarity or playfulness, and every deviation from established opinion.

What is called a love to the truth, is often nothing but intolerance, and love to traditional error; and many who seem fond of putting faith before charity, only deceive themselves by substituting a narrow and exclusive belief for one which is comprehensive and benign.

LXXXIX.

It is not when the sun shines brightest that human vision is the most distinct, or that it reaches to the

greatest distance, but rather in seasons when the light is softened or partially obstructed by clouds; as in each of these cases may be discovered on surveying the broad expanse of ocean. In like manner it is not amidst the sunshine of prosperity that the intellectual or spiritual vision of man is the most piercing or extensive; for though the nearer objects or scenes may appear luminous or beautiful, those which are remote are neglected, or obscurely discerned.

XC.

Religion is only a question of fact; and so are all the doctrines which it inculcates. It were irrational to admit a single position in theology which is not supported by the soundest evidence; but whatever is susceptible of proof, it were equally irrational to feel at all more ashamed to avow, than to profess one's belief in the most established principles of natural philosophy. Hume has observed, in his Dialogues concerning Natural Religion, that "Locke seems to have been the first Christian who ventured openly to assert that faith was nothing but a species of reason; that religion was only a branch of philosophy; and that a chain of arguments, similar to that which established any truth in morals, politics, or physics, was always employed in discovering all the principles of theology, natural and revealed." But if Locke was the first who explicitly announced such a tenet, he has no sort of claim to its authorship. The sentiment, besides being virtually embo-

died in the propositions maintained by the early Reformers, is practically exemplified in the writings of most of their successors. Witness in particular those luminaries of theological literature, Hooker, Chillingworth, Barrow, and Howe. "You may rest satisfied," says South, "that what is nonsense upon a principle of reason, will never be sense upon a principle of religion."* Even the Schoolmen, as Guizot in his Lectures on European Civilization has shown, set the example of free inquiry in theology; the disciples of Abelard having required to know, along with what he taught them, the philosophical arguments by which it could be supported.

XCI.

In throwing off the yoke of Popery, we have discarded several usages not always perhaps objectionable. In certain cases the system of establishments for religious retirement, and for literary or other tranquil occupations, might not be unattended with advantage. Circumstances may surely be conceived, in which the mental faculties would be employed with more effect in seclusion from the world, than amidst the excitement and effervescence of public activity. The reader may see the model of such a Protestant Retreat in Sir John Hawkins's Life of Walton. The institution there described, which was under the superintendence of Mr. Nicholas Farrer its founder, the intimate friend of George Herbert, was beneficial to others as well as the inmates;

* Sermons, vol. ii. p. 483.

and the features it presents, though tinged with a shade of ascetic rigour, are not a little curious and interesting. A similar establishment, with modification in the details, might be made to comprise, apart from the austerities or vows of a conventual life, the utility of such a society as that of Port Royal, to which literature has been indebted for so many estimable works. At all events there seems little tendency, in the present generation, to contract an inordinate fondness for recluse habits or contemplations. The Moravian settlements, as those of Fulneck in Yorkshire, and Herrnhut in Lusatia, present a partial approximation to the plan here suggested; resembling, on a small scale, what were called the Reductions of the Spanish Jesuits in Paraguay—a body of men whose conduct towards the natives of that unhappy country reflects unfading lustre on an order which, whatever may have been its faults, has displayed a number of the highest merits, both literary and religious, but which has not escaped the attacks of ignorant abuse, or of wanton persecution.*

* With reference to the extraordinary Society instituted by Loyola, and which has been styled by Mackintosh "the glory of Catholic Europe," I may quote a remark of Southey, no great admirer of the Romish system or usurpations, but who has the honesty to see worth in an enemy. "The extinction of the order was a heavy loss to literature, a great evil to the Catholic world, and an irreparable injury to the tribes of South America."—*History of Brazil.*

Some observations bearing on the subject above noticed, occur towards the end of a very agreeable and recondite article in the *Quarterly Review*, No. xliii., on "British Monachism," attributed to the same delightful pen. Respecting Farrer, and his establishment at Little Gidding near Huntingdon, there have lately appeared, in a small

XCII.

It has been alleged that the Pentateuch contains no intimation of the soul's immortality; and on this omission, Voltaire seems to ground an argument against the authority of that production. The Jews, he insinuates, were ignorant of the doctrine; a remarkable circumstance, if true, when, according to his own statement, that doctrine obtained not only in ancient Greece, but in almost all oriental nations —in Persia, Arabia, Syria, India, and in Egypt, the country where Moses was educated. But admitting that his writings make no definite allusion to the subject, are we to infer that the opinion was unknown, either to himself or the Jewish people? In historical summaries, or codes of law, it is not usual to interweave points of abstract or theological sentiment. We might as fairly conclude that the immortality of the soul is unknown in Britain, because neither the

volume, most of the particulars that can now be collected, drawn up chiefly from the narrative of Bishop Turner, with additions by the editor, the Rev. T. M. Macdonogh, Vicar of Bovingdon.

I add here a passage from a work which combines, with much gracefulness of style and manner, a considerable mass of historical and antiquarian information—Lawrance's Memoirs of the Queens of England. After referring to the utility of monastic establishments in former and less cultivated periods, the fair writer observes: "Even in the present day, to the philosopher devoted to his absorbing pursuits; to the aged and solitary man of letters; to the lady, high-born, perchance, but thrust by adverse fortunes from the sphere in which she was destined to move, the abbey, with its noble halls, its pleasant cloisters, and its quiet cells, may still appear a vision of peace and repose, on which the mind will linger with feelings of unavailing regret."

records of its history, nor its Parliamentary edicts, comprise any formal announcement of the position. And though the Hebrew code embraced a system of religious as well as civil polity, yet the silence of the Pentateuch is surely not incompatible with the supposition of the universal knowledge and admission of that tenet on the part of the Jews, who certainly believed in the separate existence of spirits at a period not very remote from the time of Moses, as appears from the narrative respecting the witch of Endor. But whatever may be thought on this controverted topic, observe the consistency of Voltaire, who affects to disparage the credit of the Jewish legislator, by assuming that immortality and future retribution are not made the basis of his laws. "Si tous les législateurs de l'antiquité," says he, "ont établi de sages lois sur ce fondement, Moïse pouvait bien en user de même: s'il ignorait ces dogmes utiles, il n'était pas digne de conduire une nation; s'il les savait et les cachait, il en était encore plus indigne."* Yet he elsewhere extols the laws of the Chinese for not including those articles. "Les lois de la Chine ne parlent point de peines et de récompenses après la mort: ils n'ont point voulu affirmir ce qu' ils ne savaient pas. Ils se contentèrent d'exhorter les hommes à révérer le ciel, et à être justes. Ils crurent qu'une police exacte, toujours exercée, ferait plus d'effet que des opinions qui peuvent être combattues; et qu'on craindrait plus

* "Philosophie de l'Histoire," forming the Introduction to the "Essai sur les Mœurs et l'Esprit des Nations"—Œuvres, tom. xvi. p. 143.

la loi toujours présente, qu'une loi à venir."* The avidity with which this writer seizes every occasion of enhancing the Chinese records and institutes, and vilifying those of the Jews, reflects as little credit on his discrimination as his impartiality. With all his pretensions to philosophy, and exemption from vulgar prejudice, Voltaire was in reality one of the greatest of bigots. It would be desirable that some competent person should append to his prose performances a number of critical or corrective notes, on those passages which subsequent research has shown to contain erroneous assumptions, or which are unable to bear the test of accurate reasoning. It were a pity, for the sake of these exceptionable parts, to lose so much information, argument, speculative ingenuity, and wit, as pervade the compositions of this distinguished genius.†

XCIII.

On the supposition that the functions of the soul are suspended at death, or that the faculties remain

* Philosophie de l'Histoire, p. 111.

† An opinion not much different from that above advanced respecting the patriarch of Ferney, I find expressed by Madame d' Epinay, one of that brilliant though sceptical coterie of intellect, fashion, and literature, which lent so much celebrity to the circles of Paris before the Revolution. Her portrait of Voltaire was sketched from the life; but while rendering due homage to his extraordinary and versatile powers, she remarks,—"Il n'a nulle philosophie dans la tête; il est tout hérissé de petits préjugés d'enfans; on les lui passeroit peut-être en faveur de ses graces, du brilliant de son esprit et de son originalité, s'il ne s'affichoit pas pour les secouer tous."—*Mémoires et Correspondance*, tom. iii. p. 196.

in a species of torpidity or slumber till the resurrection, the effect on awaking would probably be the same as if dissolution had but immediately taken place. Time is measured by the ideas and sensations experienced; so that if these were for a season interrupted or destroyed, no conception could be formed of the interval thus passed in the sleep of the spirit, or in the temporary cessation of its consciousness. But without adducing the intimations of Scripture, the nature and activity of the soul appear to preclude the possibility of a suspension of the intellectual functions, while the mind to which they belong is in existence. Sleep is a property peculiar to matter, being strictly the quiescence of the senses, or a state of the body in which impressions upon them are not attended with voluntary action. On the contrary, thinking is essential to mind, constituting all that we know of its nature; so that the only definition which can be given of mind, as distinct from matter, is, that it is that which thinks. Between the absence of thought therefore, and materiality or non-entity, there seems to be no medium.

To argue for a suspension of the soul itself, because some of its faculties are occasionally suspended, is to forget that what are called faculties are only certain conditions of mind, or the mind operating in a certain manner; and that while it is easy to conceive of a spiritual essence not feeling or acting in a particular way, it is impossible to conceive of its neither feeling nor acting in any way, without absolute annihilation. I take for granted

the hypothesis, so ingeniously supported by Dugald Stewart, that the mind is unceasingly occupied in sleep; and am inclined to believe in a similar continuity of thought, followed by a similar, or rather complete oblivion, in cases of swooning and the like. Beyond dispute, certain disorders affecting the brain are accompanied with abundant or preternatural mental activity, of which there is not the slightest remembrance on a change in the distemper, or on partial recovery.—The mistake appears to arise from confounding the analogies of mind and matter; an illusion apt to lurk imperceptibly in all our inquiries on subjects of this description.

XCIV.

Our souls, viewed in relation to the invisible state, are perhaps but as our bodily eyes when shut, to which the landscape is not less near than when open. To the Christian, the glories of the brighter world, though unseen, are never remote. Nothing intervenes between him and heaven but the thin veil of mortality.

THE END.

ALBEMARLE STREET,
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