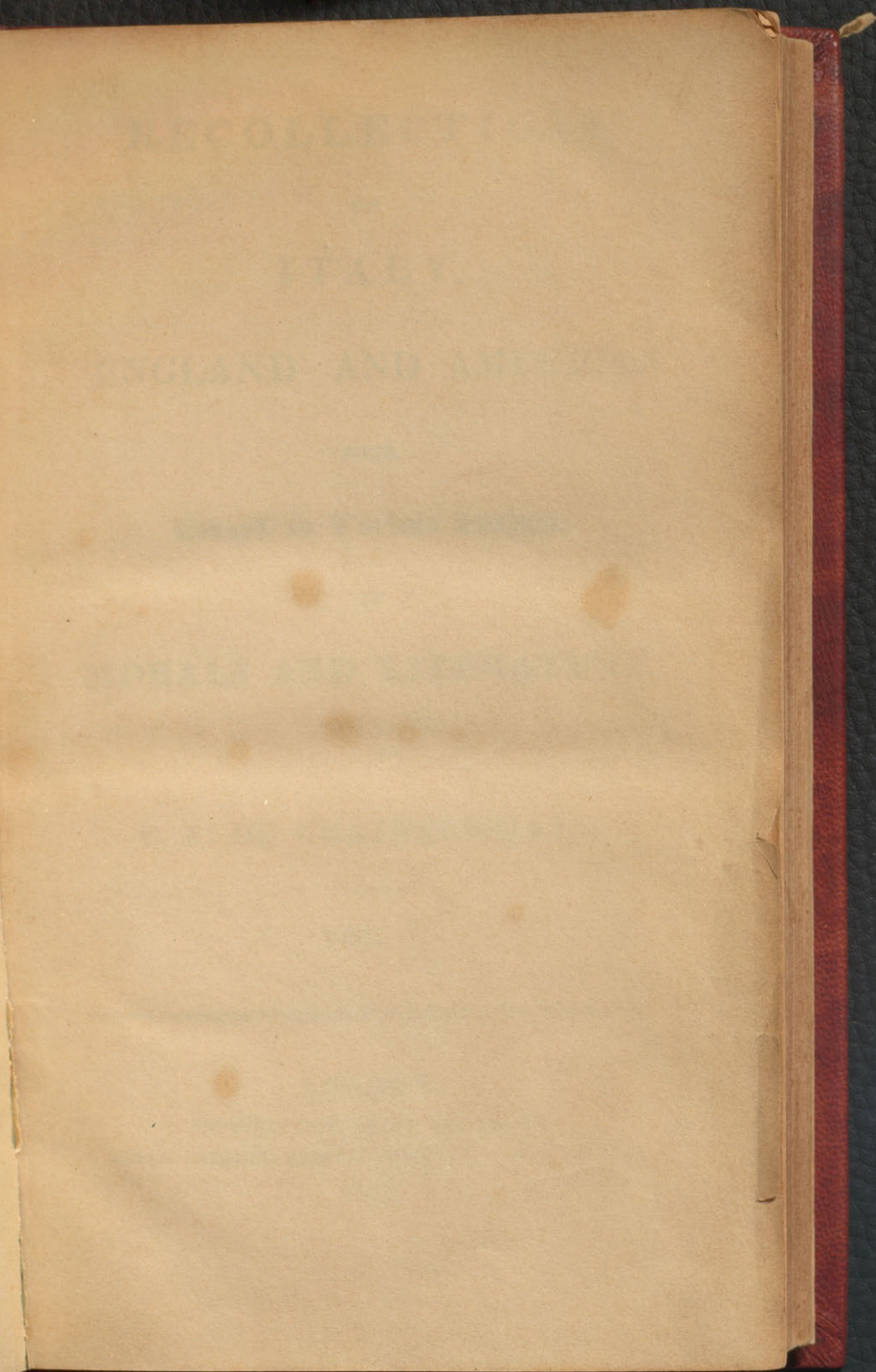


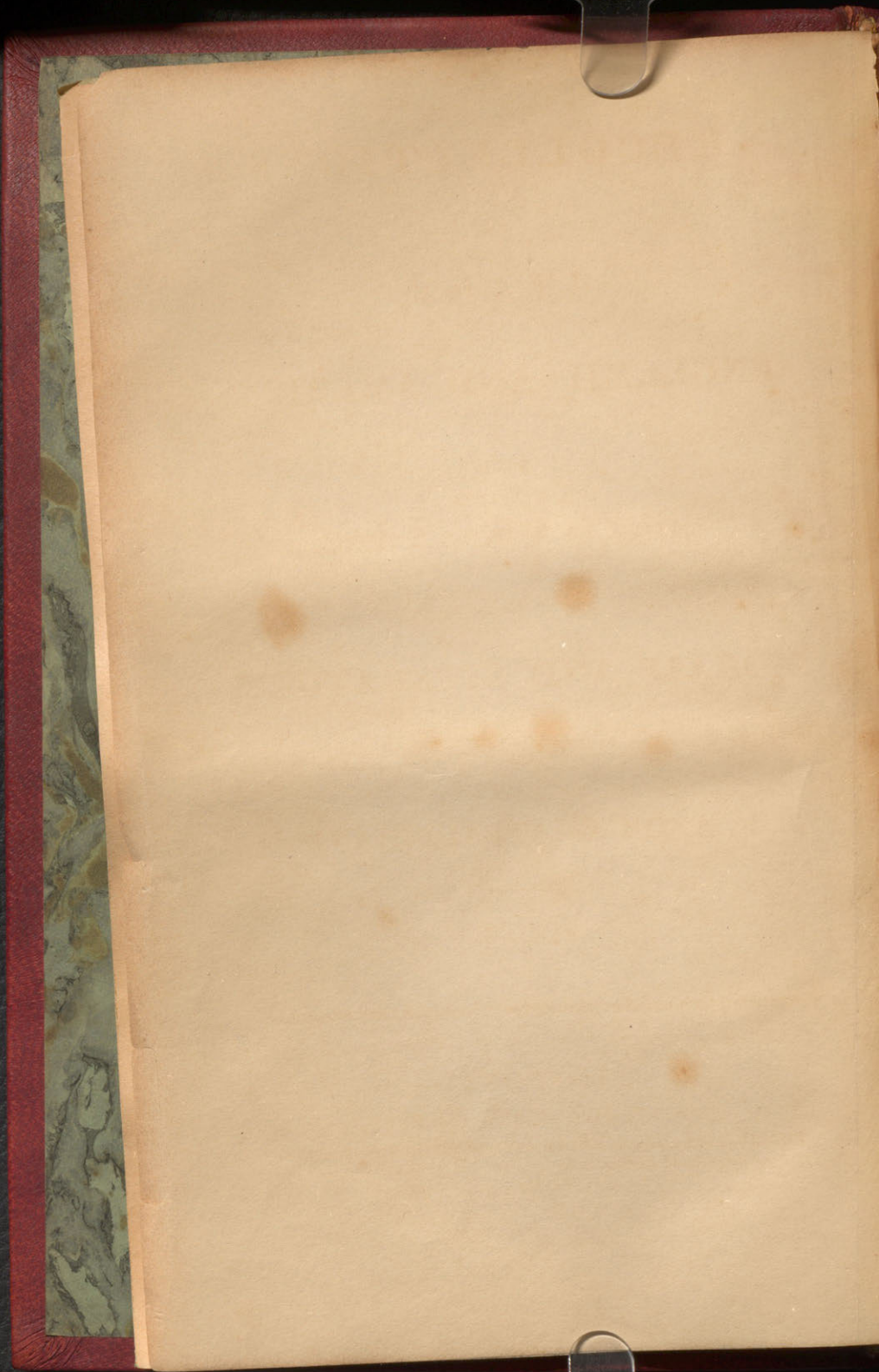


130 Chateaubriand











RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
ITALY,  
ENGLAND AND AMERICA,  
WITH  
Essays on Various Subjects,  
IN  
MORALS AND LITERATURE,  
BY  
F. A. DE CHATEAUBRIAND.  
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VOL. I.

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1815.

*H. Colburn*



RECOLLECTIONS

OF

COURT AND FLYING

ENGLAND AND AMERICA

WITH  
A VISIT TO NEW-YORK  
AND A TOUR THROUGH  
THE UNITED STATES

BY  
MORRIS AND J. B. WATSON

F. A. DE CHATELAIN

Of the Island of Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands.  
A few weeks ago, he was in  
Canada.  
First to the County of the Seneca  
A visit among the Senecas of Ontario  
Sketches of the Senecas and their country  
LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR HENRY COLBURN,  
On Milk-street, near St. Dunstons Church.

LONDON: PRINTED BY SCHULZE AND DEAN, 13, POLAND STREET.

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RECAPITULATION OF FACTS

ERRATA.

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- Page 34, lines 8 and 9, for *he* and *his* read *she* and *her*.  
156, — 11, for *entiment* read *sentiment*.  
175, — 8, the word *that* should be the first in this line,  
and erased from the next.  
213, — 3, for *is* read *was*.  
214, — 11, for *as* read *like*.  
226, — 19, for *plains* read *planes*.  
229, — 14, after the word *body*, insert *is*.  
256, — 19, for 5°, read 135°.

THE

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

If the reputation of M. de Chateaubriand, already established by works of the greatest merit, has received a considerable addition from the *Essay on Ancient and Modern Revolutions*, which we have just published, his *Recollections of Italy, England and America*, with the excellent *Essays on Literature and Morals* that accompany them, will certainly add to it.

Throughout this collection will be found those energetic ideas, that fine imagination, that picturesque colouring, those ingenious comparisons and original turns of expression which impart a peculiar charm to M. de Chateaubriand's writings. No Author of



the present day has, like him, attained the art of connecting literature with morals, by a style abounding in imagery and rich in sentiments. This happy talent is displayed in every page, and there are even passages, in which it is still more manifest than in his greater works.

Several of the detached Essays appeared in the *Mercure de France*, between the years 1800 and 1807. The Author at this time finished his *Beauties of Christianity*, and trusted that he had thereby erected a monument to the religion of his forefathers. It must be acknowledged that, in several parts of this work, he displays a soul fully impressed with the perfections of Christianity. His travels to Palestine, procured us the poem of *The Martyrs*, and the *Itinerary* of that country. After his return, M. de Chateaubriand would perhaps have determined to resume his labours in the *Mercure*, had he not found the spirit of that journal



entirely altered, and had he not been disgusted by the despotism of the French ruler, who wished not only to command the writings, but even the conversation and very thoughts of his subjects; particularly of those who were distinguished authors. It is true that M. de Chateaubriand had himself praised the despot; but this was at a period when it was still excusable to be mistaken as to the real character of Buonaparte. None of the enlightened men had penetration enough to prophecy that the general of the expedition to Egypt would be the future opponent to the rights of humanity, and M. de Chateaubriand has the further excuse, that when the Statesmen and Writers of France began to rival each other in meanness, and prostrate themselves at the foot of the throne, the Author of the *Beauties of Christianity* ceased to worship the unworthy idol of transient glory, recovered by degrees, and silently resumed



the noble attitude which belonged to him. It was now the despot's turn to humble himself before the greatest writer of his Empire, and he adopted measures to draw M. de Chateaubriand into the circle of his slaves, but in vain. All his power was ineffectual, when exerted to shake the firm and noble soul of a simple individual, who was no longer to be imposed upon by fictitious grandeur. He was induced, however, by dint of persuasion, to become a member of the first literary body in France. It was necessary that he should make a public oration upon this occasion, and it was then that he prepared the eulogium on liberty, which will be found in the present publication. His intrepidity astonished the Institute and Government. He was forbidden to deliver his oration, but he was no longer importuned for his support, which could palpably never be obtained afterwards. From this period his heart, afflicted by the misfortunes



of France, and the degradation which literature and the arts had experienced, was doomed to sigh in secret; but it experienced consolation when the tyrant began to lose the power of oppressing and ruining the nation. Those, who never could have displayed the courage of M. de Chateaubriand, thought proper to criticize his admirable publication in favour of the Bourbons,\* as being a work too strongly betraying the passions of the writer. They would perhaps have written in colder blood, because their eyes were then familiarized with the horrors which they saw incessantly renewed. But can the soul of a great writer remain torpid when liberty dawns upon his unfortunate country? Would Cicero and Demosthenes have remained torpid if they had been called upon to expose, the one an incendiary's crimes, and the other a conquering mo-

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\* Of Buonaparte and the Bourbons, 8vo. 1814.



narch's artifices and ambition? And what were these subjects in comparison with the great interests of the world, which were discussed during April 1814, in the capital of France? Cold blooded people are often useful; but still a single energetic man, when fired with honest indignation, can effect more than thousands of frigid disposition. When the revolution, so ardently desired by all those who possessed hearts not debased by slavery, was effected, the *Political Reflections* of M. de Chateaubriand were of a calmer nature, and bore reference only to the happiness which France was about to enjoy under the sway of the Bourbons.

That happiness has been, alas, of short duration. The revolutionary system is re-established in France, and M. de Chateaubriand has again quitted his country for the purpose of following his King, and devoting his pen to the instruction of his unfortunate



countrymen, by writings similar to those of which all Europe acknowledges the energetic influence.

Though M. de Chateaubriand has gained the applause of all civilized nations, and though his works have been several times printed in his native language, as well as translated into almost all the languages of Europe, it is nevertheless a fact that in his own country a numerous party of calumniators have tried to overwhelm him with criticisms, parodies, satires and injuries. It is true that they have not been able to diminish his reputation as an Author, but they have succeeded so far as to create in the public mind an uncertainty as to the rank which he ought to hold in literature. His imagination is too vivid, and sometimes carries away his reason, so that he falls occasionally into extravagant expressions, and arguments which are more specious than solid. His detractors dwell on his slight im-



perfections, and represents them as constituting the foundation of his writings. They do not chuse to see that a fine imagination is, in spite of some aberrations, infinitely superior to all those ordinary minds, the productions of which appear wise, because the rules of grammar are observed in them, and the ideas of the day exactly met. Those authors may please, but their reputation will not extend beyond the limits of their country and age. It is only by taking for their models the superior beauties of M. de Chateaubriand's style, and avoiding his defects, that they can hope to equal his reputation, and to excite, like him, the enthusiasm of all who possess cultivated minds.

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

ITALY.



RECOLLECTIONS

ITALY

RECOLLECTIONS

ROME AND ITS ENVIRONS

TO MONSIEUR DE FONTENAY

ITALY

My dear friend,

I had just arrived at Rome  
into Naples and send you all my journey has  
produced for you have a right to this all a few  
hand leaves snatched from the tomb of Virgil  
whom "I want more Parthenon" I should  
long since have given you a description of this  
classic region but various circumstances have  
hindered me. I will not leave Rome however  
without saying a few words about so celebrated  
a city. We agreed that I was to address you

# RECOLLECTIONS

OF

ITALY.

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ROME AND ITS ENVIRONS.

TO MONSIEUR DE FONTANES.

My dear friend,

I am just arrived at Rome from Naples, and send you all my journey has produced, for you have a right to this all—a few laurel leaves snatched from the tomb of Virgil, whom “*tenet nunc Parthenope.*” I should long since have given you a description of this classic region, but various circumstances have hindered me. I will not leave Rome, however, without saying a few words about so celebrated a city. We agreed that I was to address you



without ceremony; and to tell you at a venture whatever impressions were made upon me in Italy, as I formerly related to you what ideas I had formed, while wandering through the solitudes of the New World. Without further preamble, then, I will attempt to give you an account of the environs of Rome, that is to say, the adjacent country and the ruins.

You have read all that has been written on this subject, but I do not know whether travellers have given you a very just idea of the picture, which the Roman territory presents. Figure to yourself something of the desolation at Tyre and Babylon, as described in scripture—silence and solitude as vast as the noise and tumult of men, who formerly crowded together on this spot. One may almost fancy that the prophet's curse is still heard, when he announced that two things should happen on a single day, sterility and widowhood.\* You see here and there some remains of Roman roads, in places where nobody ever passes, and some dried-up

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\* Isaiah.



tracks of winter torrents, which at a distance have themselves the appearance of large frequented roads, but which are in reality the beds of waters, formerly rushing onwards with impetuosity, though they have now passed away like the Roman nation. It is with some difficulty that you discover any trees, but on every side you behold the ruins of aqueducts and tombs, which appear to be the forests and indigenous plants of this land—composed as it is of mortal dust, and the wrecks of empires. I have often thought that I beheld rich crops in a plain, but on approaching them, found that my eye had been deceived by withered grass. Under this barren herbage traces of ancient culture may sometimes be discovered. Here are no birds, no labourers, no lowing of cattle, no villages. A few miserably managed farms appear amidst the general nakedness of the country, but the windows and doors of the habitations are closed. No smoke, no noise, no inhabitant proceeds from them. A sort of savage, in tattered garments, pale and emaciated by fever, guards these melancholy dwellings, like the spectres who



defend the entrance of abandoned castles in our gothic legends. It may be said, therefore, that no nation has dared to take possession of the country, once inhabited by the masters of the world, and that you see these plains as they were left by the ploughshare of Cincinnatus, or the last Roman team.

It is in the midst of this uncultivated region that the eternal city raises her head. Decayed as to her terrestrial power, she appears to have resolved on proudly isolating herself. She has separated herself from the cities of the world, and like a dethroned queen, has nobly concealed her misfortunes in solitude.

I should in vain attempt to describe the sensation experienced, when Rome suddenly appears to your view amidst her *inania regna*, as if raising herself from the sepulchre in which she had been lying. Picture to yourself the distress and astonishment, which the prophets experienced, when God, in a vision, shewed them some city, to which he had attached the destiny of his chosen people.\* The multitude

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\* Ezekiel.



of recollections and the crowd of sensations oppress you, so that your very soul is disordered at beholding the place—for it is Rome, which has twice inherited the empire of the world, first as the heir to Saturn, and secondly to Jacob.\*

You will, perhaps, think, from my description, that nothing can be more frightful than the Roman environs; but in this conjecture you would be egregiously mistaken. They possess an inconceivable grandeur, and in contemplating them, you would be always ready to exclaim with Virgil:

*Salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,*

*Magna virum! †*

---

\* Montaigne thus describes the neighbourhood of Rome about two centuries ago.

“ We had at a distance, on our left, the Appennines, and the prospect of a country by no means pleasant, uneven and full of gaps, which would render it difficult to range troops in regular order. The country is without trees, and a considerable part of it sterile, open on every side, and more than ten miles in circumference. Like all other countries too of this description, it is very thinly inhabited.”

† Hail, happy land, producing richest fruits,

And heroes of renown!



If you view them as an economist, they will displease you, but if you survey them as an artist, or a poet, or a philosopher, you will perhaps not wish them to be altered. The sight of a corn-field or a vineyard would not cause such strong emotions in your mind as that of a country, where modern culture has not renovated the soil, and which may be said to have become as purely antique as the ruins which cover it.

Nothing is so beautiful as the lines of the Roman horizon, the gentle inclination of the plains, and the soft flying contour of the terminating mountains. The valleys often assume the form of an arena, a circus, or a riding-house. The hills are cut in terraces, as if the mighty hand of the Romans had moved the whole land at pleasure. A peculiar vapour is spread over distant objects, which takes off their harshness and rounds them. The shadows are never black and heavy; for there are no masses so obscure, even among the rocks and foliage, but that a little light may always insinuate itself. A singular tint and most peculiar harmony unite the earth, the sky, and the waters. All the



surfaces unite at their extremities by means of an insensible gradation of colours, and without the possibility of ascertaining the point, at which one ends, or another begins. You have doubtless admired this sort of light in Claude Lorrain's landscapes. It appears ideal and still more beautiful than nature; but it is the light of Rome.

I did not omit to see the Villa Borghese, and to admire the sun as he cast his setting beams upon the cypresses of Mount Marius or on the pines of Villa Pamphili. I have also often directed my way up the Tiber to enjoy the grand scene of departing day at Ponte Mole. The summits of the Sabine mountains then appear to consist of lapis lazuli and pale gold, while their base and sides are enveloped in a vapour, which has a violet or purple tint. Sometimes beautiful clouds, like light chariots, borne on the winds with inimitable grace, make you easily comprehend the appearance of the Olympian Deities under this mythologic sky. Sometimes ancient Rome seems to have stretched into the West all the purple of her Consuls and Cæsars,

the earth, the sky, and the waters.



and spread them under the last steps of the god of day. This rich decoration does not disappear so soon as in our climate. When you suppose that the tints are vanishing, they suddenly reappear at some other point of the horizon. Twilight succeeds to twilight, and the charm of closing day is prolonged. It is true that at this hour of rural repose, the air no longer resounds with *bucolic* song; you no longer hear the "*dulcia loquimur arva,*" but the victims of sacred immolation are still to be seen. White bulls and troops of half-wild horses daily descend to the banks of the Tiber, and quench their thirst with its waters. You would fancy yourself transported to the times of the ancient Sabines, or to the age of the Arcadian Evander, when the Tiber was called Albula,\* and Eneas navigated its unknown stream.

I will acknowledge without hesitation that the vicinity of Naples is more dazzling than that of Rome. When the blazing sun, or the large red moon rises above Vesuvius, like a body of

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\* Livy.



fire shot from its volcanic crater, the bay of Naples, and its banks fringed with orange-trees, the mountains of Sorrento, the island of Capri, the coast of Pozzuoli, Baiæ, Misene, Cumes, Averno, the Elysian fields, and all this Virgilian district, present to the view a magic spectacle, but it does not possess the imposing grandeur of the Roman territory. It is at least certain that almost every one is prodigiously attached to this celebrated region. Two thousand years have elapsed since Cicero believed himself an exile for life, and wrote to one of his intimate friends: "*Urbem, mi Rufi, cole, et in istâ luce vive.*"\* The attraction of the lovely Ausonia is still the same. Many examples are quoted of travellers, who came to Rome for the purpose of passing a few days, and remained there all their lives. Poussin could not resist the temptation

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\* "It is at Rome, that you must live my dear Rufus; it is that luminary which you must inhabit." I believe the passage occurs in the first or second book of the familiar Epistles; but as I quote from memory, I hope that any little mistake in this respect will be overlooked.



of residing, till his death, in a country which afforded such exquisite landscapes; and at the very moment that I pen this letter, I have the pleasure of being acquainted with M. d'Agin-court, who has lived here alone for five-and-twenty years, and who holds forth fair promise that France will also have her Winckelman.

Whoever occupies himself solely in the study of antiquities and the fine arts, or whoever has no other ties in life, should live at Rome. He will there find, for his society, a district which will nurture his reflections and take possession of his heart, with walks, which will always convey to him instruction. The stone, which he treads upon will speak to him, and the dust, which the wind blows around him, will be decomposed particles of some great human being. Should he be unhappy—should he have mingled the ashes of those, whom he loved, with the ashes of the illustrious dead, what placid delight will he experience when he passes from the sepulchre of the Scipios to the tomb of a virtuous friend, from the superb mausoleum of Cecilia Metella to the modest grave of an unfortunate woman!



He will fancy that their beloved shades find pleasure in wandering round these monuments, with that of a Cicero still lamenting his dear Tullia, or an Agrippina still occupied with the urn of Germanicus. If he be a christian, how will he be able to tear himself away from this land, which is become his own country—this land, which is become the seat of a second empire more sacred, and more powerful than the first—this land, where the friends, whom we have lost, sleep with saints in their catacombs, under the eye of the father of the faithful, appearing as if they would be the first who awoke from their long sleep, and the nearest to Heaven.

Though Rome, when internally examined, resembles at present, in a great degree, the generality of European cities, it still preserves a peculiar character; for no other city affords a similar mixture of architecture and ruins, from the Pantheon of Agrippa to the gothic walls of Belisarius, or the monuments brought from Alexandria to the dome erected by Michael Angelo. The beauty of the women is another distinguishing



feature. They recel by their gait and carriage the Clelias and Cornelias. You might fancy that you saw the ancient statues of Juno and Pallas, which had descended from their pedestals, and were walking round their temples. Among the Romans too is to be seen that tone of carnation which artists call the historic colour, and which they use in their paintings. It appears natural that men, whose ancestors played so conspicuous a part in the great theatre of the world, should have served as models for Raphael and Dominichino, when they represented historical personages.

Another singularity of the city of Rome is the number of goats, and more particularly, large oxen with enormous horns. The latter are used in teams ; and you will find these animals lying at the feet of the Egyptian obelisks, among the ruins of the Forum, and under the arches, through which they formerly passed, conducting the triumphant Roman to that Capitol which Cicero calls *the public council of the universe*.

*Romanos ad templa Deum duxere triumphos.*



With the usual noise of great cities is here mingled the noise of waters heard on every side, as if you were near the fountains of Blandusia and Egeria. From the summit of the hills, inclosed within the boundaries of Rome, or at the extremity of several streets you have a view of the fields in perspective, which mixture of town and country has a very picturesque effect. In winter the tops of the houses are covered with herbage, not unlike the old thatched cottages of our peasantry. These combined circumstances impart to Rome a sort of rural appearance, and remind you that its first dictators guided the plough, that it owed the empire of the world to its labourers, and that the greatest of its poets did not disdain to instruct the children of Romulus in the art of Hesiod.

*Ascræumque cano romana per oppida carmen.*

As to the Tiber, which waters, and participates in the glory of this city, its destiny is altogether strange. It passes through a corner of Rome, as if it did not exist. No one deigns to cast his eyes towards it, no one speaks of it,



no one drinks its waters, and the women do not even use it for washing. It steals away between the paltry houses which conceal it, and hastens to precipitate itself into the sea, ashamed of its modern appellation, *Tevere*.

I must now, my dear friend, say something of the ruins, which you so particularly requested me to mention when I wrote to you. I have minutely examined them all, both at Rome and Naples, except the temples of Pæstum, which I have not had time to visit. You are aware that they assume different characters, according to the recollections attached to them.

On a beautiful evening in July last I seated myself at Colisée, on a step of the altar dedicated to the sufferings of the Passion. The sun was setting, and poured floods of gold through all the galleries, which had formerly been thronged with men; while, at the same time, strong shadows were cast by the broken corridors and other ruinous parts, or fell on the ground in large masses from the lofty structure. I perceived among the ruins, on the right of the edifice, the gardens of Cæsar's palace, with



a palm-tree, which seems to have been placed in the midst of this wreck, expressly for painters and poets. Instead of the shouts of joy, which heretofore proceeded from the ferocious spectators in this amphitheatre, on seeing Christians devoured by lions and panthers, nothing was now heard but the barking of dogs, which belonged to the hermit resident here as a guardian of the ruins. At the moment that the sun descended below the horizon, the clock in the dome of Saint Peter resounded under the porticoes of Collisée. This correspondence, through the medium of religious sounds, between the two grandest monuments of Pagan and Christian Rome, caused a lively emotion in my mind. I reflected that this modern edifice would fall in its turn, like the ancient one, and that the memorials of human industry succeed each other like the men, who erected them. I called to mind that the same Jews, who, during their first captivity, worked at the edifices of Egypt and Babylon, had also, during their last dispersion built this enormous structure; that the vaulted roofs, which now re-echoed this Christian bell



were the work of a Pagan emperor, who had been pointed out by prophecy as destined to complete the destruction of Jerusalem. Are not these sufficiently exalted subjects of meditation to be inspired by a single ruin, and do you not think that a city, where such effects are produced at every step, is worthy of examination ?

I went to Collisée again yesterday, the 9th of January, for the purpose of seeing it at another season, and in another point of view. On my arrival I was surprised at not hearing the dogs, who generally appeared and barked in the superior corridors of the amphitheatre, among the ruins and withered herbage. I knocked at the door of the hermitage, which was formed under one of the arches, but I received no answer—the hermit was dead. The inclemency of the season, the absence of this worthy recluse, combined with several recent and afflicting recollections, increased the sadness arising from this place to such an extent that I almost supposed myself to be looking at the ruins of an edifice, which I had, a few days before, admired in a fresh and perfect state. It is thus that we are constantly

reminded of our nothingness. Man searches around him for objects to convince his reason. He meditates on the remains of edifices and empires; forgetting that he himself is a ruin still more instable, and that he will perish even before these. What most renders our life "the shadow of a shade"\* is that we cannot hope to live long in the recollection of our friends. The heart, in which our image is graven, is like the object, of which it retains the features—perishable clay. I was shewn, at Portici, a piece of cinder taken from Vesuvius, which crumbles into dust when touched, and which preserves the impression, (daily diminishing) of a female's breast and arm, who was buried under the ruins of Pompeia. Though not flattering to our self-love, this is the true emblem of the traces left by our memory in the hearts of men, who are only dust and ashes.†

Before I took my departure for Naples, I passed some days alone at Tivoli. I traversed the ruins in its environs, and particularly those

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\* Pindar.

† Job.



of Villa Adriana. Being overtaken by a shower of rain in the midst of my excursion, I took refuge in the halls of Thermes near Pécile\* under a fig-tree, which had thrown down a wall by its growth. In a small octagonal saloon, which was open before me, a vine had penetrated through fissures in the arched roof, while its smooth and red crooked stem mounted along the wall like a serpent. Round me, across the arcades, the Roman country was seen in different points of view. Large elder trees filled the deserted apartments, where some solitary black-birds found a retreat. The fragments of masonry were garnished with the leaves of scolopendra, the satin verdure of which appeared like mosaic work upon the white marble. Here and there lofty cypresses replaced the columns, which had fallen into these palaces of death. The wild acanthus crept at their feet on the ruins, as if nature had taken pleasure in re-producing, upon these mutilated *chefs-d'œuvre* of architecture, the ornament of their past beauty. The dif-

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\* Remains of the Villa.



ferent apartments and the summits of the ruins were covered with pendant verdure; the wind agitated these humid garlands, and the plants bent under the rain of Heaven.

While I contemplated this picture, a thousand confused ideas passed across my mind. At one moment I admired, at the next detested Roman grandeur. At one moment I thought of the virtues, at another of the vices, which distinguished this lord of the world, who had wished to render his garden a representation of his empire. I called to mind the events, by which his superb villa had been destroyed. I saw it despoiled of its most beautiful ornaments by the successor of Adrian—I saw the barbarians passing like a whirlwind, sometimes cautioning themselves here; and, in order to defend themselves amidst these monuments of art which they had half destroyed, surmounting the Grecian and Tuscan orders with gothic battlements—finally, I saw Christians bringing back civilization to this district, planting the vine, and guiding the plough into the temple of the Stoics, and the saloons of the Academy.\* Ere long the

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\* Remains of the Villa.



arts revived, and the monarchs employed persons to overturn what still remained of these gorgeous palaces, for the purpose of obtaining some master-pieces of art. While these different thoughts succeeded each other, an inward voice mixed itself with them, and repeated to me what has been a hundred times written on the vanity of human affairs. There is indeed a double vanity in the remains of the Villa Adriana; for it is known that they were only imitations of other remains, scattered through the provinces of the Roman empire. The real temple of Serapis and Alexandria, and the real academy at Athens no longer exist; so that in the copies of Adrian you only see the ruins of ruins.

I should now, my dear friend, describe to you the temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli, and the charming temple of Vesta, suspended over the cascade; but I cannot spare time for the purpose. I regret, too, that I am unable to depict this cascade, on which Horace has conferred celebrity. When there, I was in your domain, for you are the inheritor of the Grecian ἀφελία, or the "*simplex munditiis*," described by the author of the *Ars Poetica*; but I saw it in very gloomy



weather, and I myself was not in good spirits. I will further confess that I was in some degree annoyed by this roar of waters, though I have been so often charmed by it in the forests of America. I have still a recollection of the happiness which I experienced during a night passed amidst dreary deserts, when my wood fire was half extinguished, my guide asleep, and my horses grazing at a distance — I have still a recollection, I say, of the happiness which I experienced when I heard the mingled melody of the winds and waters, as I reclined upon the earth, deep in the bosom of the forest. These murmurs, at one time feeble, at another more loud, increasing and decreasing every instant, made me occasionally start ; and every tree was to me a sort of lyre, from which the winds extracted strains conveying ineffable delight.

At the present day I perceive that I am less sensible to these charms of nature, and I doubt whether the cataract of Niagara would cause the same degree of admiration in my mind, which it formerly inspired. When one is very young, Nature is eloquent in silence,



because there is a super-abundance in the heart of man. All his futurity is before him (if my Aristarchus will allow me to use this expression) he hopes to impart his sensations to the world, and feeds himself with a thousand chimeras; but at a more advanced age, when the prospect, which we had before us, passes into the rear, and we are undeceived as to a host of illusions, then Nature, left to herself, becomes colder and less eloquent. “*Les jardins parlent peu.*”\* To interest us at this period of life, it is necessary that we have the additional pleasure of society, for we are become less satisfied with ourselves. Absolute solitude oppresses us, and we feel a want of those conversations which are carried on, at night, in a low voice among friends.†

I did not leave Tivoli without visiting the house of the poet, whom I have just quoted. It faced the Villa of Mécænas, and there he greeted “*floribus et vino genium memorem brevis ævi.*”‡

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\* La Fontaine.

† Horace.

‡ There he greeted with flowers and wine the genius who reminds us of the brevity of life.



The hermitage could not have been large, for it is situated on the very ridge of the hill; but one may easily perceive that it must have been very retired, and that every thing was commodious, though on a small scale. From the orchard, which was in front of the house, the eye wanders over an immense extent of country. It conveys, in all respects, the idea of a true retreat for a poet, whom little suffices, and who enjoys so much that does not belong to him—" *spatio brevi spem longam reseces.*"\*

After all, it is very easy to be such a philosopher as Horace was. He had a house at Rome, and two country villas, the one at Utica, the other at Tivoli. He quaffed, with his friends, the wine which had been made during the consulate of Tully. His sideboard was covered with plate; and he said to the prime minister of the sovereign, who guided the destinies of the world: "I do not feel the wants of poverty; and if I wish for any thing more, you, Mæcenas,

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\* Closed in a narrow space of far extended hopes.



will not refuse me." Thus situated, a man may very comfortably sing of Lalage, crown himself with short-lived lilies, talk of death while he is drinking Falernian, and give his cares to the winds.

I observe that Horace, Virgil, Tibullus, and Livy all died before Augustus, whose fate in this respect was the same as Louis XIV experienced. Our great prince survived his cotemporaries awhile, and was the last who descended to the grave, as if to be certain that nothing remained behind him.

It will doubtless be a matter of indifference to you if I state the house of Catullus to be at Tivoli above that of Horace, and at present occupied by monks ; but you will, perhaps, deem it more remarkable that Ariosto composed his "*fables comiques*"\* at the same place in which Horace enjoyed the good things of this world. It has excited surprise that the author of Orlando Furioso, when living in retirement with the cardinal d'Est at Tivoli, should have fixed on

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\* Boileau.



France as the subject of his divine extravaganzas, and France too when in a state of demi-barbarity, while he had under his eyes the grave remains and solemn memorials of the most serious and civilized nation upon earth. In other respects, the Villa d'Est is the only modern one, which has interested me, among the wrecks of proud habitations belonging to so many Emperors and Consuls. This illustrious house of Ferrara has had the singular good fortune of being celebrated by the two greatest poets of its age, and the two men, who possessed the most brilliant genius, to which modern Italy has given birth.

*Piacciavi generose Ercolea prole  
Ornameno, e splendor del secol nostro,  
Ippolito, etc.*

It is the exclamation of a happy man, who returns thanks to the powerful house, which bestows favors on him, and of which he constitutes the delight. Tasso, who was more affecting, conveys in his invocation, the acknowledgments of a grateful but unfortunate man ;

*Tu magnanimo Alfonso, il qual ritogli, etc.*



He, who avails himself of power to assist neglected talent, makes a noble use of it. Ariosto and Hippolyto d'Est have left, in the valleys of Tivoli, a reputation which does not yield, in point of the charm conveyed by it, to that of Horace and Mecænas. But what is become of the protectors and the protected? At the moment that I write this letter, the house of Est is extinct, and its villa fallen into ruins. Such is the history of every thing belonging to this world.

*Linquenda tellus, et domus, et placens*

*Uxor.\**

I spent almost a whole day at this superb villa. I could not put a period to my admiration of the immense prospect, which I enjoyed from the high ground of the terraces. Below me were gardens, stretching to a considerable extent, and displaying great numbers of plane-trees and cypresses. Beyond these were the ruins of the house, which once belonged to

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\* Man must quit his estate, his house, and amiable wife.



Mecænas, on the borders of the Anio.\* On the opposite hill, which is on the other side of the river, is a wood of ancient olives and among these are the ruins of the villa once occupied by Varus.† A little further, to the left, rise the three mountains Monticelli, San Francesco, and Sant Angelo, and between the summits of these three neighbouring mountains appears the azure brow of old Socrate. In the horizon, and at the extremity of the Roman plains, describing a circle by the West and South, may be discerned the heights of Monte Fiascone, Rome, Civita Vecchia, Ostie, the sea, and Frascati, surmounted by the pines of Tusculum. Returning in search of Tivoli towards the East, the entire circumference of this immense prospect is terminated by Mount Ripoli, formerly occupied by the houses of Brutus and Atticus, at the foot of which is the Villa Adriana.

In the midst of this picture the Teverone

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\* Now the Teverone.

† The Varus, who was massacred with the legions in Germany. See the admirable description of Tacitus.



descends rapidly towards the Tiber, and the eye may follow its source to the bridge, where the mausoleum of the family Plotia is erected in the form of a tower. The high road to Rome is also visible in the plain. It was the ancient Tibur-tine way, then bordered by sepulchres; and at present, haystacks of a pyramidal form remind the spectator of the tombs, which they resemble in shape.

It would be difficult to find, in the rest of the world, a place more likely to beget powerful reflections. I do not speak of Rome, though the domes of that city are visible, by which I at once say much for a prospect; but I speak only of the district and its truly interesting remains. There you behold the house in which Mecænas, satiated with the luxuries of the world, died of a tedious complaint. Varus left this hill to shed his blood in the marshes of Germany. Cassius and Brutus abandoned these retreats, in order to overthrow their country. Under these pines of Frascati, Cicero pursued his studies. Adrian caused another Peneus to flow at the foot of that hill, and transported into this region the charms



and recollections of the valley of Tempe. Towards this source of the Soltafare the queen of Palmyra ended her days in obscurity, and her city of a moment disappeared in the desert. It was here that king Latinus consulted the god Faunus in the forest of Albunea. It was here that Hercules had his temple, and the Sybil dictated her oracles. Those are the mountains of the ancient Sabines, and the plains of Latium, the land of Saturn and Rhea, the cradle of the golden age, sung by all the poets. In short, this is the smiling region of which French genius alone has been able to describe the graces, through the pencil of Poussin and Claude Lorrain.

I descended from the Villa d'Est about three o'clock in the afternoon, and crossed the Tevere over the bridge of Lupus, for the purpose of re-entering Tivoli by the Sabine gate. In passing through the grove of olives, which I before mentioned to you, I perceived a white chapel, dedicated to the Madonna Quintilanea, and built upon the ruins of the villa formerly belonging to Varus. It was Sunday—the door



of the chapel was open, and I entered. I saw three altars disposed in the form of a cross; and on the middle one was a silver crucifix, before which burnt a lamp suspended from the roof. A solitary man, of most unhappy mien, was prostrate against a bench, and praying with such fervour that he did not even raise his eyes at the noise of my footsteps, as I approached. I felt what I have a thousand times experienced on entering a church—a sort of solace to the troubles of the heart, and an indescribable disgust as to every thing earthly. I sunk upon my knees at some distance from the man, and, inspired by the place, could not refrain from uttering this prayer :

“ God of the traveller, who sufferest the pilgrim to adore thee in this humble asylum, built on the ruins of a palace once occupied by a great man of this world,—mother of affliction, who hast mercifully established thy worship in the inheritance of this unfortunate Roman, who died far from his country among barbarians—there are at the foot of your altar, only two prostrate sinners. Grant this stranger, who seems to

be so profoundly humbled before your greatness, all that he implores of you, and let his prayer obtain for me the removal of my infirmities; so that we two Christians, who are unknown to each other, who have never met but for one instant during our lives, and who are about to part and no more see each other here below, may be astonished when we again meet at the foot of your throne in mutually owing part of our happiness to the intercession of this day, and to the miracles of your charity."

When I look at all the leaves, which are scattered over my table, I am alarmed at having trifled to such an extent, and hesitate as to sending such a letter. The fact is that I am aware of having said nothing to you, and of having forgotten a thousand things which I ought to have said. How happens it, for instance, that I have not spoken of Tusculum, and of that wonderful man, Cicero, who, according to Seneca, was the only genius ever produced by the Roman nation, equal to the vastness of its empire? "*Illud ingenium quod solum populus Romanus par imperio suo habuit.*" My voyage



to Naples, my descent into the crater of Vesuvius,\* my tours to Pompeia, Capua, Caserta, Solfatara, the Lake of Avernus, and the grotto of the Sibyl would interest you. Baiæ, where so many memorable scenes occurred, would alone deserve a volume. I could fancy that I still saw Bauli, where Agrippina's house stood, and where he used this sublime expression to the assassins sent by his son: "*Ventrem feri.*†" The isle of Nisida, which served as a retreat to Brutus, after the murder of Cæsar, the

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\* There is only some fatigue attendant on a descent into the crater of Vesuvius, but no danger, unless indeed a person should be surprised by a sudden eruption; and even in that case, if not blown into the air by the explosion of the matter, experience has proved that he may still save himself on the lava, which flows very slowly, but congeals so rapidly that a person can soon pass over it. I descended as far as one of the three small craters, formed in the middle of the large one, by the last eruption. The smoke, towards the side of the Torre del Annunciata was rather thick, and I made several abortive efforts to reach a light which was visible on the other side towards Caserte. In some parts of the mountain the cinders were burning-hot, two inches under the surface.

† Tacitus.



bridge of Caligula, the admirable Piscina, and all those palaces, built in the sea, of which Horace speaks, well deserve that any one should stop a moment. Virgil has fixed or found in these places the beautiful fictions of his sixth Eneid. It was from hence that he wrote to Augustus these modest words, the only lines of prose, I believe, written by this great man, which have reached us: "*Ego vero frequentes a te litteras accipio. De Ænea quidem meo, si mehercule jam dignum auribus haberem tuis, libenter mitterem; sed tanta inchoata res est, ut pene vitio mentis tantum opus ingressus mihi videar; cum præsertim, ut scis, alia quoque studia ad id opus multoque potiora impertiar.*"\*

My pilgrimage to the tomb of Scipio Africanus is one of those from which I derived the highest satisfaction, though I failed in attaining the object, for which I undertook it. I had been told that the mausoleum of this famous Roman

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\* This fragment occurs in the Saturnalia of Macrobius, but I cannot point out the book, having no immediate means of reference. I believe, however, that it is the first.



still existed, and that even the word *patria* was distinguishable on it, being all that remained of the inscription, which was asserted to have been carved upon it.

*“Ungrateful land, thou shalt not have my bones !”*

I went to *Patria*, the ancient *Liternum*, but did not find the tomb.\* I wandered, however, through the ruins of the house, which the greatest and most amiable men inhabited during his exile. I saw in imagination the conqueror of Hannibal walking on the sea-coast opposite to that of Carthage, and consoling himself for the injustice of Rome by the charms of friendship, and the consciousness of rectitude.

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\* I was not only told that this tomb was in existence ; but I have read the circumstances above mentioned in some travels, though I do not recollect by whom they were written. I doubt these statements, however, for the following reasons :

1st. It appears to me that Scipio, in spite of his just complaints against Rome, loved his country too much to have wished that such an inscription should be recorded on his tomb. It is contrary to all we know of the genius of the ancients.



As to the modern Romans, Duclos appears to have been sarcastic when he calls them *the Italians of Rome*. I am of opinion that there is

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2dly. The inscription spoken of, is almost literally conceived in the terms of imprecation which Livy puts into the mouth of Scipio when he left Rome. May not this have given rise to the error?

3dly. Plutarch mentions that in the neighbourhood of Gaieta a bronze urn was found in a marble tomb, where the ashes of Scipio would most probably have been deposited, and that it bore an inscription very different to the one now under discussion.

The ancient Litemum, having the name *Patria*, this may have given birth to the report that the word *Patria* was the only remaining one of the inscription upon the tomb. Would it not, in fact, be a very singular coincidence that the town should be called *Patria*, and that the same word should also be found in this solitary state upon the monument of Scipio—unless indeed we suppose the one to have been taken from the other?

It is possible, nevertheless, that authors, with whom I am unacquainted, may have spoken of this inscription in a way which leaves no doubt. I grant that there is even an expression in Plutarch, apparently favourable to the opinion I am combatting. A man of great merit, and who is the dearer to me because he is very unfortunate, visited *Patria* much about the same time that I did. We have



still among them the materials, requisite towards the formation of no common people. When the Italians are closely examined, great sense, courage, patience, genius, and deep traces of their ancient manners are to be discovered in them, with a kind of superior air, and some noble customs, which still partake of royalty. Before

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often conversed together about this celebrated place; but I am not quite sure whether he said that he had seen the *tomb* or the *word* (which would solve the difficulty) or whether he only grounded his arguments on popular tradition. For my own part I never found the tomb itself, but merely saw the ruins of the villa, which are of no great consequence.

Plutarch mentions some one to have stated that the tomb of Scipio was near Rome; but they evidently confounded the tomb of the *Scipios* with that of Scipio Africanus. Livy affirms that the latter was at Linternum, and that it was surmounted by a statue, which a tempest had thrown down; adding that he himself had seen the statue. We know too from Seneca, Cicero, and Pliny, that the other tomb, namely the family vault of the *Scipios*, was actually in existence at one of the gates of Rome. It has been discovered during the pontificate of Pius VI, and the inscriptions, appertaining to it, were conveyed to the museum of the Vatican. Among the names of the members, composing the family of Scipio, which appear upon this monument of their consequence, that of Africanus is wanting.



you condemn this opinion, which may appear to you singular, you must hear my reasons for it, and at present I have not time to send them.

What a number of observations I have to make upon Italian literature! Do you know that I never saw Count Alfieri but once in my life, and can you guess in what situation? I saw him put into his coffin. I was told that he was scarcely at all altered. His countenance appeared to me noble and grave; but death had doubtless imparted some additional degree of severity to it. The coffin being rather too short, a person bent his head over his breast, which caused a most disagreeable motion on the part of the body. Through the kindness of one who was very dear to Alfieri, and the politeness of a gentleman at Florence, who was also the Count's friend, I am in possession of some curious particulars as to the posthumous works, life and opinions of this celebrated man. Most of the public papers in France have given vague and mutilated accounts of the subject. Till I am able to communicate these particulars, I send you the epitaph which Alfieri made for his noble



mistress, at the same time that he composed his own.

*Hic sita est*

*Alf. . . . . E . . . . . St. . . .*

*Alf. . . . . Com. . . . .*

*Genere. formá. moribus.*

*Incomparabili. animi. candore.*

*Præclarissima.*

*A. Victorio. Alferio.*

*Juxta. quem. sarcophago. uno.\**

*Tumulata. est.*

*Annorum. 26. spatío.*

*Ultra. res. omnes. dilecta.*

*Et. quasi. mortale. numine*

*Ab. ipso. constanter. habita.*

*Et. observata.*

*Vixit. annos . . . menses . . . dies . . .*

*Hannonice. montibus. nata.*

*Obiit . . . die . . . mensis . . .*

*Anno. Domini. M. D. C. C. C. . . . †*

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\* Sic inscribendum me, ut opinor et opto, præmoriante ;  
sed aliter, jubente Deo, aliter inscribendum :

*Qui. juxta. eam. sarcophago. uno.*

*Conditus. erit. quamprimum.*

† Here lies Eloisa E. St. Countess of Al, illustrious



The simplicity of this epitaph, and particularly of the note which accompanies it, appears to me very affecting.

For the present I have finished. I send you *a heap of ruins*—do what you like with them. In the description of the different objects, of which I have treated, I do not think that I have omitted any remarkable circumstance, unless it be that the Tiber is still the “*flavus Tiberinus*.” It is said that it acquires its muddy appearance from the rains which fall in the mountains, whence it descends. I have often, while contemplating this discoloured river in the

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by her ancestry, the graces of her person, the elegance of her manners, and the incomparable candour of her mind; buried near Victor Alfieri and in the same grave; (a) he preferred her during twenty-six years to every thing in the world; and though mortal, she was constantly honoured and revered by him as if she had been a divinity. She was born at Mons, lived . . . . and died on . . . .

(a) To be thus inscribed, if I die first, as I believe and hope I shall; but if God ordain it otherwise, the inscription to be thus altered, after the mention of Alfieri.

Who will soon be inclosed in the same tomb with her.



serenest weather, represented to myself a life begun amidst storms. It is in vain that the remainder of its course is passed beneath a serener sky ; the stream continues to be tainted with the waters of the tempest, which disturbed it at its source.

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## VISIT TO MOUNT VESUVIUS.\*

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ON the 5th of January, I left Naples at seven o'clock in the morning, and proceeded to Portici. The sun had chased away the clouds of night, but the head of Vesuvius is always wrapt in mist. I began my journey up the mountain with a *Cicerone*, who provided two mules, one for me and one for himself.

The ascent was at first on a tolerably wide road, between two plantations of vines, which

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\* The following observations were not intended for the public eye, as will easily be perceived from the particular character of the reflections which they contain. They were principally written in pencil as I ascended to the crater of the volcano. I have not chosen to correct any part of this short journal, that I might not in any degree interfere with the truth of the narrative; but for the reasons mentioned the reader is requested to peruse it with indulgence.



were trained upon poplars. I soon began to feel the cold wintry air, but kept advancing, and at length perceived, a little below the vapours of the middle region, the tops of some trees. They were the elms of the hermitage. The miserable habitations of the vine-dressers were now visible on both sides, amidst a rich abundance of *Lachrymæ Christi*. In other respects, I observed a parched soil, and naked vines intermixed with pine-trees in the form of an umbrella, some aloes in the hedge, innumerable rolling stones, and not a single bird.

On reaching the first level ground of the mountain, a naked plain lay stretched before me, and I had also in view the two summits of Vesuvius—on the left the *Somma*, on the right the present mouth of the Volcano. These two heads were enveloped in pale clouds. I proceeded. On one side the *Somma* falls in, and on the other, I began to distinguished the hollows made in the cone of the volcano, which I was about to climb. The lava of 1766 and 1769 covered the plain, which I was crossing. It is a frightful smoky desert, where the lava, cast out like dross from a



forge, displays its whitish scum upon a black ground, exactly resembling dried moss.

Leaving the cone of the volcano to the right and following the road on the left, I reached the foot of a hill, or rather a wall, formed of the lava, which overwhelmed Herculaneum. This species of wall is planted with vines on the borders of the plain, and on the opposite side is a deep valley, filled by a copse. The air now began to "bite shrewdly."

I climbed this hill in order to visit the hermitage which I perceived from the other side. The heavens lowered; the clouds descended and flew along the surface of the earth like grey smoke, or ashes driven before the wind. I began to hear a murmuring sound among the elms of the hermitage.

The hermit came forth to receive me, and held the bridle of my mule while I alighted. He was a tall man with an open countenance and good address. He invited me into his cell, and placed upon the table a repast of bread, apples and eggs. He sat down opposite to me, rested both his elbows on the table, and calmly



began to converse while I eat my breakfast. The clouds were collected all round us, and no object could be distinguished through the windows of the hermitage. Nothing was heard in this dreary abyss of vapour, but the whistling of the wind, and the distant noise of the waves, as they broke upon the shores of Herculaneum. There was something singular in the situation of this tranquil abode of Christian hospitality—a small cell at the foot of a volcano and in the midst of a tempest.

The hermit presented to me the book in which strangers, who visit Vesuvius, are accustomed to make some memorandum. In this volume I did not find one remark worthy of recollection. The French indeed, with the good taste natural to our nation, had contented themselves with mentioning the date of their journey, or paying a compliment to the hermit for his hospitality. It would seem that this volcano had no very remarkable effect upon the visitors, which confirms me in the idea I some time since formed, namely, that grand objects and grand subjects are less capable of giving birth



to great ideas than is generally supposed; for their grandeur being evident, all that is added, beyond this fact, becomes mere repetition. The "*nascetur ridiculus mus*" is true of all mountains.

I left the hermitage at half past two o'clock, and continued to ascend the hill of lava, on which I had before proceeded. On my left was the valley, which separated me from the *Somma*; on my right the plain of the cone. Not a living creature did I see in this horrible region but a poor, lean, sallow, half-naked girl, who was bending under a load of faggots, which she had cut on the mountain.

The clouds now entirely shut out the view; for the wind blew them upwards from the black plain, of which, if clear, I should have commanded the prospect, and caused them to pass over the lava road, upon which I was pursuing my way. I heard nothing but the sound of my mule's footsteps.

At length I quitted the hill, bending to the right, and re-descending into the plain of lava, which adjoins the cone of the volcano, and



which I crossed lower down on my road to the hermitage; but even when in the midst of these calcined fragments, the mind can hardly form to itself an idea of the appearance which the district must assume, when covered with fire and molten metals by an eruption of Vesuvius. Dante had, perhaps, seen it when he describes in his Hell those showers of ever-burning fire, which descend slowly and in silence “*come di neve in Alpe senza vento.*”

“ Arivammo ad una landa  
 Che dal suo letto ogni pianta remove  
 .....  
 Lo spazzo er' un' arena arida e spessa  
 Sovra tutto 'l sabbion d'un cader lento  
 Pioven di fuoco dilatata, e falde,  
 Come di neve in Alpe senza vento.

Snow was here visible in several places, and I suddenly discovered at intervals Portici, Capri, Ischia, Pausilipi, the sea studded with the white sails of fishing boats, and the coast of the gulph of Naples, bordered with orange trees. It was a view of paradise from the infernal regions.



On reaching the foot of the cone, we alighted from our mules. My guide gave me a long staff, and we began to climb the huge mass of cinders. The clouds closed in, the fog became more dense, and increasing darkness surrounded us.

Behold me now at the top of Vesuvius, where I seated myself at the mouth of the volcano, wrote down what had hitherto occurred, and prepared myself for a descent into the crater. The sun appeared, from time to time, through the mass of vapours, which enveloped the whole mountain, and concealed from me one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world, while it doubled the horrors of the place I was in. Vesuvius, thus separated by clouds from the enchanting country at its base, has the appearance of being placed in the completest desert, and the sort of terror, which it inspires, is in no degree diminished by the spectacle of a flourishing city at its foot.

I proposed to my guide that we should descend into the crater. He made several objections, but this was only to obtain a little more money; and we agreed upon a sum, which



he received on the spot. He then took off his clothes, and we walked some time on the edge of the abyss, in order to find a part which was less perpendicular, and more commodious for our descent. The guide discovered one, and gave the signal for me to accompany him.—We plunged down.

Fancy us at the bottom of the gulph.\* I despair of describing the chaos, which surrounded me. Let the reader figure to himself a basin, a thousand feet in circumference, and three hundred high, which forms itself into the shape of a funnel. Its borders or interior walls are furrowed by the liquid fire, which this basin has contained, and vomited forth. The projecting parts of these walls resemble those brick pillars, with which the Romans supported their enormous masonry. Large rocks are hanging down in different parts, and their fragments mixed with cinders into a sort of paste, cover the bottom of the abyss.

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\* There is fatigue, but very little danger attendant on a descent into the crater of Vesuvius, unless the investigator should be surprised by a sudden eruption.



This bottom of the basin is ploughed and indented in various manners. Near the middle are three vents, or small mouths, recently opened, which discharged flames during the occupation of Naples by the French in 1798.

Smoke proceeds from different points of the crater, especially on the side towards *la Torre del Greco*. On the opposite side, towards *Caseste*, I perceived flame. When you plunge your hand into the cinders, you find them of a burning heat, several inches under the surface. The general colour of the gulph is black as coal; but Providence, as I have often observed, can impart grace at his pleasure even to objects the most horrible. The lava, in some places, is tinged with azure, ultra-marine, yellow, and orange. Rocks of granite are warped and twisted by the action of fire, and bent to their very extremities, so that they exhibit the semblance of the leaves of palms and acanthus. The volcanic matter having cooled on the rocks over which it flowed, many figures are thus formed, such as roses, girandoles, and ribbons. The rocks likewise assume the forms of plants



and animals, and imitate the various figures, which are to be seen in agates. I particularly observed on a blueish rock, a white swan modelled in so perfect a manner that I could have almost sworn I beheld this beautiful bird sleeping on a placid lake, with its head bent under its wing, and its long neck stretched over its back like a roll of silk.

*“Ad vada Meandri concinit albus olor.”*

I found here that perfect silence which I have, on other occasions, experienced at noon in the forests of America, when I have held my breath and heard nothing except the beating of my heart and temporal artery. It was only at intervals that gusts of wind, descending from the cone to the bottom of the crater, rustled through my clothes or whistled round my staff. I also heard some stones, which my guide kicked on one side, as he climbed through the cinders. A confused echo, similar to the jarring of metal or glass, prolonged the noise of the fall, and afterwards all was silent as death. Compare this gloomy silence with the dreadful thundering



din, which shakes these very places, when the volcano vomits fire from its entrails, and covers the earth with darkness.

A philosophical reflection may here be made, which excites our pity for the sad state of human affairs. What is it, in fact, but the famous revolutions of Empires, combined with the convulsions of nature, that changes the face of the earth and the ocean? A happy circumstance would it at least be, if men would not employ themselves in rendering each other miserable, during the short time that they are allowed to dwell together. Vesuvius has not once opened its abyss to swallow up cities, without its fury surprising mankind in the midst of blood and tears. What are the first signs of civilization and improved humanity, which have been found, during our days, under the lava of the volcano? Instruments of punishment and skeletons in chains! \*

Times alter, and human destinies are liable

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\* At Pompeia.



to the same inconstancy. "Life," says a Greek song, "is like the wheels of a chariot."

Τροχὸς ἄρματος γὰρ οἶα  
βίος τρεχεῖ κυλιθεῖς.

Pliny lost his life from a wish to contemplate, at a distance, the volcano, in the centre of which I was now tranquilly seated. I saw the abyss smoking round me. I reflected that a few fathoms below me was a gulph of fire.— I reflected that the volcano might at once disgorge its entrails, and launch me into the air with all the rocky fragments by which I was surrounded.

What Providence conducted me hither? By what chance did the tempests of the American ocean cast me on the plains of Lavinia? "*Lavinaque venit littora.*" I cannot refrain from returning to the agitations of this life, in which St. Augustine says that things are full of misery, and hope devoid of happiness. *Rem plenam miserie, spem beatitudinis inanem.* Born on the rocks of America, the first sound, which struck my ear on entering the world, was that

of the sea, and on how many shores have I seen the same waves break, that find me here again! Who would have told me, a few years ago, that I should hear these wanderers moaning at the tombs of Scipio and Virgil, after they had rolled at my feet on the coast of England, or the strand of Canada? My name is in the hut of the savage of Florida, and in the hermit's book at Vesuvius. When shall I lay down, at the gate of my fathers, the pilgrim's staff and mantle?

*"O patria! O Divum domus Ilium!"*

How do I envy the lot of those, who never quitted their native land, and have no adventures to record!



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## A VISIT TO MONT BLANC.

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I HAVE seen many mountains in Europe and America, and it has always appeared to me that in describing these monuments of nature, writers have gone beyond the truth. My last experience in this respect has not produced any change in my opinion. I have visited the valley of Chamouni, rendered famous by the labours of M. de Saussure; but I do not know whether the poet would there find the "*speciosa deserti*" which the mineralogist discovered. Be that as it may, I will simply describe the reflections, which I made during my journey. My opinion, however, is of so little consequence that it cannot offend any one.

I left Geneva in dull cloudy weather, and reached Servoz at the moment that the sky was becoming clear. The crest of Mont Blanc, as it is termed, is not discoverable from this part of the country, but there is a distinct view of the



snow-clad ridge called the dome. The Montées are here passed, and the traveller enters the valley of Chamouni. He proceeds under the glacier of the Bossons, the pyramids of which are seen through the firs and larches. M. Bourrit has compared this glacier, from its whiteness, and the great extent of its chrystals, to a fleet under sail. I would add in the midst of a gulph encircled with verdant forests.

I stopped at the village of Chamouni, and on the following day went to Montanvert, which I ascended in the finest weather. On reaching its summit, which is only a stage towards the top of Mont Blanc, I discovered what is improperly termed the Sea of Ice.

Let the Reader figure to himself a valley, the whole of which is occupied by a river. The mountains, near this valley, overhang the river in rocky masses, forming the natural spires of Dru, Bochard, and Charmoz. Further on, the valley and river divide themselves into two branches, of which the one waters the foot of a high mountain, called the Col du Geant or Giant's hill, and the other flows past the rocks



called Iorasses. On the opposite side is a declivity, which commands a prospect of the valley of Chamouni. This declivity, which is nearly vertical, is almost entirely occupied by the portion of the sea or lake of ice, which is called the *glacier des bois*. Suppose then that a severe winter has occurred. The river, which fills the valley, through all its inflexions and declivities, has been frozen to the very bottom of its bed. The summits of the neighbouring mountains are loaded with ice and snow wherever the granite has been of a form sufficiently horizontal to retain the congealed waters. Such is the lake of ice, and such its situation. It is manifest that it is not a sea, and not a lake, but a river; just as if one saw the Rhine completely frozen.

When we have descended to the lake of ice, the surface, which appeared to be smooth and entire while surveyed from the heights of Montanvert, displays a number of points and cavities. The peaks of ice resemble the craggy forms of the lofty cliffs, which on all sides overhang them. They are like a relief in white marble to the neighbouring mountains.



Let us now speak of mountains in general. There are two modes of seeing them, with and without clouds. These form the principal character of the Alps.

When clouded, the scene is more animated, but it is obscure, and often so confused that one can hardly distinguish its features. The clouds clothe the rocks in a thousand ways. I have seen a bald crag at Servoz, across which a cloud obliquely passed like the ancient *toga*; and I could have fancied I beheld a colossal statue of a Roman. In another quarter the cultivated part of the mountain appeared; but a barrier of vapour obstructed the view from my station, and below it black continuations of the rocks peeped through, imitating the Chimera, the Sphinx, the heads of the Anubis, and various forms of monsters and gods, worshipped by the Egyptians.

When the clouds are dispersed by the wind, the mountains appear to be rapidly flying behind this light curtain, alternately hiding and discovering themselves. At one time, a spot of verdure suddenly displayed itself through the



opening of a cloud, like an island suspended in the Heavens; at another a rock slowly disrobed itself, and gradually pierced through the dense vapour like a phantom. On such an occasion, the melancholy traveller hears only the rustling of the wind among the pines, and the roaring of the torrents which fall into the glaciers, mingled at intervals with the loud fall of an *avalanche*,\* and sometimes the whistle of the affrighted marmot, which has seen the hawk of the Alps sailing in the air.

When the sky is without clouds, and the amphitheatre of the mountains entirely displayed to view, one circumstance is particularly deserving of notice. The summits of the mountains, as they tower into the lofty regions, present to the eye a purity of delineation, a neatness of plan and profile, which objects in the plain do not possess. These angular heights, under the transparent dome of Heaven, resemble beautiful specimens of natural history, such as fine trees of coral, or stalactites inclosed in a globe of the

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\* The sudden descent of an enormous mass of snow from the mountain into the valley.



purest chrysal. The mountaineer searches in these elegant appearances for objects, which are familiar to him; hence the names of the Mules, the Charmoz, or the Chamois, and the appellations borrowed from religion, the heights of the cross, the rock of the altar, the glacier of the pilgrims—simple and artless denominations, which prove that if man be incessantly occupied in providing for his wants, he every where delights to dwell upon subjects which offer consolation.

As to mountain trees, I shall only mention the pine, the larch, and the fir, because they constitute, as it were, the only decoration of the Alps.

The pine by its shape calls to mind the beauties of architecture, its branches having the elegance of the pyramid, and its trunk that of the column. It resembles also the form of the rocks, among which it flourishes. I have often, upon the ridges and advanced cornices of the mountains, confounded it with the pointed peaks or beetling cliffs. Beyond the hill of Balme, at the descent of the glacier de Trien,



occurs a wood of pines, firs, and larches, which surpass all their congeners in point of beauty. Every tree in this family of giants has existed several ages, and the Alpine tribe has a king, which the guides take care to point out to travellers. It is a fir, which might serve as a mast for the largest man of war. The monarch alone is without a wound—while all his subjects round him are mutilated. One has lost his head; another, part of his arms; a third, has been rent by lightning, and a fourth blackened by the herdsman's fire. I particularly noticed twins which had sprung from the same trunk, and towered aloft together. They were alike in height, form, and age; but the one was full of vigour, and the other in a state of decay. They called to my mind these impressive lines of Virgil:

*“Daucia, Laride Thymerque, simillima proles,*

*“Indiscreta suis, gratusque parentibus error,*

*“Ai nunc dura dedit vobis discrimina Pallas.”*

“Oh Laris and Thimber, twin sons of Daucus, and so much resembling each other, that even your parents could not discern the



difference, and felt delight in the mistakes which you caused! But *death* has caused a mournful difference between you."

I may add that the pine announces the solitude and indigence of the mountain, on which it is found. It is the companion of the poor Savoyard, of whose lot it partakes. Like him it grows and dies upon inaccessible eminences, where its posterity perpetuates it, to perish equally unknown. It is on the larch that the mountain bee gathers that firm and savoury honey, which mixes so agreeably with the raspberries and cream of Montaubert. The gentle murmuring of the wind among the pines has been extolled by pastoral poets, but when the gale is violent, the noise resembles that of the sea, and you sometimes actually think that you hear the roaring billows of the ocean in the middle of the Alps. The odour of the pine is aromatic and agreeable. To me it has a peculiar charm; for I have smelt it at sea, when more than twenty leagues from the coast of Virginia. It likewise always awakens in my mind the idea of that new world, which was



announced to me by a balmy air—of that fine region and those brilliant lakes, where the perfume of the forest was borne to me upon the matin breeze; and as if every thing was connected in our remembrance, it also calls to mind the sentiments of regret and hope which alternately occupied my thoughts, when, leaning over the side of the vessel, I thought of that country which I had lost, and those deserts, which I was about to explore.

But to arrive finally at my peculiar opinion as to mountains, I will observe that as there can be no beautiful landscape without a mountainous horizon, so there is no place calculated for an agreeable residence, and no landscape which is satisfactory to the eye and heart where a deficiency of space and air exists. Still the idea of great sublimity is attached to mountainous views, and with great justice as far as regards the grandeur of objects; but if it be proved that this grandeur, though real in its effects, is not properly perceived by the senses, what becomes of the sublimity?

It is with the monuments of nature as with



those of art. To enjoy their beauty, a person must be stationed at the true point of perspective. Without this the forms, the colouring, and the proportions entirely disappear. In the interior of mountains, when the object itself is almost touched, and the field, in which the optics move, is quite confined, the dimensions necessarily lose their grandeur—a circumstance so true that one is continually deceived as to the heights and distances. I appeal to travellers whether Mont Blanc appeared to them very lofty from the valley of Chamounie. An immense lake in the Alps has often the appearance of a small pond. You fancy a few steps will bring you to the top of an acclivity, which you are three hours in climbing. A whole day hardly suffices to effect your escape from a defile, the extremity of which you seemed at first almost to touch with your hand. This grandeur of mountains, therefore, so often dwelt upon, has no reality, except in the fatigue which it causes. As to the landscape, it is not much grander to the eye than an ordinary one.

But these mountains, which lose their ap-



parent grandeur when they are too nearly approached by the spectator, are nevertheless, so gigantic that they destroy what would otherwise constitute their ornament. Thus by contrary laws, every thing is diminished, both as a whole and in its separate parts. If nature had made the trees a hundred times larger on the mountains than in the plains, if the rivers and cascades poured forth waters a hundred times more abundant, these grand woods and grand waters might produce most majestic effects upon the extended face of the earth; but such is by no means the case. The frame of the picture is enlarged beyond all bounds, while the rivers, the forests, the villages and the flocks preserve their accustomed proportions. Hence there is no affinity between the whole and the part, between the theatre and its decorations. The plan of the mountains being vertical, a scale is thereby supplied, with which the eye examines and compares the objects it embraces, in spite of a wish to do otherwise, and these objects one by one proclaim their own pettiness when thus brought to the test. For example, the loftiest pines can



hardly be distinguished from the vallies, or look only like flakes of soot dashed on the spot. The tracks of pluvial waters, in these black and gloomy woods, have the appearance of yellow parallel stripes, while the largest torrents and steepest cataracts resemble small streams, or bluish vapours.

Those, who have discovered diamonds, topazes and emeralds in the glaciers, are more fortunate than I was; for my imagination was never able to perceive these treasures. The snow at the foot of the *Glacier des Bois*, mixed with the dust of the granite, seemed to me like ashes. The Lake of Ice might be taken, in several quarters, for a lime or plaister pit. Its crevices were the only parts which afforded any prismatic colours, and when the masses of ice rest on the rock, they look like so much common glass.

This white drapery of the Alps has a great inconvenience too, not yet mentioned. It makes every thing around it look black, nay it even darkens the azure sky; nor must it be supposed that the spectator is remunerated for this dis-



agreeable effect by the fine contrast with the colour of the snow itself. The tint, which the neighbouring mountains confer upon it, is lost to a person stationed at their feet. The splendour, with which the setting sun gilds the summits of the Alps in Savoy, is only seen by the inhabitants of Lausanne. As to the traveller, who passes through the valley of Chamouni, it is in vain that he expects to witness this brilliant spectacle. He sees over his head, as if through a funnel, a small portion of sky which is a dingy blue in point of colour, and unmixed with any golden or purple marks of the setting luminary. Wretched district, upon which the sun hardly casts a look even at noon through its frozen barrier!

May I be allowed to utter a trivial truth for the purpose of making myself better understood? In a painting—a back ground is necessary, and for this purpose a curtain is often resorted to. In nature the sky is the curtain of the landscape; if that be wanting in the back ground, every thing is confused and without effect. Now the mountains, when a person is too near them,



obstruct a view of the greater part of the sky. There is not air enough round them; they cast a shade upon each other, and interchange the darkness which perpetually prevails among the cavities of the rocks. To know whether mountain landscapes have so decisive a superiority, it is only requisite to consult painters. You will see that they have always thrown eminences into the distance, thereby opening to the eye a view of woods and plains.

There is only one period at which mountains appear with all their natural sublimity; namely, by moon-light. It is the property of this twilight planet to impart only a single tint without any reflection, and to increase objects by isolating the masses, as well as by causing that gradation of colours to disappear, which connect the different parts of a picture. Hence the more bold and decided the features of a rock or mountain, and the more hardness there is in the design, so much the more will the moon bring out the lines of shade. It is for this reason that Roman architecture, like the contour of mountains, is so beautiful by moon-light.



The *grand*, therefore, and consequently that species of sublimity, to which it gives birth, disappears in the interior of a mountainous country. Let us now see whether the *graceful* is to be found there in a more eminent degree.

The valleys of Switzerland create at first a sort of ecstasy; but it must be observed that they are only found so agreeable by comparison. Undoubtedly the eye, when fatigued by wandering over sterile plains, or promontories covered with reddish lichen, experiences great delight in again beholding a little verdure and vegetation. But in what does this verdure consist? In some pitiful willows, in some patches of oats and barley, which grow with difficulty, and are long in ripening, with some wild trees, which bear late and bitter fruit. If a vine contrives to vegetate in some spot with a Southern aspect, and carefully protected from the Northern blast, this extraordinary fecundity is pointed out to you as an object of admiration. If you ascend the neighbouring heights, the great features of the mountains cause the miniature of the valley to disappear. The cottages become hardly visible,



and the cultivated parts look like so many patterns on a draper's card.

Much has been said of mountain flowers—the violet, which is gathered on the borders of the glaciers, the strawberry which reddens in the snow, &c. but these are imperceptible wonders, which produce no effect. The ornament is too small for the colossus, to which it belongs.

It appears that I am altogether unfortunate, for I have not been able to discover in these cottages, which have been rendered famous by the enchanting imagination of J. J. Rousseau, any thing but miserable huts filled with the ordure of cattle, and the smell of cheese and fermented milk. I found the inhabitants of them to be forlorn mountaineers, who considered themselves exiles, and longed for the luxury of descending into the valleys.

Small birds, flying from one frozen cliff to another, with here and there a couple of ravens or a hawk, scarcely give animation to the rocky snow-clad scenery, where a fall of rain is almost always the only object in motion, which salutes your sight. Happy is the man in this region,



who hears the storm announced from some old fir by the woodpecker. Yet this melancholy indication of life makes my mind feel still more sensibly the general death around me. The chamois, the bouquetins, and the white rabbits are almost entirely destroyed. Even marmots are becoming scarce; and the little Savoyard is threatened with the loss of his treasure. The wild animals are succeeded on the summits of the Alps by herds of cattle, which regret that they are not allowed to enjoy the plain as well as their masters. They have, however, when lying in the coarse herbage of the Caux district, the merit of enlivening the scene, and the more so because they recal to mind the descriptions of the ancient poets.

Nothing remains but to speak of the sensations experienced among mountains, and these are to me very painful. I cannot be happy where I witness on all sides the most assiduous labour, and the most unheard-of toil, while an ungrateful soil refuses all recompense. The mountaineer, who feels his misfortune, is more sincere than travellers. He calls the plains the *good country*;



and does not pretend that the rocks, moistened by the sweat of his brow, but not thereby rendered more fertile, are the most beautiful and best of God's dispensations. If he appears highly attached to his mountain, this must be reckoned among the marvellous connection, which the Almighty has established, between our troubles, the object which causes them, and the places, in which we experienced them. It is also attributable to the recollections of infancy, to the first sentiments of the heart, to the pleasures and even the rigours of the paternal habitation. More solitary than the rest of mankind, more serious from a habit of enduring hardships, the mountaineer finds support in his own sentiments. The extreme love of his country does not arise from any charm in the district which he inhabits, but from the concentration of his ideas, and the limited extent of his wants.

Mountains, however, are said to be the abode of contemplation.—I doubt this. I doubt whether any one can indulge in contemplation, when his walk is fatiguing, and when the attention he is obliged to bestow on his steps, entirely



occupies his mind. The lover of solitude, who gazed with open mouth at chimeras,\* while he was climbing Montanvert, might well fall into some pits, like the astrologer, who pretended to read over head when he could not see his feet.

I am well aware that poets have fixed upon valleys and woods as the proper places to converse with the Muses. For instance let us hear what Virgil says.

“*Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes,*

“*Flumina amem, sylvasque inglorius.*”

From this quotation it is evident that he liked the plains, “*rura mihi* ;” he looked for agreeable, smiling, ornamented valleys, “*vallibus amnes* ;” he was fond of rivers, *flumina amem*,’ (not torrents) and forests, in which he could pass his life without the parade of glory, “*sylvasque inglorius*.” These *sylvæ* are beautiful groves of oaks, elms, and beeches, not melancholy woods of fir ; for he does not say in this passage, “*et ingenti ramorum protegat umbrâ*,” that he wishes to be enveloped in thick shade.

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\* La Fontaine.



And where does he wish that this valley shall be situated? In a place, which will inspire happy recollections and harmonious names, with traditions of the muses and of history:

*“ O ubi campi*

*“ Sperchiusque, et virginibus bacchata Lacœnis*

*“ Taygeta! O qui me gelidis vallibus Hæmi*

*“ Sistat !”*

“ Oh, where are the fields, and the river Sperchius, and Mount Taygetus, frequented by the virgins of Laconia? Oh, who will convey me to the cool valleys of Mount Hæmus?” He would have cared very little for the valley of Chamouni, the glacier of Taconay, the greater or lesser Iorasse, the peak of Dru, and the rock of Tête-Noir.

Nevertheless, if we are to believe Rousseau, and those who have adopted his errors without inheriting his eloquence, when a person arrives at the summit of a mountain, he is transformed into a new man. “ On high mountains,” says Jean Jacques, “ Meditation assumes a grand and sublime character, in unison with the objects that strike us. The mind feels an indescribable



placid delight, which has nothing earthly or sensual in it. It appears to raise itself above the abode of mankind, leaving there all low and terrestrial feelings. I doubt whether any agitation of the soul can be so violent as to resist the effects of a lengthened stay in such a situation."

Would to Heaven that it were really thus! How charming the idea of being able to shake off our cares by elevating ourselves a few feet above the plains! But unfortunately the soul of man is independent of air and situation. Alas! a heart, oppressed with pain, would be no less heavy on the heights than in the valley. Antiquity, which should always be referred to when accuracy of feeling is the subject of discussion, was not of Rousseau's opinion as to mountains; but, on the contrary, represents them as the abode of desolation and sorrow. If the lover of Julia forgot his chagrin among the rocks of Valais, the husband of Eurydice fed the source of his grief upon the mountains of Thrace. In spite of the talents possessed by the philosopher of Geneva, I doubt whether the voice of Saint Preux will be heard by so many future ages as the lyre of Orpheus. **Œdipus,**



that perfect model of Royal calamity, that grand epitome of all earthly evils, likewise sought deserted eminences. He mounted towards Heaven to interrogate the Gods respecting human misery. We have other examples supplied by antiquity, and of a more beautiful as well as more sacred description. The holy writings of the inspired, who better knew the nature of man than the profane sages, always describe those who are particularly unhappy, the prophets and our Saviour himself, as retiring, in the day of affliction, to the high places. The daughter of Jephtha, before her death, asked her father's permission to go and bewail her virginity on the mountains of Judea. Jeremiah said that he would go to the mountains for the purpose of weeping and groaning. It was on the Mount of Olives that Christ drank the cup, which was filled with all the afflictions and tears of mankind.

It is worthy of observation that in the most rational pages of that writer, who stepped forward as the defender of fixed morality, it is still not difficult to find traces of the spirit of the age in which he lived. This supposed change of our internal dispositions, according to the nature



of the place which we inhabited, belonged secretly to the system of materialism; which Rousseau affected to combat. The soul was considered to be a sort of plant, subject to the variations of the atmosphere, and agitated or serene in conformity with this. But could Jean Jacques himself really believe in this salutary influence of the higher regions? Did not this unfortunate man himself carry with him his passions and his misery to the mountains of Switzerland?

There is only one situation, in which it is true that mountains inspire an oblivion of earthly troubles. This is when a man retires far from the world to employ his days in religious exercises. An anchorite, who devotes himself to the relief of human nature, or a holy hermit, who silently meditates on the omnipotence of God, may find peace and joy upon barren rocks; but it is not the tranquillity of the place which passes into the soul of the recluse; it is, on the contrary, his soul, which diffuses serenity through the region of storms.

It has ever been an instinctive feeling of mankind to adore the Eternal on high places.



The nearer we are to Heaven, the less distance there seems to be for our prayers to pass before they reach the throne of God. The patriarchs sacrificed on the mountains; and as if they had borrowed from their altars their idea of the Divinity, they called him the Most High. Traditions of this ancient mode of worship remained among Christian nations; whence our mountains, and in default of them our hills were covered with monasteries and abbeys. From the centre of a corrupt city, man, who was perhaps proceeding to the commission of some crime, or who was at least in pursuit of some vanity, perceived, on raising his eyes, the altars upon the neighbouring heights. The cross, displaying at a distance the standard of poverty to the eyes of luxury, recalled to the rich ideas of affliction and commiseration. Our poets little understood their art, when they ridiculed these emblems of Mount Calvary, with the institutions and retreats, which bring to our recollection those of the East, the manners of the hermits of the Thebaid, the miracles of our divine religion, and the events of times, the antiquity of which is not effaced by that of Homer.



But this belongs to another class of ideas and sentiments, and bears no reference to the general question, which we are examining. After having censured mountains, it is only just to conclude by saying something in their favour. I have already observed that they are essential to a fine landscape, and that they ought to form the chain in the back ground of a picture. Their hoary heads, their lank sides, and gigantic members, though hideous when contemplated, are admirable when rounded by the vapour of the horizon, and coloured in a melting gilded light. Let us add too, if it be wished, that mountains are the source of rivers, the last asylum of liberty in times of despotism, as well as an useful barrier against invasion, and the evils of war. All I ask is that I may not be compelled to admire the long list of rocks, quagmires, crevices, holes, and contortions of the Alpine vallies. On this condition I will say there are mountains, which I should visit again with much pleasure—for instance those of Greece and Judea.\*

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\* This letter was written prior to M. de Chateaubriand's recent Travels in the Holy Land.

RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
ENGLAND.



RECOLLECTIONS

ENGLAND

RECOLLECTIONS

OF  
THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS  
OF WALES  
DURING THEIR RESIDENCE  
IN ENGLAND  
FROM 1795 TO 1807  
BY  
A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF GENTLEMEN

LONDON  
PRINTED BY R. CLAY AND COMPANY  
ST. MARTIN'S LANE  
1808

RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
ENGLAND.

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If man were not attached, by a sublime instinct to his native country, his most natural condition in the world would be that of a traveller. A certain degree of restlessness is for ever urging him beyond his own limits. He wishes to see every thing, and is full of lamentations after he has seen every thing. I have traversed several regions of the globe, but I confess that I paid more attention to the deserts than to mankind, among whom, after all, I often experience solitude.

I sojourned only for a short period among the Germans, Spaniards, and Portuguese; but I lived a considerable time in England; and as the inhabitants of that kingdom constitute the



only people who dispute the empire of the French,\* the least account of them becomes interesting.

Erasmus is the most ancient traveller, with whom I am acquainted, that speaks of the English. He states that, during the reign of Henry VIII. he found London inhabited by barbarians, whose huts were full of smoke. A long time afterwards, Voltaire, wanting to discover a perfect philosopher, was of opinion that he had found this character among the Quakers upon the banks of the Thames. During his abode there the taverns were the places, at which the men of genius, and the friends of rational liberty assembled. England, however, is known to be the country, in which religion is less discussed, though more respected than in any other; and where the idle questions, by which the tranquillity of empires is disturbed, obtain less attention than any where else.

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\* This was written at the time that all the continental powers of Europe had been conquered by the arms of Napoleon, and had acknowledged his title.



It appears to me that the secret of English manners, and their way of thinking is to be sought in the origin of this people. Being a mixture of French and German blood, they form a link of the chain by which the two nations are united. Their policy, their religion, their martial habits, their literature, arts, and national character appear to me a medium between the two. They seem to have united, in some degree, the brilliancy, grandeur, courage, and vivacity of the French with the simplicity, calmness, good sense, and bad taste of the Germans.

Inferior to us in some respects, they are superior in several others, particularly in every thing relative to commerce and wealth. They excel us also in neatness; and it is remarkable that a people, apparently of a heavy turn, should have, in their furniture, dress, and manufactures, an elegance in which we are deficient. It may be said of the English that they employ in the labours of the hand the delicacy, which we devote to those of the mind.

The principal failing of the English nation is pride; which is indeed the fault of all man-



kind. It prevails at Paris as well as London, but modified by the French character, and transformed into self-love. Pride, in its pure state, appertains to the solitary man, who is not obliged to make any sacrifice; but he, who lives much with his equals, is forced to dissimulate and conceal his pride under the softer and more varied forms of vanity. The passions are, in general, more sudden and determined among the English; more active and refined among the French. The pride of the former makes him wish to crush every thing at once by force; the self-love of the other slowly undermines what it wishes to destroy. In England a man is hated for a vice, or an offence, but in France such a motive is not necessary; for the advantages of person or of fortune, success in life, or even a *bon mot* will be sufficient. This animosity, which arises from a thousand disgraceful causes, is not less implacable than the enmity founded on more noble motives. There are no passions so dangerous as those, which are of base origin; for they are conscious of their own baseness, and are thereby rendered furious. They endeavour



to conceal it under crimes, and to impart, from its effects, a sort of appalling grandeur, which is wanting from principle. This the French revolution sufficiently proved.

Education begins early in England. Girls are sent to school during the tenderest years. You sometimes see groups of these little ones, dressed in white mantles, straw-hats tied under the chin with a ribband, and a basket on the arm which contains fruit and a book, all with downcast eyes, blushing if looked at. When I have observed our French female children dressed in their antiquated fashion, lifting up the train of their gowns, looking at every one with effrontery, singing love-sick airs, and taking lessons in declamation, I have thought with regret of the simplicity and modesty of the little English girls. A child without innocence is a flower without perfume.

The boys also pass their earliest years at school, where they learn Greek and Latin. Those who are destined for the church, or a political career, go to the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. The first is particularly devoted to



mathematics, in memory of Newton; but the English, generally speaking, do not hold this study in high estimation; for they think it very dangerous to good morals when carried too far. They are of opinion that the sciences harden the heart, deprive life of its enchantments, and lead weak minds to atheism, the sure road to all other crimes. On the contrary, they maintain that the *belles lettres* render life delightful, soften the soul, fill us with faith in the Divinity, and thus conduce, through the medium of religion, to the practice of all the virtues.\*

When an Englishman attains manhood, agriculture, commerce, the army and navy, religion and politics, are the pursuits of life open to him. If he chuses to be what they call a gentleman farmer, he sells his corn, makes agricultural experiments, hunts foxes and shoots partridges in autumn, eats fat geese at Christmas, sings "Oh the roast beef of old England," grumbles about the present times, and boasts of the past which he thought no better at the moment, above all, inveighs against the minister

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\* Gibbon.



and the war for raising the price of port-wine, and finally goes inebriated to bed, intending to lead the same life on the following day.

The army, though so brilliant during the reign of Queen Anne, had fallen into a state of disrepute, from which the present war has raised it. The English were a long time before they thought of turning their principal attention to their naval force. They were ambitious of distinguishing themselves as a continental power. It was a remnant of ancient opinions, which held the pursuits of commerce in contempt. The English have, like ourselves, always had a species of physiognomy, by which they might be distinguished. Indeed, these two nations are the only ones in Europe, which properly deserve the appellation. If we had our Charlemagne, they had their Alfred. Their archers shared the renown of the Gallic infantry; their Black Prince rivalled our Duguesclin, and their Marlborough our Turenne. Their revolutions and ours keep pace with each other. We can boast of the same glory; but we must deplore the same crimes and the same misfortunes.



Since England is become a maritime power, she has displayed her peculiar genius in this new career. Her navy is distinguished from all others in the world by a discipline the most singular. The English sailor is an absolute slave, who is sent on board a vessel by force, and obliged to serve in spite of himself. The man, who was so independent while a labourer, appears to lose all the rights of freedom from the moment that he becomes a mariner. His superiors oppress him by a yoke the most galling and humiliating.\* Whence arises it that men of so lofty a disposition should submit to such tyrannical ill-usage? It is one of the miracles of a free government. In England the name of the law is almighty. When the law has spoken, resistance is at an end.

I do not believe that we should be able, or indeed that we ought to introduce the English system into our navy. The French Seaman,

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\* The reader will bear in mind, while contemplating this overcharged picture of our gallant navy, that the artist, by whom it is painted, is naturalized in France, though not born there.—EDITOR.



who is frank, generous, and spirited, wishes to approach his commander, whom he regards still more as his comrade than his captain. Moreover, a state of such absolute servitude, as that of the English sailor, can only emanate from civil authority; hence it is to be feared that it would be despised by the French; for unfortunately the latter rather obeys the man than the law, and his wishes are more private than public ones.

Our naval officers have hitherto been better instructed than those of England. The latter merely knew their manœuvres, while ours were mathematicians, and men of science in every respect. Our true character has, in general, been displayed in our navy, where we have appeared as warriors, and as men improved by study. As soon as we have vessels, we shall regain our birthright on the ocean, as well as upon land. We shall also be able to make further astronomical observations, and voyages round the world; but as to our becoming a complete commercial nation, I believe we may renounce the idea at once. We do every thing by genius and



inspiration; but we seldom follow up our projects. A great financier, or a great man as to commercial enterprize may appear among us; but will his son pursue the same career? Will he not think of enjoying the fortune bequeathed by his father, instead of augmenting it? With such a disposition, no nation can become a mercantile one. Commerce has always had among us an indescribable something of the poetic and fabulous in it, similar to the rest of our manners. Our manufactures have been created by enchantment; they acquired a great degree of celebrity, but they are now at an end. While Rome was prudent, she contented herself with the Muses and Jupiter, leaving Neptune to Carthage. This God had, after all, only the second empire, and Jupiter hurled his thunders on the ocean as well as elsewhere.

The English clergy are learned, hospitable, and generous. They love their country, and exert their powerful services in support of the laws. In spite of religious differences, they received the French emigrant clergy with truly christian charity. The university of Oxford



printed, at its expense, and distributed *gratis* to our poor priests, a new Latin Testament, according to the Roman version, with these words: "*For the use of the Catholic clergy exiled on account of their religion.*" Nothing could be more delicate or affecting. It was doubtless a beautiful spectacle for philosophy to witness, at the close of the eighteenth century, the hospitality of the English clergy towards the Catholic priests; nay, further, to see them allow the public exercise of this religion, and even establish some communities. Strange vicissitude of human opinions and affairs! The cry of "*The Pope, the Pope!*" caused the revolution during the reign of Charles the First; and James the Second lost his crown for protecting the Catholic religion.

They, who take fright at the very name of this faith, know but very little of the human mind. They consider it such as it was in the days of fanaticism and barbarity; without reflecting that, like every other institution, it assumes the character of the ages, through which it passes.



The English clergy are, however, not without faults. They are too negligent with regard to their duties, and too fond of pleasure; they give too many balls, and mix too much in the gaieties of life. Nothing is more revolting to a stranger than to see a young minister of religion awkwardly leading a pretty woman down an English country-dance. A priest should be entirely a divine; and virtue should reign around him. He should retire into the mysterious recesses of the temple, appearing but seldom among mankind, and then only for the purpose of relieving the unhappy. It is by such conduct that the French clergy obtain our respect and confidence; whereas they would soon lose both the one and the other, if we saw them seated at our sides on festive occasions and familiarizing themselves with us; if they had all the vices of the times, and were for a moment suspected of being feeble fragile mortals like ourselves.

The English display great pomp in their religious festivals. They are even beginning to introduce paintings into their churches; having at length discovered that religion without wor-



ship is only the dream of a cold enthusiast, and that the imagination of man is a faculty which must be nourished as well as his reason.

The emigration of the French clergy has in a great degree tended to propagate these ideas; and it may be remarked that by a natural return towards the institutions of their forefathers, the English have, for some time, laid the scene of their dramas and other literary works in the ages, during which the catholic religion prevailed among them. Of late, this faith has been carried to London by the exiled priests of France; and appears to the English, precisely as in their romances, through the medium of noble ruins and powerful recollections. All the world crowded with anxiety to hear the funeral oration over a French lady, delivered by an emigrant bishop at London in a stable.

The English church has reserved for the dead the principal part of those honours, which the Roman religion awards to them. In all the great towns there are persons, called undertakers, who manage the funerals. Sometimes you read on the signs over their shops, "*Coffin maker to*



*the King,*" or "*Funerals performed here,*" as if it was a theatrical representation. It is indeed true that representations of grief have long constituted all the marks of it, which are to be found among mankind, and when nobody is disposed to weep over the remains of the deceased, tears are bought for the occasion. The last duties paid to the departed would, however, be of a sad complexion indeed, if stripped of the marks of religion; for religion has taken root at the tomb, and the tomb cannot evade her. It is right that the voice of hope should speak from the coffin; it is right that the priest of the living God should escort the ashes of the dead to their last asylum. It may be said, on such an occasion, that Immortality is marching at the head of Death.

The political bent of the English is well known in France, but most people are ignorant as to the parties, into which the parliament is divided. Besides that of the minister, and the one in opposition to it, there is a third, which may be called *The Anglicans*, at the head of which is Mr. Wilberforce. It consists of about

*Funerals performed here*



a hundred members, who rigidly adhere to ancient manners, particularly in what respects religion. Their wives are clothed like quakers; they themselves affect great simplicity, and give a large part of their revenue to the poor. Mr. Pitt was of this sect, and it was through their influence that he was elevated to, as well as maintained in the office of Prime Minister, for by supporting one side or the other, they are almost sure to constitute a majority and decide the question discussed. When the affairs of Ireland were debated, they took alarm at the promises which Mr. Pitt made to the Catholics, and threatened to pass over to the opposition, upon which the minister made an able retreat from office, in order to preserve the friends, with whom he agreed on most essential points, and escape from the difficulties, into which circumstances had drawn him. Having acted thus, he was sure not to offend the Anglicans, even if the bill passed; and if, on the contrary, it was rejected, the catholics of Ireland could not accuse him of breaking his engagement.—It has been asked in France whether Mr. Pitt lost his credit with his



place, but a single fact will be the best answer to this question. He still sits in the House of Commons. When he shall be transferred to the upper house, his political career will be at an end.

An erroneous opinion is entertained by the French as to the influence of the party, in England, called the opposition, which is completely fallen in the opinion of the public. It possesses neither great talents, nor real patriotism. Mr. Fox himself is no longer of any use to it, having lost all his eloquence from age and excesses of the table. It is certain that his wounded vanity, rather than any other motive, induced him, for so long a time, to discontinue his attendance in Parliament.

The bill, which excludes from the House of Commons every person in holy orders, has been also misinterpreted at Paris. It is not known that the only object of this measure was to expel Horne Tooke, a man of genius, and a violent enemy of government, who had formerly been in orders, but had abandoned his cloth; who had also been a supporter of power even to the



extent of drawing upon himself an attack from the pen of Junius; and finally became a proselyte of liberty, like many others.

Parliament lost in Mr. Burke one of its most distinguished members. He detested the French Revolution, but to do him justice, no Englishman ever more sincerely loved the French as individuals, or more applauded their valour and their genius. Though he was not rich, he had founded a school for the expatriated youth of our nation, where he passed whole days in admiring the genius and vivacity of these children. He used often to relate an anecdote on the subject. Having introduced the son of an English nobleman to be educated at this school, the young orphans proposed to play with him, but the lord did not chuse to join in their sports. "I don't like the French," said he frequently with a degree of sarcasm. A little boy, who could never draw from him any other answer, said, "That is impossible. You have too good a heart to hate us. Should not your Lordship substitute your fear for your hatred?"

It would be right to speak here of English



literature, and the men of letters, but they demand a separate article. I will, therefore, content myself, for the present, with recording some critical decisions, which have much astonished me, because they are in direct contradiction to our received opinions.

Richardson is little read, being accused of insupportable tediousness and lowness of style. It is said of Hume and Gibbon that they have lost the genius of the English language, and filled their writings with a crowd of Gallicisms; the former is also accused of being dull and immoral. Pope merely passes for an exact and elegant versifier; Johnson contends that his *Essay on Man* is only a collection of common passages rendered into pleasant metre. Dryden and Milton are the two authors, to whom the title of author is exclusively applied. The *Spectator* is almost forgotten, and Locke is seldom mentioned, being thought a feeble visionary. None but professed philosophers read Bacon. Shakspeare alone preserves his imperial influence, which is easily accounted for by the following fact.



I was one night at Covent-Garden Theatre, which takes its name, as is generally known, from an ancient convent, on the scite of which it is built. A well dressed man, seated himself near me, and asked soon afterwards *where he was*. I looked at him with astonishment, and answered, "In Covent Garden." "A pretty garden indeed!" exclaimed he, bursting into a fit of laughter, and presenting to me a bottle of rum. It was a sailor, who had accidentally passed this way as he came from the city, just at the time the performance was commencing; and having observed the pressure of the crowd at the entrance of the theatre, had paid his money, and entered the house without knowing what he was to see.

How should the English have a theatre to be termed supportable, when the pit is composed of judges recently arrived from Bengal, and the coast of Guinea, who do not even know where they are? Shakspeare may reign eternally in such a nation. It is thought that every thing is justified by saying that the follies of English tragedy are faithful pictures of nature. If this



were true, the most natural situations are not those, which produce the greatest effect. It is natural to fear death, and yet a victim, who laments its approach, dries the tears before excited by commiseration. The human heart wishes for more than it is capable of sustaining, and above all, wishes for objects of admiration. There is implanted in it an impulse towards some indescribable unknown beauty, for which it was perhaps created at its origin.

A graver observation arises also from this subject. A nation, which has always been nearly barbarous with respect to the arts, may continue to admire barbarous productions, without its being of any consequence; but I do not know to what point a nation, possessing *chef d'œuvres* in every pursuit, can resume its love of the monstrous, without detracting from its character. For this reason, the inclination to admire Shakspeare is more dangerous in France than England. In the latter country this results from ignorance—in ours it would be the effect of depravity. In an enlightened age, the manners of a truly polished people contribute more towards good



taste than is generally imagined. Bad taste, therefore, which has so many means of regaining its influence, must depend on false ideas, or a natural bias. The mind incessantly works on the heart, and it is difficult for the road, taken by the heart, to be straight, when that of the imagination is crooked. He, who likes deformity, is not far from liking vice, and he, who is insensible to beauty, may easily form a false conception of virtue. Bad taste and vice almost always move together; for the former is only the expression of the latter, in the same way as words convey our ideas to others.

I will close this article with some brief observations on the soil, the atmosphere, and public buildings of England.

The country is almost without birds, and the rivers are small; but the banks of these have, nevertheless, a pleasing effect from the solitude which prevails there. The verdure of the fields is of a most lively description. There are few, indeed hardly any woods; but every person's small property being enclosed by a hedge, you might fancy when you take a survey from the



top of a hill, that you were in the middle of a forest. England, at the first glance, resembles Britany, the heaths and plains being surrounded with trees. As to the sky of this country; its azure is brighter than our's, but less transparent; The variations of light are more striking from the multitude of clouds. In summer, when the sun sets at London, beyond Kensington Gardens, it sometimes affords a very picturesque spectacle. The immense volame of coal-smoke, hanging over the city, represents those black rocks, tinged with purple, which are adopted in our representations of Tartarus, while the ancient towers of Westminster Abbey, crowned with vapour, and reddened with the last rays of the sun, raise their heads above the city, the palace, and St. James's Park, like a great monument of death, appearing to command all the other handyworks of man.

Saint Paul's church is the most beautiful modern, and Westminster Abbey the most beautiful Gothic edifice in England. I shall, perhaps, speak more at large respecting the latter on some future occasion. I have often, when



returning from my excursions round London, passed behind Whitehall, through the court in which Charles the First was beheaded. It is in an abandoned state, and the grass grows among the stones. I have sometimes stopped and listened to the wind, moaning round the statue of Charles the Second, which points to the spot where his father perished. I never found any person in this place but workmen cutting stone, whistling as they pursued their labours. Having asked one day what this statue meant, some of them could hardly give me any answer, and others were entirely ignorant of the subject. Nothing ever afforded a more just idea of human events, and our littleness. What is become of persons who made so much noise? Time has taken a stride, and the face of the earth has been renewed. To generations, then divided by political animosity, have succeeded generations indifferent to the past, but filling the present times with new animosities, which succeeding generations will in their turn forget.

These reflections have often occurred to me on some future occasion. I have often



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## ENGLISH LITERATURE.

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### I.—YOUNG.

WHEN a writer has formed a new school, and is found, after the criticisms of half a century, to be still possessed of great reputation, it is important to the cause of literature that the reason of this success should be investigated; especially when it is neither ascribable to greatness of genius, nor to superiority of taste, nor to the perfection of the art.

A few tragic situations and a few quaint words, with an indescribable, vague, and fantastic use of woods, heaths, winds, spectres, and tempests, account for the celebrity of Shakspeare.

Young, who has nothing of this nature in his works, is indebted, perhaps, for a great portion of his reputation, to the fine picture which he displays at the opening of his chief work, "The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death,



and Immortality." A minister of the Almighty, an aged father, who has lost his only daughter, wakes in the middle of succeeding nights to moan among the tombs. He associates death with time and eternity, through the only grand medium which man has within himself—I mean sorrow. Such a picture strikes the observer at once, and the effect is durable.

But on advancing a little into these Night Thoughts, when the imagination, roused by the exordium of the poet, has created a world of tears and reveries, you will find no trace of what the author promised at the outset. You behold a man, who torments himself in every way for the purpose of producing tender and melancholy ideas, without arriving at any thing beyond morose philosophy. Young was pursued by the phantom of the world even to the recesses of the dead, and all his declamation upon mortality exhibits a feeling of mortified ambition. There is nothing natural in his sensibility, nothing ideal in his grief. The lyre is always touched with a heavy hand. Young has particularly endeavoured to impart a character of sadness



to his meditations. Now, this character is derived from three sources—the scenes of nature, the ideas floating upon the memory, and religious principle.

With regard to the scenes of nature, Young wished to avail himself of them as auxiliaries to his complaints, but I do not know that he has succeeded. He apostrophizes the moon, and he talks to the stars, but the reader is not thereby affected. I cannot explain in what the melancholy consists, which a poet draws from a contemplation of nature; but it is certain that he finds it at every step. He combines his soul with the roaring of the wind, which imparts to him ideas of solitude. A receding wave reminds him of life—a falling leaf of man. This sadness is hid in every desert for the use of poets. It is the *Echo* of the fable who was consumed by grief, and the invisible inhabitant of the mountains.

When the mind is labouring under chagrin, the reflection should always take the form of sentiment and imagery, but in Young the sentiment, on the contrary, is transformed into



reflection and argument. On opening the first  
Complaint I read :

“ From short (as usual) and disturb'd repose

I wake : how happy they, who wake no more !

Yet that were vain, if dreams infest the grave.

I wake, emerging from a sea of dreams

Tumultuous ; where my wreck'd desponding thought,

From wave to wave of fancied misery,

At random drove, her helm of reason lost.

Though now restored, 'tis only change of pain,

(A bitter change) severer for severe.

The day too short for my distress, and night,

Even in the zenith of her dark domain,

Is sunshine to the colour of my fate.”

Is this the language of sorrow ? What is a  
wrecked desponding thought, floating from  
wave to wave of fancied misery ? What is a  
*night* which is a *sun*, compared with the colour  
of a person's fate ? The only remarkable feature  
of this quotation is the idea that the slumber of  
the tomb may be disturbed by dreams ; but this  
directly brings to mind the expression of Ham-  
let : “ To sleep—to dream !”

Ossian awakes also at midnight to weep,  
but Ossian weeps in reality. “ Lead, son of  
Alpin, lead the aged to his woods. The winds



begin to rise. The dark wave of the lake resounds. Bends there not a tree from Mora with its branches bare? It bends, son of Alpin, in the rustling blast. My harp hangs on a blasted branch. The sound of its strings is mournful. Does the wind touch thee, oh harp, or is it some passing ghost? It is the hand of Malvina. But bring me the harp, son of Alpin, another song shall arise. My soul shall depart in the sound; my fathers shall hear it in their airy hall. Their dim faces shall hang with joy from their cloud, and their hands receive their son."

Here we have mournful images, and poetical reverie. The English allow that the prose of Ossian is as poetic as verse, and possesses all the inflexions of the latter; and hence a French translation of this, though a literal one, will be, if good, always supportable; for that, which is simple and natural in *one* language, possesses these qualities in *every* language.

It is generally thought that melancholy allusions, taken from the winds, the moon, and the clouds, were unknown to the ancients;



but there are some instances of them in Homer, and a beautiful one in Virgil. Enæas perceives the shade of Dido in the recesses of a forest, as one sees, or fancies that one sees the new moon rising amidst clouds.

“ *Qualem primo qui surgere mense  
Aut videt, aut ridesse putat per nubila lunam.*”

Observe all the circumstances. It is the moon, which the spectator sees, or fancies that he sees crossing the clouds; consequently the shade of Dido is reduced to a very small compass, but this moon is in its first phasis, and what is this planet at such a time? Does not the shade of Dido itself seem to vanish from the “mind’s eye?” Ossian is here traced to Virgil; but it is Ossian at Naples, where the light is purer, and the vapours more transparent.

Young was therefore ignorant of, or rather has ill expressed melancholy, which feeds itself on the contemplation of nature, and which, whether soft or majestic, follows the natural course of feeling. How superior is Milton to the author of the Night Thoughts in the nobi-



lity of grief! Nothing is finer than his four last lines of *Paradise Lost* :

“ The world was all before them where to chuse  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.  
They hand in hand, with wand’ring steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.”

In this passage the reader sees all the solitudes of the world opened to our first father, all those seas which water unknown lands, all the forests of the habitable globe, and man left alone with his sins amidst the deserts of creation.

Harvey, though possessing a less elevated genius than the author of the *Night Thoughts*, has evinced a softer and more generous sensibility in his “*Meditations among the Tombs.*” He says of an infant, which suddenly died: “What did the little hasty sojourner find so forbidding and disgustful in our upper world, to occasion its precipitate exit? It is written, indeed, of its suffering Saviour that, when he had tasted the vinegar, mingled with gall, he would not drink.\* And did our new-come stranger begin

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\* Matthew, chapter 27, verse 34.



to sip the cup of life ; but, perceiving the bitterness, turn away its head, and refuse the draught ? Was this the cause why the weary babe only opened its eyes, just looked on the light, and then withdrew into the more inviting regions of undisturbed repose ?”

Dr. Beattie, a Scotch poet, has introduced the most lovely reverie into his *Minstrel*. It is when he describes the first effects of the Muse upon a young mountain bard, who as yet does not comprehend the genius, by which he is tormented. At one time the future poet goes and seats himself on the borders of the sea during a tempest ; at another, he quits the sports of the village that he may listen, first at a distance, and then more closely to the sound of the bagpipe. Young was, perhaps, appointed by Nature to treat of higher subjects, but still he was not a complete poet. Milton, who sung the misfortunes of primeval man, sighed also in *Il Penseroso*.

Those good writers of the French nation, who have known the charms of reverie, have prodigiously surpassed Young. Chaulieu, like Horace, has mingled thoughts of death with



the illusions of life. The following well known lines are of a melancholy cast much more to be admired than the exaggerations of the English poet.

“Grotto, where the murm’ring stream  
 Mossy bank and flow’ret laves,  
 Be of thee my future dream,  
 And of yonder limpid waves.  
 Fontenay, delicious spot,  
 Which my youthful life recalls,  
 Oh, when death shall be my lot,  
 May I rest within thy walls!  
 Muses, who dispell’d my woe,  
 While the humble swain you bless’d,  
 Lovely trees, that saw me grow,  
 Soon you’ll see me sink to rest.”

In like manner the inimitable La Fontaine indulges himself.

“Why should my verse describe a flow’ry bank?  
 Longer the cruel Fates refuse to spin  
 My golden thread of life. I shall not sleep  
 Beneath a canopy of sculptur’d pomp;  
 But will my rest for this be more disturb’d,  
 Or will my slumbers less delight impart?  
 No, in the trackless desert let me lie,” &c.

It was a great poet, from whom such ideas



emanated; but to pursue the comparison, there is not a page of Young, which can afford a passage equal to the following one of J. J. Rousseau. "When evening approached, I descended from the higher parts of the island, and seated myself at the side of the lake in some retired part of the strand. There the noise of the waves and the agitation of the water fixed my attention, and driving every other agitation from my soul, plunged it into a delicious reverie, in which night often imperceptibly surprised me. The flux and reflux of the waves, with their continued noise, but swelling in a louder degree at intervals, unceasingly struck my eyes and ears, while they added to my internal emotions, and caused me to feel the pleasure of existence without taking the pains to think. From time to time a weak and short reflection on the instability of human affairs, occurred to me, which was supplied by the surface of the waters; but these slight impressions were soon effaced by the uniformity of the continued motion which rocked my mind to repose; and which, without any active concurrence of my soul, attached me



so strongly to the spot, that when summoned away by the hour and a signal agreed upon, I could not tear myself from the scene without a disagreeable effort."

This passage of Rousseau reminds me that one night, when I was lying in a cottage, during my American travels, I heard an extraordinary sort of murmur from a neighbouring lake. Conceiving this noise to be the forerunner of a storm, I went out of the hut to survey the heavens. Never did I see a more beautiful night, or one in which the atmosphere was purer. The lake's expanse was tranquil, and reflected the light of the moon, which shone on the projecting points of the mountains, and on the forests of the desert. An Indian canoe was traversing the waves in silence. The noise, which I had heard, proceeded from the flood tide of the lake, which was beginning, and which sounded like a sort of groaning as it rose among the rocks. I had left the hut with an idea of a tempest—let any one judge of the impression which this calm and serene picture must have made upon me—it was like enchantment.



Young has but ill availed himself, as I conceive, of the reveries, which result from such scenes; and this arose from his being eminently defective in tenderness. For the same reason he has failed in that secondary sort of sadness, which arises from the sorrows of memory. Never does the poet of the tombs revert with sensibility to the first stage of life, when all is innocence and happiness. He is ignorant of the delights afforded by the recollection of family incidents and the paternal roof. He knows nothing of the regret, with which a person looks back at the sports and pastimes of childhood. He never exclaims, like the poet of the Seasons:

“ Welcome, kindred glooms!

Congenial horrors, hail! With frequent foot,

Pleas'd have I, in my cheerful morn of life,

When nurs'd by careless solitude I liv'd,

And sung of nature with unceasing joy,

Pleas'd have I wander'd through your rough domain,

Trod the pure virgin snows, myself as pure.” &c.

Gray in his Ode on a distant view of Eton College has introduced the same tenderness of recollection.



" Ah happy hills, ah pleasing shade,  
   Ah fields belov'd in vain,  
 Where once my careless childhood stray'd  
   A stranger yet to pain!  
 I feel the gales that from you blow,  
 .....  
 My weary soul they seem to soothe,  
 And redolent of joy and youth,  
   To breathe a second spring."

As to the recollections of misfortune, they are numerous in the works of Young. But why do they appear to be deficient in truth, like all the rest? Why is the reader unable to feel an interest in the tears of the poet? Gilbert, expiring in a hospital, and in the flower of his age, finds his way to every heart, especially when he speaks of the friends who have forsaken him.

" At life's convivial board I sat,  
   And revell'd in its choicest cheer,  
 But now I'm call'd away by Fate,  
   I die—and none will shed a tear.  
 Farewell, ye streams and verdant glades,  
   And thou, bright sun, with smile so warm,  
 Farewell, ye placid forest-shades,  
   Farewell to nature's ev'ry charm !



Oh may you long confer delight  
 On friends I fondly deem'd so true,  
 Who leave me now abandon'd quite,  
 Without one final sad adieu !"

Look in Virgil at the Trojan women, seated  
 on the sea shore, and weeping while they survey  
 the immensity of the ocean.

" *Cunctæque profundum  
 Pontum aspectabant flentes.*"

What beautiful harmony ! How forcibly  
 does it depict the vast solitude of the ocean, and  
 the remembrance of their lost country ! What  
 genuine sorrow is conveyed by this one weeping  
 glance over the surface of the billows !

M. du Parny has combined the tender charms  
 of memory with another species of sentiment.  
 His complaint at the tomb of Emma is full of  
 that soft melancholy, which characterizes the  
 writings of the only elegiac poet of France.

" Friendship, with fugitive deception kind,  
 Chases thy image, Emma, from my mind ;  
 Emma, the charming object of my love,  
 So lately call'd to blissful realms above,  
 Sweet girl, how momentary was thy sway !  
 All from thy tomb now turn their eyes away ;  
 Thy memory, like thyself, is sinking to decay."



The Muse or the poet, to whom we are indebted for Eleonora, indulged in reverie upon the same rocks, where Paul, resting his head upon his hand, saw the vessel sail away, which contained Virginia. The cloistered Eloïsa revived all her sorrows and all her love by even thinking of Abelard. Recollections are the echo of the passions; and the sounds, which this echo repeats, acquire, from distance, a vague and melancholy character, which makes them more seductive than the accents of the passions themselves.

It remains for me to speak of religious sadness. Except Gray and Hervey, I know only one protestant writer (M. Necker) who infused a degree of tenderness into sentiments drawn from religion. It is known that Pope was a catholic, and that Dryden was the same at intervals. It is believed too that Shakspeare belonged to the Roman church. A father burying his daughter by stealth in a foreign land—what a beautiful subject for a christian minister! Notwithstanding this, but few affecting passages are to be found in Young's Complaint called Narcissa.



He sheds fewer tears over the tomb of his only daughter than Bossuet over the coffin of Madame Henriette.

“ Sweet harmonist, and beautiful as sweet !  
 And young as beautiful, and soft as young !  
 And gay as soft, and innocent as gay !  
 And happy (if aught happy here) as good !  
 For Fortune fond had built her nest on high.  
 Like birds quite exquisite of note and plume  
 Transfix'd by Fate (who loves a lofty mark)  
 How from the summit of the grove she fell,  
 And left it unharmonious ! All its charms  
 Extinguish'd in the wonders of her song !  
 Her song still vibrates in my ravish'd ear,  
 Still melting there, and with voluptuous pain,  
 Oh to forget her !) trilling thro' my heart.”

This passage, all prejudice apart, I think intolerable, though it is one of the most beautiful in the French translation of Young's Night Thoughts by M. Le Tourneur. Is this the language of a father ? Sweet harmonist or musician, as beautiful as sweet, and young as beautiful, and soft as young, and gay as soft, and innocent as gay ! Is it thus that the mother of Euryalus deplores the loss of her son, or that



Priam utters lamentations over the body of Hector? M. de Tournear has displayed much taste by converting Young's "*birds, transfixed by Fate, who loves a lofty mark,*" into a nightingale struck by the fowler's shot. It is a prodigious improvement, as may be instantly perceived. The means should always be proportioned to the object, and we ought not to use a lever for the purpose of raising a straw. Fate may dispose of an empire, change a world, elevate or throw down a great man, but Fate should not be employed in killing a bird. It is the *durus arator*, it is the *feathered arrow* which should be used to kill nightingales and pigeons.

It is not in this way that Bossuet speaks of Madame Henriette. "She has passed," says he, "from morning to evening like the herbs of the field. In the morning she flourished—oh, with what elegance! You know it. At night we saw her withered, and those strong expressions, by which the Scriptures almost exaggerate the instability of human affairs, were precisely and literally verified in this Princess. Alas, we composed her memoirs of all that we could fancy



most glorious. The past and the present were our guarantees for the future. Such was the history, of which we had formed the outline, and to complete our noble project, nothing was requisite but the duration of her life, which we did not think in any danger. For who could have supposed that years would be refused to one of such vivacity in her youth? By her death our plan is totally destroyed in a moment. Behold her—in spite of her great heart, behold this Princess lately so much admired and beloved! See to what a state death has reduced her; and even these remains, such as they are, will soon disappear.”

I should have liked to quote some pages of regularly supported beauty from the *Night Thoughts of Young*. Such are to be found in the French translation, but not in the original. The *Nights of M. Le Tourneur*, and the imitation of M. Colerdeau are works in all respects different to the English one. The latter only possesses beauties scattered here and there, and rarely supplies ten irreproachable lines together. Seneca and Lucan may be sometimes traced in



Young, but Job and Pascal never. He is not a man of sorrow—he does not please the truly unhappy.

Young declaims in several places against solitude; so that the habit of his soul was certainly not an inclination to reverie.\* The saints pursued their meditations in the deserts, and the Parnassus of poets is also a solitary mountain. Bourdaloue intreated of the superior of his order permission to retire from the world. “I feel,” wrote he, “that my frame grows feeble, and approaches towards dissolution. I have run my course, and thank Heaven, I can add that I have been faithful to my God.—Let me be allowed to employ the remainder of my

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\* The English reader will probably not have agreed with M. de Chateaubriand on several points discussed in this criticism. Young can never be said to have disliked solitude. Let him speak for himself:

“Oh lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,

Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,

Who think it solitude to be alone!

Communion sweet, communion large and high!” &c.

*Editor.*



days in devotion to the Almighty, and in securing my own salvation. In retirement I shall forget the affairs of this world, and humble myself with contrition every day before my Maker."

If Bossuet, living amidst the magnificence of Versailles was able to diffuse a genuine and majestic species of sadness through his writings, it was because he found solitude in religion; because though his body was in the world, his soul was in a desert; because his heart had found a sanctuary in the secret recesses of the tabernacle, because, as he himself said of Maria Theresa of Austria, he ran to the altar to enjoy humble repose with David; because he shut himself, as that Princess did, in his oratory, where, in spite of the tumult of the court, he found the carmel of Elias, the desert of Saint John, and the mountain, which so often witnessed the sorrows of Jesus."

Dr. Johnson, after having severely criticized Young's Night Thoughts, finishes by comparing them to a Chinese garden. For my own part, all I have wished to say is, that if we impartially compare the literary works of other nations with



those of France, we shall find an immense superiority in favour of our own country. We always at least equal others in strength of thought, while we are certainly superior in point of taste; and it should ever be remembered that though genius produces the literary offspring, taste preserves it. Taste is the good sense of genius, and without it the latter is only a silly species of sublimity. But it a singular circumstance that this sure criterion, by which every thing yields the exact tone it ought to yield, is still less frequently found than the creative faculty. Genius and wit are disseminated in about equal proportions, at all times; but there are only certain nations, and among these only particular moments, at which taste appears in all its purity. Before and after this moment, every thing fails either from deficiency or excess. It is for this reason that perfect works are so rare; for it is necessary that they should be produced in the happy hours of united taste and genius. This great junction, like that of certain heavenly bodies, appears only to take place after the lapse of several ages, and then endures only for a moment.



## II.—SHAKSPEARE.

AFTER having spoken of Young, I proceed to a man who has made a schism in literature, who is idolized by the country which gave him birth, admired throughout the North of Europe, and placed by some Frenchmen at the side of Corneille and Racine.

It was Voltaire, who made France acquainted with Shakspeare. The opinion, which he at first formed of English tragedy, was, like most of his early opinions, replete with justice, taste, and impartiality. In a letter to Lord Bolingbroke, written about the year 1730, he observed: "With what pleasure did I see, while in London, the tragedy of Julius Cæsar, which has been the delight of your nation for a century and a half!" On another occasion he said: "Shakspeare created the English stage. He had a genius abounding with vigorous conception; he was natural and sublime, but he did not possess a single spark of taste, or the least knowledge of rules. I shall make a bold assertion, but a true one, when I state that this



author spoiled the English stage. There are such beautiful scenes, such grand and terrible passages in his monstrous farces, which are called tragedies, that his pieces have always been performed with great success."

Such were the first decisions of Voltaire as to Shakspeare; but when an attempt was made to set up this great genius as a model of perfection, when the masterpieces of the Greek and French drama were declared inferior to his writings, then the author of *Merope* perceived the danger. He perceived that by elevating the beauties of a barbarian, he had misled those, who were unable, like himself, to separate the pure metal from the dross. He wished to retrace his steps, and attacked the idol he had worshipped; but it was then too late, and he in vain repented that he had *opened the gate to mediocrity*, and *assisted*, as he himself said, *in placing the monster on the altar*. Voltaire had made England, which was then but little known, a sort of marvellous country to supply him with such heroes, opinions, and ideas as he wanted. Towards the close of his life he reproached



himself with this false admiration, of which he had only availed himself to support his doctrines. He began to discover its lamentable consequences, and might unfortunately exclaim: "*Et quorum pars magna fui.*"

M. de la Harpe, an excellent critic, in his analysis of Shakspeare's *Tempest*, which was translated into French by M. Le Tourneur, exposed to full view the gross irregularities of Shakspeare, and avenged the cause of the French stage. Two modern authors, Madame de Staël Holstein and M. de Rivarol have also passed sentence on the great English tragic poet; but it appears to me that notwithstanding so much has been written on this subject, several interesting remarks may yet be made.

As to the English critics, they have seldom spoken the truth respecting their favourite poet. Ben Jonson, who was first the disciple, and then the rival of Shakspeare, shared with him at first their good opinion. Pope observes that "they endeavoured to exalt the one at the expense of the other." Because Ben Jonson had much the more learning it was said, on the one hand,



that Shakspeare had none at all; and because Shakspeare had much the most wit and fancy, it was retorted on the other that Jonson wanted both. Ben Jonson is only known at the present day by his *Fox* and his *Alchymist*.\*

Pope displayed more impartiality in his criticisms. "Of all English poets," says he, "Shakspeare must be confessed to be the fairest and fullest subject for criticism, and to afford the most numerous, as well as most conspicuous instances, both of beauties and faults of all sorts."

If Pope had abided by this judgment, he would have deserved praise for his moderation; but soon afterwards he is hurried away by the prejudices of his country, and extols Shakspeare above every genius ancient and modern. He

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\* Surely at present better known by *Every Man in his Humour* than any of the pieces mentioned by the author. The *Fox* is never performed, and the *Alchymist*, which Garrick reduced to a farce, under the title of the *Tobacco-nist*, for the purpose of displaying his own inimitable powers in the character of Abel Druggier, has been also laid on the shelf, none of our modern performers having attempted that part except Mr. Emery. The great actor of the present day, however, Mr. Kean is about to appear in the character.—EDITOR.



goes so far as even to excuse the lowness of some characters in the English poet by this ingenious comparison. "In these cases," says he; "Shakspeare's genius is like some prince of a romance in the disguise of a shepherd or peasant; a certain greatness of spirit now and then breaks out, which manifest his higher extraction and qualities."\*

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\* M. de Chateaubriand has here been guilty of a great oversight, for I will not suppose that he has wilfully perverted Pope's meaning to support his own philippic against our immortal bard. He seems to think that the above quotation was made upon *tragedy*, whereas it was made upon *comedy*, and every one must be aware that strictures upon the one are very unlikely to be just as to the other. That the reader may judge for himself I will quote the whole passage from Pope. "In *tragedy*," says he, "nothing was so sure to surprise and cause admiration, as the most strange, unexpected, and consequently most unnatural events and incidents; the most exaggerated thoughts; the most verbose and bombast expressions; the most pompous rhimes, and thundering versifications. In *comedy*, nothing was so sure to please as mean buffoonery, vile ribaldry, and unmannerly jests of fools and clowns. Yet even in these our author's wit buoys up, and is borne above his subject; his genius in those low parts is like some prince of a romance in the dis-



Theobald and Sir Thomas Hanmer follow in their turn. Their admiration is without bounds. They attack Pope for having made some trifling corrections in the works of the great poet. The celebrated Dr. Warburton, who undertook the defence of his friend, informs us that Mr. Theobald was a poor man, and Sir Thomas Hanmer a poor critic; that he gave money to the former, and notes to the latter. Even the good sense and discrimination of Dr. Johnson seems to forsake him when he speaks of Shakspeare. He reproaches Rymer and Voltaire for having said that the English tragic poet does not sufficiently preserve a verisimilitude of manners—that Shakspeare's Romans are not sufficiently Roman, and his kings not completely royal. “These,” says he, “are the petty cavils guise of a shepherd or peasant; a certain greatness and spirit now and then break out, which manifest his higher extraction and qualities.” Surely Pope distinctly alludes, in these last lines, to *comedy*. As an excuse for the introduction of low parts among those of a graver cast, he merely says that Shakspeare “writ to the people,” that “the audience was generally composed of the meaner sort,” and that he was obliged to hit the taste and humour of the times, in order to gain a subsistence.—EDITOR.



of petty minds. A poet overlooks the casual distinctions of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery." It is useless to descant upon the bad taste and falsity of this criticism. The verisimilitude of manners, far from being the drapery, is the leading feature of the picture itself. All those critics, who incessantly dwell on nature, regarding the "casual distinction of country and condition" as prejudices of the art, are like those politicians who plunge states into barbarity, by wishing to annihilate social distinctions.

I will not enter into the opinions of Rowe, Steevens, Gildon, Dennis, Peck, Garrick, &c. Mrs. Montague has surpassed them all in point of enthusiasm. Hume and Blair are the only persons, who keep within tolerable bounds. Sherlock has dared to say (and it required courage even for an Englishman to go so far) that there is nothing in Shakspeare, which can be called mediocrity; that all he has written is either excellent or detestable; that he never followed nor even conceived a plan, excepting, perhaps, that of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*; but that



he often writes a scene very well. This critique very nearly approaches the truth.

Mr. Mason, in his *Elfrida* and *Caractacus*, has tried, but without success, to transplant the tragedy of Greece into England. The *Cato* of Addison is now hardly ever played. At the Theatres of Great Britain the audience is only diverted by the monstrosities of Shakspeare, or the horrors of Otway.

Were we contented to speak vaguely of Shakspeare, without deliberately weighing the question, and without reducing criticism to some particular points, we should never arrive at any proper explanation; for by thus confounding *the age in which he wrote with the genius of the individual*, and *the dramatic art itself*, every one might praise or censure the father of the English Theatre according to his inclinations. It appears to us that Shakspeare should be considered with reference to all the three points, which I have just stated.

First, then as to *the age in which he lived*, Shakspeare cannot be very much admired. He was perhaps superior to his cotemporary Lope



de Vega, but he can, by no means, be compared with Garnier and Hardy, who at that time "lisped in numbers" among us, and uttered the first accents of the French Melpomene. It has been ascertained too that the prelate Trissino had, at the same period caused regular tragedy to re-appear in Italy by the production of his *Sophonisba*. Curious researches have been made for the translations of ancient authors, which existed in Shakspeare's time. I do not find in the catalogue any other dramatic pieces than one called *Jocasta*, taken from the *Phœnicians* of Euripides, the *Andria* and *Eunuch* of Terence, the *Menechmi* of Plautus and the tragedies of Seneca. It is doubtful whether Shakspeare had any knowledge of these versions, for he has not borrowed the foundation of his plays from these original authors, even when they were translated into English, but has worked upon some English imitations of the ancient sources. For instance, with regard to *Romeo and Juliet*, he has neither taken the story from *Girolamo de la Corte*, nor the novel of *Bandello*, but from a small English poem called the *Tragical History*



of *Romeo and Juliet*. In like manner, he does not owe the story of *Hamlet* to Saxo Grammaticus, because he did not understand Latin.\* It is known that, generally speaking, Shakspeare was an uneducated illiterate man. He was obliged to abscond from the county in which he resided, for having killed deer in a gentleman's park, and before he became an actor in London, took care of horses at the door of the theatre, while the owners of them attended the representation. It is a memorable circumstance that Shakspeare and Molière were performers; both these men though so highly endowed with mental qualifications, were forced to tread the boards for the purpose of obtaining a livelihood. The one regained the dramatic art lost in the lapse of ages; the other brought it to perfection. Like two philosophers of antiquity they shared the empire of smiles and tears; and both, perhaps,

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\* See Saxo Grammaticus from page 48 to 59, *Amlethus ne prudentius agendo patruo suspectus redderetur; stoliditatis simulationem amplexus, extremum mentis vitium finxit.*



consoled themselves for the injustice of fortune, the one in painting the follies, and the other the sorrows of mankind.

As to the second point, *his genius, or natural talents*, Shakspeare is not less prodigious than Molière. I do not know, indeed, that any man ever examined human nature with deeper penetration. Whether he treats of the passions, whether he speaks of morals or policy, whether he deplores or foresees the misfortunes of states he has a thousand sentiments to cite, a thousand thoughts to introduce, a thousand applications to make with regard to all the circumstances of life. It is with reference to genius that the fine isolated scenes of Shakspeare should be considered, and not merely as to their dramatic correctness. In this consists the principal error of the poets' admirers in England: for if these scenes be considered according to the rules of art, it would be necessary to ascertain whether they are necessary, and whether they are properly connected with the subject. The "*non erat his locus*" occurs to the reader in every page of Shakspeare.



Reverting, however, to the works of the great author himself, how beautiful is his third scene of the fourth act of Macbeth !

*Enter Rosse.*

*Macduff.* See, who comes here ?

*Malcolm.* My countryman, but yet I know him not.

*Macduff.* My ever welcome cousin, welcome hither !

*Malcolm.* I know him now. Good God, betimes remove  
The means that make us strangers.

*Rosse.* Sir, amen !

*Macduff.* Stands Scotland where it did ?

*Rosse.* Alas, poor country,  
Almost afraid to know itself ! It cannot  
Be call'd our mother, but our grave ; where nothing,  
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile  
Where sighs and groans, and shrieks that rend the air  
Are made, not mark'd ; where violent sorrow seems  
A modern ecstasy. The dead man's knell  
Is there scarce ask'd for who ; and good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
Dying or ere they sicken.

*Macduff.* Oh relation  
Too nice, and yet too true !

*Malcolm.* What is the newest grief ?

*Rosse.* Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever,



Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound  
That ever yet they heard.

.....  
Your castle is surpris'd, your wife and babes  
Savagely slaughter'd. To relate the manner  
Were on the quarry of these murder'd deer  
To add the death of you.

*Malcolm.* Merciful heaven !

.....  
*Macduff.* My children too !

*Rosse.* Wife, children, servants, all  
That could be found.

*Macduff.* And I must be from thence !  
My wife kill'd too ?

*Rosse.* I have said.

*Malcolm.* Be comforted.

*Macduff.* He has no children.—All my pretty ones ?  
Did you say all ?—O hell-kite, all !  
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam  
At one fell swoop ?”

What truth and energy in the description of Scotland's misfortunes ! The smile, which is described to be only upon the countenance of infants, the cries of anguish which no one dares to observe, the deaths so frequent that no one inquires for whom the passing bell is tolling—



does not each Frenchman fancy that he sees the picture of his native land during the sway of Robespierre? Xenophon has given almost a similar description of Athens during the reign of the thirty tyrants. "Athens," observes he, "was only one vast tomb, inhabited by terror and silence. A look, a motion, a thought became fatal to the unfortunate citizens. The countenance of the victim was studied, and the wretches sought there for candour and virtue, as the judge endeavours to discover the marks of guilt in the countenance of a culprit\*."

The dialogue of Rosse and Macduff calls to mind that of Flavius and Curiatius in Corneille, when the former announces to the lover of Camilla that he has been fixed upon to fight the Horatii.

*Curiatius.* Has Alba of three warriors made her choice?

*Flavius.* She has, and I announce it.

*Curiatius.* Who the three?

*Flavius.* Your brothers and yourself.

*Curiatius.* Who?

*Flavius.* I have said.

You and your brothers.

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\* Xenoph. Hist. Græc. Lib. 2.



The interrogations of Macduff and Curia-  
tius are beauties of the same order. "My chil-  
dren too?"—"Wife, children."—"My wife  
killed too?"—"I have said . . ."—"Who the  
three?"—"Your brothers and yourself."—  
"Who?"—"You and your brothers." But  
Shakspeare's expression:—"He has no chil-  
dren," remains without a parallel.

The same artist, who painted this picture,  
wrote the charming farewell scene in Romeo  
and Juliet. Romeo, who is condemned to exile,  
is surprised by the morning while with Juliet, to  
whom he is secretly married.

*Juliet.* Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day;

It was the nightingale, and not the lark

That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear;

Nightly she sings in yon pomegranate tree.

Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

*Romeo.* It was the lark; the herald of the morn,

No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks

Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east;

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day

Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

I must be gone and live—or stay and die,

*Juliet.* Yon light is not day light—I know it, I:

It is some meteor that the sun exhales.



To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,  
 And light thee on thy way to Mantua :  
 Therefore stay yet ; thou needst not to be gone.

*Romeo.* Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death,  
 I am content, so thou wilt have it so.

I'll say yon grey is not the morning's eye,  
 'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow ;  
 Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat  
 The vaulty heav'n so high above our heads :  
 I have more care to stay than will to go,  
 Come, death, and welcome—Juliet wills it so.  
 How is't, my soul ?—Let's talk—it is not day.

*Juliet.* It is, it is. Hie hence—begone—away !  
 It is the lark that sings so out of tune,  
 Straining harsh discords, and displeasing sharps.  
 Oh now be gone—More light and light it grows."

How affecting is this contrast of the charms of morning and the last pleasures of a newly married couple, with the horrible catastrophe which is about to follow ! It is of a nature still more innocent than the Grecians can boast, and less pastoral than Amintas or Pastor Fido. I know only one parting scene, which can bear a comparison with Romeo and Juliet. It is to be found in an Indian drama, translated from the Sanscrit language ; and even this arises



from the novelty of the image, not at all from the interest of the situation. Sacantala, when on the point of quitting the paternal roof, finds herself stopped :

“*Sacantala.* Ah ! what is it that clings to the skirts of my robe, and detains me ?

*Canna.* It is thy adopted child, the little fawn, whose mouth, when the sharp points of Cusa grass had wounded it, has been so often smeared by thy hand with the healing oil of Ingudi ; who has been so often fed by thee with a handful of Syámáka grains, and now will not leave the footsteps of his protectress.

*Sac.* Why dost thou weep, tender fawn, for me, who must leave our common dwelling place ?—As thou wast reared by me when thou hadst lost thy mother, who died soon after thy birth, so will my foster-father attend thee, when we are separated, with anxious care. Return, poor thing, return—we must part. *[She bursts into tears.*

*Can.* Thy tears, my child, ill suit the occasion. We shall all meet again ; be firm. See the direct road before thee, and follow it.—When the big tear lurks beneath thy beautiful eye-lashes, let thy resolution check its first efforts to disengage itself.—In thy passage over this earth, where the paths are now high, now low, and the true path seldom distinguished, the traces of thy feet must needs be unequal ; but virtue will press thee right onward.”

*Published Translation of Sacantala.*



The parting scene of *Romeo and Juliet* is not pointed out by Bandello, and belongs entirely to Shakspeare. The fifty-two commentators on this author, instead of acquainting us with a number of useless things, should have employed themselves in discovering the beauties which appertain to this extraordinary man as his own property, and those which he has borrowed from others. Bandello thus records the parting of the lovers in few words :

“ A la fine, cominciando l'aurora a voler uscire, si basciarono, estrettamente abbracciarono gli amanti, e piena di lagrime e sospiri si dissero adio.”\*

“ At last, morning beginning to break, the two lovers kissed and closely embraced each other, then full of tears and sighs bade farewell.”

It may be remarked that Shakspeare generally makes great use of contrasts. He likes to exhibit gaiety at the side of sadness, to mix diversion and the shout of joy with funeral pomp and the voice of sorrow. The musicians, summoned to the marriage of Juliet, arrive precisely in time to follow her to the grave. Indifferent

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\* *Novelle del Bandello, Seconda Parte.*



as to the afflictions of the house, they proceed to indecent pleasantries, and discuss matters totally irrelevant to the fatal event. Who does not in this recognize a true delineation of life? Who does not feel the bitterness of the picture? Who has not witnessed similar scenes? These effects were by no means unknown to the Greeks, and several traces of them are to be found in Euripides; but Shakspeare works them up to the highest pitch of tragedy. Phædra has just expired, and the persons forming the chorus do not know whether they ought to enter the apartment of the princess.

## FIRST DEMI-CHORUS

Φίλοι, τι δρωμεν η δοκει περαν δομοις,  
 Αυσαι τ' αναστ' αν δε επιτο αστων βροχων.

## SECOND DEMI-CHORUS.

Τιδ' ε παρεισι προπο ολοι νεανιαι,  
 Το πολλα πραστειν εκ ενασφαλει βιε.

“*First Demi-Chorus.* Companions, what shall we do? Ought we to enter into the palace, and assist in disengaging the queen from her narrow confines?”

*Second Demi-Chorus.* That care belongs to her slaves. Why are they not present? Those, who meddle with too many affairs, have no safety in life.”



In *Alcestes*, Death and Appollo are jokers. Death wishes to seize *Alcestes*, while yet young, because he does not like an old victim, or as Father Brumoy translates it, a wrinkled victim. These contrasts should not be entirely rejected, for they sometimes produce an effect bordering on the terrible, though a single shade of expression, whether too strong or too weak, is sufficient to make them immediately low or ridiculous.

Shakspeare, like all tragic poets, has sometimes succeeded in displaying genuine comedy, whereas comic poets have never achieved the point of writing good tragedy; a circumstance which perhaps proves that there is something of a vaster nature in the genius of *Melpomene* than in that of *Thalia*. Whoever paints with skill the mournful side of human nature, is also able to represent the ridiculous one; for he who attains the greater object can command the less.\* But the mind, which

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\* This I conceive to be what the lawyers term a *non sequitur*. It cannot be said that all tragic poets have been



particularly employs itself in the delineation of pleasantries, allows severer ideas to escape, because the faculty of distinguishing objects infinitely minute, almost always supposes the impossibility of embracing objects, which are infinitely grand; whence it must be concluded that the serious is the true criterion of human genius, and exhibits our true nature. "Man that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery."

There is only one comic writer, who walks at the side of Sophocles and Corneille—it is Molière; but it is remarkable that his comedies, entitled *Tartuffe* and the *Misanthrope*, greatly approach towards tragedy from their sentiment, and if I may be allowed the expression in such a case, from their gravity.

The English highly esteem the comic character of Falstaff, in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. In fact it is well designed, though

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able to write comedy. Rowe, for instance, whose tragic powers are indisputable (witness his *Fair Penitent* and *Jane Shore*) completely failed in the *Biter*, which was the only comedy he ever wrote.—EDITOR.



often unnatural, low, and *outré*. There are two ways of laughing at the faults of mankind. The one is first to bring forward the ridiculous foibles of our nature, and then to point out its good qualities. This is the mode adopted by English writers; it is the foundation of the humour displayed by Sterne and Fielding, which sometimes ends in drawing tears from the reader. The other consists in exhibiting praiseworthy features at first, and adding in succession, a display of so many ridiculous follies as to make us forget the better qualities, and lose at last all esteem for the noblest talents and the highest virtues. This is the French manner—it is the comedy of Voltaire—it is the *Nihil mirari* which disgraces our dramatic productions.

The partisans of Shakspeare, who so much extol his genius both in tragedy and comedy, appear to me as if they much deceived themselves, when they boast that his style is so natural. He is, I grant, natural in sentiment and thought, but never in expression, some few fine scenes excepted, in which he rises to his greatest height; and even in these his language is often affected.



He has all the faults of the Italians of his age, and is eminently defective in simplicity. His descriptions are inflated and distorted, frequently betraying the man of bad education, who is ignorant of common grammar and the exact use of words, and who combines, at hazard, poetic expressions with things of the most trivial nature. Is it not lamentable that such an enlightened nation, which gave birth to critics like Pope and Addison, should be in extacies with the character of the starved apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet*? It is the most hideous and disgusting burlesque; though I allow that a ray of light peeps through it, as is the case with all the shadows of Shakspeare. *Romeo* makes a reflection upon this miserable man, who clings so closely to life though loaded with all its miseries. It is the same sentiment which *Homer* puts with so much simplicity into the mouth of *Achilles*, while in the regions of *Tartarus*. "I would rather be the slave of a labourer on earth, and lead a life of penury, than reign the sovereign of the land of shades."



It remains to consider Shakspeare with reference to the dramatic art, and after having been an eulogist, I may now be allowed to become a critic.

All that has been said in praise of Shakspeare, as a dramatic author, is comprised in this passage of Dr. Johnson: "Shakspeare has no heroes. His scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the occasion. Even where the agency is supernatural, the dialogue is level with life. Shakspeare's plays are not, in the critical and rigorous sense, either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion, and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hastening to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the ma-



lignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another ; and many mischiefs and benefits are done and hindered without design.”

Such is the literary paradox of Shakspeare’s admirers, and their whole argument tends to prove that there are no dramatic rules, or that the art is not an art. When Voltaire reproached himself with having opened the gate to mediocrity, by too highly praising Shakspeare, he doubtless meant to say that by banishing all rules and returning to pure nature, nothing was more easy than to equal the best plays of the English nation. If, in order to attain the summit of the dramatic art, it is only requisite to heap together incongruous scenes, without consequence or connexion, to blend the low with the noble, to mingle burlesque with the pathetic, to station a water-carrier near a monarch and a vender of vegetables at the side of a queen, who may not reasonably hope to become the rival of Sophocles and Racine ? Whoever finds himself so situated in society as to see much of men and things, if he will only take the trouble of retracing the events of a single day, his conversa-



tions with the artisan or the minister, the soldier or the prince—if he will only recal the objects which passed under his eyes, the ball and the funeral procession, the luxury of the rich and the distress of the poor—if he will do this, I say, he will at once have composed a drama in Shakspeare's style. It may perhaps be deficient in genius, but if Shakspeare be not discovered in the piece as a writer, his dramatic skill will be exactly imitated.

It is necessary, therefore, to be first persuaded that there is an *art* in composition for the stage or press, that this art necessarily contains its *genera*, and that each *genus* has its rules. Let no one say that these *genera* and rules are arbitrary, for they are the produce of Nature herself. Art has only separated that, which Nature has confounded, selecting the most beautiful features without swerving from the likeness of the great model. Perfection tends in no degree towards the destruction of truth; and it may be said that Racine, with all the excellence of his *art*, is more *natural* than Shakspeare, as the Belvidere Apollo, in all his gran-



deur of divinity, possesses more of the human form and air than a coarse Egyptian statue.

But if Shakspeare, say his defenders, sins against rules, confounds all the *genera* of the art, and destroys verisimilitude, he at least produces more bustle in his scenes, and infuses more terror than the French.

I will not examine to what extent this assertion is true, or whether the liberty of saying or doing every thing is not a natural consequence of this multitude of characters. I will not examine whether, in Shakspeare's plays, all proceeds rapidly towards the catastrophe; whether the plot is ravelled and unravelled with art, by incessantly prolonging and forwarding the interest excited in the minds of the audience. I will only say that if our tragedies be really deficient as to incidents (which I by no means allow) it is principally ascribable to the subjects of them; but this does not prove that we ought to introduce upon our stage the monstrosities of the man, whom Voltaire called a *drunken savage*. A single beauty in Shakspeare does not atone for his innumerable faults. A gothic monument



may impart pleasure by its obscurity, and even by the deformity of its proportion ; but no one would think of chusing it as a model for a palace.

It is particularly contended that Shakspeare is a great master in the art of causing tears to flow. I do not know whether it is the first of arts to make a person weep, according to the way in which that expression is now understood. Those are genuine tears which poetry produces, but it is necessary that there should be as much admiration as sorrow in the mind of the person who sheds them. When Sophocles presents to my view *Œdipus* covered with blood, my heart is ready to break ; but my ear is struck with a gentle melancholy, and my eyes are enchanted by a spectacle transcendently fine. I experience pleasure and pain at the same moment. I have before me a frightful truth, and yet I feel that it is only an ingenious imitation of an action, which does not exist, perhaps never existed. Hence my tears flow with delight. I weep, but it is while listening to the accents of the Muses. Those daughters of



Heaven weep also ; but they do not disfigure their divine faces by grimace. The ancients depicted even their Furies with beautiful countenances, apparently because there is a moral beauty in remorse.

While discussing this important subject, let me be allowed to say a few words respecting the quarrel which at present divides the literary world. Part of our men of letters admire none but foreign works, while the other part lean strongly to our own school. According to the former, the writers, who existed during the reign of Louis XIV. had not sufficient vivacity in their style, and betrayed a poverty of conception. According to the others, all this pretended vivacity, all these efforts of the present day, towards the attainment of new ideas, are only decadence and corruption. One party rejects all rules, the other recalls them all.

To the former it may be observed that an author is lost beyond redemption if he abandons the great models, which can alone keep us within the delicate bounds of taste, and that it is erroneous to think a style possessed of vivacity which



proceeds *ad infinitum* in exclamations and interrogations. The second age of Latin literature had the same pretensions as ours. It is certain that Tacitus, Seneca, and Lucan possess a more varied style of colouring than Livy, Cicero and Virgil. They affect the same conciseness of ideas and brilliancy of expression, which we at present endeavour to attain. They load their descriptions; they feel a pleasure in forming pictures to the "mind's eye;" they abound in sentiment, for it is always during corrupt times that morality is most talked of. Ages, however, have passed away, and without regard to the *thinkers* of Trajan's time, the palm is awarded to the reign of Augustus, in which imagination and the arts flourished at large. If examples were instructive, I could add that another cause of decay in Latin literature was the confusion of dialects in the Roman empire. When the Gauls sat in the Senate; when within the walls of Rome, which was become the capital of the world, every jargon might be heard from the Gothic to the Parthian, it may easily be supposed that all taste for the beauties of Horace



and Cicero was at an end. The similarity is striking. At least, if it should still remain fashionable in France to study foreign idioms, and inundate us with translations, our language will soon lose its florid simplicity, and those gallicisms, which constitute its genius and grace.

One of the errors, into which men of letters have fallen, when in search of unbeaten roads, arises from the uncertainty which they observed to exist as to the principles of taste. A person is a great author in one journal, and a miserable scribbler in another. One calls him a brilliant genius, another a declaimer. Whole nations vary in opinion. Foreigners deny that Racine was a man of genius, or that his numbers are possessed of harmony; and we judge of English writers in a very different way to the English themselves. It would astonish the French if I were to mention what French authors are admired and despised in England.

All this, however, ought not to create an uncertainty of opinion, and cause original principles to be abandoned, under a pretext of there being no established standard of taste. There is a



sure basis, which may always be relied upon, namely, ancient literature. This remains an invariable model. It is round those, who point out such great examples, that we ought at once to rally, if we would escape barbarism. If the partisans of the old school go a little too far in their dislike of foreign literature, it may be overlooked. Upon this principle it was that Boileau opposed Tasso, asserting that the age in which he lived, had too strong a propensity to fall into the errors of that author.

Still by ceding something to an adversary, shall we not more easily bring public opinion back to good models? May it now be allowed that imagination and the arts were indulged to too great an extent in the reign of Louis XIV? Was not the art of *painting nature*, as it is now termed, almost unknown at that time? Why should it not be admitted that the style of the present day has really assumed a more perfect form, that the liberty of discussing any subject has brought a greater number of truths into circulation, that the sciences have imparted more firmness to the human mind, and more precision



to human ideas? I know that there is danger in allowing all this, and that if one point be yielded, it is difficult to know where to stop; but still is it not possible that a man, by proceeding cautiously between the two lines, and always leaning rather towards the ancient than the modern one, may unite the two schools, and create from them the genius of a new era? Be this as it may, every effort to produce so great a revolution will be abortive if we remain irreligious. Imagination and sentiment are essentially combined with religion. A species of literature, from which the charms of tenderness are banished, can never be otherwise than dry, cold, and merely possessed of mediocrity.\*

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\* The reader will have found in the foregoing dissertation a considerable portion of genuine critical acumen, mingled with no small share of the national partialities and prejudices, which M. de Chateaubriand so freely ascribes to others. When Voltaire's earlier observations are against Shakspeare it is declared that, while young, his criticisms were "replete with justice, taste, and impartiality," but when he is not sufficiently abusive, his later attacks are preferred. Shakspeare is placed, by M. de Chateaubriand,



## III.—BEATTIE.

THE genius of Scotland has, during the present age, sustained with honour the literature, which Pope, Addison, Steele, Rowe, &c. had elevated to a high degree of perfection. England can boast of no historians superior to Hume and Robertson, and of no poets more richly gifted than Thomson and Beattie. The latter, who never left his native desert, was a minister and a professor of Philosophy, resident at a small town

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below such crude authors as Garnier and Hardy. He is allowed to have "regained the dramatic art after it had been lost in the lapse of ages," but this is only for the purpose of describing Molière as having brought it to perfection. Racine is declared to be more natural than Shakspeare, and it is deemed literary treason that the latter should have been elevated to the side of Corneille. I venture, however, to doubt whether a competent judge, *of any nation*, can peruse the scenes, from which M. de Chateaubriand himself has made extracts to shew their comparative skill, without giving a decisive preference to our countryman. In spite of "the monstrosities" of this "barbarian" as M. de C. calls him, or this *drunken savage*, if he prefers Voltaire's expression to his own, may the day soon arrive when Britain can boast of possessing another dramatic genius equal to Shakspeare!

EDITOR.



in the north of Scotland. He is distinguished as a poet by a character entirely novel, and when he touched his lyre, he in some degree brought back the tones of the ancient bards. His principal and as it were only work, is a small poem entitled the *Minstrel*, or the *Progress of Genius*. Beattie wished to pourtray the effects of the Muse on a young mountain shepherd, and to retrace the inspirations which he himself had doubtless felt. The original idea of the *Minstrel* is charming, and most of the descriptions are very agreeable. The poem is written in metrical stanzas, like the old Scotch ballads,\* a circumstance which adds to its singularity. It is true that the author, like all foreigners, is sometimes too diffuse, and sometimes deficient in taste. Dr.

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\* The stanza of Beattie's *Minstrel* is an avowed copy of the one used in the *Fairy Queen*. "I have endeavoured," says the author, "to imitate Spenser in the measure of his verse, and in the harmony, simplicity and variety of his composition. This measure pleases my ear, and seems, from its Gothic structure and original, to bear some relation to the subject and spirit of the poem." *Editor.*



Beattie likes to enlarge on common maxims of morality, without possessing the art of giving them a new appearance. In general, men of brilliant imagination and tender feelings are not sufficiently profound in their thoughts, or forcible in their reasoning. Ardent passions or great genius are necessary towards the conception of great ideas. There is a certain calmness of heart and gentleness of nature, which seem to exceed the sublime.

A work like the *Minstrel* can hardly be analyzed; but I will extract a few stanzas from the first book of this pleasing production. I would rather employ myself in displaying the beauties of an author than in nicely investigating his faults. I would rather extol a writer than debase him in the reader's eyes. Moreover, instruction is better conveyed by admiration than censure; for the one reveals the presence of genius, while the other confines itself to a discovery of blemishes which all eyes could have perceived. It is in the beautiful arrangements of Heaven that the Divinity is perceived, and not by a few irregularities of nature.



“ Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb  
The steep, where Fame's proud temple shines afar;  
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime  
Has felt the influence of malignant star,  
And waged with Fortune an eternal war;  
Check'd by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,  
And Poverty's unconquerable bar;  
In life's low vale remote has pin'd alone,  
Then dropt into the grave, unpitied and unknown?

And yet the langour of inglorious days  
Not equally oppressive is to all:  
Him, who ne'er listen'd to the voice of praise,  
The silence of neglect can ne'er appal.  
There are, who, deaf to mad Ambition's call,  
Would shrink to hear the obstreperous trump of Fame:  
Supremely blest, if to their portion fall  
Health, competence, and peace. Nor higher aim  
Had he, whose simple tale these artless lines proclaim.

This sapient age disclaims all classic lore;  
Else I should here, in cunning phrase display  
How forth THE MINSTREL fared in days of yore,  
Right glad of heart, though homely in array;  
His waving locks and beard all hoary grey:  
And from his bended shoulder decent hung  
His harp, the sole companion of his way,  
Which to the whistling wind responsive rung;  
And ever as he went some merry lay he sung.



Fret not thyself, thou glittering child of Pride,  
That a poor Villager inspires my strain ;  
With thee let Pageantry and Power abide :  
The gentle Muses haunt the sylvan reign ;  
Where through wild groves at eve the lonely swain  
Enraptur'd roams, to gaze on nature's charms.  
They hate the sensual, and scorn the vain ;  
Nor him whose sordid soul the love of gold alarms.

Though richest hues the peacock's plumes adorn,  
Yet horror screams from his discordant throat.  
Rise sons of harmony and hail the morn,  
While warbling larks on russet pinions float ;  
Or seek at noon the woodland scene remote,  
Where the linets carol from the hill.  
O let them ne'er with artificial note,  
To please a tyrant strain their little bill,  
But sing what Heaven inspires, and wander where they will !

Liberal, not lavish, is kind Nature's hand ;  
Nor was perfection made for man below.  
Yet all her schemes with incest are plann'd,  
Good counteracting ill, and gladness woe.  
With gold and gems if Chilian mountains glow ;  
If bleak and barren Scotia's hills arise ;  
There plague and poison, lust and rapine grow :  
Here peaceful are the vales, and pure the skies,  
And freedom fires the soul, and sparkles in the eyes."



To this extract I will add a few more stanzas towards the end of the first book :

“ Oft when the winter storm had ceas'd to rave,  
He roam'd the snowy waste at even, to view  
The cloud stupendous, from th' Atlantic wave  
High-tow'ring, sail along th' horizon blue :  
Where, midst the changeful scenery, ever new,  
Fancy a thousand wond'rous forms descries,  
More wildly great than ever pencil drew.  
Rocks, torrents, gulfs, and shapes of giant size,  
And glitt'ring cliffs on cliffs, and fiery ramparts rise.

Thence musing onward to the sounding shore,  
The lone enthusiast oft would take his way.  
List'ning, with pleasing dread, to the deep roar  
Of the wide-welt'ring waves. In black array  
When sulphurous clouds roll'd on th' autumnal day,  
Even then he hasten'd from the haunt of man,  
Along the trembling wilderness to stray,  
What time the lightning's fierce career began,  
And o'er heaven's rending arch the rattling thunder ran.

Responsive to the sprightly pipe, when all  
In sprightly dance the village youth were join'd,  
Edwin, of melody aye held in thrall,  
From the rude gambol far remote reclin'd,



Sooth'd with the soft notes warbling in the wind,  
 Ah then, all jollity seem'd noise and folly,  
 To the pure soul by Fancy's fire refin'd,  
 Ah what is mirth but turbulence unholy,  
 When with the charms compar'd of heavenly melancholy!

Is there a heart that music cannot melt?

Alas! how is that rugged heart forlorn!

Is there, who ne'er those mystic transports felt

Of solitude and melancholy born?

He needs not woo the Muse; he is her scorn.

The sophist's rope of cobwebs he shall twine;

Mope o'er the schoolman's peevish page; or mourn,

And delve for life in Mammon's dirty mine;

Sneak with the scoundrel fox, or grunt with glutton swine.

For Edwin, Fate a nobler doom had plann'd;

Song was his favourite and first pursuit.

The wild harp rang to his advent'rous hand,

And languish'd to his breath the plaintive flute.

His infant muse, though artless, was not mute:

Of elegance, as yet he took no care;

For this of time and culture is the fruit;

And Edwin gain'd at last this fruit so rare;

As in some future verse I purpose to declare."

It will be seen from the last stanza that Beat-



tie intended to continue his poem, and he did in fact write a second canto sometime afterwards, but it is very inferior to the first. Edwin having attained manhood, takes walks "of wider circuit" than before.

"One evening, as he fram'd the careless rhyme,  
It was his chance to wander far abroad,  
And o'er a lonely eminence to climb,  
Which heretofore his foot had never trod;  
A vale appear'd below, a deep retired abode.

Thither he hied, enamour'd of the scene,  
For rocks on rocks pil'd, as by magic spell,  
Here scorch'd with lightening, there with ivy green,  
Fenc'd from the north and east this savage dell.  
Southward a mountain rose with easy swell,  
Whose long long groves eternal murmur made;  
And toward the western sun a streamlet fell,  
Where, thro' the cliffs, the eye, remote, survey'd,  
Blue hills, and glitt'ring waves, and skies in gold array'd.

Along this narrow valley you might see  
The wild deer sporting on the meadow ground,  
And, here and there, a solitary tree,  
Or mossy stone, or rock with woodbine crown'd.



Oft did the cliffs reverberate the sound  
Of parted fragments tumbling from on high ;  
And from the summit of that craggy mound  
The perching eagle oft was heard to cry,  
Or on resounding wings to shoot athwart the sky.

One cultivated spot there was, that spread  
Its flow'ry bosom to the noon-day beam,  
Where many a rose-bud rears its blushing head,  
And herbs for food with future plenty teem.  
Sooth'd by the lulling sound of grove and stream,  
Romantic visions swarm on Edwin's soul :  
He minded not the sun's last trembling gleam,  
Nor heard from far the twilight curfew toll ;  
When slowly on his ear these moving accents stole."

It is the voice of an aged hermit, who after having known the illusions of the world, has buried himself in this retreat, for the purpose of indulging in meditation, and singing the praises of his Creator. This venerable old man instructs the young troubadour, and reveals to him the secret of his own genius. It is evident that this was a most happy idea, but the execution has not answered the first design of the author. The



hermit speaks too long, and makes very trite observations with regard to the grandeur and misery of human life. Some passages are, however, to be found in this second book which recal the charm created by the first. The last strophes of it are consecrated to the memory of a friend, whom the poet had lost. It appears that Beattie was often destined to feel the weight of sorrows. The death of his only son affected him deeply and withdrew him entirely from the service of the Muses. He still lived on the rocks of Morven, but these rocks no longer inspired his song. Like Ossian, after the death of Oscar, he suspended his harp on the branches of an oak. It is said that his son evinced great poetical talents; perhaps he was the young minstrel, whom a father had feelingly described, and whose steps he too soon ceased to trace upon the summit of the mountain.



...and makes very true  
 ...with regard to the present and in-  
 ...of human ... are show-  
 ...to be found in the ... which  
 ...the chain ... the first ... the last  
 ...of it ... to the memory of  
 ...when the ... had lost ... it appears  
 ...the ... was often ... to ... the weight  
 ...the ... of ... the ...  
 ...and ... the ... from the  
 ...of the ... the ... and ... on the  
 ...of ... but ... no longer in-  
 ...his ... the ... after the death  
 ...he ... his ... on the ...  
 ... It is said that his son ... great  
 ... perhaps he was the young  
 ... when a father had ...  
 ... he ... to ...  
 ... of the mountain



RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
AMERICA.



ON THE ISLAND OF BRAZILIA

RECOLLECTIONS

In the spring of 1791 I made a voyage to  
 America. Before the vessel which conveyed me  
 reached the destination, the wind was so high  
 as well as provisions, that the passengers  
 the Ansons, resolved to land their several  
 pieces with a view to the service of the  
 were emigrating to Brazil, under the guid-  
 ance of the superior Sr. M. N. Among these  
 priests were some foreigners, particularly Mr.  
 T., a young Englishman of an excellent family,  
 who had lately become a convert to the Roman  
 faith.

The history of this youth is too singular  
 not to be recorded, and will perhaps be more  
 particularly interesting to the English reader.

Mr. T. was the son of a Scotch woman  
 and an English clergyman, who was, I believe



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ON THE ISLAND OF GRACIOZA,

*ONE OF THE AZORES.*

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IN the spring of 1791 I made a voyage to America. Before the vessel, which conveyed me, reached her destination, we were in want of water, as well as provisions; and finding ourselves near the Azores, resolved to touch there. Several priests were passengers in the same ship; they were emigrating to Baltimore, under the guidance of the superior St. . M. N. Among these priests were some foreigners, particularly Mr. T. . a young Englishman of an excellent family, who had lately become a convert to the Roman faith.

The history of this youth is too singular not to be recorded, and will perhaps be more particularly interesting to the English reader.

Mr. T. . was the son of a Scotch woman and an English clergyman, who was, I believe,



the rector of W. though I have in vain tried to find him, and may possibly have forgotten the right names. The son served in the artillery, and would no doubt have soon been distinguished by his merit. He was a painter, a musician, a mathematician, and master of several languages. He united with the advantages of a tall and elegant person the talents which are useful, and those which make us court the society of their possessor.

M. N. superior of St. . . . having visited London on business, I believe in the year 1790, became acquainted with young T. . . This monk had that warmth of soul which easily makes proselytes of men possessing the vivid imagination by which T. . . was distinguished. It was determined that the latter should repair to Paris, send the resignation of his commission from that place to the Duke of Richmond, embrace the Catholic religion, and, after entering into holy orders, accompany M. N. to America. The project was put in execution, and T. . . in spite of his mother's letters, which he could not read without tears, embarked for the new world.



One of those chances, which decide our destiny, caused me to sail in the same vessel as this young man. It was not long before I discovered his good qualities, and I could not cease to be astonished at the singular circumstances, by which a wealthy Englishman of good birth should have thus been thrown among a troop of Catholic priests. T... perceived, on his part, I understood him; but he was afraid of M. N. that who seemed averse to too great an intimacy between his disciple and myself.

Meanwhile we proceeded on our voyage, and had not yet been able to open our hearts to each other. At length we were one night upon deck without any of the other priests. T... related to me his adventures, and we interchanged assurances of sincere friendship.

T... was, like myself, an admirer of nature. We used to pass whole nights in conversation upon deck, when all were asleep on board the vessel, except the sailors upon duty, when all the sails were furled, and the ship rolled dully through the calm, while an immense sea extended all around us into shade, and repeated the



magnificent illumination of the star-sprinkled sky. Our conversations, at such times, were perhaps not quite unworthy of the grand spectacle which we had before our eyes; and ideas escaped us which we should be ashamed of expressing in society, but which I should be happy to recal and write down. It was in one of these charming nights when we were about fifty leagues from the coast of Virginia, and scudding under a light breeze from the west, which bore to us the aromatic odour of the land, that T... composed for a French Romance, an air which exhaled the very spirit of the scene that inspired it. I have preserved this valuable composition, and when I happen to repeat it, emotions arise in my breast which few people can comprehend.

Before this period, the wind having driven us considerably to the north, we found ourselves under the necessity of then also taking in water, &c. which we did at Saint Peter's Island, on the coast of Newfoundland. During the fortnight we were on shore, T... and I used to ramble among the mountains of this frightful island, and lose ourselves amidst the fogs that perpetually prevail



there. The sensitive imagination of my friend found pleasure in these sombre and romantic scenes. Sometimes, when we wandered in the midst of clouds and storms, listening to the roaring waves which we could not discern, and lost ourselves upon a bleak desolate heath, or gazed at the red torrent which rolled among the rocks, T. . . . would imagine himself to be the bard of Cona, and in his capacity of Demi-Scotchman, begin to declaim from Ossian, or sing to wild airs, composed upon the spot, passages from that work. His music often led me back to ancient times—" 'Twas like the memory of joys that are past, pleasing and mournful to the soul." I am extremely sorry that I did not write down the notes of some of these extraordinary songs, which would have astonished amateurs and artists. I remember that we passed a whole afternoon in raising four large stones, to the memory of an unfortunate man, in a little episode after the manner of Ossian, taken from my *Pictures of Nature*,—a production, known to some men of letters, which has been destroyed. We thought of Rousseau, who amused himself



with overturning the rocks in his island, that he might see what was under them. If we had not the genius of the author of *Emily*, we had at least his simplicity. At other times we botanized.

On our arrival at Baltimore, T. . . . without bidding me farewell, and without appearing to feel the intimacy which had subsisted between us, left me one morning, and I have never seen him since. When I retired to England, I endeavoured to discover his family, but in vain. I had no wish but to ascertain that he was happy, and take my leave; for when I knew him I was not what I now am. At that time I rendered him some service, and it is not congenial with my disposition to remind a person of the obligations conferred by me when rich, now that misfortunes have overtaken me. I waited upon the Bishop of London, but in the registers, which he permitted me to examine, I could find no clergyman of T.'s name. I must have mistaken the orthography. All I know is that he had a brother, and that two of his sisters had places at court. I have met with few men, whose hearts



harmonized more with mine than that of T. He had, nevertheless an expression in his eye *palpable* of some concealed thought, which I did not like. *madness*

On the 6th of May, about eight o'clock in the morning, we discovered the Peak of the island bearing the same name, which is said to surpass in height that of Teneriffe. Soon afterwards we perceived lower land, and towards noon cast anchor in a bad road, upon a rocky bottom, and in forty-five fathoms water.

The island of Gracioza, before which we lay, is composed of small hills, that swell out towards their summits, so as to resemble the graceful curving form of Corinthian vases. They were, at the period of which I am speaking, covered with the fresh verdure of grain; and it shed a pleasant odour peculiar to the Azores. In the midst of these undulating carpets, appeared symmetrical divisions of the fields, formed of volcanic stones, in colour black and white, heaped one upon another to the height of a man's breast. Wild fig-trees, with their violet leaves and little purple figs arranged upon the branches like knots of flowers upon a chaplet,



were scattered here and there through the country. An abbey was visible at the top of a mountain, and at its base in a nook the red roofs of the little town Santa Cruz. The whole island, with all its bays, capes, creeks and promontories, was reflected from the waves. Great naked rocks constituted its exterior boundary, and formed a contrast, by their smoky colour, to the festoons of spray hanging to them, and appearing in the sun like silver lace. The peak of Peak Island, beyond Gracioza, majestically raised its head above a mass of clouds, and formed the background of the picture. A sea of emerald and a sky of the purest azure supplied the main tints of the scene, while the numerous sea-fowl and the grey crows of the Azores flew screaming and croaking round our vessel as she lay at anchor, or cut the surface of the billow with their wings expanded in the shape of a sickle, augmenting around us noise, motion and life.

It was decided that I should land as interpreter with T. another young man, and the second captain. The boat was hoisted out, and the



sailors began to row us towards the shore, which was about two miles from the ship. It was not long before we observed a bustle on the coast, and a pinnace approaching us. The moment it came within hail, we distinguished in it a number of monks. They addressed us in Portuguese, Italian and English; and we replied in these three languages, that we were Frenchmen. Great alarm prevailed in the island. Our vessel was the first of large bulk that had ever appeared there, and ventured to anchor in the dangerous road where she now was. The new tri-coloured flag had likewise never been seen in this part of the world before; and the inhabitants knew not but that we might be from Algiers or Tunis. When they saw that we wore the human form, and understood what was said to us, their joy was universal. The monks invited us into their pinnace, and we soon reached Santa Cruz, where we landed with difficulty on account of a violent surge which continually beats there.

All the inhabitants of the island ran to see us. Four or five unhappy men, who had been hastily armed with pikes, formed our guard.



The uniform of his Majesty attracting particular notice, I passed for the important man of the deputation. We were conducted to the Governor's miserable house, where his Excellency, who was attired in an old green dress which had formerly been ornamented with gold lace, gave us an audience of reception, and graciously permitted us to purchase the articles we wanted.

After this ceremony we were dismissed, and the honest monks conducted us to a large hotel, which was neat, commodious and much more like the Governor's palace than the one he inhabited.

T.... had found a fellow countryman. The brother, who was most active for us, was a Jersey sailor, whose vessel had been wrecked at Gracioza several years before. He was the only one of the crew who escaped death, and being not deficient, as to intelligence, he perceived that there was only one trade in the island, that of the monks. He resolved, therefore, to become one, listened with great docility to the instructions of the holy fathers, learnt Portuguese as well as a few words of Latin, and being recom-



mended by the circumstance of his belonging to England, this wandering sheep was admitted into the sacred fold.

As it was long since he had spoken his own language, he was delighted to find any one that understood it. He walked with us in the island, and took us to his convent.

Half Gracioza appeared to me, without much exaggeration, to be peopled with monks, and the following circumstance may serve to convey an idea of the ignorance, in which these good fathers remained at the close of the eighteenth century.

We had been mysteriously conducted to a small organ in the parish church, under the idea that we had never seen so curious an instrument. The organist took his seat with a triumphant air, and played a most miserable discordant sort of litany, trying all the time to discover our admiration in our looks. We appeared to be extremely surprised. T... then modestly approached, and seemed just to touch the keys with great respect. The organist made signs to him, as if saying: "Take care." All at once



T.... displayed the harmony of a celebrated passage in the compositions of Pleyel. It would be difficult to imagine a more amusing scene. The organist almost fell to the earth; the monks stood openmouthed with pale and lengthened visages, while the brothers in attendance made the most ridiculous gestures of astonishment around us.

Having embarked our provisions on the following day, we ourselves returned on board, accompanied by the good fathers, who took charge of our letters for Europe, and left us with great protestations of friendship. The vessel had been endangered, during the preceding night, by a brisk gale from the East. We wished to weigh anchor, but, as we expected, lost it. Such was the end of our expedition.

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*A few words concerning the Cataract of Canada.*

THIS famous cataract is the finest in the known world. It is formed by the river Niagara, which proceeds from Lake Erie, and throws itself into the Ontario. The fall is about



nine miles from the latter lake. Its perpendicular height may be about two hundred feet; but the cause of its violence is that, from Lake Erie to the cataract, the river constantly flows with a rapid declination for almost six leagues: so that, at the place of fall, it is more like an impetuous sea than a river, and a hundred thousand torrents seem to be rushing towards the gaping gulph. The cataract is divided into two branches, and forms a curve, in the shape of a horse-shoe, the length of which is about half a mile. Between the two falls is an enormous rock hollowed out below, which hangs with all its firs, over the chaos of the waters. The mass of the river, which precipitates itself on the south side, is collected into the form of a large cylinder at the moment it quits the brink, then rolls out in snowy whiteness, and shines in the sun with every variety of prismatic colours. That, which falls on the northern side, descends in a terrific cloud like a column of water at the deluge. Innumerable bows are to be seen in the sky, curving and crossing over the abyss, and from it proceeds a horrid roar which is heard to the



distance of sixty miles around. The water, thus furiously falling on the rock beneath, recoils in clouds of whirling spray, which mount above the summits of the forest, and resemble the thick smoke of a tremendous conflagration. Enormous rocks, towering upwards like gigantic phantoms, decorate the sublime scene. Wild walnut trees, of a reddish and scaly appearance, find the means of desolate existence upon these fossil skeletons. Scarcely a living animal is seen in the neighbourhood, except eagles, which, as they hover above the cataract in search of prey, are overpowered by the current of air, and forced with giddy fall to the bottom of the abyss.

The spotted *Carcajou*, suspended by its long tail from the extremity of a lower branch, tries to catch the fragments of drowned carcasses which are thrown ashore by the boiling surge, such as those of elks and bears; while rattlesnakes announce, by their baleful sound, that they are lurking on every side.



## VISIT

## TO THE COUNTRY OF THE SAVAGES.

I TOOK my departure for the country of the Savages in a packet boat, which was to convey me from New-York to Albany by Hudson's river. The passengers were numerous and agreeable, consisting of several women and some American Officers. A fresh breeze conducted us gently towards our destination. Towards the evening of the first day, we assembled upon deck, to partake of a collation of fruit and milk. The women seated themselves upon the benches, and the men were stationed at their feet. The conversation was not long kept up. I have always remarked that when nature exhibits a sublime or beautiful prospect, the spectators involuntarily become silent. Suddenly one of the company exclaimed: "Near that place Major André was executed." My ideas instantly took another turn. A very pretty American lady was intreated to sing the ballad, which describes the story of



that unfortunate young man. She yielded to our sollicitation; her voice evidently betrayed her timidity, but it was exceedingly replete with sweet and tender sensibility.

The sun now set, and we were in the midst of lofty mountains. Here and there huts were seen, suspended over the abysses, but they soon disappeared among the clouds of mingled white and rosy hue, which horizontally flitted past these dwellings. When the summits of the rocks and firs were discovered above these clouds, one might have fancied them to be islands floating in the air. The majestic river, the tides of which run North and South, lay outstretched before us in a strait line, inclosed between two exactly parallel banks. Suddenly it took a turn to the West, winding its golden waves around a mountain which overlooked the river with all its plants, and had the appearance of a large *bouquet*, tied at its base with azure riband. We preserved a profound silence; for my own part, I hardly ventured to breathe. Nothing interrupted the plaintive song of the fair passenger, except the sound (of which we were hardly sensible) made by the vessel, as it glided before a



light breeze through the water. Sometimes the voice acquired an additional swell when we steered near the bank, and in two or three places it was repeated by a slight echo. The ancients would have imagined that the soul of André, attracted by this impressive melody, felt a pleasure in murmuring its last notes among the mountains. The idea of this brave and unfortunate man, who was a lover and a poet, who died for his country in the flower of his age, regretted by his fellow citizens and honoured by the tears of Washington, spread over this romantic scene a softer tint. The American officers and I had tears in our eyes—I from the effect of the delicious state of mind into which I was plunged—They no doubt from the recollection of their country's past troubles, which doubled the calmness of the present moment. They could not, without a sort of ecstasy, contemplate a district, lately covered with battalions in glittering arms, and resounding with the noise of war, now buried in profound tranquility, lighted by the last fires of day, decorated with all the pomp of nature, animated by the soft whistle of Virginian night-



ingales, and the cooing of wild pigeons; while the simple inhabitants were seated on the point of a rock, at some distance from their cottages, and quietly observed our vessel as it passed along the river beneath them.

The tour, which I made on this occasion, was in fact only a prelude to a journey of much greater importance, the plan of which I communicated, on my return, to M. de Malesherbes, who was to have laid it before government. I intended nothing less than to decide, by a land investigation, the great question of a passage from the South sea into the Atlantic by the North. It is known that, in spite of the efforts made by Captain Cook, and subsequent navigators, this point has always remained doubtful. In 1786 a merchantman pretended to have entered an interior sea of North America at 48° lat. N. and those on board asserted that all, which had been considered as continental coast to the North of California, was a long chain of islands extremely close to each other. On the other hand, a traveller from Hudson's Bay saw the sea at 72° lat. N. at the mouth of the river



Cuivre. It is said that a frigate arrived last summer, which had been sent by the British Admiralty to ascertain the truth or fallacy of the discovery made by the merchantman above mentioned, and that this frigate confirms the truth of Cook's reports. Be this as may, I will just state what was my plan.

If government had favoured the project, I should have embarked for New-York. There I should have had two immense covered waggons made, to be drawn by four yoke of oxen. I should have also procured six small horses, such as those which I used on my first expedition. I should have taken with me three European servants, and three savages of the Five-Nations. Reasons operate to prevent the mention of some particulars of the plan which it was my intention to follow; the whole forms a small volume in my possession, which would not be useless to those who explore unknown regions. Suffice it to say that I would have renounced all ideas of traversing the deserts of America, if it would have cost the simple inhabitants a single tear. I should have wished that among the savages, *the*



*man with a long beard* might, long after my departure, be spoken of as the friend and benefactor of the human race.

When I had made every preparation, I should have set out directly towards the West, proceeding along the lakes of Canada to the source of the Mississippi, which I should have ascertained. Then descending by the plains of Upper Louisiana as far as the 40th degree of Northern latitude, I should have resumed my course to the West, so as to have reached the coast of the South Sea a little above the head of the gulph of California. Following the coast and keeping the sea always in sight, I should next have proceeded due North, thereby turning my back on New Mexico. If no discovery had altered my line of progress, I should have pursued my way to the mouth of Cook's Inlet, and thence to the river Cuivre in 72 degrees lat. N. Finally, if I had no where found a passage, and could not double the most Northern Cape of America, I should have re-entered the United States by Hudson's Bay, Labrador and Canada.

Such was the immense and perilous voyage,



which I proposed to undertake for the service of my country and Europe. I calculated that it would occupy (all accidents apart) five to six years. There can be no doubt of its utility. I should have given an account of the three kingdoms of Nature, of the people and their manners. I should have sketched the principal views, &c.

As to the perils of the journey, they were undoubtedly great, and those, who make nice calculations on this subject, will probably not be disposed to travel among savage nations. People alarm themselves, however, too much in this respect. When I was exposed to any danger, in America, it was always local and caused by my own imprudence, not by the inhabitants. For instance, when I was at the cataract of Niagara, the Indian ladder being broken which had formerly been there, I wished, in spite of my guide's representations, to descend to the bottom of the fall by means of a rock, the craggy points of which projected. It was about two hundred feet high, and I made the attempt. In spite of the roaring cataract, and frightful abyss which gaped beneath me, my head did not swim, and I



descended about forty feet, but here the rock became smooth and vertical; nor were there any longer roots or fissures for my feet to rest upon. I remained hanging all my length by my hands, neither being able to reascend nor proceed, feeling my fingers open by degrees from the weight of my body, and considering death inevitable. There are few men, who have, in the course of their lives, passed two such minutes as I experienced over the yawning horrors of Niagara. My hands at length opened and I fell. By most extraordinary good fortune I alighted on the naked rock. It was hard enough to have dashed me in pieces, and yet I did not feel much injured. I was within half an inch of the abyss, yet had not rolled into it; but when the cold water began to penetrate to my skin, I perceived that I had not escaped so easily as I at first imagined. I felt insupportable pain in my left arm; I had broken it above the elbow. My guide, who observed me from above, and to whom I made signs, ran to look for some savages, who with much trouble drew me up by birch cords, and carried me to their habitations.



This was not the only risk I ran at Niagara. On arriving at the cataract, I alighted and fastened my horse's bridle round my arm. As I leaned forward to look down, a rattle-snake moved in the neighbouring bushes. The horse took fright, reared on his hind legs and approached the edge of the precipice. I could not disengage my arm from the bridle, and the animal, with increasing alarm, drew me after him. His feet were already on the point of slipping over the brink of the gulph, and he was kept from destruction by nothing but the reins. My doom seemed to be fixed, when the animal, astonished at the new danger which he all at once perceived, made a final effort, and sprung ten feet from the edge of the precipice.



## A NIGHT

AMONG THE SAVAGES OF AMERICA.

It is a feeling, natural on the part of the unfortunate, to aim at the illusions of happiness by the recollection of past pleasures. When I feel weary of existence, when I feel my heart torn by the effects of a commerce with mankind, I involuntarily turn aside, and cast a look of regret. Enchanting meditations! Secret and ineffable charms of a soul which enjoys itself, it was amidst the immense deserts of America that I completely tasted you! Every one boasts of loving liberty, and hardly any one has a just idea of it. When I travelled among the Indian tribes of Canada—when I quitted the habitations of Europeans, and found myself, for the first time, alone amidst boundless forests, having all nature, as it were prostrate at my feet, a strange revolution took place in my sensations. I was seized with a sort of delirium, and followed no track,



but went from tree to tree, and indifferently to the right or left, saying to myself: "Here there is no multiplicity of roads, no towns, no confined houses, no Presidents, Republics and Kings, no laws and no human beings.—Human beings! Yes—some worthy savages, who care nothing about me, nor I about them; who, like myself wander wherever inclination leads them, eat when they wish it, and sleep where they please. To ascertain whether I was really in possession of my original rights, I put in practice a thousand acts of human will, as fancy suggested them. These proceedings highly enraged the great Dutchman, who accompanied me as a guide, and who in his soul believed me to be a madman.

Released from the tyrannical yoke of society, I comprehended the charms of that natural independence, far surpassing all the pleasures of which civilized man can have an idea. I comprehended why a savage was unwilling to become an European, why several Europeans had become savages, and why the sublime discussion *on the inequality of conditions* was so little understood by most of our philosophers. It is incredible to what a state of littleness nations and their highly



boasted institutions were reduced in my eyes. It appeared to me that I was looking at the kingdoms of the earth with an inverted telescope, or rather that I myself was enlarged, exalted, and contemplating, with the eyes of a giant, the remains of my degenerate fellow creatures.

You, who wish to write of mankind, transport yourselves into the deserts. Become for an instant the children of nature—then, and not till then take the pen.

Among the innumerable enjoyments, which I experienced during these travels, one in particular made a lively impression upon my heart.\*

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\* Almost all that follows is taken from the manuscript of my Travels in America, which perished together with several other incomplete works. Among them I had begun one, *Les Tableaux de la Nature*, which was the history of a savage tribe in Canada, moulded into a sort of romance. The frame, which inclosed these pictures of nature, was entirely new, and the paintings themselves, being strange to our climate, might have merited the indulgence of the reader. Some praise has been bestowed upon my manner of delineating nature, but if the public had seen the work now mentioned, written as it was by fragments on my knee among the savages themselves, in the forests and on the banks of American lakes, I presume to state that



I was going to see the celebrated cataract of Niagara, and had taken my road through the Indian nations, which inhabit the wilds west of the American plantations. My guides were the sun, a pocket compass, and the Dutchman whom I have mentioned. This man perfectly understood five dialects of the *Huron* language. Our equipage consisted of two horses, to the necks of which we fastened a bell at night, and then allowed them to go at large in the forest. At first I was rather afraid of losing them, but my guide removed this apprehension by pointing out the admirable instinct, which causes these sagacious animals never to wander out of sight of our fire.

One evening, when we conceived that we they would probably have found matter more deserving their notice. Of all this work only a few detached leaves remain in my possession, and among them is the Night, which I now insert. I was destined to lose by the revolution fortune, parents, friends, and what is never to be regained when once lost, the detail of reflections as they naturally arose during my travels. Our thoughts are perhaps the only property to be called really our own—even these were taken from me.



had proceeded so far as to be only about eight or nine leagues from the cataract, we were just about to alight from our horses, that we might prepare our hovel, and light our fire according to the Indian custom. At this moment we perceived a blaze in the woods, and soon afterwards espied some savages seated on the bank of the same stream, which flowed past us. We approached them, and the Dutchman having, by my order, asked permission to pass the night with them, it was granted on the spot. Accordingly we all began our labours together. After having cut branches from the trees, fixed stakes in the ground, stripped off bark to cover our palace, and performed some other general services, each of us turned his attention to his own affairs. I fetched my saddle, which faithfully served as my pillow during the whole journey. The guide attended to our horses, and with regard to his preparations for the night, he was not so delicate as myself, and generally availed himself of some old trunk of a tree for his bed. Our work being finished, we seated ourselves in a circle, with our legs crossed like tailors. In



the centre of us was an immense fire, at which we prepared our maize for supper. I had a bottle of brandy too, which not a little increased the gay spirits of the savages. They produced in return some legs of bear, and we made a royal repast.

The party was composed of two women with infants at the breast, and three warriors. Two of the latter might be about forty to forty-five years of age, though they appeared to be much older; the third was a young man.

The conversation soon became general, that is to say, by some broken expressions on my part, and by many gestures, an expressive kind of language, which the Indian tribes comprehend with astonishing readiness, and which I learnt among them. The young man alone preserved an obstinate silence, keeping his eyes stedfastly fixed on me. In spite of the black, red, and blue streaks, with which he was disfigured, and the further mutilation of having no ears, it was easy to perceive the noble and sensible expression which animated his countenance. How favorably did I think of him for not liking me! He



appeared to be mentally reading the history of all the calamities, with which Europeans had overburthened his country.

The two little children, which were entirely naked, had fallen asleep at our feet, before the fire. The women took them gently in their arms, and laid them upon skins, with that maternal care which it was delicious to observe among these pretended savages. The conversation at length died away by degrees, and each person sunk to rest in the place which he had hitherto occupied.

I was, however, an exception, being unable to close my eyes. Hearing the deep breathing of my companions on all sides, I raised my head, and resting on my elbow, contemplated, by the red light of the expiring fire, the sleeping Indians stretched around me. I acknowledge that I found it difficult to refrain from tears. Good young man! How affecting did thy repose appear to me! Thou, who didst seem so feelingly alive to the misfortunes of thy country, wert of too lofty and superior a disposition to suspect a stranger of evil intentions. Europeans, what a



lesson is this for us! These savages, whom we have pursued with fire and sword, whom our avarice has not even left in possession of a shovel full of earth to cover their dead bodies on all this vast continent heretofore their patrimony—these very savages received their enemy in their hospitable huts, shared with him their miserable repast, and their couch to which remorse was a stranger, enjoying close to him, the sleep of the virtuous. Such virtues are as much above our conventional ones, as the souls of these uncultivated people are superior to those of man in a state of society.

The moon was bright. Heated by my ideas I rose and took a seat at some distance, upon the root of a tree which crept along the side of the rivulet. It was one of those American nights, which the pencil of man never will be able to pourtray, and which I have remembered a hundred times with delight.

The moon had reached the highest point of the Heavens, and a thousand stars glittered in the great clear expanse. At one time the queen of night reposed upon a group of clouds,



which resembled the summit of lofty mountains crowned with snow. By slow degrees these clouds stretched themselves out, assuming the appearance of waving transparent zones of white satin, or transforming themselves into light frothy flakes, of which countless numbers wandered through the blue plains of the firmament. At another time the aerial vault appeared as if transformed into the sea shore, where horizontal beds, and parallel ridges might be discovered, apparently formed by the regular flux and reflux of the tide. A gust of wind then dispersed the clouds, and they formed themselves into large masses of dazzling whiteness, so soft to the eye that one almost seemed to feel their delicate elasticity. The landscape around me was not less enchanting. The cerulean velvety light of the moon silently spread over the forest, and at intervals descended among the trees, irradiating in some degree even the deepest thickets. The brook, which flowed at my feet, hiding itself now and then under the umbrageous oaks, sallows and sugar-trees, and re-appearing a little further off, all brilliant from the constellations of



the night, resembled an azure ribband studded with diamonds, and transversely marked with black lines. On the other side of the stream, in a large natural meadow, the clear light of the moon shone without motion on the turf, extending like a curtain over it. At one moment the birch-trees, which were scattered here and there through the Savanna, were, by the caprice of the breeze, confounded with the soil on which they grew, and enveloped in a sort of grey gauze; at another they ceased to retain this chalky appearance, and buried themselves in obscurity, forming, as it were, islands of floating shade upon a motionless sea of light. Silence and repose prevailed throughout the scene, except when a few leaves fell here and there, or a sudden gust of wind swept past, accompanied occasionally by the dismal note of the owl. At a distance and at intervals too I heard the solemn sound of the cataract at Niagara, which, in the calmness of night, was lengthened out from one desert to another, and expired among the solitary forests.

The astonishing grandeur of this picture



and the melancholy, which it inspired, are not to be expressed by human language. The most beautiful nights in Europe can convey no idea of it. In vain does the imagination try to roam at large amidst our cultivated plains, for every where the habitations of mankind oppose its wish; but in this deserted region the soul delights to bury and lose itself amidst boundless forests—it loves to wander, by the light of the stars, on the borders of immense lakes, to hover on the roaring gulph of terrific cataracts, to fall with the mighty mass of waters, to mix and confound itself, as it were, with the wild sublimities of Nature.

These enjoyments are too exquisite. Such is our weakness that excess of pleasure becomes painful, as if Nature were afraid of our forgetting that we are men. Absorbed in my existence, or rather wandering entirely from myself, having no distinct sentiment or idea, but an ineffable indescribable sensation, resembling the mental happiness which we are told that we shall feel in another world, I was suddenly recalled to the one which I inhabit. I felt ill, and was con-



vinced that I must indulge my reverie no further. I now returned to our *Ajouppa*, and lying down near the savages, soon sunk into profound sleep.

On awaking in the morning, I found my companions ready for departure. My guide had saddled our horses; the warriors were armed, and the women busy in collecting their baggage; which consisted of skins, maize, and smoked bear.

I arose, and taking from my portmanteau some powder and ball, and a box made of red wood, distributed these among my associates of the night, who appeared to be pleased with my generosity. We then separated not without signs of mutual regard and regret, each touching his forehead and breast, according to the custom of these children of nature, which appeared to me very superior to the ceremonies practised by us. Even to the young Indian, who cordially took the hand which I offered, we all parted with hearts full of each other. Our friends pursued their way to the North, being directed by the mosses, and we to the West under the guidance of my compass. The warriors departed first, the women followed, carrying the baggage and infants on their backs, suspended in furs. The



little creatures looked back at us and smiled. My eyes for a long time followed this affecting and maternal spectacle, till at length the group entirely disappeared among the thickets.

Benevolent savages, who so hospitably entertained me, and whom I doubtless shall never again behold, let me be here permitted to pay the tribute of my gratitude. May you long enjoy your precious independence in those delightful solitudes, where my wishes for your happiness will ever follow you. What corner, my friends, of your immense deserts, do you at present inhabit? Are you still together, and always happy? Do you sometimes talk about the stranger of the forest? Do you picture to yourselves the kind of country which he inhabits? Do you utter wishes for his happiness, while you recline upon the banks of your solitary rivers? Generous family! His lot is much changed since the night he passed with you; but it is at least a consolation to him, while persecuted by his countrymen beyond the seas, that his name is, in some unknown wilderness at the other extremity of the world, still pronounced with tender recollection by the poor Indians.



## ANECDOTE

*Of a Frenchman, who dwelt among the Savages.*

PHILIP DE COCQ, who was born in a little village of Pitou, went to Canada in his infancy, served there as a soldier, at the age of twenty years, during the war of 1754, and after the battle of Quebec retired to the country of the Five Nations, where, having married an Indian woman, he renounced the customs of his native land to adopt the manners of the savages. When I was travelling through the wilds of America, I was not a little surprised to hear that I had a countryman established as a resident, at some distance in the woods. I visited him with eagerness, and found him employed in pointing some stakes at the door of his hut. He cast a look towards me, which was cold enough, and continued his work; but the moment I addressed him in French, he started at the recollection of his country, and the big tear stood in his



eye. These well-known accents suddenly roused, in the heart of the old man, all the sensations of his infancy. In youth we little regret the pleasures of our first years; but the further we advance into life the more interesting to us becomes the recollection of them; for then every one of our days supplies a sad subject for comparison. Philip intreated me to enter his dwelling, and I followed him. He had considerable difficulty in expressing what he meant. I saw him labour to regain the ancient ideas of civilized man, and I watched him most closely. For instance, I had an opportunity of observing that there were two kinds of relative things absolutely effaced from his mind, viz. that of any superfluity being proper, and that of annoying others without an absolute necessity for it. I did not chuse to put my grand question, till after some hours of conversation had restored to him a sufficiency of words and ideas. At last I said to him: "Philip, are you happy?" He knew not at first how to reply.—"Happy," said he, reflecting—"happy! Yes; but happy only since I became a savage.—" And how do you pass



your life?" asked I.—He laughed.—“I understand you,” continued I. “You think such a question unworthy of an answer. But should you not like to resume your former mode of living, and return to your country?”—“My country! France! If I were not so old, I should like to see it again.”—“And you would not remain there?” added I.—The motion of Philip’s head answered my question sufficiently. “But what induced you,” continued I, “to become what you call a savage?”—“I don’t know,” said he,—“instinct.” This expression put an end to my doubts and questions. I remained two days with Philip, in order to observe him, and never saw him swerve for a single moment from the assertion he had made. His soul, free from the conflict of social passions, appeared to me, in the language of the savages with whom he dwelt, calm as the field of battle after the warriors had smoked together the *calumet* of peace.



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**ON MACKENZIE'S TRAVELS**

*In the interior of North America.*

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THE general interest, with which travels are read, may perhaps be caused by the inconstancy and satiety of the human heart. Tired of the society with which we live, and of the vexations which surround us, we like to lose ourselves in the contemplation of distant countries, and among unknown nations. If the people, described to us, are happier than ourselves, their happiness diverts us; if more unfortunate, their afflictions are consolatory to us. But the interest, attached to the recital of travels, is every day diminishing in proportion to the increase of travellers. A philosophical spirit has caused the wonders of the desert to disappear,

“The magic woods have lost their former charm,”

as Fontanes says, — When the first Frenchmen, who investigated the shores of Canada, spoke of lakes similar to



seas; cataracts which fall from Heaven, and forests the depth of which could not be explored, the mind is much more strongly moved than when an English merchant, or a modern *Savant* tells you that he has penetrated to the Pacific Ocean, and that the fall of Niagara is only a hundred and forty-four feet in depth.

What we gain in knowledge, by such information, we lose in sentiment. Geometrical truths have destroyed certain truths of the imagination, which are more important to morality than is supposed. Who were the first travellers of antiquity? The legislators, poets, and heroes—Jacob, Lycurgus, Pythagoras, Homer, Hercules, Alexander. The “*dies peregrinationis*” are mentioned in Genesis. At that time every thing was prodigious without ceasing to be real, and the hopes of these exalted men burst forth in the exclamation of “*Terra ignota! Terra immensa!*” \*

We naturally dislike to be confined within bounds, and I could almost say that the globe

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\* Oh land unknown, oh land of vast extent!



is become too small for man since he has sailed round it. If the night be more favourable than the day to inspiration and vast conceptions, it is because it conceals all limits, and assumes the appearance of immensity. The French and English travellers seem, like the warriors of those two nations, to have shared the empire of the earth and ocean. The latter have no one, whom they can oppose to Tavernier, Chardin, Parnin, and Charlevoix, nor can they boast of any great work as the "*Lettres Edifiantes*;" but the former, in their turn, possess no Anson, Byron, Cook, or Vancouver. The French travellers have done more than those of the rival nation towards making us acquainted with the manners and customs of foreign countries—*ποον εγνω*—*mores cognovit*; but the English have been more useful as to the progress of universal geography—*εν ποντω παθεν*,\* *in mari passus est*. They share with the Spaniards and Portuguese the honour of having added new seas and new

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\* *Odyssey*.



continents to the globe, and of having fixed the limits of the earth.

The prodigies of navigation are perhaps those, which afford the highest idea of human genius. The reader trembles, and is full of admiration when he sees Columbus plunging into the solitudes of an unknown ocean, Vasco de Gama doubling the cape of Tempests, Magellan emerging from a vast ocean to enter one vaster still, and Cook flying from one pole to the other, bounded on all sides by the shores of the globe, and unable to find more seas for his vessels.

What a beautiful spectacle does this navigator afford, when seeking unknown lands, not to oppress the inhabitants, but to succour and enlighten them; bearing to poor savages the requisites of life; swearing, on their charming banks, to maintain concord and amity with these simple children of nature; sowing among icy regions the fruits of a milder climate, and thus imitating Providence, who foresaw the fall and the wants of man!

Death having not permitted Captain Cook to complete his important discoveries, Captain



Vancouver was appointed by the British Government to visit all the American coast from California to Cook's River or Inlet, as it is sometimes called, and to remove all doubts, which might yet remain concerning a passage to the North West of the New World. While this able officer fulfilled his mission with equal intelligence and courage, another English traveller, taking his departure from Upper Canada, proceeded across deserts and through forests to the North Sea and Pacific Ocean.

Mr. Mackenzie, of whose travels I am about to speak, neither pretends to the honour of being a scientific man, nor a writer. He was simply carrying on a traffic with the Indians in furs, and modestly gives his account to the public as only the journal of his expedition. Sometimes, however, he interrupts the thread of his narrative to describe a scene of nature, or the manners of the savages; but he never possesses the art of turning to his advantage those little occurrences, which are so interesting in the recitals of our missionaries. The reader is scarcely informed who were the companions of



the author's fatigues. No transport is exhibited on discovering the ocean, which was the wished-for object of his enterprize, no scenes of tenderness at his return. In a word, the reader is never embarked in the canoe with the traveller, and never partakes of his fears, his hopes and his perils.

Another great fault is discoverable in this work. It is unfortunate that a simple journal should be deficient in method and perspicuity, but Mr. Mackenzie manages his subject in a confused way. He never states where Fort Chepewyan is, from which he first sets out; what discoveries had been made in the regions he was about to visit, before he undertook to explore them; whether the place, at which he stops near the entrance of the Frozen Sea, was a bay, or merely an expansion of the river, as one is led to suppose. How can the traveller too be certain that this great river of the West, which he calls Tacoutche Tessé is the river of Columbia, since he did not go down to its mouth? How happens it that part of the course of this



river, which he did not visit, is nevertheless marked upon his map? &c. &c.

In spite of these numerous defects, the merit of Mr. Mackenzie's journal is very great, but it requires commentaries, at one time to give an idea of the deserts which the traveller is crossing, and impart a little spirit to the meagre dryness of his narrative, at another to explain some point of geography left in an obscure state by the author. These omissions I will attempt to supply.

Spain, England, and France owe all their American possessions to three Italians, Columbus, Cabot, and Verazani. The genius of Italy, buried under its ruins, like the giants under the mountains which they had piled upon each other, appears now and then to awake, for the purpose of astonishing the world. It was about the year 1523 that France employed Verazani to go in quest of new discoveries. This navigator examined more than 600 leagues of the North American coast, but he founded no colonies.



James Cartier, his successor, visited all the country called *Kannata* by the savages, that is to say, *the mass of huts*.\* He ascended the great river, which received from him the name of St. Lawrence, and advanced as far as the island of *Montreal*, which was then called *Hochelaga*.

In 1540 M. de Roberval obtained the vice-royalty of Canada. He transported several families thither, with his brother, whom Francis I. distinguished by the appellation of *Hannibal's gen d'arme*, on account of his bravery; but being shipwrecked in 1540, "with them sunk," said Charlevoix, "all the hopes which had been conceived of forming an establishment in America, no one daring to flatter himself with the idea of being more skilful or fortunate than these two brave men."

The disturbances, which soon afterwards began in France, and continued fifty years,

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\* The Spaniards had certainly discovered Canada before James Cartier and Verazani. There are some who assert that the name of Canada is derived from two Spanish words *Acca nada*.



prevented the attention of government to any events at a distance. The genius of Henry IV. having stifled civil discord, the project of founding a colony in Canada was resumed with ardour. The Marquis de la Roche embarked in 1598 to try his fortune again, but his expedition had a disastrous end. M. Chauvin succeeded to his projects and misfortunes, and lastly the Commdore de Catte, being employed on the same enterprize about the year 1603, confided the direction of it to Samuel de Champelain, whose name brings to our recollection the founder of Quebec, and the father of French colonies in North America.

From this time the Jesuits were entrusted with the care of continuing the discoveries in the interior of the Canadian forests. Then began those famous missions, which extended the French Empire from the borders of the Atlantic, and the icy region of Hudson's Bay, to the shores of the gulph of Mexico. Fathers Biart and Enemond Masse traversed the whole of Nova Scotia; Father Joseph penetrated to Lake Nipiving; Fathers Brebœux and Daniel visited



the magnificent deserts of the Hurons, between the lake of that name, Lake Michigan, and Lake Erie; while Father de Lamberville caused Lake Ontario, and the five cantons of the Iroquois to be known. Attracted by the hope of martyrdom, and the recital of the sufferings which their companions had endured, other labourers in the evangelical vineyard arrived from all parts, and spread themselves into every dreary region. "They were sent," says the historian of New France," and they went with joy. They accomplished the promise of the Saviour of mankind, by making his gospel known throughout the world."

The discovery of the Ohio and the Mississippi in the West of Lake Superior, the Lake of the Woods in the North West of the River Bourbon, and the interior coast of James Bay in the North, was the result of these apostolic travels. The Missionaries had even a knowledge of those *Rocky Mountains*,\* which Mr. Mackenzie crossed on his way to the Pacific

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\* They called this chain the mountain of Brilliant Stones.



Ocean, and of the great river flowing to the West, that is to say, the Columbia.—If any one should wish to convince himself that I advance only what is true, it will be sufficient to cast an eye over the ancient charts of the Jesuits.

All the great discoveries, therefore, in the interior of North America, were made or pointed out when the English became masters of Canada. By giving new names to the lakes, mountains, rivers and streams, or by corrupting the old French names, they have only thrown geography into disorder. It is not even sufficiently proved that the latitudes and longitudes, which they have given to certain places, are more exact than those fixed by our learned missionaries.\*

In order to form a correct idea of the point

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\* Mr. Arrowsmith is at present the most celebrated geographer in England. If any one will take his great map of the United States, and compare it with Imley's last maps, he will find a prodigious difference, particularly in that part which lies between the lakes of Canada and Ohio. The charts of the Missionaries, on the contrary, much resemble Imley's maps.



from which Mr. Mackenzie took his departure, and of his general course, it is perhaps essential to observe the following particulars.

The French missionaries and the ramblers through Canada had pushed their discoveries as far as Lake Ouinipie, or Ouinipigon to the west, and as far as Lake Assinibouls or *Lac des Cris-tinaux* to the North. The first of these appears to be the one called by Mr. Mackenzie the Slave Lake.

The Anglo-Canadian Company, which carries on the trade in furs, has established a factory at Fort Chepewyan† or Chepawayan, on a lake called the Lake of the Mountains, which communicates with the Slave Lake by a river.

From the Slave Lake proceeds a river which flows to the North, and which Mr. Mackenzie designates by his own name. The river Mackenzie falls into the Polar Sea at  $69^{\circ} 14'$  North lati-

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\* The French maps place it in latitude  $5^{\circ}$  N. and the English in 53.

†  $58^{\circ} 40'$  lat. N. and  $10^{\circ} 30'$  long. W. meridian of Greenwich.



tude, and  $135^{\circ}$  west longitude, meridian of Greenwich. The discovery of this river and its navigation to the northern Ocean are the object of Mr. Mackenzie's first travels.

He left Fort Chepewyan on the 3rd of June 1789, and returned thither on the 12th of September in the same year. He left it a second time on the 10th of October 1792 on a new expedition, directing his course to the West. He crossed the Lake of the Mountains, and ascended a river called Oungijah, or Peace river, which takes its source in the Rocky Mountains. A great river descends beyond these mountains, and flows to the west where it loses itself in the Pacific Ocean. It is called Tacoutche-Tesse or Columbia.

The passage from Peace River to that of Columbia, and the facility of navigation in the latter, at least to the point where Mr. Mackenzie abandoned his canoe, were the discoveries which resulted from Mr. Mackenzie's second enterprize. After an absence of eleven months he returned to the place of his departure.

It must be observed that as Peace River



proceeds from the Rocky Mountains to throw itself into an arm of the Lake of the Mountains; as the Lake of the Mountains communicates with Slave Lake by a river which bears this latter name; and as Slave Lake, in its turn, pours its waters into the Northern Ocean by the river Mackenzie, it follows that the Peace, Slave and Mackenzie rivers are in fact only one, which proceeds from the Rocky Mountains in the west, and precipitates itself into the Polar Ocean. Let us now take our departure with the traveller, and descend the river Mackenzie in company with him.

He crosses the Lake of the Mountains, enters Slave River, which brings him to the lake of the same name, coasts along the north bank of the lake, and finally discovers Mackenzie river. From the lake to this point the country on the north side is low and covered with forests; on the South it is more elevated but also very woody. We here observe many trees thrown down and blackened by fire in the midst of which young poplars appear, having risen there since the conflagration. It is worthy



of remark that when a forest of firs and birches is consumed by fire, poplars appear instead of them, though there was previously no tree of this genus in the space laid open by the devouring element.

The naturalist will perhaps contest the accuracy of this observation on the part of Mr. Mackenzie; for in Europe every thing, which deranges our systems, is treated as ignorance, or the wandering of imagination; but no philosopher can deny and no artist can depict the beauty of the streams which water the New World. Let the reader represent to himself an immense river, flowing through the thickest forests—let him figure to himself all the accidental circumstances connected with the trees upon its banks. The American oaks, falling from old age, bathe their hoary heads in the stream; the plains of the West bend towards the wave with the black squirrels and white ermines, which are climbing up their trunks, or sporting among their branches; the Canadian sycamores join in the group; the Virginian poplars grow in a solitary manner, or lengthen themselves out



into a moving avenue. Sometimes a river rushing from the depths of a desert, forms a magnificent junction with another river as it crosses some noble forest. At other times a roaring cataract covers the side of a mountain with its azure veil. The banks seem to fly, to bend, to enlarge, to diminish. Here are towering rocks which overhang the stream, there groups of young trees, the tops of which are flattened like the plain that gave them birth. On all sides murmurs are heard, which it would be difficult to define. They proceed from frogs which low like bulls\* and from others which live in the trunks of old willows.† The repeated cry of the latter alternately resembles the tinkling of a bell such as hangs about the neck of sheep, and the barking of a dog.‡ The traveller, agreeably

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\* Bull-frog.

† Tree-frog.

‡ "They deposit their young in the stumps of decayed trees. They do not croak like the frogs in Europe, but during the night bark like dogs." *Le Père du Tertre, Histoire Natur. des Antilles.* Tom. III, No. 317.



deceived in these wild regions, fancies that he is approaching the cottage of a labourer, and that he hears the distant motion of a flock.

Harmonious warblings swell upon the breeze, and fill the woods, as if the Hamadryads joined in universal chorus ; but the concert soon grows weaker, and gradually dies away among the cedars and the rushes, so that you can hardly say, at the moment the sounds diminish into silence, whether they still exist, or are only continued by imagination.

Mr. Mackenzie, continuing to descend the river, arrived ere long at the country inhabited by the savages called Indian Slaves. They informed him that he would find lower down, on the banks of the same stream, another tribe called Hare Indians ; and still lower, as he approached the sea, the Esquimaux.

“ During our short stay with these people, they amused us with dancing, which they accompanied with their voices. They leap about and throw themselves into various antic postures. The women suffer their arms to hang, as without the power of motion.”



The songs and dances of savages have always something in them, which is melancholy or voluptuous. "Some play the flute," says the father du Tertre, "others sing, and form a kind of music which has to them much sweetness." According to Lucretius attempts were made to imitate the singing of birds by the human voice, long before poetry, accompanied by the lyre, charmed the ears of mankind.

*At liquidas avium voces imitauer ore  
Ante finit multo, quam laevia carmina cantu  
Concelebrare homines possent, auresque juvare.*

Sometimes you see a poor Indian, whose body, quite bent by excessive labour and fatigue, and a hunter, whose appearance breathes a spirit of cheerfulness. When they dance together, you are struck with an astonishing contrast; the former becomes at once straight and balances himself with unexpected ease; the latter sings the most melancholy airs. The young female appears as if she wished to imitate the graceful undulations of the birches in her desert, and the youth the plaintive murmurs which creep through their branches.



When these dances take place on the margin of a river, and in the recesses of a forest, where unknown echoes for the first time repeat the sound of the human voice; and where the bear of the desert looks from the heights of some rock at these pastimes of savage man, we cannot but acknowledge that there is something grand in the very rudeness of the picture; we cannot but be affected when we reflect upon the destiny of this child of nature, which is born unknown to the world, dances for a moment in the valleys through which it will never pass again, and soon reposes in the grave, under the moss of these deserts which has not even preserved the impression of its footsteps. "*Fuissen quasi non essem.*"

Passing under some sterile mountains, the traveller steered to land and climbed the steep rocks with one of his Indian hunters. Four chains of mountains form the grand divisions of North America.

The first proceeds from Mexico, and is only a prolongation of the Andes, which cross the Isthmus of Panama. It stretches from South to North along the great South Sea, al-



ways inclining towards Cook's Inlet. Mr. Mackenzie calls this ridge the Rocky Mountains, and passed them between the source of Peace river and the river Columbia, where it falls into the Pacific Ocean.

The second chain begins at the *Apalaches*, on the Eastern borders of the Mississippi, extends to the North-East under the name of the *Alle-ganies*, the *Blue Mountains*, and the *Laurel Mountains*, passing behind the Floridas, Virginia and New England, through the interior of Nova Scotia to the gulph of St. Lawrence. It divides the waters, which fall into the Atlantic, from those which swell the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the lakes of Lower Canada.

It is probable that this chain formerly extended to the Atlantic, and served as a barrier to it, in the same way as the first ridge still borders on the Indian Ocean. The ancient continent of America, therefore, apparently began at these mountains; for the three different level tracts of country, so regularly marked, from the plains of Pennsylvania to the Savannahs of Florida, indicate that the part in question was



covered with water, and afterwards left bare at different periods.

Opposite the bank of the gulph of St. Lawrence (where, as I have said, the second chain terminates) rises, on the East of Labrador, a third ridge almost as long as the two former. It extends at first on the South-East to the *Ou-taouas*, forming the double source of the rivers which precipitate themselves into Hudson's Bay, and those which pay the tribute of their waters to the gulph of St. Lawrence; then turning to the North-West, and stretching along the Northern coast of Lake Superior, it arrives at Lake St. Anne, where it takes the shape of a fork, to the North-West and South-West.

Its Southern arm passes to the South of great lake *Ouinipic*, between the marshes which feed the river Albany to James Bay and the fountains, from which the Mississippi receives its floods destined to fall into the gulph of Mexico.

Its Northern arm touches on Swan's Lake and the factory of Osnaburgh; then crossing the river Severn, reaches Port Nelson river,



passing to the North of Lake Ouinipic. It finally unites with the fourth chain of mountains.

This is of less extent than any of the others. It begins at the borders of the river *Saskatchiwine*, stretches to the North-East between the rivers Erlan and Churchhill, then extends Northward to latitude 57, where it is divided into two branches, of which the one, continuing its Northern direction, reaches the coast of the Frozen Sea; while the other, running to the West, meets with Mackenzie river. The eternal snow, with which these mountains are crowned, feeds, on the one hand, the rivers which fall into Hudson's Bay, and on the other, those which are swallowed by the Northern ocean.

It was one of the mountains of this last chain which Mr. Mackenzie wanted to climb with his attendant. Those, who have only seen the Alps and Pyrenees, can form no idea of these hyperborean solitudes, these desolate regions where strange animals are wandering on unknown mountains, as was the case after the general deluge. "*Rara per ignotos errent ani-*



*malia montes.*” Clouds, or rather humid fogs, incessantly hang on the summits of these dismal elevations. Rocks, which are beaten with perpetual rains, pierce with their blackened crags through the whitish vapour, resembling in their forms and immobility phantoms, which are gazing at each other in frightful silence!

Between these mountains, deep vallies of granite are perceptible, clothed in moss and watered with torrents. Stinted firs, of the species called by the English spruce, and small ponds of brackish water, far from varying the monotony of the scene, augment its uniformity and gloominess. These regions resound with the extraordinary cry of the bird, which inhabits the North. Beautiful swans that swim on these wild waters, and clusters of raspberry bushes growing under the shelter of some rock, seem as if sheltered there to console the traveller, and to remind him of that Providence, which knows how to spread graces and perfumes even through the most desolate country. But it is at the borders of the ocean that the scene is beheld in all its horrors. On one side extend vast fields of



ice, against which break the discoloured waves, and no sail is ever beheld upon them; on the other rises a district, mountainous, barren, and calculated to inspire the most melancholy ideas. Along the coast nothing is to be seen but a sad succession of dreary bays and stormy promontories. At night the traveller takes refuge in some cleft of a rock, driving from it the sea eagle, that flies away with clamorous shrieks. All night he listens with terror to the roaring of the winds re-echoed in his cavern, and the cracking of the ice upon the shore. Mr. Mackenzie arrived at the coast of the Frozen Ocean on the 12th July, 1789, or rather at a bay of ice where he observed whales, and perceived a flux and reflux of tide: He landed on an island, the latitude of which he fixed at  $69^{\circ} 14' N$ . This was the boundary of his first expedition. The ice, want of provisions, and the depression of spirits exhibited by his people, did not allow him to descend as far as the sea, which was doubtless only at a short distance from him. For a long time the sun had never set to the eye of the traveller, but appeared pale



and enlarged, as it mournfully moved through the frozen expanse.

Miserable they

Who, here entangled in the gath'ring ice,

Take their last look of the descending sun !

While, full of death, and fierce with tenfold frost,

The long, long night, incumbent o'er their head,

Falls horrible.

*Thomson's Winter.*

On quitting the bay to re-ascend the river, and return to Fort *Chipewyan*, Mr. Mackenzie passed four Indian establishments, which appeared to have been recently inhabited.

“ We then landed,” says the traveller, “ upon a small round island which possessed somewhat of a sacred character. On the top of it seemed to be a place of sepulture, from the numerous graves which we observed there. We found the frame of a small canoe, with various dishes, troughs and other utensils, which had been the living property of those who could now use them no more, and form the ordinary accompaniments of their last abodes.”

Mr. Mackenzie often speaks of the religion



of these nations, and their veneration for the tomb. The unfortunate savage blesses God in these icy regions, and deduces from his own misery the hopes of another life, while civilized man, in a mild climate and surrounded by all the gifts of Providence, denies his Creator.

Thus we have seen the inhabitants of these countries; dancing at the source of the river which our traveller has traced, and we now find their tombs near the sea, at the mouth of this same river—a striking emblem of the course of our years, from the fountains of joy in which we are plunged during infancy, to the ocean of eternity which swallows us. These Indian cemeteries, scattered among the American forests, are in fact glades, or small inclosures cleared of the wood that grew upon them. The scite of them is entirely covered with mounds of a conical form; while carcasses of buffaloes and elks, buried among the herbage, are here and there intermingled with human skeletons. I have sometimes seen in these places a solitary pelican, perched upon the whitened moss-covered bones, resembling, in its silence and pensive attitude, some old savage,



weeping and meditating over the remains of his fellow creatures. The people, who carry on a commerce in furs, avail themselves of the land thus half cleared by death, to sow there, as they pass, different sorts of grain. The traveller all at once finds these colonies of European vegetables, with their foreign air, their foreign dress, and their domestic habits, in the midst of those wild plants which are natives of this distant climate. They often emigrate over the hills, and extend through the woods, according to the inclinations which they brought from their indigenous soil. It was thus that exiled families preferred, in the desert, those situations which recalled the idea of their country.

On the 12th of September 1789, after an absence of a hundred and two days, Mr. Mackenzie again arrived at Fort Chipewyan.—Three years after his first undertaking, he left this Fort a second time, crossed the Lake of the Hills, and reached Peace River. He pursued his way upon this stream for twenty days, and arrived on the first of September 1792 at a place, where he proposed to build a house and pass the win-



ter. He employed all the cold season in carrying on a commerce with the Indians, and making preparations for his expedition.

“On the 20th of April the river was yet covered with ice, the plains were delightful, the trees were budding and many plants in blossom.”

That, which is called in North America the *great thaw*, affords to the eye of the European a spectacle not less magnificent than extraordinary. During the first fortnight of April, the clouds, which till then came rapidly from the North West, gradually cease their course in the Heavens, and float for some time, as if uncertain what direction to take. The colonist leaves his hut, and goes over his cultivated land to examine the desert. Suddenly he exclaims: “There comes the South-East breeze!” At this instant a luke-warm air is felt playing on the hands and face, while the clouds begin to return slowly towards the North. Every thing in the valley and woods undergoes a complete change. The mossy point of the rocks first display themselves, amidst the uniform whiteness of hoar frost; then appear the firs; and among them



forward shrubs, which are now hung with festoons of flowers, instead of the frozen chrystals of late pendent from their branches. Nature gradually opens her veil of snow as the sun approaches. The American poets will, perhaps at some future day, compare her to a bride, who takes off her virgin robe timidly and as if with regret, half revealing and yet trying to conceal her charms from her husband.

It is then that the savages, whose deserts Mr. Mackenzie was exploring, joyfully issue from their caverns. Like the birds of their climate, winter collects them together, and spring disperses them. Every couple returns to its solitary wood, to build a new nest, and sing of renovated love.

This season, which puts all in motion through the American forests, gave our traveller the signal of departure. On Thursday the 9th of May, 1793, Mr. Mackenzie set out with six Canadians and two Indian hunters, in a canoe made of bark. If he could, from the borders of the Peace River, have seen what was passing in Europe at that time, in a great ci-



vilized nation; the hut of the Equimaux would have appeared, in his estimation, preferable to the palaces of kings, and solitude to a commerce with mankind.

The French translator of Mr. Mackenzie's travels observes that the companions of the English merchant were, with one exception, all of French origin. The French easily accustom themselves to savage life, and are much beloved by the Indians. When Canada fell into the hands of the English in 1729, the natives soon perceived the difference. "The English," says Father Charlevoix, "during the short time that they were masters of the country, did not succeed in gaining the affections of the Indians. The Hurons never appeared at Quebec. Other tribes which were nearer to this city, and several of which had, from taking individual offence at different matters, openly declared against us, at the approach of the English squadron, likewise shewed themselves but rarely. They had all been not a little disconcerted at finding that when they wished to take the same liberties with the new comers, which the French had



without any difficulty allowed, their manners had not pleased. It was still worse in a short time, when they were driven with blows out of the houses, which they had hitherto entered with the same freedom as their own huts. They resolved, therefore, to withdraw; and nothing so much attached them to our interest afterwards, as this difference of manners and character in the two nations which had established themselves there. The missionaries, who were soon aware of the impression made upon the Indians, availed themselves of it to convert these savages to the Christian faith, and attach them to the French nation." The French never attempt to civilize them, for that would cost too much trouble; they like better to become savages themselves. The forest can boast of no hunters who are more adroit, no warriors who are more intrepid. They have been seen to endure the infliction of torture with a degree of firmness that astonished even the Iroquois, and unfortunately they have been also seen to become as barbarous as their torturers. Is it that the extremes of a circle meet, and that the highest



degree of civilization, being the perfection of the art, touches closely upon nature? Or rather, is it not a sort of universal talent and pliability of manners, that adapt the Frenchman to every climate and to every sphere of life? Be this as it may, he and the American Indian possess the same bravery, the same indifference as to life, the same improvidence as to what will happen to-morrow, the same dislike to work, the same inclination to be tired of the good things which they possess, the same inconstancy in love, the same taste for dancing and for war, the fatigues of the chase and the pleasures of the feast. These similarities of disposition in the Frenchman and Indian cause in them a great inclination towards each other, and easily convert the inhabitant of Paris into the rambler of the Canadian woods.

Mr. Mackenzie re-ascended the Peace River with his French savages, and thus describes the beauty of nature around him.

“From the place which we quitted this morning, the West side of the river displayed a succession of the most beautiful scenery I had



ever beheld. The ground rises at intervals to a considerable height, and stretching inwards to a considerable distance, at every interval or pause in the river, there is a very gently ascending space or lawn, which is alternate with abrupt precipices to the summit of the whole, or at least as far as the eye could distinguish. This magnificent theatre of nature has all the decorations which the trees and animals of the country can afford it. Groves of poplars, in every shape, vary the scene, and their intervals are enlivened with vast herds of elks and buffaloes; the former choosing the steeps and uplands, the latter preferring the plains. At this time the buffaloes were attended with their young ones, who were frisking about them, and it appeared that the elks would soon exhibit the same enlivening circumstance. The whole country displayed an exuberant verdure. The trees, that bear a blossom, were advancing fast to that delightful appearance, and the velvet rind of their branches, reflecting the oblique rays of a rising or setting sun, added a splendid gaiety to the scene, which no expressions of mine are qualified to describe."



These amphitheatrical spectacles are common in America. Not far from *Apalachuela*, in the Floridas, the land gradually rises on leaving the river *Chataleche*, and towers into the air as it verges to the horizon; but it is not an ordinary inclination, like that of a valley; it is by natural terraces ranged one above another, like the artificial gardens of some mighty potentate. These terraces are planted with different trees, and watered by a multitude of fountains, the streams of which, exposed to the rising sun, sparkle amidst the verdure, or flow with golden lustre past the mossy rocks. Blocks of granite surmount this vast structure, and are themselves topped by lofty pines. When you discover this superb chain of terraces from the margin of the river, and the summit of the rocks which crown them enveloped in clouds, you think that you are beholding the columns of Nature's temple, and the magnificent steps which lead to it.

The traveller reached the Rocky Mountains, and began to wind among them. Obstacles and dangers increased on all sides. Here his people were obliged to carry the baggage by



land, in order to avoid the cataracts and rapids ; there they found it necessary to resist the impetuosity of the current by laboriously drawing the canoe with a cord. Mr. Mackenzie's whole passage through these mountains is very interesting. At one time he is compelled to hew down trees and cut his way into the forest ; at another he leaps from rock to rock at the risk of his life, and receives his companions, one after another, upon his shoulders. The cord breaks—the canoe strikes upon the shelves—the Canadians are discouraged, and refuse to go any further. It is in vain that Mr. Mackenzie wanders in the desert for the purpose of discovering the passage to the river in the West. Some reports of fire arms, which he hears in this desolate region, alarm him with the supposition that hostile savages approach. He climbs up a high tree, but can discern nothing except mountains covered with snow, in the midst of which are some stunted birches, and below, woods extending apparently *ad infinitum*.

Nothing is so dreary as the appearance of these woods, when surveyed from the summits



of mountains in the New World. The valleys, which you have traversed, and which you command on all sides, appear in regular undulations beneath you, like the billows of the ocean after a storm. They seem to diminish in size according to the distance, at which you gradually leave them. Those that are nearest to you are of a reddish green tint, the next are slightly coloured with azure, and the remotest form parallel belts of sky blue.

Mr. Mackenzie descended from his tree and endeavoured to find his companions. He no longer saw the canoe at the bank of the river. He fired his gun, but no answer was given to his signal. He went first one way and then another, alternately walking up and down the side of the river. At length he found his friends, but not till after he had passed four-and-twenty hours in excessive anxiety and uneasiness. Soon afterwards he met some savages. When interrogated by the traveller, they pretended at first to be ignorant of any river in the West, but an old man was induced, by the caresses and presents of Mr. Mackenzie, to become, at



length, more communicative. "He knew," observes Mr. M. "of a large river that runs towards the mid-day sun, a branch of which flowed near the source of that which we were now navigating, and said that there were only three small lakes, and as many carrying places, leading to a small river which discharges itself into the great one."

The reader may imagine what were Mr. Mackenzie's transports on hearing this happy intelligence. He hastened to embark, accompanied by an Indian, who undertook to act as his guide to the unknown stream. He soon quitted the Peace River, and entered another of a more contracted width, which proceeded from a neighbouring lake. He crossed this lake, and proceeded from one lake to another, from one river to another, till, after being wrecked and encountering various other accidents, he found himself, on the 18th of June, 1793, upon the Tacoutche Tesse, or Columbia, which falls into the Pacific Ocean.

Between two chains of mountains lay a grand valley, shaded by forests of poplars,



cedars, and birches. Under these forests the traveller descried columns of smoke, announcing to him the dwellings of the invincible savages who inhabit this region. The red and white clay, here and there, on the steep sides of the mountains, conveyed the idea of ancient ruins. The river Columbia pursues its winding course through these beautiful retreats, and on the numerous islands, which divide its stream, large huts were seen, half concealed among the groves of pines, where the natives pass their summers.

Some savages having made their appearance upon the bank, the traveller approached them, and succeeded in obtaining from them valuable information.

“According to their account, this river, whose course is very extensive, runs toward the mid-day sun; and at its mouth, as they had been informed, white people were building houses. They represented its current to be uniformly strong, and that in three places it was altogether impassable, from the falls and rapids which poured along between perpendicular rocks that were much higher and more rugged than



any we had yet seen, and would not admit of any passage over them. But besides the difficulties and dangers of the navigation, they added, that we should have to encounter the inhabitants of the country, who were very numerous."

This account threw Mr. Mackenzie into great perplexity, and again discouraged his companions. He concealed his uneasiness, however, as well as he could, and for some time still followed the course of the waters. He met with other natives, who confirmed the report he had previously received, but who told him that if he chose to quit the river, and proceed directly to the West, he would arrive at the sea in a few days by a very easy road, which was well known to the savages.

Mr. Mackenzie immediately determined to act upon this suggestion. He re-ascended the river till he reached the mouth of a small stream that had been pointed out to him, and leaving his canoe there, penetrated into the woods, on the faith of an Indian who acted as his guide, and who, on taking the slightest offence, might



deliver him to hostile hordes, or abandon him in the midst of the deserts.

Each Canadian carried on his shoulders a package weighing ninety pounds, exclusive of his gun and ammunition, the last of which was in no great quantity. Mr. Mackenzie himself carried, in addition to his arms and telescope, a load of provisions and trinkets, weighing seventy pounds.

The necessity of enduring what they had undertaken, fatigue, and an indescribable sensation of confidence, which is acquired by being accustomed to dangers, soon removed all uneasiness from the minds of our travellers. After a long day's journey through thickets, after being at one time exposed to a scorching sun, and at another drenched with heavy rains, they quietly fell asleep at night to the sound of the Indian's song.

Mr. Mackenzie describes this song as consisting of soft melancholy sounds, tolerably melodious, and in some degree resembling church music. When a traveller awakes under a tree at midnight, in the deserts of America,



and hears the distant concert of some savages, interrupted at intervals by long pauses and the murmur of the wind through the forest, nothing can impart to him a more perfect idea of that aerial music mentioned by Ossian, which departed bards cause to be heard by moonlight on the summit of *Slimora*. Our travellers now arrived at districts inhabited by Indian tribes, whose manners Mr. Mackenzie describes in a manner that much affects the feelings of the reader. He saw a woman, who was almost blind, and much oppressed by age, carried alternately by her own parents, because her infirmities would not allow her to walk. On another occasion, a young woman, with her child, presented to him a vessel full of water, at the passage of a river, as Rebecca filled her pitcher for the servant of Abraham at the wells of Nahor, and said to him: "Drink, and I will draw water for thy camels also."

I myself was once among an Indian tribe, where several of them wept at seeing a traveller, because it reminded them of friends, who



were gone to the *Land of Souls*, and had set out long ago upon their *Travels*.

Every thing is important to the tourist of the desert. The print of a man's foot, recently made, in some wild spot is more interesting to him than the vestiges of antiquity in the plains of Greece. Led by the indications of a neighbouring population, Mr. Mackenzie passed through the village of a hospitable people, where every hut is accompanied by a tomb. Leaving this place, he arrived at the Salmon River, which discharges itself into the Pacific Ocean. A numerous tribe more polished, better clad, and better accommodated as to their dwellings, received him with cordiality. An old man forced his way through the crowd, and clasped him in his arms. A banquet was prepared to welcome him, and he was supplied with provisions in abundance. A youth took a mantle from his own shoulders, and placed it on those of Mr. Mackenzie. It is almost like a scene in Homer. M. Mackenzie passed several days among this tribe. He examined the cemetery, which was only a great wood of cedars, where the dead were burnt and



which constituted a temple for the celebration of two annual festivals, the one in spring and the other in autumn. When he walked through the village, sick people were brought to him that he might cure them, an affecting *trait* of simplicity on the part of a people, among whom man is still dear to man, and who perceive only one advantage in superior knowledge—that of relieving the unfortunate.

The chief of the nation finally appointed his own son to accompany M. Mackenzie to the sea in a canoe made of cedar, which he presented to the traveller. This chief informed M. Mackenzie that ten winters previous to the time at which he spoke, while embarked in the same canoe, with forty Indians, he found on the coast two vessels full of white men. It was the good *Tooler*\*, whose memory will be long dear to the people dwelling on the borders of the Pacific Ocean.

On Saturday, the 20th July, 1793, at eight o'clock in the morning, M. Mackenzie

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\* Captain Cook.



left the Salmon River, and entered into the arm of the sea, where this river discharges itself from several mouths. It would be useless to follow him in his navigation of this bay, where he constantly found traces of captain Vancouver. He observed the latitude at  $52^{\circ} 21' 33''$ , and says: "I now mixed up some vermilion in melted grease, and inscribed, in large characters, on the South East face of the rock, on which we had slept last night, this brief memorial—Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, twenty second of July, one thousand, seven hundred and ninety three."

The discoveries of this traveller supply us with two great results, the one important to commerce, the other to geography. It is thus that England, by the various researches of her enterprising inhabitants, sees before her new sources of wealth, and a new road to her establishments in the Indies and China.

As to the progress in geography, which in fact tends also to the advantage of commerce, Mr. Mackenzie's expedition to the West is less important than the one to the North. Captain



Vancouver had sufficiently proved that there is no passage on the western coast of America, from Nootka sound to Cook's River. Thanks to the labours of Mr. Mackenzie, but little remains to be done in the North. The extremity of Refus Bay is situated about  $68^{\circ}$  lat. N. and  $85^{\circ}$  long. W. meridian of Greenwich. In 1771 Mr. Hearne, who went from Hudson's Bay, saw the sea at the mouth of the river of the *Cuivre Mines*, nearly at  $69^{\circ}$  lat. and  $110^{\circ}$  long. There are then only five or six degrees of longitude between the sea observed by M. Hearn, and the sea at the extremity of Hudson's Bay.

In a latitude so elevated, the degrees of longitude are very minute. Suppose them to be a dozen leagues each, and there remain hardly more than seventy-two leagues to be discovered between the two points mentioned.

In  $5^{\circ}$  long. at the West of the mouth, by which the river of the *Cuivre Mines* discharges itself, Mr. Mackenzie discovered the sea at  $69^{\circ} 7'$  lat. N. By following our first calculation, therefore, we shall have no more than sixty leagues of unknown coast between the sea obser-



ved by Mr. Hearn and that by Mr. Mackenzie.

Continuing towards the West, we find Behring's strait. Captain Cook advanced beyond this straight to  $69^{\circ}$  or  $70^{\circ}$  lat. N. and  $141^{\circ}$  long. W. a distance of seventy-two leagues, so that there are no more than  $6^{\circ}$  of longitude between the Northern Ocean of Cook and that of Mackenzie.

Here then is a chain of established points at which the sea has been perceived round the Pole on the northern coast of America, from the extremity of Behring's Strait to the extremity of Hudson's Bay. It remains only to travel by land through the three intervals, which divide these points, and which cannot together extend beyond two hundred and fifty leagues. We shall then ascertain that the continent of America is bounded on every side by the ocean, and that there is, at its northern extremity, a sea which is perhaps accessible to vessels.

May I be allowed to make one remark?

Mr. Mackenzie has effected, for the advantage



of England, what I undertook and proposed to the French government. My project will, at all events, no longer seem chimerical. While others were in search of fortune and repose, I solicited the honour of bearing the French name into unknown seas, at the peril of my life; of founding for my country a colony upon the Pacific Ocean, of wresting the profits, attendant on a wealthy branch of commerce, from her rival; and of preventing that rival's use of any new roads to the Indies.

In giving an account of Mr. Mackenzie's travels, I have been justified in mingling my own observations with his, because the design of both was the same, and because, at the moment that he was employed on his first expedition, I was also wandering through the forests of America. But he was supported in his undertaking; he left behind him happy friends and a tranquil country. I was not so fortunate.

END OF VOL. I.



RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
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ENGLAND AND AMERICA,  
WITH  
Essays on Various Subjects,  
IN  
MORALS AND LITERATURE;  
BY  
F. A. DE CHATEAUBRIAND,

AUTHOR OF  
TRAVELS IN GREECE AND PALESTINE, THE BEAUTIES OF  
CHRISTIANITY, AN ESSAY ON REVOLUTIONS, &c. &c.

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VOL. II.

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ESSAYS

ON

*VARIOUS SUBJECTS*

IN

LITERATURE & MORALS.

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ESSAYS

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

IN  
ESSAYS  
ON LITERATURE & MORALS.

LETTER TO M. DE FONTAINE

UPON M. DE FONTAINE'S SYSTEM

OF WRITING

IN

I waited with impatience my dear friend for  
the receipt of your **ESSAYS ON LITERATURE & MORALS**.  
As the said promised to answer  
your criticisms I will endeavour to show what a  
wound of his **ESSAYS** will be to the defence of  
perfectibility. In your **ESSAYS** you have  
shown I believe to be the greatest and  
most, but I am sure that you will not object  
that you are a **ESSAYS** and I am sure to  
explain the word **ESSAYS** in your system  
founded. Also I would be very glad to

D

ESSAYS, vol. II.



# ESSAYS

ON

## VARIOUS SUBJECTS

IN

### LITERATURE & MORALS.

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#### LETTER TO M. DE FONTANES

UPON MADAME DE STAEL-HOLSTEIN'S SYSTEM  
OF MORALS.

I WAITED with impatience, my dear friend, for the second edition of Madame de Staël's work, on literature. As she had promised to answer your criticisms I was curious to know what a woman of her talents would say in defence of *perfectibility*. As soon as her work reached my solitude, I hastened to read the preface and notes; but I saw that not one of your objections was removed, she had only endeavoured to explain the word upon which the whole system is founded. Alas! it would be very gratifying



to believe that we are from age to age advancing progressively towards perfection, and that the son is always better than the father. If any thing could prove this excellence in the human character it would be to see that Madame de Staël has found the principle of this illusion in her own heart. Yet I cannot help always entertaining apprehensions that this lady who so often laments over mankind, in boasting of their *perfectability* is like those priests who do not believe in the idol to whom they offer incense at the altars.

I will say also my dear friend, that it seems to me altogether unworthy a woman of the authors merit to have sought, by way of answer to you, to raise doubts with respect to your political opinions. What concern have these pretended opinions with a dispute purely literary?— Might one not justly retort her own argument upon Madame de Staël and say that she has very much the air of not loving the present government and regretting the days of *greater liberty*? Madame de Staël was too much above these means to have made use of them; she ought to



have left them to those who, in a spirit of philanthropy, prepare the road to Cayenne for certain authors if ever *the good times should return*.

Now then, my dear friend, I must tell you my mode of thinking upon this new course of literature. But in combating the system I shall perhaps appear to you as little reasonable as my adversary. You are not ignorant that my passion is to see Jesus Christ every where, as Madame de Staël's is to see *perfectibility*. I have the misfortune of believing, with Pascal, that the christian religion alone can explain the problem of man. You see that I begin by sheltering myself under a great name, in order that you may spare my contracted ideas, and my anti-philosophic superstitions. For the rest, I find myself emboldened, in thinking with what indulgence you have already announced my work. But when will this work appear?— It has even now been two years in the press— for two years the printer has been indefatigable in creating delays, and I have been no less indefatigable in correcting the work. What I am going to say in this letter will then be taken



almost entirely from my future work on the *Genius of Christianity, or on the Moral and Poetical Beauties of the Christian Religion*. It will be amusing to you to see how two minds, setting out from two opposite points, have sometimes arrived at the same results. Madame de Staël gives to philosophy what I ascribe to religion.

To begin with ancient Literature. I agree perfectly with the ingenious author whom you have refuted, that our theatre is superior to the theatre of the ancients; I see yet more clearly that this superiority arises from a more profound study of the human heart. But to what do we owe this knowledge of the passions?—to christianity entirely, in no way to philosophy. You smile, my friend, listen to me. If there existed in the world a religion, the essential qualities of which were to plant a barrier against the passions of men, it would necessarily augment the play of the passions in the Drama and the Epopœa; it would be by its very nature much more favourable to the developement of character than any other religious institution, which, not min-



gling itself with the affections of the soul, would only act upon us by external scenes. Now the Christian Religion has this advantage over the religions of antiquity ; 'tis a celestial wind which swells the sails of virtue, and multiplies the storms of conscience around vice.

All the bases of vice and of virtue are changed among men, at least among Christians, since the preaching of the Gospel. Among the ancients, for example, humility was considered as baseness, and pride as a noble quality. Among us the reverse is the case ; pride is the first of vices and humility the first of virtues. This transmutation of principles alone makes a change in the entire system of morals. It is not difficult to perceive that christianity is in the right, —that christianity alone rests upon the fundamental truths of nature. But it results from thence that we ought to discover in the passions, things which the ancients did not see, yet that these new views of the human heart, cannot justly be attributed to a growing perfection in the genius of man.

To us the root of all evil is vanity ; the root



of all good charity ; thus vicious passions are always a composition of pride, virtuous ones are a composition of love. Setting out with these extreme terms, there are no medium terms that cannot easily be found in the scale of our passions. Christianity has carried morality to such a length, that it has, as it were, subjected the emotions of the soul to mathematical rules.

I shall not enter here, my dear friend, into an investigation of dramatic characters, such as those of father, of husband, &c. &c.—neither shall I treat of each sentiment separately ; all this you will see in my work. I shall only observe with respect to friendship, in thinking of you, that christianity has developed its charms most eminently, because the one, like the other, consists altogether of contrasts. In order for two men to be perfect friends, they ought incessantly to attract and repel each other by some place ; they ought to possess equal powers of genius, but directed to different objects ; opposite opinions, similar principles ; different loves and hatreds, but the same fund of sensibility ; humours that cross each other, but tastes that



assimilate; in one word, great contrast of character, with great harmony of soul.

In treating the subject of love, Madame de Staël has entered upon a commentary on the story of Phædra. Her observations are acute, and we see by the lesson of the scoliast that she perfectly understands her text. But if it be only in modern times that this passion has been formed from a combination of the soul and the senses, and we have seen that species of love of which friendship forms the moral basis, is it not to christianity that we are indebted for this sentiment being brought to perfection?—is it not this mild religion which, tending continually to purify the heart, has carried spirituality even into those inclinations which appear the least susceptible of it?—how much has it redoubled their energy by crossing them in the heart of man. Christianity alone has given rise to those terrible combats between the flesh and the spirit which are so favourable to grand dramatic effects. See in Héloïse the most impetuous of passions struggle against a menacing religion. Héloïse loves, Héloïse burns, but religion raises up walls of ice



to check the raging fever ; there, every warmer feeling is extinguished under insensible marble ; there, eternal chastisements or rewards attend her fall or her triumph. Dido only loses an ungrateful lover ; Héloïse, alas ! endures far other torments : she must choose between a faithful lover and her God ; nor must she hope that the least particle of her heart can be secretly devoted to the service of her Abelard. The God whom she serves is a jealous God ; a God who must be preferred before every other object ; a God who punishes the very shadow of a thought, à mere dream alone addressed to any other than himself.

For the rest, we cannot but feel that these cloisters, these vaults, these austere manners, contrasted with unfortunate love, must at once increase its power and its sorrows. I lament exceedingly that Madame de Staël has not developed the system of the passions religiously. *Perfectibility* was not, at least according to my opinion, the instrument which ought to have been employed to measure weakness ; I would rather have appealed to the very errors of my



life. Obligated to give the history of dreams, I would have interrogated my dreams, and if I had found that our passions are really more refined than the passions of the ancients I should only have concluded that the illusion we are under is more complete.

If the time and place permitted, my dear friend, I should have many other remarks to make on ancient literature; I should take the liberty of combating many of Madame de Staël's literary opinions. I must, however, observe, that I cannot agree with her respecting the metaphysics of the ancients; their dialectic was more verbose and less impressive than ours, but in metaphysics they knew quite as much as we do. Has mankind advanced a single step in the moral sciences?—No; it has advanced only in the physical ones; nay, how easy would it be to dispute even the principles of our sciences. Certainly Aristotle with his ten categories, which included all the powers of thought, knew as much as Boyle or Condillac with their idealism. But we might pass eternally from one system to another in these matters; in metaphysics all is



doubt, obscurity, and uncertainty. The reputation and the influence of Locke are already declining in England; his doctrine, which goes to proving very clearly that there are no such things as innate ideas, is nothing less than certain, since it cannot stand against mathematical truths, which could never have passed into the soul through the medium of the senses. Is it smell, taste, feeling, hearing, seeing, which could demonstrate to Pythagoras that in a rectangular triangle the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares made on the other two sides. All the arithmeticians, and all the geometricians will tell Madame de Staël, that the numbers and the relations of the three dimensions of matter are pure abstractions of the thought, and that the senses, far from having any concern in this kind of knowledge, are its greatest enemies. Besides, mathematical truths, if I dare say it, are innate in us for this very reason, that they are eternal, unalterable. If then these truths be eternal, they can only be emanations from a fountain of truth which exists somewhere; and this fountain of truth



can only be God. The idea of God is then, in its turn, an innate idea in the human mind; and our soul which contains these eternal truths must be an immortal essence.

Observe, my dear friend, this connection of things, and then judge how very little Madame de Staël has examined into the depths of her argument. I shall be constrained here, in spite of myself, to pass a very severe judgment. This lady, anxious to invent a system, and imagining she perceived that Rousseau had reflected more profoundly than Plato, and Seneca more than Livy, thought she was in possession of all the clues to the soul, and to the principle of intelligence. But pedantic spirits, like myself, are not at all satisfied with this precipitate march; they would have had her dive deeper into the subject, not have been so superficial. They would have had her, in a book which treats of the most important subject in the world, the faculty of thought in man, given way less to imagination, to a taste for sophism, to the versatile and changeable fancy of the woman.

You know with what we religious people are charged by the philosophers;—they say that



we have not very strong heads, and shrug their shoulders with pity when we talk to them of the moral sentiment; they ask *what all this proves?* —Indeed I must own to my confusion, that I cannot tell that myself, for I have never sought to demonstrate my heart to myself, I have left that task to my friends. Do not take any unfair advantage of this confession, and betray me to philosophy. I must have the air of understanding myself, even though I do not in reality understand myself at all. I have been told in my retreat that this manner would succeed; but it is very singular that all those who overwhelm us with this contempt for our *want of argumentation*, and who regard our miserable ideas as *things habituated to the house* \*, themselves forget the very foundation of things on which they treat. Thus we are obliged to do violence to ourselves, and to think, at the hazard of our lives, in contradiction to our religious dispositions, in order to bring back to the recollection of these thinkers, what they ought to have thought.

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\* A phrase used by Madame de Staël in her new Preface.



Is it not altogether incredible that in speaking of the degradation of the Roman emperors, Madame de Staël has neglected to point out the influence that growing christianity had upon the minds of men. She has the air of never recollecting the religion which changed the face of the world, till she comes to the moment when the inroads of the barbarians commenced. But long before this epoch the cries of justice and liberty had resounded through the empire of the Cæsars. And who was it that had uttered these cries?—The Christians. Fatal blindness of systems! Madame de Staël applies the epithet of the *madness of martyrdom* to acts which her generous heart, on other occasions, would have extolled with transport. I speak here of young virgins who preferred death to the caresses of tyrants, of men refusing to sacrifice to idols, and sealing with their blood, before the eyes of the astonished world, the dogmas of the unity of God and the immortality of the soul. Here is, in my opinion true philosophy.

What must have been the astonishment of the human race when in the midst of the most



shameful superstitions *when every thing*, as Bossuet says, *was God except God himself*—how much must the world have been astonished at such a time on a sudden to hear from Tertullian the following abstract of the Christian Faith “The God whom we adore is one only God who created the Universe with the Elements, the bodies, and the minds of which it is composed;—who by his word, his reason and his Almighty power called out of nothing a world to be the ornament of his greatness.—He is invisible, although he is every where to be seen, impalpable, although we form to ourselves representations of him, incomprehensible although obvious to all the lights of reason.—Nothing can make us so well comprehend the supreme Being, as the impossibility of conceiving him; his immensity at the same time conceals him, and discloses him to the eyes of mankind.\*”

And when the same apologist dared alone speak the language of freedom amid the silence of the rest of the world, was not this philosophy.

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\* *Tertul. Apologet. Chap. 1*



Who would not have thought that he heard the first Brutus roused from the tomb, menacing the throne of Tiberius when listening to these fiery accents which shook the porticoes whither enslaved Rome came to breathe her sighs. "I am not the slave of the Emperor; I have only one master, the all-powerful and eternal God who is also the master of Cæsar.\* It is for this reason that you exercise all sorts of cruelties towards us. Ah if it were permitted to us to render evil for evil, a single night and a few torches would suffice for our vengeance. We are but of yesterday, and we are every where among you—your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your camps, your colonies, your tribes, your councils, the palace, the senate, the forum, in all these we abound, we leave you nothing free except your temples."

I may be mistaken, my dear friend, but it seems to me that Madame de Staël in sketching the history of the philosophic mind should not have omitted such things. The literature of the

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\* *Apologet*, Cap. 37.



Fathers which fills up the ages from Tacitus to Saint Bernard offered an immense career for reflections and observations. One of the most injurious appellations for example, which the people could give to the first Christians was that of *philosophers*.\* They called them also *Atheists*,† and forced them to abjure their religion in these terms: *αἰσὴ τοῦς ἄθεοις* *confusion to the atheists*,‡ Strange fate of Christians! burnt under Nero for atheism, guillotined under Robespierre for over-credulity!—Which of the two tyrants was in the right?—According to the law of *perfectibility* Robespierre.

Throughout the whole of Madame de Staël's book, from the one end to the other, there are nothing but the most singular contradictions. Sometimes she appears almost a christian, and I am ready to rejoice in the idea; but, in an instant after, philosophy resumes the ascendancy. Sometimes, inspired by her natural sensibility

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\* St. Just. Apolog.—Tert. Apologet, &c.

† Athenogor. Legat. pro Christ.—Arnob. lib. 1.

‡ Euseb. lib. 4, Cap. 15.



which tells her that there is nothing fine, nothing affecting without religion, she suffers her soul to have its free course; but suddenly *argumentation* awakes and checks in an instant the effusions of her soul. Analysis then takes the place of that vague infinite in which thought loves to lose itself, and the understanding cites, to its tribunal, causes which formerly went before that old seat of truth called by our Gaulish fathers the *entrails of man*. Hence it results that Madame de Staël's book appears to be a singular mixture of truths and errors. When she ascribes to Christianity the melancholy that reigns in the genius of the moderns, I am entirely of her opinion; but when she joins to this cause I know not what malignant influence of the north, I no longer recognise the writer who before appeared so judicious. You see, my dear friend, that I am led on by my subject; but I proceed now to modern literature.

The religion of the Hebrews, born amidst thunderings and lightnings, in the deserts of Horeb and of Sinai, had in it a sadness truly formidable. The Christian religion in retaining



all that was sublime in that of Moses, softened its other features. Formed to soothe the miseries and relieve the wants of our hearts, it is essentially tender and melancholy. It represents man always as a traveller who passes here below through a valley of tears and only finds repose in the tomb. The God whom it offers to our adoration is the God of the unfortunate; he has himself been a sufferer; children and weak persons are the objects of his peculiar interest, he cherishes those who weep.

The persecutions experienced by the first among the faithful, undoubtedly increased their disposition to serious meditation. The invasion of the barbarians filled up the measure of their calamities, and the human mind received from it an impression of gloom which could never be wholly effaced. All the ties which attached them to life being broken at once, God alone remained as their hope, the deserts as their refuge. In like manner as at the deluge, men sought to save themselves by flying to the mountains; but these new refugees carried with them the spoils of the arts and civilization. The



most solitary places were filled with anchorites, who, clothed with the leaves of the palm-tree, devoted themselves to unceasing penitence, in hopes of disarming the anger of the Deity. On every side convents were raised, where those unfortunate beings who had been deceived by the world sought a retreat; where those souls who preferred remaining in ignorance of certain sentiments of existence, rather than exposing themselves to seeing them cruelly betrayed, found a refuge. An all-prevailing melancholy was the necessary consequence, of this monastic life; for melancholy is principally engendered by a vacuity of the passions; it then most prevails when these passions, being without an object, consume away of themselves, as must happen in a life of solitude.

This sentiment was besides increased by the regulations which were adopted in the greater part of the communities. In some these votaries of religion dug their own graves by the light of the moon, in the cemeteries of their convents; in others they had no bed but a coffin; many wandered about like departed shades, over the



ruins of Memphis and Babylon, accompanied by the lions whom they had tamed with the sounds of the harps of David. Some condemned themselves to a perpetual silence, others repeated in an eternal canticle either the sighs of Job, the lamentations of Jeremiah, or the penitential hymns of the prophet king. The monasteries were built in the most desert spots; they were dispersed over the summits of Libanus, they were to be found amid the arid sands of Egypt, in the deepest recesses of the forests of Gaul, and upon the strands of the British seas. Oh how melancholy must have been the tinklings of the bells which amid the calm of night called the vestals to prayer and watching, and which mingled themselves beneath the vaults of the temples with the last sounds of the canticles, and the feeble breaking of the distant waves. How profound must have been the meditations of the solitary who from between the bars of his window contemplated the sublime aspect of the sea, perhaps agitated by a storm!—a tempest amid the waves, calm in his retreat, men dashed to pieces upon the rocks at the asylum of



peace!—infinite space on the other side the walls of a cell, like as the stone of the tomb alone separates eternity from life. All these different powers, misfortunes, religion, varied recollections, the manners of the times, even the scenes of nature, combined to make the genius of Christianity the genius of Melancholy itself.

It appears to me useless then to have recourse to the barbarians of the North to explain this character of gloominess which Madame de Staël finds more particularly in the literature of England and of Germany, but which appears to me not less remarkable among the masters of the French school. Neither England nor Germany produced Pascal or Bossuet, those two great models of melancholy in thoughts and in sentiments. But Ossian, my dear friend, is not he the great fountain of the North, whence all the bards have intoxicated themselves with gloom, as the ancients painted Homer under the likeness of a great river at which all the petty rivers came to fill their urns. I confess that this idea of Madame de Staël pleases me much; I love to represent to myself these two blind men,



the one seated upon the summit of a rugged mountain in Scotland, with his head bald, his beard wet with the dew, the harp in his hand dictating his laws from the midst of his fogs to all the poetic tribes of Germany; the other exalted upon the heights of Pindus surrounded by the Muses, who hold his lyre, raising his venerable head towards the azure heavens of Greece, and with a sceptre of laurels in his hand giving laws to the country of Tasso and Racine. “*You abandon my cause then,*” you will perhaps here be ready to exclaim. Undoubtedly, my friend, but I must whisper you the reason in secret, it is that *Ossian was himself a Christian*.—Ossian a Christian!—Grant that I am happy in having converted this bard; and that in pressing him under the banners of religion I take from the *Age of Melancholy* one of its first heroes.

None but foreigners are still the dupes of Ossian; all England is convinced that the poems which bear the name of his are the works of Mr. Macpherson himself. I was for a long time deceived by this ingenious fraud; an enthusiast in Ossian, like a young man, as I was



then, I was obliged to pass several years among the literati of London before I could be entirely undeceived. But at length, conviction was no longer to be resisted, and the palaces of Fingal vanished away from before me like many other of my dreams. You know of the long-standing controversy between Doctor Johnson and the supposititious translator of the Caledonian bard. Mr. Macpherson, pressed to the uttermost, never could produce the manuscript of Fingal, concerning which he told a ridiculous story that he found it in an old coffer at the house of a peasant, adding that the manuscript was written on paper in Runic characters. Now Johnson has clearly demonstrated that neither paper or the Runic Alphabet were in use in Scotland at the epoch fixed on by Macpherson. As to the text, which we see printed with some of the poems by Smith, or any that may hereafter be printed, it is well known that these poems have been translated from the English into the Caledonian tongue, for several of the Scotch mountaineers have made themselves accomplices in the fraud of



their fellow-countryman. This it was that deceived Doctor Blair.\*

It is indeed no very uncommon thing in England for manuscripts to be found in this way. We have lately seen a tragedy of Shakespeare; and what is still more extraordinary ballads of the time of Chaucer were so perfectly imitated in the style, the parchment, and the ancient character, that every body was deceived by the imposture. Many volumes were already prepared and ready for the press developing the beauties, and proving the authenticity of these miraculous works, when the editor was detected composing and writing himself these Saxon poems. The admirers and commentators got out of the scrape with only a laugh against them, and the trouble of making a bonfire of their works, but, if I am not mistaken the young man who had given

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\* Some English Journals have asserted, and the assertion has been copied into the French Journals, that the true text of Ossian was at length about to appear; but it can never be any thing more than a Scotch version made from the text of Mr. Macpherson himself.



this extraordinary direction to his talents, in despair, put an end to his own life.

It is however certain that there are ancient poems, in existence, which bear the name of Ossian; they are of Irish or Erse origin, the work of some monks of the thirteenth century. Fingal is a giant who makes one step only over from Scotland to Ireland, and the heroes go to the Holy-Land to expiate the murders they have committed.

To say the truth it seems now wholly incredible how any one ever could have been deceived with respect to the true author of Ossian's poems. The man of the eighteenth century peeps through the thin veil at every moment. I will only instance by way of example the apostrophe of the bard to the sun. "O sun," he says, "whence comest thou, whither dost thou go, wilt thou not fall one day," &c. &c.\*

Madame de Staël who is so well versed in the history of the human understanding will

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\* I write from memory and may be mistaken as to the exact words, but I give the sense, and that is sufficient.



see that there are here so many complex ideas under moral, physical, and metaphysical relations, that they can scarcely without palpable absurdity be ascribed to a savage. Besides this, the most abstract ideas on time, on duration, and on eternity, occur at almost every page of Ossian. I have lived among the savages of America, and I have observed that they often talk of the times that are past, but never of those that are to come. Some grains of dust at the bottom of the tomb, remain to them as a testimony of life in the vacuum of the past, but what can indicate to them existence in the vacuum of the future. This anticipation of the future, which is so familiar to us, is nevertheless one of the strongest abstractions at which the ideas of mankind have arrived. Happy the savage who does not know like us, that grief is followed by grief, and whose soul devoid of recollection or of foresight does not center in itself, by a sort of painful eternity, the past, the present, and the future.

But what proves incontestably that Mr. Macpherson is the author of Ossian's poems, is the perfection or the *beautiful ideal of morals*



which reigns in them. This deserves to be somewhat dwelt upon. The *beautiful ideal* is the offspring of society; men nearly in a state of nature have no conception of it. They content themselves, in their songs, with painting exactly what they see; and as they live in the midst of deserts, their pictures are always grand and poetical; for this reason no bad taste is to be found in their compositions, but then they are and must be, monotonous, and the sentiments they express cannot arrive at true heroism.

The age of Homer was already some way removed from this time. Let a savage pierce a kid with his arrows, let him cut it in pieces in the midst of the forests, let him extend his victim upon glowing coals made from the trunk of a venerable oak, so far all is noble in this action. But in the tent of Achilles we find basons, spits, knives; one instrument more and Homer would have sunk into the meanness and littleness of German descriptions, or he must have had recourse to the *beautiful ideal* by beginning to *conceal*. Observe this well;—the following explanation will make all clear.



70 In proportion as society, increasing in refinement, multiplied the wants and the conveniences of life, the poets learnt that they must not, as before, place every thing before the eyes but must veil over certain parts of the picture. This first step taken, they next saw that in doing so, some choice must be made, and at length that the thing chosen was susceptible of a finer form, or a finer effect, in such, or such a position. Thus always concealing, and always selecting, always retrenching and always adding, they found themselves by degrees deviating into forms which were not natural, but which were more beautiful than those of nature, and to these forms they gave the name of the *beautiful ideal*. This *beautiful ideal* may then be defined as the art of choosing and concealing.

The *beautiful ideal* in morals was formed on the same principles as the *beautiful ideal* in physics, by keeping out of sight certain emotions of the soul; for the soul has its degrading wants and its meannesses as well as the body. And I cannot refrain from observing that man is of all living beings the only one who is susceptible of



being represented more perfect than he is by nature, and as approaching to divinity. No one would think of painting the *beautiful ideal* of an eagle, a lion, &c. If I dared carry my ideas to the faculty of *reasoning*, my dear friend, I should say, that I see in that a grand idea in the author of all things, and a proof of our immortality.

That society wherein morals have attained with the greatest celerity all the developements of which they are capable, must the soonest attain the beautiful ideal of character. Now this is what eminently distinguishes the societies formed in the christian religion. It is a strange thing and yet strictly true, that through the medium of the Gospel, morals had arrived among our ancestors at their highest point of perfection, while as to every thing else they were absolute barbarians.

I ask now where Ossian could have imbibed those perfect ideas of morals with which he adorns his heroes. It was not in his religion, since it is agreed on all hands that there is no religion among his savages. Could it be from



nature itself?—And how should the savage Ossian seated upon a rock in Caledonia, while every thing around him was cruel, barbarous, gross and sanguinary, arrive so rapidly at those notions of morals which were scarcely understood by Socrates in the most enlightened days of Greece?—notions, which the Gospel alone revealed to the world, as the result of observations pursued for four thousand years upon the character of man. Madame de Staël's memory has betrayed her when she asserts that the Scandinavian poetry has the same characteristics which distinguish the poetry of the pretended Scotch bard. Every one knows that the contrary is the fact, the former breathes nothing but brutality and vengeance. Mr. Macpherson has himself been careful to point out this difference and to bring the warriors of Morven into contrast with the warriors of Lochlin. The ode, to which Madame de Staël refers in a note has even been cited, and commented upon by Doctor Blair, in opposition to the poetry of Ossian. This ode resembles very much the death-song of the Iroquois: "*I do not fear death, I am*



“brave, why can I not again drink out of the  
 “skulls of my enemies, and devour their  
 “hearts,” &c. In fine, Mr. Macpherson has been  
 guilty of mistakes in Natural History, which  
 would alone suffice to betray the imposture; he  
 has planted oaks where nothing but gorse ever  
 grew, and made eagles scream, where nothing was  
 ever heard but the voice of the barnacle, or the  
 whistling of the curlew.

Mr. Macpherson was a member of the Eng-  
 lish parliament, he was rich, he had a very fine  
 park among the mountains of Scotland where by  
 dint of much art, and of great care, he had suc-  
 ceeded in raising a few trees; he was besides a  
 very good Christian and deeply read in the Bi-  
 ble; he has sung his mountains, his park, and  
 his religion.\*

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\* Several passages of Ossian are evident imitations from  
 the Bible, as are others from Homer. Among the latter is  
 that fine expression *the Joy of Grief* *χρησὶν τεταρπόμεθα γοοῖο*  
 Book II. verse 211. I must observe that, in the original of  
 Homer there is a cast of melancholy which has not been  
 retained by any of his translators. I do not believe, like  
 Madame de Staël, that there has ever been a particular *Age*



This does not undoubtedly derogate in any way from the merit of the poems of *Fingal* and *Temora*; they are not the less true models of a sort of melancholy of the desert, which is full of charms. I have just procured the small edition which has been recently published in Scotland, and you must not frown, my dear friend, when I tell you that I never go out now without my Wetstein's Homer in one pocket and my Glasgow edition of Ossian in the other. It results however from all I have said that Madame de Staël's system respecting the influence of Ossian upon the literature of the North moulders away; and if she shall persist in believing that such a person as this Scotch bard really did exist, she has too much sense and reason not to perceive that a system which rests upon a basis so disputable must be a bad one. For my part, you see that I have every thing to gain by the fall of Ossian, and that in depriving the tragedies of Shakespeare, Young's Night Thoughts,

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of *Melancholy*, but I believe that all great geniuses have a disposition to melancholy.



Pope's Eloisa to Abelard, and Richardson's Clarissa, of this gloomy *perfectibility* I establish victoriously the melancholy of religious ideas. All these authors were christians, it is even believed that Shakspeare was a catholic.

If I were now to follow Madame de Staël into the age of Louis XIV, you would doubtless reproach me with being altogether extravagant. I will confess that, on this subject I, harbour a superstition almost ridiculous. I fall into a holy anger when people would compare the writers of the eighteenth century with those of the seventeenth; even at this moment, while I write, the very idea is ready to drive my *reason out of all bounds* as Blaise Pascal used to say. I must have been terribly led away by the talents of Madame de Staël, if I could have remained silent in such a cause.

We have no historians she says. I should have thought that Bossuet was worth something. Montesquieu himself is indebted to him for his work on the *Grandeur and fall of the Roman Empire*, the sublime abridgement of which he found in the third part of Bossuet's Essay on



Universal History. Herodotus, Tacitus, and Livy, are, according to my ideas little in comparison with Bossuet; to say this, is sufficient to say that the Guiccardini's, the Marianas, the Humes, the Robertsons, disappear before him. What a survey does he take of the whole earth,—he is in a thousand places at once. A patriarch under the palms of Thophel, a minister at the court of Babylon, a priest at Memphis, a legislator at Sparta, a citizen at Athens and at Rome, he changes time and place at his will, he passes along with the rapidity and the majesty of centuries; holding in his hand the rod of the law with an incredible authoritativeness he drives Jews and Gentiles to the tomb; he comes at last himself at the end of this convoy of generations, and marching forwards, supported by Isaiah and Jeremiah, utters his prophetic lamentations amid the dust and ruins of mankind.

Without religion a man may have talents, but it is almost impossible to have genius. How little appear to me the greater part of men of the eighteenth century who instead of the infinite instrument employed by the Racines and the



Bossuets as the fundamental note on which their eloquence was rested, have recourse to the scale of a narrow philosophy, which subdivides the soul into degrees and minutes, and reduces the whole universe, the Deity himself included, to a simple subtraction from nothing.

Every writer who refuses to believe in one only God, the author of the universe and the judge of man, whose immortal soul he created, banishes infinity from his works. He restrains his ideas to a circle of mud from which he cannot free himself; every thing operates with him by the impure means of corruption and regeneration. The vast abyss is but a little bituminous water, mountains are only petty protuberances of calcareous or vitrescible stone. Those two admirable luminaries of heaven the one of which is extinguished when the other is lighted, for the purpose of illuminating our labours and our watchings, these are only two ponderous masses formed by chance, by I know not what fortuitous combination of matter. Thus all is disenchanted, all is laid open by incredulity. These people would even tell you that they know what



man is, and if you would believe them they would explain to you whence comes thought, and what makes the heart palpitate at hearing the recital of a noble action; so easily do they comprehend what never could be comprehended by the greatest geniuses. But draw near and see in what these mighty lights of their philosophy consist. Look to the bottom of the tomb, contemplate that inhumed corps, that statue of annihilation, veiled by a shroud—this is the whole man of the Atheist.

You have here a very long letter, my dear friend, yet I have not said half what I could say upon the subject. I shall be called a capuchin, but you know that Diderot loved the capuchins very much. For you, in your character of poet, why should you be frightened at a grey beard; Homer long ago reconciled the Muses to it. Be this as it may, it is time to think of drawing the epistle to a conclusion. But since you know that we papists have a strong passion for making converts, I will own to you, in confidence, that I would give much to see Madam de Staël range herself under the banners of religion. This is



what I would venture to say to her had I the honour of knowing her

“ You are, Madam, undoubtedly a woman of very superior talents, you have a strong understanding, your imagination is sometimes full of charms, as witness what you say of Erminia, disguised as a warrior; and your turns of expression are often at the same time brilliant and elevated. But notwithstanding these advantages your work is far from being all that it might have been made. The style is monotonous, it wants rapidity and it is too much mingled with metaphysical expressions. The sophism of the ideas is repulsive, the erudition does not satisfy, and the heart is too much sacrificed to the thoughts. Whence arise these defects?—from your philosophy. Eloquence is the quality in which your work fails the most essentially, and there is no eloquence without religion. Man has so much need of an eternity of hope, that you have been obliged to form one to yourself upon the earth, in your system of *perfectibility*, to replace that *infinite* hope which you refuse to see in heaven. If you be sensible to fame return



to religious ideas. I am convinced that you have within you the germ of a much finer work than any you have hitherto given us. Your talents are not above half developed; philosophy stifles them, and if you remain in your opinions you will not arrive at the height you might attain by following the route which conducted Pascal, Bossuet, and Racine, to immortality."

Thus would I address Madame de Staël, as far as glory is concerned. In adverting to the subject of happiness that my sermon might be the less repulsive, I would vary my manner; I would borrow the language of the forests, as I may well be permitted to do in my quality of a savage, and would say to my neophite :

" You appear not to be happy, you often complain in your work of wanting hearts that can understand you. Know that there are certain souls who seek in vain in nature souls formed to assimilate with their own, who are condemned by the supreme mind to a sort of eternal widowhood. If this be your misfortune, it is by religion alone that it can be cured. The word *philosophy*



in the language of Europe, appears to me synonymous with the word *solitude*, in the idiom of savages. How then can philosophy fill up the void of your days?—can the void of the desert be filled up by a desert.

“ There was once a woman in the Apalachean mountains, who said : ‘ There are no such things as good genii for I am unhappy, and all the inhabitants of our huts are unhappy. I have not met with a man, whatever was the air of happiness which he wore, that was not suffering under some concealed wound. The heart, the most serene to appearance resembled the natural well of the Savannah of Alachua ; the surface appears calm and pure, but when you look to the bosom of this tranquil bason you perceive a large crocodile which the well cherishes in its waters.’

“ The woman went to consult a fortune-teller of the desert of Scambra, whether there were such things as good genii. The Sage answered her : ‘ Reed of the river who would support thee if there were not good genii ; thou oughtest to believe in them for the reason alone



that thou art unhappy. What wouldest thou do with life if being without happiness, thou wert also without hope. Occupy thyself, fill up in secret the solitude of thy days by acts of beneficence; be the polar star of the unfortunate, spread out thy modest lustre in the shade, be witness to the tears that flow in silence, and let all that are miserable turn their eyes to thee without being dazzled by it. These are the sole means of finding the happiness you want. The Great Mind has only struck thee to render thee sensible to the woes of thy brethren, and that thou mayest seek to soothe them. If thy heart be like to the well of the crocodile, it is also like those trees which only yield their balm to heal the wounds of others when wounded themselves by the steel.' Thus spoke the fortune-teller of the desert of Scambra, to the woman of the Apalachean mountains, and retired again into his cavern in the rock."

Adieu, my dear friend, I embrace you, and love you with all my heart.



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 ON THE POET GILBERT\*.
 

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WHEN we see M. Gilbert poor and without a name, attack the powerful faction of men of letters, who in the last century dispensed fame and fortune;—when we see him in this unequal contest struggle almost alone against the opinions most in fashion, and the highest reputations, we cannot but acknowledge in his success the prodigious empire of talent.

A collection of Heroics, of translations, and fugitive pieces, under the title of the *Literary Début*, announced M. Gilbert to the world of letters. A young man who seeks his own talent, is very liable to mistake it; the Juvenal of the eighteenth century deceived himself with respect to his. The epistle from *Eloïsa to Abelard*, had revived a species of poetry which had

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\* He died in the year 1780. See the remarkable account of his death in the *Historical and Literary Memoirs and Anecdotes* by Baron de Grimm, english translation anno. 1780.



been almost forgotten since the days of Ovid. *The Heroïde* a poem, partly historic, partly elegiac, has this strong objection that it rests on declamation and common place expressions of love. The poet, making his hero speak for himself, can neither elevate his language to the proper inspired mark, suited to the lyre, nor descend to the familiar tone of a letter. The subject of *Eloïsa* alone permitted at once all the naïveté of passion, and all the art of the Muse, because religion lends a pomp to language without depriving it of its simplicity. Love then assumes a character at once sublime and formidable, *when the most serious occupations, the holy temple itself, the sacred altars, the terrible mysteries of religion all recal the idea of it, are all associated with its recollections.\**

The history of Madame de Gange did not present M. Gilbert with as powerful an engine as religion. Yet fraternal affection, contrasted with jealousy, might have furnished him with some very pathetic situations. In the *Heroïde* of Dido, the poet has translated some of the

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† MASSILLON. *The Prodigal Son.*



verses of the Eneïd very happily, particularly the *non ignara malis*.

In woe myself, I learned to weep for woe.

I know not however whether this sentiment be in itself as just as it is amiable ; it is certain at least that there are men whose hearts adversity seems to harden ; they have shed all their tears for themselves.

Nature had given M. Gilbert some fancy and much assurance ; so that he succeeded better in the Ode, than in Heroics. The exordium of his *Last Judgement* is very fine.

What benefits have all your savage virtues produced  
Justly you have said, God protects us as a father  
Oppress'd on all sides, cast down, you crouch  
Under the feet of the wicked whose boldness is prosperous.

.....  
Let this God come then if ever he existed !—  
Since virtue is the subject of misfortune  
Since the child of sorrow calls and is not heard  
He must sleep in heaven beneath his silent thunders.

The sound of the trumpet which awakens the dead from the tomb, answers alone to the question of the wicked. It would be difficult



to find a turn more animated, more lyric. Every one knows the lines which conclude this ode.

The Eternal has broken his useless thunder,—  
 And of wings and a scythe for ever depriv'd  
 Upon the world destroyed *time* stands motionless.

The fine expression *widow of a king people*, speaking of Rome, which is in the ode addressed to Monsieur upon his journey to Piedmont;—the apostrophe of the impious to Christ in the Ode upon the Jubilee: *we have irretrievably convicted thee of imposture oh Christ!* with the poet's reflexion in speaking again in his own character, after this blasphemy: *thus spoke in past times a people of false sages*;—Thunder personified which would select the head of the blasphemer to crush it with its power, if the time of mercy were not come;—the people marching in the steps of the cross, those old warriors who to appease the vengeance of the lord go to offer *laurels, and the sufferings of a body of which the tomb already possesses the half*;—all these things appear to us in the true nature of the ode which:



Winging to heaven its ambitious flight  
 Holds in its measures, commerce with the gods.

Why then should M. Gilbert, who joins boldness of expression to the lyric movement, not be placed in the same rank with Malherbe, Racine, and Rousseau?—It is that he fails frequently in harmony of numbers, without which there can be no real poetry. Poetic imagery and thoughts, cannot of themselves constitute a poet, there must be also harmony of versification, a melodious combination of sounds ; the chords of the lyre must be heard to vibrate. Unfortunately the secret of this divine harmony cannot be taught, a happy ear is the gift of nature. M. Gilbert does not understand *those changes of tone which cross each other, and, by the mixture of their accords, often communicate a heavenly transport a delicious rapture to the soul.*\* In some few strophes he has somewhat seized this harmony so necessary to the lyric genius. In speaking of the battle of Ushant he exclaims :

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\* Longinus, chap. 32.



Haste to revenge, the time's arrived  
 When these our haughty foes so oft forsworn  
 Their pride, their still enduring wrongs shall expiate,  
 Too long with patience have our souls endur'd  
 The servile peace which they elate  
 With victory impos'd.

Dunkirk invokes you, hear you not her voice  
 Raise, raise again the towers that guard her shores,  
 Release her port, by slavery long restrain'd  
 From the harsh doom that bound her to obey  
 At once two sovereign lords.

M. Gilbert has sometimes laid down the lyre, to assume the voice of the orator. "There was once a country," says he, in the peroration of his eulogium of Léopold Duke of Lorraine, "there was once a country in which the subjects had a right to judge their master, at the moment when Providence calls monarchs to himself to require from them an account of their actions. They assembled in a throng around his body, which was exposed on the side of the tomb, when one insulted the unfortunate corpse by saying: *My innocent family were poisoned by thy orders.*—Another exclaimed: *He plundered me of all my property.*—Another: *Men were in*



*his eyes no more than the flocks that graze the fields*; all condemned him to become the prey of ravenous birds. But if he had been just, then the whole nation with hair dishevelled, uttering dreadful cries, assembled to deplore their loss, and to raise for him a superb mausoleum, while the orators made the temples resound with celebrating his glory. Well, my friend, the time which has elapsed since the death of Léopold gives us the same privilege that these people enjoyed. We have nothing to apprehend from the resentment of his son, his sceptre is broken, his throne is annihilated. There are here citizens of all ranks and descriptions; some have lived under his laws, others have learnt from their fathers the history of his reign. Let them rise.—And thou shade of Leopold, come forth from the tomb, come and receive the tribute of praise or of malediction which is owed to thee by this august assembly. Speak, citizens, speak, this great shade is here present, *Have ye any thing wherewith to reproach Léopold?*—Not one speak?—*Have ye any thing, I ask, wherewith to reproach Léopold?*—Wherever I turn my eyes I



see countenances cast down, I see vain tears flow. Ungrateful men! dare you wrong your benefactor by this injurious silence? Speak, I say once more, *Have ye any thing wherewith to reproach Léopold?*—Alas! I understand ye.—You have no reproaches to make, unless to heaven, that so soon cut short his days.—Let us then weep.”

This is not indeed the eloquence of the Bishop of Meaux, but if this passage had been found in Flechier, it would long ago have been cited with honour and distinction.

In many passages of his works, M. Gilbert complains bitterly of his fate, “What folly,” said a woman once, “to open our hearts to the world; it laughs at our weaknesses, it does not believe in our virtues, it does not pity our sorrows.” The verses that follow, the effusion of a man under misfortunes, are only remarkable for the accent of truth which they bear. The poet shews himself struggling by turns against the noble thirst of fame, and the chagrins inseparable from the career of letters.



Heaven placed my cradle in the dust of earth,

I blush not at it—master of a throne

My lowest subject had my bosom envied.

Asham'd of owing ought to blood alone

I had wished to be reborn, to raise myself.

This is truly the language of a young man who feels, for the first time, a generous passion for glory. But he is soon reduced to regretting his primitive obscurity; he draws a picture of the happiness of a friend whom he has quitted in the country: "Justice, peace, every thing smiled around Philemon. Oh how should I delight in that enchanting simplicity while expecting the return of an absent husband, assembles all the fruits of their tender love; while directing the yet feeble steps of the elder, and carrying the youngest in her arms, she hastens with them to the foot of the path by which their father is to descend." Here the softened feelings of misfortune have mingled themselves with the accents of the poet, we no longer see the satyrist armed with his *bloody lines*.

We are sorry to find M. Gilbert dwelling so often upon his hunger. Society, who always



find indigence troublesome, that they may avoid being solicited to relieve it, say that it is noble to conceal our misery. The man of genius struggling against adversity, is a gladiator who fights for the pleasures of the world, in the arena of life; one wishes to see him die with a good grace. M. Gilbert was not ungrateful, and whoever had the happiness of alleviating his sorrows received a tribute from his muse, how small soever might have been the boon. Homer, who like our young poet, had felt indigence, says, that *the smallest gifts do not fail to soothe and rejoice us.*

In the piece entitled the *Complaints of the Unhappy*, we find a passage truly pathetic:

Woe, woe, to those alas! who gave me birth!

Blind, barbarous father, mother void of pity,

Poor, must you bring an infant to the light

The heir to nought but your sad indigence?

Ah had ye yet but suffered my young mind

In ignorance to remain, I then had liv'd

In peace, tilling the earth; but you must nurse

Those fires of genius that have since consum'd me.

The last reproach which our unfortunate poet addresses to the authors of his days falls



very lamentably upon the manners of the age. It is thus that we all aim at soaring above the rank to which nature had destined us. Led on by this universal error, the honest mechanic restrains his scanty portion of bread that he may give his children a learned education; an education which too often leads them only to despise their families. Genius is besides very rare. Undoubtedly a man of superior talents is sometimes to be found in the humbler walks of life, but how many estimable artisans taken from their mechanical labours would prove nothing but wretched authors. Society then finds itself overcharged with useless citizens, who, tormented by their own self-love harass both the government and the people at large with their vain systems and idle speculations. Nothing is so dangerous as a man of moderate talents whose only occupation is to make books.

Nay, although a parent should be convinced that his child is born with a decided talent for letters is it certain that he seeks the happiness of that child in opening to him this barren career?



—Oh let him recollect these lines of the poet now in question.

How many a hapless author, wretched doom!

Has want conducted to his unknown tomb.

Let him think of Gilbert himself, extended upon the bed of death, breathing out his last sigh with the following melancholy reflection.

At life's fair banquet an unhappy guest

One day I sat, now see me on my bier.

While o'er the spot where my sad corse shall rest,

No mourner e'er shall come to drop one tear.

Would not Gilbert, a simple labourer, cherished by his neighbours, beloved by his wife, dying full of years surrounded by his children, under the humble roof of his fathers, have been much more happy than Gilbert hated by men, abandoned by his friends, breathing at the age of thirty, his last sigh on the wretched bed of an hospital, deprived through chagrin of that reason to which alone he looked for any claim to superiority;—of reason, that weak compensation which heaven grants to men of talent, for the sorrows to which they are subjected.



It will doubtless be here objected against what I say, that if Gilbert was unhappy he had no one but himself to reproach for it. True it is indeed that satire is not the path which leads to the acquisition of friends, and conciliates the public esteem and beneficence. But, in our age, this species of poetry has been too much decried. While the reigning faction in literature has been prodigal of the appellations of *toad-eaters*, *sy-cophants*, *fools*, *sneakers*, and the like, to all who were not of their own opinions, it has regarded the least attempt at retaliation as a heinous crime; complaining of it to the echoes, wearying the ears of the sovereign with their cries, wanting all who dared attack the apostles of the new doctrine to be prosecuted as libellers: "Ah, my good Alembert," said the King of Prussia, endeavouring to console this great man, "if you were King of England you would experience mortifications of a very different kind which your good subjects would provide to exercise your patience." And in another letter he says: "You charge me with a commission so much the more embarrassing, as I am neither a



corrector of the press, nor a censor of the gazettes. As to the gazetteer of the Lower Rhine, the family of Mauléon must think it right that it should not be molested, since without freedom in writing, men's minds must remain in darkness, and since the Encyclopædists, whose zealous disciple I am, deprecate all censure, and insist that the press ought to be entirely free, that every one should be permitted to write whatever may be dictated by his peculiar mode of thinking."

One can never enough admire all the wit, the talents, the irony, and the good sense that reign throughout the letters of Frederick. Satire is not in itself a crime, it may be very useful to correct fools and rogues, when it is restrained within due bounds: *Ride si sapiis*. But it must be acknowledged that poets sometimes go too far, and, instead of ridicule, run into calumny. Satire should be the lists in which each champion, as in the pastimes of chivalry, should aim determined strokes at his adversary, but avoiding to strike either at the head or the heart.

If ever the subject could justify the satire,



this undoubtedly, was the case in that chosen by M. Gilbert. The misfortunes which have been brought upon us by the vices and the opinions with which the poet reproaches the eighteenth century, shew how much he was in the right to sound the cry of alarm. He predicted the disasters we have experienced, and verses where formerly we found *exaggeration* we are now obliged to confess contain nothing but *simple truths*. "A monster rises up, and strengthens himself in Paris; who, clothed in the mantle of philosophy or rather falsely clothed under that assumed garb, stifles talent and destroys virtue. A dangerous innovator, he seeks by his cruel system to chase the Supreme Being from heaven, and dooming the soul to the same fate as the expiring body, would annihilate man by a double death. Yet this monster carries not with him a fierce and savage air, and has the sound of virtue always in his mouth."

It is indeed a most remarkable thing in history that the attempt should ever be made to introduce atheism among a whole people under the name of virtue. The word *liberty* was in-



cessantly in the mouths of these people who crouched at the feet of the great, and who, not satisfied with the contempt of the first court in the kingdom, chose to swallow large draughts of it from a second. They were *fanatics crying out against fanaticism*; men triply wicked, for they combined with the vices of the atheist, the intolerance of the sectary, and the self-conceit of the author.

M. Gilbert was so much the more courageous in his attacks upon *philosophism*, because not sparing any party, he painted with energy the vices of the great, and of the clergy, which served as an excuse to the innovation, and which they alleged in justification of their principles:

See where with steps enervated by sloth,  
The great ones of the land scarce know to drag  
Along their feeble limbs.

Could we escape a fearful destruction.—  
From the days of the regency, to the end of  
the reign of Louis XV. intrigue every day made  
and unmade statesmen. Thence that continua-  
change of systems, of projects, of views. These  
ephemeral ministers were followed by a crowd of



flatterers, of clerks, of actors, of mistresses; all, beings of a moment, were eager to suck the blood of the miserable, and were soon trampled on by another generation of favourites as fugitive and as voracious as the former. Thus, while the imbecility and folly of the government irritated the minds of the people, the moral disorders of the country reached their utmost height. The man who no longer found happiness in the bosom of his family, accustomed himself to seek his happiness in ways that were independent of others. Repelled by the manners of the age from the bosom of nature, he wrapped himself up in a harsh and cold egotism, which withered all virtue in its very bud.

To complete our misfortunes, these sophists, in destroying happiness upon the earth, sought also to deprive man of the hopes of a better life. In this position, alone in the midst of the universe, having nothing to feed on but the chagrins of a vacant and solitary heart, which never felt another heart beat in unison with it, was it very astonishing that so many Frenchmen were ready to seize the first phantom which pre-



sented a new world to their imaginations. For the rest, was M. Gilbert the only person who saw through the innovators of his age?—was he to be singled out as a mark against which all their cries of atrocity were to be directed because he had given so faithful a picture of them in his verses. If some severe strokes were aimed against that passion of *thinking* and that *geometrical* rage which had seized all France, did he go farther than Frederick II, whose words may well be quoted here as a commentary upon, and an excuse for our poet.

In a dialogue of the dead, where this royal author brings together Prince Eugene, General Lichtenstein, and the Duke of Marlborough, he draws this picture of the Encyclopædists. "These people," he says, are a sect which have arisen in our days assuming themselves to be philosophers. To the effrontery of Cynics they add the noble impudence of putting forth all the paradoxes that come into their heads; they pride themselves upon their geometry, and maintain that those who have not studied this science cannot have correct ideas, consequently that



they themselves alone have the faculty of reasoning. If any one dares to attack them, he is soon drowned in a deluge of ink and abuse; the crime of treason against philosophy is wholly unpardonable. They decry all sciences except their own calculations; poetry is a frivolity, the fictions of which ought to be banished the world: a poet ought not to think any thing worthy of his rhymes but algebraic equations. As to history, that they would have studied in the reverse, beginning at our own times, and mounting upwards to the deluge. They would fain reform all governments, making France a democratic state, with a geometrician as its legislator, to be governed entirely by geometricians who shall subject all the operations of the new government to infinitesimal calculations. This republic would maintain a constant peace, and would be supported without an army."

*Posthumous Works of Frederick II, vol. VI.*

It was above all things a primary object among the literati of that time, to depreciate the great men of the seventeenth century; to



diminish the weight of their example and authority. Let us again hear the King of Prussia on this subject. Thus does he speak in his examination of the *System of Nature*.

“ It is a great error to believe that perfection is to be found in any thing human; the imagination may form such chimeras to itself, but they will never be realized. In the number of centuries that the world has now endured, different nations have made experiments on all sorts of governments, but not one has been found that was not subject to some inconveniences. Of all the paradoxes which the would-be philosophers of our days maintain with so much self-complacency, that of decrying the great men of the last century appears to be what they have the most at heart. How can their reputations be increased by exaggerating the faults of a king, all whose faults were effaced by his splendour and greatness. The foibles of Louis XIV are well known, these philosophers have not even the petty merit of having been the first to discover them. A prince who should reign only a week would



doubtless be guilty of some errors, how many must be expected from a monarch who passed nearly sixty years of his life upon the throne."

This passage is followed by a magnificent eulogium of Louis XIV, and Frederick often recurs to the same subject in his correspondence with M. d'Alembert. "Our poor century," he says, "is no less lamentably barren of great men, than of good works. Of the age of Louis XIV, which does honour to the human mind, nothing remains to us but the dregs, and soon not even that will be left." The eulogium of Louis the Great, from the pen of the Great Frederick,—a King of Prussia defending French glory against French literati, is one of those precious strokes at which a writer ought to catch very eagerly.

I have already remarked, that if M. Gilbert had only attacked the sophists, he might have been suspected of partiality; but he equally raised his voice against every vicious character, whatever might be his rank and power. Without any idea or apprehension of doing injury to religion, he abandoned to contempt those



ecclesiastics who are the eternal shame of their order.

Religion, matron driven to despair,  
By her own children mangled and defaced ;—  
Weeping their ways, in her deserted temples,  
In vain with words of pardon does she stretch  
Her arms toward them, still reviled, derided,  
Her precepts are forgot, her laws profaned.  
See there, amid a circle of gay nymphs,  
That youthful Abbé ;—saintly in his garb,  
In mind a sophist, he directs his wit  
Against that God, by serving whom he lives.

I do not think that a more despicable character exists, than that of a priest who, considering christianity as an abuse, yet consents to feed on the bread of the altar, and lies at once to God and to man. But we would fain enjoy the honours of philosophy without losing the riches of religion ; the first being necessary to our self-love, the second to our manners.

Such was the deplorable success which infidelity had obtained, that it was not uncommon to hear a sermon in which the name of Jesus Christ was avoided by the preacher as a rock



on which he feared to split. And what was so ridiculous and so fatal in this name to a christian orator?—Did Bossuet find that this name detracted from his eloquence?—You preach before the poor, and you dare not name Jesus Christ!—before the unfortunate, and the name of their father must not pass your lips!—before children, and you cannot instruct them that it was he who blessed their innocence. You talk of morality, and you blush to name the author of that which is preached in the gospel; never can the affecting precepts of religion be supplied by the common-place maxims of philosophy. Religion is a sentiment, philosophy an essay of reason, and even supposing that both led to practising the same virtues it would always be safest to take the first. But a still stronger consideration is, that all the virtues of philosophy are accessible to religion, while many of the religious virtues are not accessible to philosophy. Was it philosophy that established itself on the summit of the Alps to rescue the traveller?—Is it philosophy that succours the slave afflicted with the plague in the bagnios of



Constantinople, or that exiles itself in the deserts of the New World, to instruct and civilize the savages. Philosophy may carry its sacrifices so far as to afford assistance to the sick, but in applying the remedy it turns away its eyes; the heart and the senses recoil, for such are the emotions of nature. But see religion, how it soothes the infirm, with what tenderness it contemplates those disgusting wounds,—it discovers an ineffable beauty, an immortal life in those dying features, where philosophy can see nothing but the hideousness of death. There is the same difference between the services that philosophy and religion render to human nature as exists between duty and love.

To justify M. Gilbert for having defended christianity, I cannot rest too much on the authority of the great king whom I have so often cited in this article. The philosophers themselves considered him as a philosopher, and certainly he cannot be accused of harbouring any religious superstitions; but he had a long habit of governing men, and he knew that the mass could not be led with the abstract principles of



metaphysics. In pursuing his refutation of the *System of Nature*, he says: "How can the author pretend to maintain, with any face of truth, that the christian religion is the cause of all the misfortunes of human nature. To speak with justice, he should have said, simply, that the ambition and interests of mankind make use of this religion as a pretence to disturb the peace of the world, and to satisfy their own passions. What objection can seriously be made against the system of morality contained in the decalogue?—Did the gospel contain no other precept but this one: *Do not to others what you would not that they should do to you*, we should be obliged to confess that these few words contain the very quintessence of all morality. Besides, were not charity and humanity, with the pardon of offences, preached by Jesus in his excellent sermon on the mount?—The law itself must not be confounded with the abuses of it, the things inculcated, with the things practised."

Ripened by age and experience, perhaps warned by that voice which speaks from the



tomb, Frederick, towards the close of his life, had shaken off those vain systems which lead to nothing but errors. He began to feel the foundations of society tremble under him, and to discover the deep mine that atheism was silently hollowing out. Religion is made more especially for those who are the most elevated above their fellow creatures. It is stationed around thrones, like those vulnerary herbs which grow about the mountains of Switzerland, there where falls the most terrible are likely to be encountered.

It is probable that the two satires of M. Gilbert, and some stanzas of his odes will retain a place among our literature. This young poet, who died before his talents were matured, has neither the grace and lightness of Horace, nor the beautiful poetry and exquisite taste of Boileau. He tortures his language, he seeks after inversion, he drives on his metaphors too far, his talents are capricious and his muse fanciful, but he has forcible modes of expression, verses well constructed, and sometimes the vein of Juvenal. Thanks to the re-establishment of our



temples in France, we have no occasion for new Gilberts to sing the woes of religion, we require poets to chaunt her triumphs. Already some of our most distinguished literati, Messrs. Delille, Laharpe, Fontanés, Bernardin de St.-Pierre, and others have consecrated their meditations to religious subjects. A new defender, M. de Bonald, has arisen, who, by the depth of his ideas and the power of reasonings, has abundantly justified the lofty and all-seeing wisdom of the christian institutions. Every one among our youth who gives any promise of talent, returns to those sacred principles which made Quintilian say: "If thou believest, thou shalt soon be instructed in the duties of a good and happy life." *Brevis est institutio vita, honesta beataque, si credas.*



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 ANALYSIS

OF THE WORK OF M. DE BONALD

*Entitled: "PRIMITIVE LEGISLATION considered  
in the latter times by the light of reason  
alone."*

"FEW men are born with that particular and decided disposition towards one only object which we call talent; a blessing of nature, if favorable circumstances assist its developement, and permit the exercise of it; a real misfortune, a torment to its possessor, if it be contradicted."

This passage is taken from the book we are about to examine. Nothing is more affecting than those involuntary complaints which sometimes escape from true talent. The author of *Primitive Legislation*, like many other celebrated writers, seems only to have received gifts from nature to feel disgust at them. Like Epictetus he has been obliged to reduce his philosophy to these two maxims ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου, *suffer and*



*abstain.* It was in the obscure cottage of a German peasant, in the bosom of a foreign country that he composed his *Theory of Political and Religious power*, a work suppressed by the Directory in France; it was in the midst of all possible privations, and menaced with the law of the proscription, that he published his *Observations upon Divorce*, an admirable treatise, the latter pages of which, in particular, are a model of that eloquence of thought which is so superior to the eloquence of words, and which subdues every thing, as Pascal says, by the *right of power*. In fine, it is at the moment when he is about to quit Paris, letters and his genius, if I may be allowed the expression, that he gives us his *Primitive Legislation*; Plato crowned his works by his *Laws*, and Lycurgus banished himself from Sparta after having established his. Unfortunately, we have not, like the Spartans, sworn to observe the laws of our new legislator. But let M. de Bonald be satisfied; when, as in him, the authority of good morals is combined with the authority of genius, when the soul is free from those weaknesses, which place arms in the hands



of calumny, and console mediocrity, obstacles must vanish sooner or later, and we must arrive at that position in which talent is no longer a mortification, but a blessing.

The judgments generally passed upon our modern literature, appear to me somewhat exaggerated. Some mistake our scientific jargon, and inflated phraseology for the progress of genius and illumination; according to them language and reason have advanced much since Bossuet and Racine:—but what advance!—Others on the contrary find nothing that is endurable; if they are to be believed we have not a single good writer. Is it not a tolerably well established truth, that there have been epochs in France when the state of literature was very much below what it is at present? Are we competent judges in such a cause, and can we very justly appreciate those writers who live in the same time with ourselves? Such, or such a cotemporary author whose value we scarcely feel, may be one day considered as the glory of our age. How long have the great men of Louis XIV found their true level? Racine and La Bruyère were



almost unknown while they lived. We see Rollin, that writer full of learning and taste, balance the merits of Fléchier and Bossuet and give us plainly to understand that the preference was generally given to the former. The mania of all ages has been to complain of the scarcity of good writers and good books. What things have not been written against *Telemachus*, against the *Characters of La Bruyère*, against the most sublime of Racine's works? Who does not know the epigram upon Athalia? On the other hand, let any one read the journals of the last century; let them farther read what La Bruyère and Voltaire themselves said of the literature of their times; will it be believed that they speak of the period when the country could boast a Fénelon, a Bossuet, a Pascal, a Boileau, a Racine, a Molière, a La Fontaine, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Buffon, a Montesquieu?

French literature is about to assume an entirely new face; with the revolution, other thoughts, other views of men and of things must have arisen. It is easy to see that writers



will be divided into two classes ; some will make it their great endeavour entirely to quit the ancient routes, others will no less assiduously endeavour to follow those models, but always presenting them under a new point of view. It is very probable that the latter will, in the end, triumph over their adversaries, because, in upholding their own labours by great authorities, they will have much safer and abler guides, documents much more fertile in themselves, than those who would rest upon their own talents alone.

M. de Bonald will contribute not a little to this victory ; already his ideas begin to obtain a currency ; fragments of them are to be traced in the greater part of the journals and publications of the day. There are certain sentiments and certain styles, which may be almost called contagious, and which, if I may be pardoned the idea, tint all minds with their colouring. This is, at the same time, a good and an evil. An evil inasmuch as it disgusts the writer whose freshness is thus, as it were faded, and



whose originality is rendered vulgar;—a good, in as far as it tends to circulate useful truths more widely.

M. de Bonald's new work is divided into four parts. The first, including the preliminary discourse, treats of the relations of beings to each other, and the fundamental principles of legislation. The second considers the ancient state of the ecclesiastical ministry in France. The third treats of public education, and the fourth examines the state of christian and mahometan Europe.

To remount to the *Principles of Legislation*, M. de Bonald begins by remounting to the *Principles of Beings*, in order to find the primitive law, the eternal example of human laws; for human laws are only good or bad, inasmuch as they approach or deviate from that divine law which flows from divine wisdom. *Lex rerum omnium principem expressa natura, ad quam leges hominum diriguntur, quæ supplicio improbos officiunt, et defendunt et tuentur bonos.\**

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\* Cicero de Leg. lib. 2.



Our author traces rapidly the history of philosophy, which, according to him, among the ancients, signified *the love of wisdom*, and among us signifies *a search after truth*. Thus the Greeks made wisdom consist in the practice of morality, we make it consist in the theory. "Our philosophy," says M. de Bonald, "is empty in its thoughts, lofty in its language; it combines the licentiousness of the Epicureans with the pride of the Stoics. It has its sceptics, its pyrrhonians, its eclecticics; the only doctrine it has not embraced is that of privations."

On the cause of our errors, M. de Bonald makes the following profound remark: "In physics we may be allowed to assume particular errors, in morals we ought to assume general truths. It is from having done the contrary, from having assumed truths in physics, that mankind believed so long in the absurd system of physics established by the ancients; as it is from having assumed errors in the general morals of nations that so many persons, in our days, have been wrecked."

The author is soon led to examine the pro-



blem of *innate ideas*. Without embracing the opinion that rejects them, or ranging himself with the party that adopts them, he believes that God has given to men in general, not to every man in particular, a certain portion of principles or innate sentiments, such as the idea of a Supreme Being, of the immortality of the soul, and of the first notions of our moral duties, absolutely necessary to the establishment of social order. Hence it happens, that, strictly speaking, single persons may be found who have no knowledge of these principles, but that no society of men was ever found totally ignorant of them. If this be not the truth, at least we must allow that the mind capable of reasoning thus is not one of an ordinary texture.

From thence M. de Bonald passes to the examination of another principle on which he founds all legislation. This is, *that speech was taught to man, that it is not an intuitive quality in him*. He recognizes three sorts of speech, gesticulation, oral communication, and writing. This opinion he founds upon reasons which appear to have great weight. First, because it is



necessary to think of the words before the thought can be uttered. Secondly, because those who are born deaf, and never hear speech, are dumb, a proof that speech is a thing acquired not intuitive. Thirdly, because, if speech be a human invention, there are no longer any necessary truths.

To this idea M. de Bonald recurs very frequently; because, according to him, on this rests all the controversy of theists and atheists with christians and philosophers. In fact, it must be allowed, that if we could prove speech to have been revealed, not invented, we should have a physical proof of the existence of God; God could not have given speech to man without also giving him rules and laws; all would then become positive in society. This seems to us to have been the opinion of Plato, and of the Roman philosopher. *Legem neque hominum ingeniiis, ex-cognitatum neque scitum aliquod esse populorum, sed æternum quiddam, etc.*

It became necessary for M. de Bonald to develope his idea more fully, and this he has done in an excellent dissertation, at the end of



his work. We there find this comparison which one might believe translated from the *Phædon*, or from *The Republic*. "That necessary and natural correspondence between the thoughts, and the words by which they are explained, and that necessity of speech to render present to the mind its own thoughts, and the thoughts of others, may be rendered sensible by a comparison, the extreme exactness of which would alone prove a perfect analogy between the laws of our intellectual nature, and of our physical nature.

"If I am in a dark place I have no ocular vision or knowledge by sight of the existence of bodies that are near me, not even of my own body; and under this relation these beings are the same to me as if they did not exist. But if the light is admitted, on a sudden all the objects receive a relative colour, according to the particular contexture of the surface. Each body is present to my eyes, I see them all, I judge the relations of form, of extent, of the distance of every object from the other, and from myself.

"Our understanding is this dark place



where we do not perceive any idea, not even that of our own intelligence, till words penetrating by the sense of hearing and seeing, carry light into that darkness, and call, if I may say so, every idea, which answers, like the stars in Job, *here I am*. Then alone are our ideas explained, we have the consciousness, the knowledge of our thoughts, and can convey it to others; then only have we an idea of ourselves, have we an idea of other beings, and the relations they have among themselves and with us. As the eye distinguishes each body by its colour, the mind distinguishes each idea by its expressions."

Do we often find reasoning so powerful, combined with such vivacity of expression? The ideas *answering to speech like the stars of Job, HERE I AM*; is not this of an order of thoughts extremely elevated, of a character of style very rare? I appeal to men of better talents and understanding than myself: *Quantum eloquentia valeat, pluribus credere potest.*

Yet we will venture to propose some doubts to our author, and submit our observations to



his superior judgment. We acknowledge, like him, the principle of the transmission of speech, or that it has been taught to us. But does he not carry this principle too far? In making it the only positive proof of the existence of God, and of the fundamental laws of society, does he not put the most important truths to the hazard, in case this sole proof should be disputed. The reasoning that he draws from the deaf and dumb, in favour of speech being taught, is not perhaps thoroughly conclusive. It may be said, you take your example in an exception, and you seek your proof in an imperfection of nature. Let us suppose a savage in possession of his senses, but not having speech; this man, pressed by hunger, meets in the forest with some object proper to satisfy it, he utters a cry of joy at seeing it, or at carrying it to his mouth. Is it not possible that having heard the cry, the sound, be it what it may, he retains it, and repeats it afterwards, every time he perceives the same object, or is pressed with the same want. The cry will become the first word of his vocabulary, and thus he will proceed on



till he arrives at the expression of ideas purely intellectual.

It is certain that the idea cannot be put forth from the understanding without words, but it will perhaps be admitted, that man, with the permission of God, lights up himself this torch of speech, which is to illuminate the soul; that the sentiment or idea first gives occasion to the expression, and that the expression in its turn re-enters and enlightens the mind. If the author should say that millions of years would be requisite to form a language in this way, and that Jean-Jaques Rousseau himself, believed that speech was necessary for the invention of words, we will admit this difficulty also. But M. de Bonald must not forget that he has to do with men who deny all tradition, and who dispose at their pleasure of the eternity of the world.

There is, besides, a more serious objection. If words be necessary for the manifestation of the idea, and that speech enters by the senses, the soul in another life, despoiled of the bodily organs, cannot have the consciousness of its thoughts. There will in that case be but one re-



source remaining, which is, to say that God then enlightens with his own words, and that the soul sees its ideas in the divinity. This is to return to the system of Mallebranche.

Minds of deep reflection will like to see how M. de Bonald unrolls the vast picture of social order, how he follows and defines the civil, political, and religious administration. He proves, convincingly, that the Christian religion has completed man, as the supreme legislator said in yielding up the ghost: ALL IS FINISHED.

M. de Bonald gives a singular elevation, and an immense depth to christianity; he follows the mystical relations of the *Word* and the *Son*, and shews that the true God could not be known but by the revelation, or incarnation of his *Word*, as the faculty of thought in man is only manifested by speech or the incarnation of the thought. Hobbes, in his *Christian City*, explained the *Word* as the author of the legislation. *Intestamento novo græce scripto* VERBUM DEI cæpè ponitur (non pro eo, quod loquuntur est



*Deus) sed pro eo quod de Deo et de regno ejus. . .*

*In hoc autem sensa idem significant λογος Θεου.*

Our author makes an essential difference between the constitution of domestic society, or the order of a family, and the political constitution; relations which, in our times, have been too much confounded together. In the examination of the ancient ecclesiastical ministry in France, he shews a profound knowledge of our history. He examines the principle of the sovereignty of the people, which Bossuet had attacked in his fifth notice, in answer to M. Jurieu. “Where every thing is independent, says the Bishop of Meaux, there is nothing sovereign.” A thundering axiom, a manner of arguing precisely, such as the protestant ministers required, who prided themselves, above all things, on their reasoning and their logic. They complained of being crushed by the eloquence of Bossuet, and the orator immediately put aside eloquence; like those christian warriors who, in the midst of a battle, seeing their adversaries without arms, threw their arms aside, that they might not obtain too easy a



victory. Bossuet passing afterwards to the historical proofs, and shewing that the pretended *social pact* has never existed, makes it clear, as he says himself, that there is in the idea *as much ignorance as words*; that if the people are the sovereign, they have an incontestable right to change their constitution every day, &c. This great man whom M. de Bonald, worthy to be his admirer, cites with so much complacency; this great man establishes also the excellence of hereditary succession. "It is for the benefit of the people," says he, "that the government should feel perfectly at its ease, that it should be perpetuated by the same laws that perpetuate the human race, and should follow as it were, the march of nature."

M. de Bonald reproduces to us this fund of good sense, and sometimes this simple grandeur of style. The ignorance and the bad faith into which our age has fallen, with respect to that of Louis XIV., is a subject of astonishment from which one recovers with difficulty. The writers of this age are thought to have wholly overlooked the principles of social order, and



yet there is not a single question of importance, in political science, which Bossuet has not treated, whether in his *Universal History*, in his *Politics, taken from the Scriptures*, or in his controversies with the protestants.

For the rest, if the first and second volumes of M. de Bonald's work be liable to some objections, the same cannot be said of the third. The author there treats the subject of education with a superiority of intellect, a force of reasoning, and a clear-sightedness that entitles him to the warmest eulogium. It is, indeed, in treating particular questions of morals or politics that he excels. He spreads over them a *fertilizing moderation*, to use the fine expression of M. Daguesseau. I do not doubt that his *Treatise on Education* will attract the eyes of the great men in the state, as his *Question of Divorce* has fixed the attention of all men of the soundest minds in France.

M. de Bonald's style might sometimes be more harmonious and less neglected. His thoughts are always brilliant and happily chosen; but, I know not whether his mode of



expressing them may not occasionally be somewhat too terse and familiar. These are, however, slight defects which will disappear with a little labour. Perhaps some better arrangement of his matter might also be desirable, and more clearness of his ideas; great and elevated geniuses are apt not to have sufficient compassion for the weakness of their readers; 'tis a natural abuse of power. Farther, the distinctions he makes, appear sometimes too ingenious, too subtile. Like Montesquieu, he is fond of supporting an important truth upon a slight reason. The definition of the word, the explanation of an etymology, are things too curious and too arbitrary to be advanced in support of an important principle.

These criticisms are, however, rather offered in compliance with the miserable custom which requires, that criticism should always follow in the train of eulogium. Heaven forbid that we should scrutinize with too nice an eye, some trifling defects in the writings of so very superior a man as M. de Bonald. As we do not set ourselves up for authority, we may have per-



mission to admire with the vulgar, and we will avail ourselves amply of this privilege in favour of the author of *Primitive Legislation*. Happy the state that possesses such citizens; men whom the injustice of fortune cannot discourage, who will fight for the sake of doing good alone, though without any hope of conquering.

At the very moment when I write these words, I descend one of the greatest rivers in France; on two opposite mountains rise two towers in ruins; on the tops of these towers little bells are suspended which are sounded by the mountaineers as we pass. This river, these mountains, these sounds, these gothic monuments, amuse for a moment the eyes and ears of the spectators and auditors, but no one thinks of stopping to go where the bells invite them. Thus, the men who at this day preach morals and religion, in vain, from the tops of their turrets give the signal to those who are led away by the torrent of the world. The traveller is astonished at the magnificence of the ruins, at the sweetness of the sounds that issue from them, at the sublimity of the recollections associated with



them, but he does not suffer these emotions to arrest his course ; at the first bend of the river he loses sight of the objects, and all is forgotten.

We may remark in history, that the greater part of the revolutions which have taken place among civilized nations, have been preceded by the same opinions and announced by the same writings : *Quid est quod fallurum ? Ipsum quod fallurum est.* Quintilian and Elian speak of that Archilochus who first ventured to publish the shameful history of his conscience in the face of the universe ; he flourished in Greece before the reform of Solon. According to the report of Eschines, Draco had completed a *Treatise on Education*, where taking man from his cradle, he conducted him step by step to the tomb. This recalls to the mind the eloquent Jean Jaques Rousseau.

The *Cyropedia of Xenophon*, a part of the *Republic of Plato*, and the first book of his *Laws*, may also be regarded as fine treatises, more or less proper to form the hearts of the youth. Seneca, and above all the judicious Quintilian, placed on another theatre, in times



more resembling our own, have left excellent lessons both to the masters and the scholars. Unhappily, from so many good writings on education, we have only borrowed the systematic part, precisely that which, being adapted to the manners of the ancients, cannot apply to our own. That fatal imitation which we have carried to excess in every thing, has been the cause of many misfortunes, in naturalizing among us the murders and devastations of Sparta and of Athens. Without attaining the greatness of those celebrated cities, we have imitated the tyrants who, to embellish their country, transported thither the tombs and the ruins of Greece. If the fury for destroying every thing had not been the predominant character of this age, why should we have had occasion to seek systems of education amid the spoils of antiquity. Have we not the institutions of christianity? That religion so calumniated, to which we nevertheless owe the very arts by which we are fed, rescued our fathers from barbarian darkness. With one hand the Benedictines guided the plough in Gaul, with



the other they transcribed the poems of Homer ; and while the *clerks* of the community were occupied with the collection of ancient manuscripts, the poorer brethren of these schools of piety instructed the children of the people, gratis, in the first rudiments of learning. They obeyed this command of the book where we find — *Non deo illi potestatem in juventute, et ne despicias cogitatus illius.*

Soon after appeared that celebrated society which gave Tasso to Italy, and Voltaire to France, and of which it might be truly said, that every member was a distinguished man of letters. The Jesuit, a mathematician in China, the legislator in Paraguay, the antiquary in Egypt, the martyr in Canada, was in Europe the man of letters and polished manners, whose urbanity took from science that pedantry which never fails to disgust youth. Voltaire consulted the Fathers Porée and Brumoy upon his tragedies : “ Julius Cæsar has been,” said he, writing to M. de Cideville, “ read before ten Jesuits ; they think of it as you do.” The rivalship which was established for a moment between *Port*



*Royal*, and *the Society*, forced this latter to watch more scrupulously over the morals established there, and the *Provincial Letters* completed the correction of the evil. The Jesuits were mild and tolerant, seeking only to render religion amiable through indulgence to our weaknesses, and were first led astray by this charitable design. Port Royal was inflexible and severe, like the prophet king who seemed emulous to equal the rigour of his penitence by the elevation of his genius. If the most tender of all the poets was educated in the school of the solitaries, the most austere of all preachers sprung up in the bosom of society. Bossuet and Boileau inclined towards the first; Fénelon and La Fontaine towards the second; *Anacreon was silent before the Jansenists.*

Port Royal, sublime at its birth, changed and altered on a sudden like those antique emblems which have only the head of an eagle: the Jesuits, on the contrary, maintained their ground and improved to the last moment of their existence. The destruction of this order has been an irreparable injury to education and



to literature; this is now allowed on all hands. But according to the affecting reflexion of an historian: *Quis beneficorum servat memoriam? Aut quis ullam calamitosis deberi partam gratiam? aut quando fortuna non mutam fidem?*

It was then under the age of Louis XIV, an age which gave birth to all the greatness of France, that the system of education for the two sexes arrived at its highest point of perfection. One cannot recal without admiration those times when we saw come forth from the christian schools, Racine, Montfaucon, Sévigné, La Fayette, Dacier; the times when he who sung Antiope gave lessons to the wives, in which Fathers Hardouin and Jouvanay explained sublime antiquity;—while the geniuses of Port Royal wrote for the higher classes of pupils, the great Bossuet charged himself with the catechisms of little children.

Rollin soon appeared at the head of the university. This learned man whom, in modern times, some have been pleased to qualify as a college pedant, full of absurdities and preju-



dices, is, nevertheless, one of the first French writers who spoke with encomium of an English philosopher: "I shall make great use of two modern authors," says he, in his *Treatise on Study*; "these are M. de Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambray, and the English Mr. Locke, whose writings on Education are highly esteemed, and with good reason; the latter has, however, some particular sentiments which I would not be thought to adopt. I know not, besides, whether he was well versed in the Greek tongue, and in the study of the *Belles-Lettres*; at least he does not appear to value them sufficiently." It is, in fact, to Mr. Locke's work that we must recur for the date of those systematic opinions which tend to make all children the heroes of romance, or of philosophy.

The *Emilius*, in which these opinions are unfortunately consecrated by great talents and sometimes by an all-commanding eloquence, is now considered as a practical work. Under this point of view, there is scarcely an elementary book for infancy which is not to be preferred to



it; of this we seem at length to be sensible, and a celebrated woman\* has, in these later days, published precepts of education much more salutary and useful. A man, whose genius was ripened by the storms of the revolution, has now put the finishing stroke to the overthrow of such principles of a false philosophy, and has completely re-established education upon a moral and religious basis.

The third volume of the *Primitive Legislation* is consecrated to this very important subject. M. de Bonald begins by laying down as a principle that man is born weak and ignorant, but capable of learning.—“Very different,” he says, “from the brute, man is born perfectible, the brute perfect.”

What then should man be taught?—Every thing that is good; that is to say, every thing necessary for the preservation of his being. And what are the general means to be employed for this preservation?—*society*. How is this term, society, to be explained when thus ap-

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\* Madame de Genlis.



plied?—It is to be explained by those expressions of the general will, called *laws*. Laws are then the will whence result certain actions which are called our duties as members of society. Education, therefore, properly speaking, is *instruction in the laws and duties of society*.

Man under religious and political relations belongs to a *domestic society*, and a *public society*. There are, consequently, two systems to be followed in education. First, as *domestic society* is concerned, which follows the child into its paternal roof; this has for its end to form the man as a member of a family, and to instruct him in the elements of religion. Secondly, as it concerns *public society* which includes those branches of education received by the child in public establishments, the end of which is to form the man as a member of a community by instructing him in the relative political and religious duties which that station demands.

Education in its principle ought to be essentially religious. Here M. de Bonald combats with great strength the author of *Emilius*. To say that we ought not to instil any religious



principles in infancy is one of the most fatal errors that philosophy ever advanced. The author of *Primitive Legislation* cites the dreadful example of seventy-five children, below fifteen years of age, brought before the police in the space of five months, for robberies and offences against good morals! The citizen Scipio Bexon, president of the tribunal of the first instance for the department of the Seine, to whom we are indebted for the knowledge of this fact, says, in his report, that more than half the pilferings which take place at Paris are committed by children.

Public establishments, says M. Necker in his *Course of Religious Morals*, ought always to secure to children elementary instruction in morals and religion. Indifference to this object will render those by whom such establishments are regulated one day fearfully responsible for the wanderings that it may be necessary to punish. Will not their consciences be terrified at the reproach which may be made them by a young man brought before the criminal tribunal, and on the verge of receiving a rigorous



sentence? What, in effect, could be answered, if he were to say: "I have never been formed to virtue by any instruction; I was devoted to mercenary occupations, I was launched into the world before any one principle was inscribed in my heart, or engraved on my memory. They talked to me of liberty, of equality, never of my duties towards others, never of the religious authority which would have subjected me to these duties. I was left the child of nature, and you would judge me after laws composed for *society*. It was not by a sentence of death that I ought to have been instructed in the duties of life." Such is the terrible language which a young man might eventually hold in hearing his condemnation.

In speaking of domestic education, M. de Bonald, first of all, would have us reject those English, American, philosophic practices, invented by the spirit of system, and supported by fashion. "Light cloathing," says he, "a bare head, a hard bed, sobriety, exercise, and privations, rather than enjoyments; in a word, almost always what costs the least, is what suits



the best: nature does not employ so much expense, so many cares to raise up a frail edifice which is only to last an instant, which a breath may overthrow."

He next recommends the re-establishment of *corporations*: "Which," says he, "the government ought to consider as the *domestic education* of the lower class of people. These corporations, in which religion was fortified by the practices and regulations of the civil authority, had, among other advantages, that of restraining by the somewhat severe duties of the masters, a rugged youth, whom necessity removed early from the paternal roof, and whose obscurity placed them out of the reach of the political power." This is to see a great way into things, and to consider, as a legislator, what so many writers have only viewed as economists.

Passing on to public education, the author proves first, like Quintilian, the insufficiency of a private education, and the necessity of a general one. After speaking of the places where colleges ought to be established, and fixing the number of pupils that each college ought to



contain, he examines the great question of the *masters*. Let him speak for himself. "Education must be *perpetual, universal, uniform*. It must then be carried on by a body, for in nothing but a body can we find *perpetuity, generality, or uniformity*. This body, for it must be only one, charged with the public education, cannot be an entirely secular body, for where would be the tie that would assure the perpetuity, and consequently the uniformity. Would personal interest be this tie? but seculars would have, or might have, families. They would then belong more to their families than to the state, more to their own children than to the children of others, would be more attached to their own personal interest than to the public interest; the love of self, which some consider as the universal tie, is, and always will be the mortal enemy of the love of others.

"If the public instructors be bachelors, although seculars, they can never form a body of themselves. Their fortuitous aggregation will only be a continued succession of individuals, entering there to earn a livelihood, and



quitting it for an establishment. And what father of a family would like to consign his children to the care of unmarried persons whose morals are not guaranteed by religious discipline. If they are married, how can the state assure to men charged with families, animated with just ambition to acquire a fortune, and more capable than any others of resigning themselves successfully to the acquisition of it,—how can the state, I say, assure to such men an establishment which shall restrain them effectually from ever looking to one more lucrative. If, from views of oeconomy, their wives and children are to live under the same roof with them, concord is impossible; if they are permitted to live separately, the expenses must be incalculable. Well instructed men would not submit their minds to regulations which must follow an uniform routine, to methods of instruction which would seem to them defective. Men, desirous of acquiring wealth, or men overwhelmed with wants, would think only of enriching themselves. Fathers of families would forget their public cares in their domestic affections. The state



can only be certain of retaining, in their establishments for education, men, supposing them seculars, who are not fit for any other profession, persons of no character or respectability. Of this we may be easily convinced in calling to mind that some of the most active instruments in our disorders at Paris, were that class of laic instructors attached to the colleges, who, in their classical ideas saw the *forum* of Rome in the assemblies of the sections, and conceived themselves orators, charged with the destinies of the republic, when they were only brawlers swoln with pride and vanity, and impatient to rise above their situations. It is essential then to have a body which cannot be dissolved ; a body, the members of which, shall by one common regulation make a sacrifice of their personal families. But what other power, except that of religion, what other engagements but those which she consecrates, can bind men to duties so austere, and induce them to make sacrifices so painful."

The vigorous dialectic of this passage will be remembered by every reader. M. de Bonald



urges his argument in a manner which leaves no place of refuge to his adversaries. The only thing that can be urged against his reasoning is, the example of the protestant universities; but he may answer that the professors in these universities, although they are married, are *priests*, or *ministers of religion*; that the universities are christian foundations, the funds and revenues of which are independent of the government; that after all, such are the disorders in these institutions, that discreet parents are often afraid of sending their children to them. All this changes the state of the question entirely, and even serves, in the last analysis, to confirm the reasoning of our author.

M. de Bonald, occupying himself only with laying down principles, neglects to give particular advice to the masters. This advice is to be found, however, in the writings of the good Rollin. The titles alone of his chapters suffice to make this excellent man beloved. *On the manner of exercising authority over children—on making ourselves loved and feared—inconveniencies and dangers of punishments—on talking reason to children—on*



*piquing their honour—on making use of praises, rewards, and caresses—on rendering study pleasing—on allowing children rest and recreation—on piety, religion, zeal for the safety of children.*

Under this last title is a passage which cannot fail of affecting the readers almost to tears.

“ What is a christian master charged with the education of young people? He is a man to whose [hands Jesus Christ has consigned a certain number of children, whom he has purchased with his blood, for whom he has given his life, whom he inhabits as in his house, and in his temple, whom he regards as his members, as his brethren, as his co-heirs, of whom he would make so many kings and priests, who shall reign and serve God with him and by him to all eternity; and he has confided to them this precious trust that they may preserve the inestimable treasure of innocence to them. What grandeur, what dignity does not so honourable a commission add to the functions of these masters.” A good master ought to apply to himself these words which God made continually to resound in the ears of Moses, the conductor



of his people. "Bear them in your bosom as a nurse is accustomed to bear her young child."

From the masters, M. de Bonald passes on to the pupils. He would have them occupied principally in the study of ancient languages, which open to children the treasures of the past, and lead their minds and hearts to great recollections to the contemplation of great examples. He raises his voice against that philosophical education which says he, "in encumbering the memories of children with idle nomenclatures of minerals and plants, narrows the intellect."

Well may any one be pleased at finding himself entertaining like sentiments and opinions with such a man as M. de Bonald. We have ourselves had the happiness of being one of the first to attack this dangerous mania of the present times.\* No body can be more sensible than myself to the charms of *Natural History*, but what an abuse of the study do we not see at the present moment, both in the manner in

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\* In my *Recollections in England*, and in my *Spirit of Christianity*.



which it is carried on, and in the consequences which some have drawn from it. Natural History, properly so called, cannot be, ought not to be, any thing but a series of pictures as in nature. M. de Buffon had a sovereign contempt for classification, which he called *the scaffolding to arrive at science, not science itself*. Independently of the other dangers to which the study of the science exclusively leads, inasmuch as they have an immediate relation with the original vice of man; they cherish pride much more than letters do. Descartes believed, as we are informed by the learned author of his life, that *it is dangerous to apply too earnestly to those superficial demonstrations which are much more frequently produced by chance than by industry and experience*. His maxim was, that such application accustoms us insensibly not to make use of our reason, and exposes us to losing the road traced to us by its light.

If you would teach Natural History to children, without narrowing their hearts and blighting their innocence, put into their hands M. de Luc's Commentary upon Genesis, or the



work cited by M. Rollin in the book of *Studies*, entitled, *Of Philosophy*. Ah! what sublime philosophy, how little resembling that of our days; let us cite a passage by chance.

“What architect has taught the birds to choose a firm place for their nests, and to build them upon a solid foundation? What tender mother has counselled them to cover the bottom with soft and delicate materials, such as down or cotton, or if these materials fail, who suggested to them that ingenious charity which leads them to pluck with their beaks sufficient feathers from their own breasts to prepare a commodious cradle for their young?—Is it for the birds, Oh Lord! that you have united together so many miracles which they cannot know?—Is it for men who do not think of them?—Is it for the curious who content themselves with admiring without remounting to you?—Is it not visible that your design was to recal us to you; by such a spectacle to render your providence and your infinite wisdom sensible to us: to fill us with confidence in your goodness, extended so



tenderly, even to the birds, two of which are not of more value than a farthing."

There is perhaps but another book in the world, the *Studies of Nature*, by M. Bernardin de St. Pierre, which offers pictures equally affecting, equally religious. The finest page of M. de Buffon does not equal the tender eloquence of this christian emotion: *Is it for the birds Oh Lord!* &c.

A stranger was a short time since in a company where the son of the house, a boy of seven or eight years old, was the theme of conversation, he was represented as a prodigy. A great noise was soon after heard, the doors were opened and the little doctor appeared, with his arms naked, his breast uncovered, and dressed like a monkey that was to be shewn at a fair. He entered with a bold and confident air, looking about him for admiration, and importuning every body present with his questions. He was placed upon a table in the midst of the company and interrogated: *What is man?* "He is a *mammiferous* animal who has four extremities, two of which terminate in hands." *Are there any other*



*animals of his class?* "Yes, the bat and the ape." The assembly uttered shouts of admiration, but the stranger turning towards us, said somewhat impatiently; "If I had a child who said such things, in spite of his mother's tears, I should whip him till he had forgotten them." I cannot help recalling upon this occasion the words of Henry IV. "My love," said he one day to his wife, "you weep when I flog your son, but it is for his good, and the pain I give you at present will spare you one day much greater pain."

These little naturalists who do not know a single word of their religion, or of their duties, are at the age of fifteen wholly insupportable. Already men, without being men, you see them drag about their pale faces and enervated bodies, among the circles at Paris, pronouncing their *ipse dixit* upon every thing with the most decided tone, giving their opinions upon morals and upon politics, pronouncing on what is good and what is bad, judging the beauty of women, the goodness of books, the performance of actors and of dancers; dancing with the most perfect



admiration of themselves, piquing themselves upon being already renowned for their *success* with the ladies, and for the completion of this scene of mingled absurdity and horror, having sometimes recourse to suicide.

Ah! these are not the children of former times, whom their parents sent for home every Thursday from the college. They were dressed simply and modestly, with their cloathes fastened decently. They advanced with timidity into the midst of the family circle, blushing when they were spoken to, casting down their eyes, saluting with an awkward and embarrassed air, but borrowing grace from their very simplicity and innocence. Yet the hearts of these poor children bounded with delight. What joy to them was a day thus passed under the paternal roof, in the midst of complaisance from the servants, of the embraces of their friends, and the secret gifts of their mothers. If they were questioned with regard to their studies, they did not answer that *man was a mammiferous animal placed between the bat and the ape*, for they were ignorant of these important truths, but they



repeated what they had learnt from Bossuet or Fénelon, that God created man to love and serve him; that man has an immortal soul, that he will be rewarded or punished in another life according to his good or bad actions here; that children ought to respect their father and mother; all those truths in short, taught by the catechism, and which put philosophy to the blush. This *natural history of man* was supported by some celebrated passages of Greek or Latin verses taken from Homer or Virgil, and these fine quotations from the great geniuses of antiquity were in perfect unison with the geniuses, not less ancient, of the authors of *Telemachus*, and the *Universal History*.

But it is time to pass on to the general view of *Primitive Legislation*. The principles M. de Bonald lays down are: "That there is a supreme or general cause. This Supreme Being is God. His existence is more especially proved by the gift of Speech which man could not have discovered of himself, which must have been taught him. The general cause, or God, has produced an effect equally general in the world;



which is man. These two terms, *cause* and *effect*, *God* and *man*, have a necessary intermediate term, without which there could be no relations between them. This necessary medium term ought to be proportioned to the perfection of the cause, and the imperfection of the effect. What is the medium then? Where is it? This, says the author, is the great enigma of the universe. It was announced to one people, it was intended to be made known to others. At the destined period it was made known; therefore, till that time the true relations of man with God were not known, because all beings are only known by their relations, and no medium terms or relations existed between God and man. Thus a true knowledge of God and man, and their natural relations to each other must arrive; there must necessarily be good laws, because laws are the expression of natural relations; civilization, therefore, must necessarily follow the notion of a mediator, and barbarism the ignorance of a mediator; civilization, consequently began among the Jews, and was com-



pleted among the Christians; the *Pagans* were all *barbarians*."

The sense in which the author intends the word *barbarians* to be understood, must here be clearly defined. The arts, according to his ideas, do not constitute a *civilized*, but a *polished* people; he attaches the word *civilization* only to moral and political laws. We must feel, however, that this definition although admirably conceived, is liable to many objections; nor can it readily be admitted that a Turk of this day is more *civilized* than an Athenian of old, because he has a *confused knowledge of a mediator*. Exclusive systems, which lead to great discoveries, must inevitably have some weak parts, and be liable to some dangers.

The three primitive terms being established, M. de Bonald applies them to the social or moral world, because these three terms include, in effect, the order of the universe. The *cause*, the *means*, and the *effect* become then, for society, the *governing power*, the *ecclesiastical ministry*, and the *subject*. "Society," he says, "is religious or political, domestic or public.



The purely domestic state of religious society is called *Natural Religion*,—the purely domestic state of political society is called a family. The completion of religious society was the leading mankind first to the *theism* or *national religion* of the Jews, and from thence to the general religion of the Christians. Political society was carried to perfection in Europe, when men were led from the domestic state to the public state, and when those *civilized* communities were established which arose out of Christianity.

The reader must perceive that he has here quitted the systematic part of M. de Bonald's work, and that he enters upon a series of principles perfectly new, and most fertile in matter. In all particular modifications of society, the governing power wills its existence, consequently watches over its preservation; the ministers of religion act in execution of the will of this governing power; the subject is the object of this will, and the end at which the action of the ministers aims. The power *wills*, it must therefore be one; the ministers act, they must therefore be many.



M. de Bonald thus arrives at the fundamental basis of his political system; a basis which he has sought, as we see plainly, in the bosom of God himself. Monarchy, according to him, or unity of power, is the only government derived from the essence of things, and the sovereignty of the Omnipotent over nature. Every political form which deviates from this, carries us more or less back to the infancy of nations, or the *barbarism* of society.

In the second book of his work, he shews the application of this principle to the particular stages of society. In family or domestic society, he considers the different relations between masters and servants, between parents and children. In public society he contends that the public power ought to be like domestic power, committed to God alone, independent of men; that is to say, that it should be a power of unity, masculine, perpetual; for without unity, without perpetuity, without being masculine, there can be no true independence. The attributes of power, the state of peace and war, the code of laws are examined by the author. In unison with his



title, he refers in all these things to the *Elements of Legislation*; he feels the necessity of recurring to the most simple notions, when all principles have been overthrown in society.

In treating of the ecclesiastical ministry, which follows the two books of principles, the author seeks to prove, by the history of modern times, particularly by that of France, the truth of the principles which he has advanced. "The Christian religion," he says, "in appearing to the world, called to its cradle shepherds and kings, and their homage, the first it received, announced to the universe, that it came to regulate families and states, the private and the public man.

"The combat began between idolatry and christianity; it was bloody; religion lost its most generous *athletæ*, but it finally triumphed. Till then, confined to family or domestic society, it was now mingled with state concerns, it became a proprietor. To the little churches of Ephesus and Thessalonica succeeded the great churches of Gaul and Germany. The political state was combined with the religious state, or rather it was con-



stituted naturally by it. The great monarchies of Europe were formed conjointly with the great churches; the church had its chief, its ministers, its subjects or faithful; the state had its chief, its ministers, its subjects. Division of jurisdictions, hierarchy in the functions, the nature of property, even to its very denominations became, by degrees alike, in the religious ministry, and in the political ministry. The church was divided into metropolitans, diocesans, &c.; the state was divided into governments or duchies, districts or counties, &c. The church had its religious orders, charged with the education of the people, and made the depositaries of science, the state had its military orders devoted to the defence of religion; every where the state rose with the church, the dungeon by the side of the bell, the lord or the magistrate by the side of the priest; the noble, or the defender of the state lived in the country, the votary of religion in the desert. But the first order of things soon changed, and the political and religious state of the country altered together. The towns increased in number and magnitude, and the nobles



came to inhabit them, while at the same time the priests quitted their solitudes. Property was denaturalised, the invasions of the Normans commenced, changes were made in the reigning powers, the wars of the kings against their vassals occasioned a vast number of fiefs, the natural and exclusive property of the political orders, to pass into the hands of the clergy, while the nobles became possessed of the ecclesiastical tenths, the natural and exclusive property of the clerical order. The duties for which they called, naturally followed the property to which they were attached; nobles appointed to ecclesiastical benefices, which were often rendered hereditary in the family; the priest instituted judges and raised soldiers, or even judged and fought himself; the spirit of each body was changed at the same time that the property was confounded.

At length the epoch of the great religious revolution arrived. It was first prepared in the church by the injudicious institution of the mendicant orders which the court of Rome thought it prudent to establish in opposition to a rich



and corrupt clergy. But these bodies soon became in a refined and witty nation like France, objects of sarcasm to the literati.\* At the same time that Rome established its militia, the state founded its bodies of the like description. The crusades and the usurpations of the crown having impoverished the order of the nobles, it was necessary to have recourse to hired troops for the defence of the state. The military force, under Charles VII, passed over to the body of the people, or to soldiers who served for pay; the judiciary force, under Francis I, passed over to the men of letters through the venality of the judiciary officers. The reformation of the church,

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\* When the mendicant orders were first established in the church, could it be said that the French were then an elegant nation? Does not the author, besides, forget the innumerable services these orders have rendered mankind? The first literati who appeared at the revival of letters were far from turning the mendicant orders into ridicule, for a great number of them were themselves of some religious order. The author seems here to confound the epochs; but we allow it would have been good to diminish insensibly the mendicant orders in proportion as the manners in France became more elegant and refined.



proceeded in the same course with the innovations in the state. Simple citizens took the place of magistrates constituted for exercising the political functions; simple religionists usurped the religious functions from the priests. Luther attacked the sacerdotal order, Calvin replaced it in his own family. Popularism crept into the state, presbyterianism into the church. The public ministry of the church passed over to the people, till they at length arrogated to themselves the sovereign power, when the two parallel and corresponding dogmas of the political democracy, the one that the religious authority resides in the body of the faithful, the other that the political sovereignty is in the assembly of the citizens, were triumphantly proclaimed.

From this change of principles arose a change of manners. The nobles abandoned the more sublime functions of judges to embrace the profession of arms alone. Military licentiousness soon began to relax the moral ties, women began to influence the appointments to the public ministry of the church, luxury was introduced into the court and the towns, a nation



of citizens supplanted a nation of husbandmen ; wanting consequence they were ambitious of obtaining titles ; the nobles sold themselves, at the same time that the property of the church was put up to auction ; great names became extinct, the first families of the state sunk into poverty, the clergy lost their authority and their consideration ; philosophy, finally, springing up from this religious and political chaos, completed the overthrow of the shaken monarchy.

This very remarkable passage is taken from M. de Bonald's *Theory of political and religious power*, which was suppressed by the Directory, a very few copies only escaping into the world. Possibly some time or other the author may give a republication of this most important work, one very superior to the *Primitive Legislation* ; this latter may indeed be called in some sort only an abstract of it. Then will it be known whence are derived many ideas in political science which have been brought forwards by the writers of the present day, and which, since they have not thought proper to acknowledge the source



whence they are derived, have been supposed wholly new.

For the rest we have found every where, and we glory in it, in the work of M. de Bonald, a confirmation of the literary and religious principles which we announced in the *Genius of Christianity*. He even goes farther in some respects than we had done, for we did not find ourselves sufficiently authorized to say with him *that we must at this day use the utmost circumspection not to be ridiculous in speaking of mythology*. We believe that a genius, well-directed, may yet draw many treasures from this fruitful vine; but we also think, and we were perhaps the first to advance it, that there are more sources for dramatic poetry in the Christian religion, than in the religion of the ancients; that the numberless conflicts of the passions necessarily resulting from a chaste and inflexible religion must compensate amply to the poet the loss of the mythological beauties. Although we should only have raised a doubt upon so important a literary question, upon a question decided



in favour of fable by the highest authorities in letters, would not this be to have obtained a sort of victory.\*

M. de Bonald also condemns those timid minds who, from *respect for religion*, would willingly abandon religion itself to destruction. He expresses himself in nearly the same terms that we have done: "Even though these truths, so necessary to the preservation of social order, were disowned from one end of Europe to the

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\* Madame de Staël herself, in the preface to her novel of *Delphine*, makes some concession when she allows that religious ideas are favourable to the development of genius; yet she seems to have written this work for the purpose of combating these same ideas, and to prove that there is nothing more dry and harsh than Christianity, more tender than philosophy. It is for the public to pronounce whether she has attained her end. At least she has given new proofs of those distinguished talents and that brilliant imagination which we were happy to recognize. And although she endeavours to give currency to opinions which freeze and wither the heart, we feel throughout her work effusions of that kindness of soul which no systems of philosophy can extinguish, and of that generosity to which the unfortunate have never appealed in vain.



other; would it be necessary to justify ourselves to weak and timid minds, to souls full of terrors, that we dared to raise a corner of the veil which conceals these truths from superficial observers?—and could there be christians so weak in their faith as to think that they would be the less respected, in proportion as they were more known.”

Amidst the violent criticisms which have assailed us from the very first steps we ventured to take in the paths of literature, we must confess it is extremely flattering and consoling to us to see at this day our humble efforts sanctioned by an opinion so important as that of M. de Bonald. We must, however, take the liberty of saying to him that in the ingenious comparison which he draws between our work and his own, he proves that he knows much better than ourselves how to use the weapons of imagination, and that if he does not employ them more frequently it is because he despises them. He is, notwithstanding any thing that may be urged to the contrary, the skilful architect of that temple of which we are only the unskilful decorator.



It is much to be regretted, that M. de Bonald had not the time and fortune necessary for making one single work of those upon the *Theory of Power*, upon *Divorce*, upon *Primitive Legislation*, and his several *Treatises upon political subjects*. But Providence, who disposes of us, has appointed M. de Bonald to other duties, and has demanded of his heart the sacrifice of his genius. This man, endowed with talents so superior, with a modesty so rare, consecrates himself, at the present moment, to an unfortunate family, and paternal cares make him forget the path of glory. The eulogium pronounced in the Scriptures, upon the patriarchs, may well be applied to him: *Homines divites in virtute, pulchritudinis studium habentes; pacificantes in domibus suis.*

The genius of M. de Bonald appears to us rather profound than elevated; it delves more than it aspires. His mind is at once solid and acute; his imagination is not always, like imaginations eminently poetic, led away by an ardent sentiment or a grand image, but it is always ingenious, and abounds with happy turns; for



this reason, we find in his writings more of calm than of motion, more of light than of heat. As to his sentiments, they every where breathe that true French honour, that probity, which formed the predominant characteristic in the writers of the age of Louis XIV. We feel that these writers discovered truth less by the power of their minds than by the integrity of their hearts.

It is so seldom we have works like this to examine, that I trust I shall be pardoned the length to which the present article has run. When the luminaries which now shine around our literary horizon are gradually hiding themselves, and about to be extinguished, we rest with particular delight upon a new luminary which rises. All these men have grown old with glory in the republic of letters; these writers, so long known, to whom we shall succeed, but whom we can never replace, have seen happier days. They lived while a Buffon, a Montesquieu, a Voltaire still existed: Voltaire had known Boileau, Boileau had seen the great Corneille expire, and Corneille, while a child, might have heard the last accents of Malherbe.



This fine chain of French genius is broken ; the revolution has hollowed out an abyss, which has for ever separated the future from the past. No medium generation has been formed between the writers who are no more and those who are to come. One man alone holds to a link of each chain, and stands in the midst of this barren interval. He, whom friendship dares not name, but whom a celebrated author, the oracle of taste and of criticism, has designated for his successor, will be easily recognized. In any case, if the writers of the new age, dispersed by fearful storms, have not been able to nourish their genius at the sources of ancient authorities, if they have been obliged to draw from themselves; if this be the case, yet have not solitude and adversity been great schools to them? Companions alike in misfortunes, friends before they were authors, may they never see revived among them those shameful jealousies, which have too often dishonoured an art so noble and consolatory. They have still much occasion for courage and union. The atmosphere of letters will for a long time be stormy.



It was letters that nourished the revolution, and they will be the last asylum of revolutionary hatred. Half a century will scarcely suffice to calm so much humbled vanity, so much wounded self-love. Who then can hope to see more serene days for the Muses? Life is too short; it resembles those courses in which the funeral games were celebrated among the ancients, at the end of which appeared a tomb.

Εσθηκεφύγον άυον δσον, &c.

“ On this side,” said Nestor to Antilochus, “ the trunk of an oak, despoiled of its branches, rises from the earth, two stones support it in a narrow way, it is an antique tomb, and the marked boundary of your course.”



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UPON M. MICHAUD'S POEM,

*The Spring of a Proscript.*

M. de Voltaire has said:

Or sing your joys, or lay aside your songs,

May we not say, with equal justice,

Or sing your woes, or lay aside your songs,

Condemned to death during the days of terror, obliged to fly a second time, after the 18th of Fructidor, the author of this poem was received by some hospitable spirits in the mountains of Jura, and found, among the pictures presented by nature, at once subjects to console his mind and to cherish his regrets.

When the hand of Providence removes us from intercourse with mankind, our eyes, less distracted, fix themselves naturally upon the sublime spectacles which the creation presents to them, and we discover wonders, of which



before we had no idea. From the bosom of our solitude we think upon the tempests of the world, as a man cast upon a desert island, from a feeling of secret melancholy, delights to contemplate the waves breaking upon the shore where he was wrecked. After the loss of our friends, if we do not sink under the weight of our griefs, the heart reposes upon itself, it forms the project of detaching itself from every other sentiment, to live only upon its recollections. We are then less fit to mingle with society, but our sensibility is more alive. Let him who is borne down by sorrow bury himself amid the deepest recesses of the forest, let him wander among their moving arches, let him climb mountains, whence he may behold immense tracts of country, whence the sun may be seen rising from the bosom of the ocean, his grief never can stand against spectacles so sublime. Not that he will forget those he loved, for then would he fear to be consoled; but the remembrance of his friends would mingle itself with the calm of the woods and of the heavens, he would still retain his grief, it would only be deprived of its bitterness.



Happy they who love Nature, they will find her,  
and her alone, a friend in the day of adversity.

These reflections were suggested by the work which we are about to examine. It is not the production of a poet who seeks the pomp and the perfection of the art, it is the effusion of a child of misfortune, who communes with himself, and who touches the lyre only to render the expression of his sorrows more harmonious; it is a proscribed sufferer, who addresses his book like Ovid: "My book, thou wilt go to Rome, and go without me! Alas! why is not thy master permitted to go thither himself? Go, but go without pomp or display, as suits the production of a banished poet."

The work, divided into three cantos, opens with a description of the early fine days in the year. The author compares the tranquillity of the country with the terror which then prevailed in the towns, and paints the labourer's reception of a *proscript*.

Ah! in those days of woe, if some lorn wretch  
A refuge sought beneath his lonely roof,



His cottage door, his kind and simple heart  
 Flew open to receive him, while the woods  
 His guileless hands had planted, their discreet  
 And sheltering boughs spread circling, to conceal  
 From wicked eyes the joyous heart he'd made.  
 Religion, persecuted in towns, finds also, in  
 her turn, an asylum in the forests, although she  
 has lost her altars and her temples.  
 Sometimes the faithful, warm'd by holy zeal,  
 Assemble in the hamlet, 'mid the gloom  
 Of night, to pay their homage to that Power  
 By whom they live, who with paternal care  
 Protects them thus; instead of sacred incense  
 Offering the flow'rs of spring, the ardent vows  
 Of upright souls, while echo to the woods  
 Repeats their humble prayers. Ah! where, alas!  
 Are now their antique presbyt'ry, that cross,  
 Those bells that tower'd to heaven?—monuments  
 By our forefathers so rever'd, so cherish'd.

These verses are easy and natural, the sentiments are mild and pious, according with the objects to which they form, as it were, the background of the picture. Our churches give to our hamlets and towns a character singularly



moral. The eyes of the traveller are first fixed upon the religious turret that encloses the bells, the sight of which awakens in the bosom a multitude of pious sentiments and recollections. It is the funereal pyramid, beneath which rest the ashes of our forefathers; but it is also the monument of joy, where the bell announces life to the faithful. It is there that the husband and wife exchange their mutual vows, that Christians prostrate themselves before the altar, the weak to entreat support from their God, the guilty to implore compassion from their God, the innocent to sing the goodness of their God. Does a landscape appear naked and barren of objects, let but the turret of a rustic church be added, every thing in an instant is animated, is alive; the sweet ideas of the pastor and his flock, of an asylum for the traveller, of alms for the pilgrim, of Christian hospitality and fraternity, are awakened in the mind, they are seen on every side.

A country priest, menaced by the law which condemned to death all of his class who were seen exercising their sacred functions, yet who would not abandon his flock, and who goes by night to comfort the labourer, was a picture



which must naturally present itself to the mind of a proscribed poet.

He wanders through the woods. O silent night,  
 Veil with thy friendly shade his pious course!  
 If he must suffer still, O God support him!  
 'Tis a united hamlet's voice entreats thee,  
 And you, false votaries of philosophy,  
 Yet spare his virtues, and protect his life!  
 Escap'd from cruel chains, from dreary dungeons,  
 He preaches pardon for the wrongs we suffer,  
 Wiping the tears which trickle down the cheeks  
 Of those that listen with delight around.

It appears to us that this passage is full of simplicity and piety. Are we then much deceived in having maintained that religion is favourable to poetry, and that in repressing our religious feelings we deprive ourselves of one of the most powerful mediums for touching the heart.

The author, concealed in his retreat, apostrophizes the friends whom he scarcely hopes ever to see again

Thou shalt be heard no more, O sweet Delille,  
 Thou rival and interpreter by turns  
 Of the great Mantuan bard, . . . . .



Nor thou, who by thy strains could charm our woes;  
 Thou Fontanés, whose voice consol'd the tombs,  
 Nor Morellet, whose strong and nervous pen  
 Pleaded the sufferer's cause 'gainst tyranny;  
 Suard, who, emulous of Addison, combin'd  
 With learning, wit, with solid reason, grace;  
 Laharpe, whose taste could oracles explain,  
 Sicard, whose lessons verge to miracles;  
 Jussieu, Laplace, and virtuous Daubenton,  
 Who taught us secrets to Buffon unknown—  
 Ah! never shall these eyes behold you more.

These regrets are affecting, and the eulogiums pronounced by the author upon his friends have the rare merit of being in unison with the public opinion; besides, this appears to us quite in the taste of the ancients. Is it not thus that the Latin poet, whom we have already cited, addresses his friends whom he has left at Rome? "There is," says Ovid, "in our native country a something soothing, which attracts us, which charms us, which does not permit us to forget it. . . . You hope, dear Rufinus, that the chagrins which devour me will yield to the consolations you send me in my exile; begin then, my friends,



by being less amiable, that I may live without you with less pain."

Alas! in reading the name of M. de Laharpe, in the verses of M. Michaud, who can resist being deeply affected. Scarcely have we found again those who were dear to us, than a longer, an ever-during separation, must sever us again. No one sees more clearly and more painfully than ourselves the whole extent of the misfortune which at this moment threatens learning and religion. We have seen M. de Laharpe cast down, like Hezekiah, by the hand of God. Nothing but the most lively faith, but the most sacred hope, can inspire a resignation so perfect, a courage so great, thoughts so elevated and affecting, amid the pains of lingering agony, amid repeated experience of the sufferings of death.

Poets love to paint the sorrows of banishment, so fertile in sad and tender sentiments. They have sung Patroclus taking refuge under the roof of Achilles, Cadmus abandoning the walls of Sidon, Tydæus seeking an asylum with Adrastus, and Teucer sheltered in the island of



Venus: The chorus in *Iphigenia in Tauris* vain would traverse the air: "I would pause in my flight over my paternal roof, I would see once more that spot so dear to my remembrance, where, under the eyes of a mother, I celebrated an innocent marriage." Ah who does not see here the *dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos*? who does not recur to Ulysses wandering far from his country, desiring, as his sole happiness, once more to see the smoke of his own palace. Mercury finds him sad and dejected, on the shores of the island of Calypso, contemplating, as he sheds tears, that sea so eternally agitated:

Πόντον ἐπ' ἀτρούγετον δερκεσκέτο δειράα λειβαίν.

An admirable line, which Virgil has translated, applying it to the exiled Trojans:

*Cunctæque profundum*

*Pontum aspectabant flentes.*

This *flentes* thrown to the end of the line is very fine. Ossian has painted with different colours, but which are also full of charms, a young



woman dead far from her country in a foreign land. "There lovely Moina is often seen when the sun-beam darts on the rock, and all around is dark. There she is seen, Malvina, but not like the daughters of the hill. Her robes are from the stranger's land, and she is unknown."

We may judge by the sweet lamentations which fall from the author of the poem under examination, that he deeply felt this *mal du pays*, this malady which attacks Frenchmen, above all others, when far from their own country. Monimia in the midst of the barbarians could not forget *the sweet bosom of Greece*. Physicians have called this sadness of the soul *nostalgia* from two Greek words *νοστος* *return*, and *αλγος* *grief*, because it is only to be cured by returning to the paternal roof. How indeed could M. Michaud, who makes his lyre sigh so sweetly, avoid infusing sensibility into a subject which even Gresset could not sing without being melted. In the Ode of the latter upon the *Love of our Country*, we find this affecting passage: "Ah if in this melancholy course he should be overtaken by the last sleep, without seeing



again that dear country in which the sun first beamed upon him, still his expiring tenderness prays that his sad remains may be deposited there. Less light would lie the earth of a foreign land upon his abandoned manes."

In the midst of the sweet consolations which his retreat affords to our exiled poet, he exclaims:

O, lovely days of spring, O beauteous vales

What work of art can with your charms compare?

Is all a Voltaire wrote worth one sole ray

Of breaking dawn, or worth the smallest flow'r

Op'd by the breath of Zephyr?

But [does not M. de Voltaire, whose impieties we hold in as great detestation as M. Michaud can do, sometimes breathe sentiments worthy of admiration?—Has not he too felt these sweet regrets for a lost country. "I write to you" he says to Madame Denis, "by the side of my stove, with a heavy head and a sad heart, casting my eyes over the river Sprey, because the Sprey flows into the Elbe, the Elbe into the sea, while the sea receives the Seine, and our house at Paris is near that river."



It is said that a Frenchman, obliged to fly during the reign of terror, bought, with a few deniers, a bark upon the Rhine, where he lodged himself with a wife and two children. Not having any money there was no hospitality for him. When he was driven from one bank, he passed over without complaining to the other side, and often persecuted on both banks, he was obliged to cast anchor in the midst of the river. He occupied himself in fishing for the subsistence of his family, but his fellow-creatures still disputed with him the succours offered by Providence, envying him even the little fish with which they saw him feed his children. At night he went on shore and collected a few dried plants to make a fire, when his wife remained in the utmost anxiety till his return. This family who could not be reproached with any thing except being unfortunate, found not, over the vast globe, a spot of earth on which they could rest their heads. Obligated to pursue the lives of savages in the midst of four great civilized nations, their sole consolation was that in thus wandering about they were still in the neighbourhood



of France, they could sometimes breathe the air which had passed over their country. M. Michaud wandered in this way over the mountains whence he could discern the tops of the trees in his beloved France; but how could he pass away his time in a foreign land? How were his days to be occupied? Was it not natural that he should visit those rustic tombs where Christian souls had terminated their exile full of hope and joy. This was what he did, and, thanks to the season he chose, the asylum of death was changed to a lovely field covered with flowers.

Perhaps beneath this grave with flowers o'ergrown

A child of Phœbus rests, to him unknown.

Thus the fair flow'r that grows on you lone mount

Its sweet perfumes, its brilliant hues alone

Flings to the barren waste. Thus dazzling gold,

Sovereign of metals, in the darkest caves

That earth embosoms, hides its fatal charms.

The author would perhaps have done better to follow more closely the English poet whom he intends to imitate. He has substituted the com-



mon image of gold deeply embowelled in the earth to that of a *pearl hidden at the bottom of the sea*. The flower which only expands its colours to the barren waste ill explains the original turn of Gray, *born to blush unseen*.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene

The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear,

Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen

And waste its sweetness in the desert air.

The sight of these peaceful tombs recalls to the poet the troubled sepulchres where slept our departed kings, which ought not to have been opened till the consummation of all things, but a particular judgment of Providence occasioned them to be broke into before their time. A frightful resurrection depopulated the funereal vaults of St. Dennis; the phantoms of our kings quitted their eternal shade, but as if frightened at reappearing alone to the light, at not finding themselves, as the prophet says, *in the world with all the dead*, they replunged again into the sepulchre.

And now these kings exhum'd by miscreant hands

Have twice descended to the darksome tomb.



From these fine lines it is evident that M. Michaud is capable, in his poetry, of taking any tone.

It is somewhat remarkable that some of these spectres, blackened\* by the grave, still retained such a resemblance of what they were when alive that they were easily recognized. The characters of their prevailing passions, even the minutest shadings of the ideas by which they had been principally occupied, were to be discovered in their features. What then is that faculty of thought, in man, which leaves such strong impressions on the countenance even in the dust of annihilation?—Since we speak of poetry let us be permitted to borrow the simile of a poet. Milton tells us that the Divine Son, after having accomplished the creation of the world rejoined his eternal principle, and that their route over created matter was for a long time discernible by a track of light; thus the soul returning into the bosom of God leaves in the mortal body the glorious traces of its passage.

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\* The face of Louis XIV. was turned as black as ebony.



M. Michaud is highly to be applauded for having made use of those contrasts which awaken the imagination of the reader. The ancients often employed them in tragedy; a chorus of soldiers keeps guard at the Trojan camp on the fatal night when Rhœsus has scarcely finished his course. In this critical moment do these soldiers talk of combats, do they retrace the images of terrible surprizes?—Hear what the semi-chorus says:—“Listen! those accents are the strains of Philomel who in a thousand varied tones deplores her misfortunes and her own vengeance. The bloody shores of Simois repeat her plaintive accents. I hear the sound of the pipe, 'tis the hour when the shepherds of Ida go forth, carrying their flocks to graze in the smiling vallies. A cloud comes over my weary eye-lids, a sweet langour seizes all my senses; sleep shed over us, by the dawn, is most delicious.”

Let us frankly acknowledge that we have no such things in our modern tragedies, however perfect they may otherwise be; and let us be sufficiently just to confess that the barbarous Shakspeare has sometimes hit upon a species of



sentiment so natural, yet so rare, upon this simplicity in his imagery. The chorus above-cited in Euripides will naturally recal to the reader the dialogue in *Romeo and Juliet*:  
 “*Is it the lark that sings*” &c.

But while those pastoral pictures which in softening terror increase pity, because as Fénélon says, they create *a smile in a heart of anguish*, are banished from the tragic scene, we have transported them with much success into works of another kind. The moderns have extended and enriched the domain of descriptive poetry. Of this M. Michaud himself furnishes some fine examples.

On you tall mountain tops, yet on the verge  
 Of disappearing, day, still ling'ring, smiles  
 Upon the flow'rs herself had bade expand,—  
 The river, following its majestic course,  
 Reflects beneath its clear and glassy surface  
 The dark hues of the woods that fringe its shores.  
 Some feeble rays of light still pierce amid  
 The thickly woven foliage, and illumé  
 The lofty turrets of the antique castle;  
 The slate reflecting these declining rays,  
 The windows blazing to the dazzled sight



At distance shew like fire. And hark, I hear  
From forth those bow'rs, sweet songstress of the spring,  
Thy strains, which seem more mellow to the ear  
'Mid evening's gloom; and while the woods around  
Are vocal made by thee, the mute Arachue  
To the low bramble and aspiring oak  
Fastens her netted snares: meanwhile the quail,  
Like me a stranger in a foreign land,  
Pours through the listening fields her springy lays.  
Quitting his labyrinth, the imprudent rabbit  
Comes forth to meet the hunter who awaits him;  
And the poor partridge, by the gloom encourag'd,  
From answering echoes asks her wander'd mate.

This seems the proper place to advert to a reproach made us by M. Michaud in his preliminary discourse, where he combats, with no less taste than politeness, our opinion of descriptive poetry. "The author of the *Genius of Christianity*," says he, "ascribes the origin of descriptive poetry to the Christian religion, which, *in destroying the charm attached to the mythological fables, has reduced the poets to seek the interest of their pictures in their truth and exactness.*"

The author of the poem on *Spring* thinks



that we are here mistaken. But, in the first place, we have not ascribed the origin of descriptive poetry to the Christian religion, we have only attributed to it the developement of this species of poetry; which seems to me a very different thing. Moreover, we have been careful not to say that Christianity has destroyed the charm of the mythological fables; we have endeavoured, on the contrary, to prove that every thing beautiful which is to be found in mythology, such, for example, as the *moral allegories*, may well be employed by a Christian poet, and that *the true religion* has only deprived the Muses of the minor, or disgusting fictions of paganism. And is the loss of the *physical allegories* so much to be regretted? What does it signify to us whether Jupiter means the æther, Juno the air, &c.

But since M. de Fontanes, a critic whose judgments are laws, has thought that he also ought to combat our opinion upon the employment of mythology, let us be permitted to revert to the passage which has given occasion to this discussion. After showing that the an-



cients were scarcely acquainted with descriptive poetry, in the sense which we attach to this term; after having shown that neither their poets, their philosophers, their naturalists, nor their historians have given descriptions of nature, I add: "We cannot suspect men endowed with the sensibility of the ancients to have wanted eyes to discern the beauties of nature, or talents to paint them. Some powerful cause must then have blinded their eyes. Now this cause was their mythology; which, peopling the earth with elegant phantoms, took from the creation its solemnity, its grandeur, its solitude, and its melancholy. It was necessary that christianity should chase all this people of fauns, of satyrs, of nymphs, to restore to the grottoes their silence, to the woods their disposition to excite meditation. The deserts have assumed, under our worship, a more sad, a more vague, a more sublime character. The domes of the forests are raised, the rivers have broken their petty urns, to pour out their waters, drawn from the summits of the mountains, only into the great deep. The true God, in being restored to



his works, has given to nature his own immensity.

“Sylvans and Naiads may strike the imagination agreeably, provided always that we are not incessantly presented with them. We would not

Of their empire o'er the sea

Deprive the Tritons, take from Pan his flute,

Or snatch their scissars from the fatal sisters.

“But what does all this leave in the soul? What results from it to the heart? What fruit can the thoughts derive from it? How much more favoured is the Christian poet, in the solitude where God walks with him! free from this multitude of ridiculous deities, which surrounded him on every side, the woods are filled with one immense Divinity. The gifts of wisdom and prophecy, the mysteries of religion, seem to reside eternally in their sacred recesses. Penetrate into the American forests, as ancient as the world itself,” &c. &c.

It appears to us, that the principle, as thus laid down, cannot be attacked fundamentally,



though some disputes may be admitted as to the details. It may perhaps be asked, whether nothing fine is to be found in the *ancient allegories*? We have answered this question in the chapter where we distinguish two sorts of allegories, the *moral* and the *physical*. M. de Fontanes has urged that the ancients equally knew this solitary and formidable deity who inhabits the woods. But have we not ourselves assented to this, in saying, “As to those unknown gods, whom the ancients placed in the deep woods and in the barren deserts, they undoubtedly produced a fine effect, but they formed no part of the mythological system; the human mind here recurred to *natural religion*. What the trembling traveller adored in passing through these solitudes was something *unknown*, something the name of which he could not tell, whom he called the *divinity of the place*. Sometimes he addressed it by the name of *Pan*, and *Pan* we know was the *universal god*. The great emotions which wild nature inspires have never been without existence, and the woods still preserve to us their formidable deity.”



The excellent critic whom we have already cited, maintains farther, that there have been Pagan people who were conversant with descriptive poetry. This is undoubtedly true, and we have even availed ourselves of this circumstance to support our opinions, since the nations to whom the *Gods of Greece* were unknown, had a glimmering view of that beautiful and simple nature which was masked by the mythological system.

It has been objected that the moderns have outraged descriptive poetry. Have we said any thing to the contrary; let us be permitted to recur to our own words: "Perhaps it may here be objected, that the ancients were in the right to consider descriptive poetry as the accessory part, not as the principal subject of the picture; in this idea we concur, and think that in our days there is a great abuse of the descriptive. But abuse is not the thing itself, and it is not the less true, that descriptive poetry, such as we are accustomed to it at present, is an additional engine in the hands of the poet; that it has extended the sphere of poetical imagery, without depriving



us of painting the manners and the passions, such as those pictures existed for the ancients."

In short, M. Michaud thinks that the species of poetry which we call *descriptive*, such as is fixed at this day, has only begun to be a species since the last century. But is this the essential part of the question? Will that prove that descriptive poetry has emanated from the Christian religion alone. Is it, in fact, very certain that this species of poetry is properly to be considered as having had its rise only in the last century. In our chapter entitled, *The historic part of Descriptive Poetry among the Moderns*, we have traced the progress of this poetry; we have seen it commence with the writings of the Fathers in the desert; from thence spread itself into history, pass among the romance-writers and poets of the Lower Empire, soon mingle itself with the genius of the Moors, and attain under the pencils of Ariosto and Tasso, a species of perfection too remote from the truth. Our great writers of the age of Louis XIV. rejected this sort of Italian descriptive poetry which celebrated nothing but *roses, clear*



*fountains, and tufted woods.* The English, in adopting it, stripped it of its affectation, but carried into it another species of excess in overloading it with detail. At length returning into France, in the last century, it grew to perfection under the pens of Messrs. Delille, St. Lambert, and Fontaine, and acquired in the prose of Messrs. de Buffon and Bernardin de St. Pierre, a beauty unknown to it before.

We do not pronounce this judgment from ourselves alone, for our own opinion is of too little weight, we have not even like Chaulieu, *for the morrow,*

A little knowledge and a deal of hope,  
 but we appeal to M. Michaud himself. Would he have dispersed over his verses so many agreeable descriptions of nature, if christianity had not disencumbered the woods of the ancient Dryads and the eternal Zephyrs? Has not the author of the *Poem of Spring* been deluded by his own success? He has made a delightful use of fable in his *Letters upon the Sentiment of*



*Pity*, and we know that Pygmalion adored the statue which his own hands had formed. "Psyche," says M. Michaud, "was desirous of seeing Love, she approached the fatal lamp and Love disappeared for ever. Psyche, signifies the soul in the Greek language, and the ancients intended to prove by the allegory that the soul finds its most tender sentiments vanish in proportion as it seeks to penetrate the object of them." This explanation is ingenious; but did the ancients really see all this in the fable of Psyche? We have endeavoured to prove that the charm of mystery in those things which may be called the sentimental part of life is one of the benefits which we owe to the delicacy of our religion. If Pagan antiquity conceived the fable of Psyche, it appears to us that it is here a Christian who interprets it.

Still farther: Christianity, in banishing fable from nature, has not only restored grandeur to the deserts, it has even introduced another species of mythology full of charms for the poet, in the *personification of plants*. When the Heliotrope was always Clytia, the mulberry-tree



always Thisbe, &c. the imagination of the poet was necessarily confined; he could not animate nature by any other fictions than the consecrated fictions, without being guilty of impiety; but the modern muse transforms at its pleasure all the plants into nymphs without any injury to the angels and the celestial spirits which it may spread over the mountains, along the rivers, and in the forests. Undoubtedly it is possible to carry this personification to excess and M. Michaud has reason to ridicule the poet Darwin who in the *Loves of the Plants*, represents *Genista* as walking tranquilly under the shade of arbours of myrtle. But if the English author be one of those poets of whom Horace speaks who are condemned to make verses, for having dishonoured the ashes of their fathers, that proves nothing as to the fundamental good or ill of the thing. Let another poet, endowed with more taste and judgment, describe the *Loves of the Plants*, they will offer only pleasing pictures.

When in the chapters which M. Michaud attacks we have said; "see in a profound calm, at the breaking of dawn, all the flowers of this



valley ; immovable upon their stalks they incline themselves in a variety of attitudes, and seem to look towards every point in the horizon ; even at this moment when to you all appears tranquil, a great mystery is in operation, nature conceives, and these plants are so many young mothers turned towards the mysterious region whence they are to imbibe fecundity. The sylphs have sympathies less aërial, communications less invisible. The narcissus confides to the rivulet her virgin race, the violet trusts her modest posterity to the care of the Zephyr, a bee gathers honey from flower to flower, and without knowing it fertilizes a whole meadow, a butterfly carries an entire nation under her wing, a world descends in a drop of dew. All the *Loves of the Plants* are not however equally tranquil, some are tempestuous, like those of mankind. Tempests are necessary to marry the cedar of Sinäi upon inaccessible heights, while at the foot of the mountain the gentlest breeze suffices to establish an interchange of voluptuousness among the flowers. Is it not thus that the breath of the passions agitates the kings of the



earth on their thrones, while the shepherds live happily at their feet.

This is very imperfect undoubtedly, but from this feeble essay it is easy to see how much might be made of such a subject by a skilful poet.

It is indeed this relationship between animate and inanimate objects, which furnished one of the primary sources whence was derived the ancient mythology. When man, yet wild, wandering among the woods had satisfied the first wants of life, he felt another want in his heart, that of a supernatural power, to support his weakness. The breaking of a wave, the murmur of a solitary wind, all the noises which arise out of nature, all the movements that animate the deserts, appeared to him as if combined with this hidden cause. Chance united these local effects to some fortunate or unfortunate circumstances in his pursuit of the animals on which he was to prey; a particular colour, a new and singular object perhaps struck him at that moment; thence the Manitou of the Canadian, and the Fetiche of the Negro, the first of all the mythologies.



This elementary principles of a false belief being once unfolded, a vast career was opened for human superstitions. The affections of the heart were soon changed into divinities more dangerous than they were amiable. The savage who had raised a mound over the tomb of his friend, the mother who had given her darling infant to the earth, came every year at the fall of the leaf, the former to shed his tears, the latter to drop her milk over the hallowed turf; both believed that the absent objects so regretted, and always living in their remembrance, could not have wholly ceased to exist. It was without doubt friendship weeping over a monument which inspired the dogma of the immortality of the soul, and proclaimed the religion of the tombs.

But man, at length, quitting the forests, formed himself into a society with his fellow-creatures. Soon, the gratitude or the fears of the people raised legislators, heroes, and kings to the rank of deities. At the same time, some geniuses cherished by heaven, as an Orpheus or a Homer, increased the numbers that inhabited



Olympus: under their creative pencils, all the accidents of nature were transformed into celestial spirits. These new gods reigned for a long time over the enchanted imaginations of mankind; Anaxagoras, Democritus, Epicurus, all essayed to raise the standard against the religion of their country. But, oh sad infatuation of human errors! Jupiter was a detestable god, such an one that moving atoms, an eternal matter was preferable to this deity, armed with thunder, and the avenger of crimes.

It was reserved for the Christian religion to overthrow the altars of all these false gods, without plunging the people into atheism, and without destroying the charms of nature. For, even though it were as certain as it is doubtful, that Christianity could not furnish to the poet a vein of the *marvellous* as rich as that furnished by fable, yet it is true, and to this M. Michaud himself must assent, that there is a certain poetry of the soul, we will say almost an imagination of the heart, of which no trace can be found in mythology. The affecting beauties that emanate from this source, would alone amply compensate the ingenious falsehoods of antiquity.



In the pictures of paganism, every thing is a machine and a spring, all is external, all is made for the eyes; in the pictures of the Christian religion, all is sentiment and thought, all is internal, all is created for the soul. What charm of meditation, what scope for sensibility! there is more enchantment in one of those divine tears which Christianity excites, than in all the pleasing errors of mythology. With *Our Lady of Sorrows*, a *Mother of Pity*, some obscure saint, a patron of the blind, the orphan and the miserable, an author may write a more heart-dissolving page than with all the gods of the Pantheon. Here indeed is *poetry*, here indeed is the *marvellous*. But would you seek the marvellous still more sublime, contemplate the life and the sorrows of Christ, and remember that your God was called the *Son of Man*. We will venture to predict, that a time will come when we cannot be sufficiently astonished how it was possible to pass over the admirable beauty of the expressions used in Christianity, and when we shall have difficulty to comprehend how it could be possible to laugh at the celestial religion of reason and misfortune.



UPON THE  
HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST,  
BY FATHER DE LIGNY.

THE History of the Life of Jesus Christ is one of the last works for which we are indebted to that celebrated society,\* nearly all the members of which were men distinguished for their literary attainments. Father de Ligny, born at Amiens in 1710, survived the destruction of his order, and prolonged till 1783 a career which commenced during the misfortunes of Louis XIV, and finished at the period of the disasters of Louis XVI. Whenever in these latter times we met in the world with an aged ecclesiastic, full of knowledge, wit, and amenity, having the manners of a man of liberal education, and of one who had been accustomed to good company,

\* Father de Ligny was a Jesuit.



we were disposed to believe that ancient priest a Jesuit. The Abbé Lenfant also belonged to this order, which has given so many martyrs to the church; he was the friend of Father de Ligny, and it was he who made him finally determine to publish the history in question of the Life of Jesus Christ.

This History is, in fact, nothing more than a commentary upon the Gospels, and it is that which constitutes its great merit in our eyes. Father de Ligny cites the text of the New Testament, and expounds every verse in two ways; the one, by explaining in a moral and historical point of view what you have just read; the other, by answering any objections which may be urged against the passage cited. The first commentary is in the page with the text, in the same manuer as in the Bible of Father de Carrières; the second is in the form of a note, at the bottom of the page. In this manner the author offers to your view, in succession, and in their proper order, the different chapters of the Evangelists; and by thus bringing to your observation their affinity, by reconciling their ap-



parent contradictions, he developes the entire life of the Redeemer of the world.

The work of Father de Ligny was become very scarce, and the Typographical Society have rendered an essential service to religion in reprinting a book of such eminent utility. We know of many histories of the life of Jesus Christ, among the productions of French authors, but not one which combines, like the present, the two advantages of being at the same time an explanation of the Scriptures, and a refutation of the sophisms of the day. The Life of Jesus Christ by Saint Real wants grace and simplicity; it is much more easy to imitate Salust and the Cardinal de Retz, than to acquire the style of the Gospel. \* Father Montreuil, in

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\* The Conspiracy of the Count de Fiesco, by Cardinal de Retz, appears to have served as a model for the Conspiracy of Venice, by Saint Réal. There subsists between these two works the difference which always must subsist between the original and the copy, between him who writes with rapture and genius, and he who by dint of hard labour is enabled to imitate this rapture and this genius, with more or less truth and happiness,



his Life of Jesus Christ, revised by Father Brignon, has preserved, on the contrary, much of the charm of the New Testament. His style being a little antiquated, contributes perhaps to this charm; for the ancient French language, and more especially that which was spoken under Louis XIII, was well calculated to display the energy and simplicity of the Scriptures. It would have been fortunate had a good translation of them been made at this period. Sacy was too late, and the two best versions of the Bible are the Spanish and English versions.\* The last of these, which in many places retains the force of the Hebrew, was made in the reign of James I; the language in which it is written has become a sort of sacred language for the three kingdoms, as the Samaritan text was for the Jews; the veneration which the English have for the Scriptures appears to be augmented by it, and the antiquity of the idiom seems as if it increased the antiquity of the book. Finally,

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\* M. de Chateaubriand was not acquainted with the excellent German version of Luther.      EDITOR.



it is impossible not to be aware, that all the histories of Jesus Christ which are not, like that of Father de Ligny, a simple commentary upon the New Testament, are, generally speaking, bad, and even dangerous works. We have copied this manner of disfiguring the Gospel from the Protestants, not observing that it has had the effect of turning many persons to Socinianism. Jesus Christ is not a man; we ought not therefore to write his life in the same manner that we would write that of a simple legislator. We may endeavour to relate his works in the most affecting manner, but we can never paint him any other than as a human being;—to paint his divinity is far above our reach. Human virtues have something corporeal in them, if we may be permitted the expression, which the writer can seize; but the virtues of Christ are so deeply *intellectual*, there is in them such a *spirituality*, that they seem to shrink from the *materiality* of our expressions.

It is this *truth* so delicate, so refined, of which Pascal speaks, and which our grosser organs



cannot touch without *blunting the point*.\* The divinity of Christ is no where to be found, and cannot possibly be found any where but in the gospel, where it shines among the ineffable sacraments instituted by the Saviour, and amid the miracles which he performed. The apostles alone were able to pourtray it, because they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They were witnesses of the wonders performed by the Son of man ; they lived with him ; some part of his divinity remained stamped upon their sacred writings, as the features of this celestial Messiah remained, say they, impressed on the mysterious veil which wiped the sweat from his brow. There is besides some danger, that under the idea of producing a work of taste and literature, the whole Gospel may be transformed into a mere history of Jesus Christ. In giving to facts a certain air of something merely human, and strictly historical, in appealing incessantly to an assumed reason which is too

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\* Pascal's Thoughts.



often nothing more than deplorable folly, and in aiming at preaching morality, entirely divested of all dogmas, the protestants have suffered every thing like exalted eloquence to perish from among them. In effect, we cannot consider either the Tillotsons, the Wilkins's, the Goldsmiths, or the Blairs, notwithstanding their merits, as great orators, more especially if we compare them with a Basil, a Chrysostome, an Ambrose, a Bourdaloue, or a Massillon. Every religion which considers it as a duty to avoid dogmas, and to banish pomp from its worship, condemns itself to be dry and cold. We must not presume that the heart of man, deprived of any assistance from the imagination, can have resources within itself sufficient to cherish the undulations of eloquence. The very sentiment of eloquence is destroyed even at the moment of its birth, if it does not find itself surrounded by things capable of nourishing and supporting it; if it finds no images to prolong its duration, no spectacles to fortify it, no dogmas which transporting it into the region of mystery, prevent its being disenchanted.



The protestants boast that they have banished gloom from the Christian religion; but in the Catholic worship, Job and his holy melancholy, the shade of the cloisters, the tears of the penitent upon his rock, the voice of Bossuet delivering a funeral oration, will create more men of genius, than all the maxims of a morality devoid of eloquence, as plain and unadorned as the temple where it is preached. Father de Liguý has then considered the subject in its proper point of view, in confining his life of Christ to a simple concordance of the different Gospels. Who, besides, could flatter himself with being able to equal the beauty of the New Testament? Would not an author who should aspire to such pretensions be already condemned. Every Evangelist has his particular character except Saint Mark, whose Gospel seems to be nothing more than an abridgement of Saint Matthew's. Saint Mark was a disciple of Saint Peter, and many people think that he wrote under the direction of this prince of the Apostles. It is worthy of remark, that he has related the heavy fault committed by his master. That Jesus Christ should



have chosen for the chief of his Church precisely, the only one among his disciples who had denied him, appears to us at once a sublime and interesting mystery. There do we see all the spirit of Christianity; Saint Peter is the Adam of the new law; he is the sinful and repentant father of the new Israelites; his fall teaches us, that the Christian religion is a religion of mercy, and that Jesus Christ has established his law among men subject to error, much less for the innocent than for the repentant.

The Gospel of Saint Matthew is to be recommended above all things, for the pure morality which it inculcates. It is this Apostle who has transmitted to us the greatest number of moral precepts in the sentiments recorded by him, as proceeding so abundantly from the mouth of Jesus Christ.

Saint John has something more mild and tender in his manner. We recognise in him "*the disciple whom Jesus loved,*" the disciple who was near him on the mount of Olives during his agony—a sublime distinction undoubtedly, since none but the cherished friend of our soul is



worthy to be admitted to the mystery of our griefs. John was, besides, the only one among the Apostles who accompanied the Son of Man to the cross. It was there that the Saviour bequeathed to him the care of his mother. "*Mother behold your Son; disciple behold your Mother.*" Divine expression! ineffable recommendation. This was the well beloved disciple who slept upon the bosom of his master, who retained in his soul an image of him never to be effaced; who was the first to recognise him after his resurrection;—the heart of John could not be mistaken in the features of his divine friend, and faith was given to him as a reward for kindness.

For the rest the spirit breathed throughout the whole of Saint John's Gospel is comprised in the maxim, which he went about repeating in his old age. This apostle full of days and of good works, when no longer able to preach long sermons to the new people whom he had brought forth to Jesus Christ contented himself with this exhortation: "*My little children love one another.*"



St. Jerome asserts that Saint Luke was a physician, a profession so noble and so esteemed in antiquity, and adds that his gospel is medicine to the soul,—His language is pure and elevated, shewing at once a man conversant with letters, and one who was well acquainted with the manners and the men of his time.—He begins his narrative after the manner of the ancient historians; you may fancy that it is Herodotus speaks:

1. Since many have undertaken to write the history of those things which have come to pass amongst us—

2. According to the account given by those who, from the beginning, were eye witnesses of them, and who have been ministers of the word—

3. It seemed proper to me that I also, most excellent Theophilus, having been exactly informed of all these things from their commencement, should write to you in their order the whole history of them.

Our ignorance is such, at the present time, that there are perhaps some men of letters who will be astonished at learning that Saint Luke



is a great writer, whose gospel breathes the true genius of the ancient Greek and Hebrew languages—What can be more beautiful than the passage which precedes the birth of Christ?

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia; his wife was also of the race of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth—

They were both righteous before God, but they had no children because that Elisabeth was barren, and they were both now well stricken in years.

Zacharias offers a sacrifice, an Angel “appears to him standing by the side of the altar of incense, he informs him that he shall have a son, that this son shall be called John, that he shall be the precursor of the Messiah and that “*he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.*”—The same Angel goes afterwards to a virgin living in Israel, and says to her: “*Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee*”—Mary goes into the mountains of Judea; she meets Elisabeth, and the infant which the latter carries in her womb, leaps



at the voice of the virgin who is about to bring the Saviour into the world. Elisabeth, being filled on a sudden with the Holy Ghost, raises her voice and cries aloud "*Blessed art thou among women : and blessed is the fruit of thy womb !*

*Whence am I thus blessed that the mother of my Saviour comes to me ?*

*For when you saluted me, no sooner had your voice struck my ears, than my infant leaped in my womb for joy.*

Mary then chants the magnificent canticle *O my soul, glorify the Lord !*

The history of the manger and of the shepherds follow next ; *a multitude of the heavenly host sing, during the night, " glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace, good will to men "* a sentiment worthy of angels and which is as it were an epitome of the whole Christian religion.

We believe ourselves to be somewhat acquainted with antiquity, and we dare affirm that we might have searched a long time among the sublimest geniuses of Greece and Rome before we had found any thing which was at once so simple and so wonderful.



Whoever reads the gospel, with a little attention, will every moment discover in it admirable things, which escape us at first on account of their extreme simplicity.—Saint Luke, for instance, in giving the genealogy of Christ goes back to the beginning of the world. Arrived at the first generations and continuing to name the different races he says “*Cainan which was of Enos, which was of Seth, which was of Adam, which was of God!*” the simple expression “*which was of God*” thrown out thus without any comment and without any reflexion, to relate the creation, the origin, the nature, the end, and the mystery of man, appears to us the height of sublimity.

Much praise is due to Father de Ligny for having felt that he ought not to alter these things, and that he who could not be satisfied with these, and similar touches, must have a very false taste, and be little acquainted with christianity. His History of Jesus Christ offers an additional proof of the truth of what we have advanced in another place, that the fine arts among the moderns are indebted to the Catholic religion



for the major part of their success. Sixty engravings, after the masters of the Italian, French and Flemish schools, enrich this fine work; and it is worthy of remark, that in seeking to add the embellishments of pictures to a life of Jesus Christ it has been found that all the *chefs-d'œuvre* of modern painting were comprehended in the collection.\*

We scarcely know how to bestow sufficient commendation upon the typographical society who, in so short a space of time, have given us with the truest taste and discrimination works of such general utility.—*The select Sermons of Bossuet and Fénelon, the Letters of Saint Francis de Sales,* and many other excellent books, have all issued from the same presses, and leave nothing further to be desired as to the manner in which they are executed.

The work of Father de Ligny, besides being embellished by the painter, is about to receive

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\* Raphael, Michael Angelo, Dominichino, the Caracci, Paul Veronese, Titian, Leonardo-da-Vinci, Guercino, Lanfranc, Poussin, Le Sueur, Le Brun, Rubens, &c.



another ornament not less precious. M. de Bonald has undertaken to write a preface to it; this name alone speaks talents and an enlightened mind, and commands respect and esteem. Who is better calculated to treat of the laws and precepts of Jesus Christ, than the author of *Divorce*, of the work upon *Primitive Legislation*, and of that upon the *Theory of Political and Religious Power*?

It cannot any longer be a matter of doubt; this senseless religion, this madness of the cross, the approaching fall of which has been pronounced by superlative wisdom, is about to be regenerated with added force. The palm of religion thrives always in proportion to the tears which christians shed, as the verdure of the grass is renewed in a spot of land which has been abundantly watered. It was an unworthy error to believe that the gospel was overthrown because it was no longer defended by the prosperous part of mankind. The strength of christianity lies in the cottage of the poor, and its basis is as durable as the misery of man upon which it is built. "The church," says Bossuet,



in a passage which we might have supposed to emanate from the tenderness of Fénelon, if it had not a more elevated and original turn,—“ the church is the daughter of the Omnipotent, but her father, who sustains her from within, abandons her often to persecution from without ; and, after the example of Jesus Christ, she is obliged to exclaim in her agony ; *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!*\* her husband is the most powerful as well as the most sublime and the most perfect among the sons of men, † but she has only heard his enchanting voice, she has only enjoyed his mild and engaging presence for a moment. ‡ Suddenly he has taken to flight with a rapid course, and swifter than the fawn of a hind, has ascended to the highest mountains. § Like a desolate wife the church has done nothing

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\* *Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me ?*

† *Speciosus forma pro filiis hominum.* Psal. XLIV, 3.

‡ *Amicus sponsi stat et audit eum, gaudio gaudet propter vocem sponsi.* JOANN. iii, 29.

§ *Fuge dilecte mi, et assimulare capræ, hinnuloque cervorum super montes aromatum.* Cant. viii, 14.



but groan, and the song of the forsaken turtle\* is in her mouth; in short she is a stranger and a wanderer upon the earth, where she is come to gather together the children of God under her wings, and the world who is incessantly labouring to tear them from her does not cease to cross her in her pilgrimage.†

This pilgrimage may be crossed but its completion cannot be prevented.—If the author of the present article had not been already persuaded of this important truth he must have been convinced of it now, by the scene passing before his eyes.‡ What is this extraordinary power which leads about a hundred thousand christians upon these ruins? By what prodigy does the cross appear again in triumph in the same city where not long since it was, in horrible derision, dragged in the mud or deluged with blood? Whence does this proscribed so-

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\* *Vox turturis audita est in terrâ nostrâ.* Cant. ii, 12.

† Funeral oration of M. le Tellier.

‡ This was written at Lyons on the day of the festival of Corpus Christi.



lemnity re-appear? What song of mercy has replaced so suddenly the roaring of cannon, and the cries of the christians who are thrown to the earth? Is it the fathers, the mothers, the brothers, the sisters, the children of these victims who pray for the enemies of the faith, and whom you behold upon their knees in every direction, at the windows of these ruined houses, or upon the heaps of stones which are yet smoking with the blood of the martyrs?—The mountains, covered with monasteries, not less religious because they are deserted; these two rivers, where the ashes of the confessors of Jesus Christ have so often been thrown; all the places consecrated by the first steps of Christianity among the Gauls; this grotto of St. Pothin;—the catacombs of Irènæus have not beheld greater miracles than those which are effected at this moment. If, in 1793, at the moment of the fusillades of Lyons, when the temples were demolished and the priests were massacred; when an ass loaded with the sacred ornaments was led about the streets and the executioner armed with his hatchet accompanied this worthy parade of



reason; if a man had then said: "Before ten years shall have passed away, a Prince of the Church, an Archbishop of Lyons, shall carry the holy sacrament publicly along the same places, accompanied by a numerous clergy, by young maidens cloathed in white; that the ceremony should be preceded and followed by men of all ages and of all professions, carrying flowers and torches; that the misguided soldiers who had been armed against religion, should appear in this festival to protect it"—If a man had, ten years ago, held such language, he would have passed for a visionary; yet this man would not have told the whole truth; even on the eve of the ceremony, more than ten thousand christians desired to receive the seal of the true faith; the prelate of this great commune appeared like Saint Paul, in the midst of an immense crowd, who demanded of him a sacrament so precious in the times of trial, since it gives the power to confess the gospel. And yet this is not all; deacons have been ordained, and priests have been consecrated! Do they tell us that the new pastors seek glory and fortune? Where are the bene-



fices which await them, the honours which can recompense them for the labours their ministry exacts? A mean alimentary pension, some half ruined presbytery, or some obscure habitation provided by the charity of the faithful—these are the sum of the temptations offered them.— They must moreover expect to be calumniated; they must reckon upon denunciations, upon mortifications of every description; we may say more, should some powerful man withdraw his protection one day, the next, philosophism would exterminate the priests under the sword of tolerance, or open again for them the philanthropic deserts of Guiana—Ah! when the children of Aaron fell with their faces upon the earth, when the archbishop, standing before the altar, stretching his hands towards the prostrate Levites pronounced these words *Accipe jugum Domini*—the force of them penetrated all hearts and filled all eyes with tears. “ They have accepted from him this yoke, the yoke of the Lord,” and they have found it so much the more light, *omnes ejus leve* in proportion as men have endeavoured to render it heavy—Thus in spite of



the predictions of these oracles of the age, in spite of the *progress of the human mind*, the church increases and perpetuates itself, according to the oracle, much more to be relied on, of him by whom it was founded. And whatever shall be the storms by which it may yet be assailed it will continue to triumph against the *superior lights* of the sophists, as it has triumphed over the darkness of the barbarians.

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ON THE  
NEW EDITION OF ROLLIN'S WORKS.

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THE friends of literature have observed for some time, with extreme pleasure, that those principles of taste which ought never to have been neglected, are every where reviving. By degrees the systems which have been productive of so much evil are abandoned; men venture to examine and combat the unaccountable opinions which have been propagated respecting the lite-



liture of the eighteenth century. Philosophy, formerly but too fruitful, seems at present menaced with sterility, while religion produces every day new talents, while it daily sees its disciples multiplied.

A symptom not less unequivocal of the return of men's minds to sound and rational ideas, is the reprinting those classical works which the ridiculous ignorance and contempt of the philosophers had rejected. Rollin, for instance, abounding as he does with the treasures of antiquity, was not deemed worthy to serve as a guide to the scholars of an *age of superior light*, the professors of which themselves, had great occasion to be sent back to school.\* Men who had passed forty years of their lives in composing, conscientiously, some excellent volumes of instruction for youth; men who in the retirement of their closets lived on familiar terms with Homer, with Demosthenes, with Ci-

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\* I must here be understood to speak only of the age, as taken collectively, not including some men whose talents will always be considered as an honour to France.



cero, with Virgil; men who were so simply and so naturally virtuous, that no one thought even of praising their virtues; men of this description were doomed to see a set of miserable charlatans, destitute of talents, of science, or of moral conduct, preferred before them. The *poetics* of Aristotle, of Horace and of Boileau were replaced by *poetics* full of ignorance, of bad taste, of misguided principles and mistaken decisions. According to the judgment of the master would be repeated from the Zoilus of Quinault: "*Boileau, the correct author of many excellent works.*" According to the scholar, would have been pronounced: "*Boileau, without fire, without fancy, without fecundity.*" When our respect for good models is lost to such a degree, no one can be astonished at seeing the nation return to barbarism.

Happily the opinion of the age begins to take another turn. In a moment when the ancient modes of instruction are about to be revived, the public will no doubt see with pleasure that a new edition of the complete works of Rollin is in preparation. The *Treatise on Study* will



first appear, and will be accompanied by observations and critical notes. This admirable undertaking is under the direction of a man who preserves the sacred deposit of the traditions and the authorities of ages, and who will deserve from posterity the title of *restorer of the School of Boileau and of Racine*.

The life of Rollin, which is to precede this edition of his works, is already printed, and is now before us. It is equally remarkable for the simplicity and the mild warmth of the style, for the candour of the opinions, and the justness of the ideas. We shall have only one subject of regret in giving to our readers some fragments of this life, it is that we are not permitted to name the young and modest author to whom we are indebted for it.

After speaking of the birth of Rollin and his entrance into the College of the Eighteen, the writer of the life adds: "The young Rollin was a stranger to those emotions of vanity which so often accompany knowledge newly acquired, and which yield in the sequel to more extensive acquisitions. This sweet natural



disposition expanded with his attainments, and he only appeared the more amiable as he became better informed. It must be observed that the rapid progress he made in learning, which was talked of in the world with a sort of astonishment, redoubled the tenderness of his happy mother. Nor was she assuredly less flattered by receiving visits continually from persons of the highest distinction for their rank and birth, who came to congratulate her, asking as a favour that the young student might be permitted to pass the days of vacation with their children who were of the same college; that he might be the companion of their pleasures as he was of their exercises.

“The world was then full of those pious and illustrious families where flourished the ancient manners, and the Christian virtues. Many of these in particular were included in the magistracy of which they were the great ornament. While the young warriors sought in the midst of dangers to sustain the glory of their ancestors, or to acquire new honours, the young magistrates engaged in another species of militia, and,



subjected to a discipline yet more rigorous, distinguished themselves by their frugality, by serious studies, by science, by elevation of sentiments. They transmitted to their sons these holy and irreproachable manners; they took a pleasure in being surrounded with virtuous children, they sometimes shared their studies and found a noble relaxation in the labours which had occupied their youth.

“The two eldest sons of M. Le Pelletier then minister, and who belonged to the same class with the young Rollin, found a formidable competitor in this new comer. M. Le Pelletier who knew all the advantages of emulation sought every means of cherishing it. When the young Rollin was *emperor*, which often happened, he sent him the gratuity which he was accustomed to give his sons; and the latter, notwithstanding, tenderly loved their rival. On the days of vacation he often accompanied them home in their coach, or they carried him first to his mother's house if he desired it, and waited there for as long a time as he wished to stay.



“ One day, Madame Rollin observed that her son, in getting into the carriage, took the first place without any ceremony. She began to reprove him severely, as being guilty of a great breach of propriety and good manners ; but the preceptor, who was with them, interrupted her mildly, representing it as a regulation made by M. Le Pelletier that the youths should take their places in the carriage according to the order in which each stood in his class. Rollin preserved, to the last days of his life, a tender and grateful respect for the protector of his youth, whose kindnesses he thought he could never sufficiently acknowledge. He was the constant friend of the young men who had been the companions of his studies, and attached himself more and more to this respectable family by that amiable sentiment which delights to dwell on the recollections of our youth, and extends itself through every stage of life.”

It appears to us that this passage is very affecting ; we hear the accents of a true French heart ; something of mingled gravity and tenderness like the old magistrates and the young



college friends of which our author recals the recollection. It is remarkable that it was only in France, in that country celebrated for the frivolity of its inhabitants that we saw these august families so distinguished for the austerity of their manners. A Harlay, a De Thou, a Lamoignon, a d'Aguesseau, formed a singular contrast with the general character of the nation. Their serious habits, their rigid virtues, their incorruptible opinions, seemed, as it were, an expiation which they incessantly offered for the lightness and inconstancy of the mass. They rendered to the state the most important services in more than one way. That Matthew Molé who made Duchesne undertake the collection of the historians of France, exposed his life many times during the troubles of the Fronde, as his Father Edward Molé had braved the fury of the League, to secure the crown to Henry IV. It was this same Matthew, who, braver than Gustavus or M. Le Prince, answered, when some one would have prevented his exposing himself to the rage of the populace: "*Six feet of earth will bring the greatest man in the world to reason.*" This was



to act like the ancient Cato, and to speak like the ancient Corneille.

Rollin was an extraordinary man who might almost be said to possess genius by dint of science, of candour, and of goodness. It is only among the obscure titles of the services rendered to childhood that the true documents of his glory are to be found; it is there that the author of his life has sought those features with which he has composed a picture full of sweetness and simplicity; he delights to present to us Rollin charged with the education of youth. The tender respect which the new rector preserved for his ancient masters, his love to the children confided to his care, and the solitudes he experienced on their account are delightfully painted, and always with a manner suited to the subject; a rare faculty indeed.

When the author afterwards proceeds to speak of his hero's works, and enters into important discussions, he shews a spirit imbued with the good doctrines, and a head capable of strong and serious ideas. As an instance of this we will cite a passage where the principles of



education are investigated, with the faults that have been imputed to the ancient method of instruction. The author says :

“ More important inconveniences, it has been said, are found in the course of instruction pursued at our universities, which calling the attention of young men incessantly to the heroes of the ancient republics, and to the contemplation of their virtues, cherishes in their minds, maxims and thoughts contrary to the political order of the society in which they live. Some even conceive the anarchical and revolutionary doctrines to have issued from the colleges. Assuredly every thing is mortal to those who are already sick, and this remark is an impeachment of the time in which it was made. But although some particular examples might be cited, which seem to justify it, we cannot allow it valid as an objection against the mode of instruction in the university, unless on the supposition that those objects were separated, which in fact were always combined ; I mean to say the examples of heroism and the maxims proper to excite an enthusiasm in the religion which puri-



fies them, and renders them conformable to order. Rollin however does not separate them, and if sometimes he abandons his disciple to a very natural admiration of brilliant actions, he is always ready to restrain him within legitimate bounds ; he returns to the charge, he examines the pagan hero by a light more safe and more penetrating, showing in what respects he failed both by the excess and by the imperfections of his virtues.

“ With such temperate restrictions, should virtues of a doubtful nature, should maxims that may prove intoxicating and too strong for reason, be always placed before the eyes of youth ; and when we are once sure of the mind being properly regulated, there is no reason to fear heating it. Then the admiration which the heroes of antiquity excite, is no longer dangerous, it is as favourable to virtue as the study of those inimitable works in which they are celebrated ; it fertilizes talents and carries on essentially the great work of education. This classical instruction contributes towards ornamenting the whole life, by instilling a crowd of



maxims, and by leading to comparisons which mingle themselves with every situation in which the public man may be placed, spreading thus over the most common actions, that sort of dignity always attendant upon elegance of manners. I please myself with thinking, that in the midst of study and of the rural occupations which filled up the leisure hours of our illustrious magistrates in France, they found a secret charm in the recollection of a Fabricius or a Cato, who had been the object of their enthusiasm in their youthful days. In one word, those virtuous instincts which defended the ancient republics against the vices of their institutions and their laws, are like an excellent nature which religion has finished. Not only does she repress every dangerous energy, but she ennobles every action by giving pure motives for it, she elevates the mind by the very restrictions she imposes upon it to a grandeur yet more heroic; it is this above all things which assures the pre-eminence of those characters we admire in our modern histories."

We might here apply, as our judgment



upon the author himself, the comparison which follows the fine passage above-cited; a passage no less justly thought than well written. "It is thus that in the immortal works to which we are always led by an inexhaustible attraction, we see the expression of a brilliant imagination subjected to strong and severe reasoning, but enriched by its very privations, and which bursts out only at intervals to attest the grandeur of the conquest made over it."

The rest of the Life of Rollin is filled with those petty details which pleased Plutarch so much, and which occasioned him to say in his life of Alexander: "As the painters who sketch portraits seek, above all things, resemblance in the features of the face, particularly in the eyes, where shine the most sensibly the characteristics of the mind, let me be permitted to seek the principal features in the soul, that in bringing them together I may form living and animated portraits of the great men I would describe."

We think we shall confer an obligation on the readers by giving, at full length, the oratorical effusion with which the author terminates the



life. " Louis XVI, struck with a renown so interesting, has acquitted us of what was due to the manes of Rollin; he has exalted his name, so that hereafter it will be recorded with others of the highest celebrity, in ordering a statue to be erected to him among those of the Bossuets and the Turennes. The venerable pastor of youth will descend to posterity in the midst of the great men who rendered the fine age of France so illustrious. If he may not have equalled them, he has at least taught us to admire them. Like them his writings breathe all that nature so conspicuous in the writings of the ancients, while his conduct displayed those virtues which cherish strength of mind, and even become real talents; like them he will always increase in fame, and public gratitude will continually advance his glory.

" In relating the labours, and the simple events which filled up the life of Rollin, we were sometimes carried back to an epoch which is every day farther removed from us, and painful reflections have mingled themselves with our narration. We have spoke of the course of



studies in France, and it is not long since they were interrupted. We have retraced the government and the discipline of the colleges where a happy youth was educated, far from the seductions of society, and the greater part of these colleges are still deserts. We have recalled the services rendered by that university so celebrated and so venerable, its ancient honours and that spirit of good fellowship which perpetuated the fame of the useful knowledge taught, and of the masters by whom it was communicated, and they are no more; all have perished in the general wreck of every thing great and useful. The quarters, even, where the university of Paris flourished, seem as in mourning for their destruction; the cause of their celebrity gone, no longer are new inhabitants perpetually resorting to them; the population has moved into other places to exhibit there samples of other manners. Where are now the strict educations which prepared the soul to fortitude and tenderness? Where are those modest, yet well-informed young men, who united the ingenuous minds of infancy with the solid qualities that grace and



adorn the man? Where, in short, is the youth of France?—A new generation has succeeded.....

“Who can recount the complaints and reproaches which are daily uttered against this new race. Alas! they grew up almost unknown to their fathers, in the midst of civil discords, and they are absolved by the public calamities. Every thing was wanting to them, instruction, remonstrance, good example, the mild treatment of the paternal roof, which disposes the child to virtuous sentiments, and gives to his lips a smile that can never be effaced. Yet for such losses they evince no regret, they cast no look of sadness behind them; we see them wandering about the public places, and filling the theatres as if they were only reposing after a long life of toil and labour. Ruins surround them, and they pass before those ruins without experiencing the curiosity of an ordinary traveller; they have already forgotten those times of eternal memory.

“Generation, new indeed, which will bear a distinct and singular character, which separates



the old times from the times to come. It will not have to transmit those traditions which are an honour to families, nor those decorums which are the guarantees of public manners, nor those customs which form the great bonds of society. They march to an unknown goal, dragging with them our recollections, our decorums, our manners, and customs; the old men find themselves still greater strangers in their country in proportion as their children are multiplied on the earth. . . .

“ At present the young man, thrown, as by a shipwreck, upon the entrance of his career, vainly contemplates the extent of it. He produces nothing but ungratified wishes, and projects devoid of consistence. He is deprived of recollection, and he has no courage to form hopes; his heart is withered and he has never had any passions; as he has not filled the different epochs of life, he feels always within himself something imperfect which will never be finished. His taste, his thoughts, by an afflicting contrast, belong at once to all ages, without presenting either the charm of youth, or the gravity of ripened age. His whole life bears the ap-



pearance of one of those stormy years, the progress of which is marked with sterility, and in which the course of the seasons and the order of nature seem wholly inverted. In this confusion the most desirable faculties are turned against themselves, youth is a prey to the most extraordinary gloom, or to the false sweets of a wild and irregular imagination, to a proud contempt of life, or to an indifference which arises from despair. One great disease shows itself under a thousand different forms. Even those who have been fortunate enough to escape this contagion of the mind, confess all the violence that they have suffered. They have leaped hastily over the first stages, and take their seats already among the aged, whom they astonish by an anticipated maturity, but without finding any thing to compensate what they have missed in passing over their youth.

“ Perhaps some among these may be induced occasionally to visit those asylums of science which they were never permitted to enter. Then, seeing the spacious enclosures, where are heard anew the sounds of classic sports and triumphs,



casting their eyes over the lofty walls where still may be read the half effaced names of some of the great men of France, they may feel bitter regrets arise in their souls, accompanied by desires even more painful than the regrets. They demand even now, that education which produces fruits for a whole life, and which nothing can compensate. They demand even those pains and chagrins of childhood, which leave behind such tender recollections—recollections so sweet to a mind of sensibility. But they demand, alas, in vain. After having consumed fifteen years, that great portion of human life, in silence, and yet in the midst of the revolutions of empires, they have only survived the companions of their own age; survived it may almost be said themselves, to approach that term where irrecoverable losses alone are to be expected. Thus they must always be consigned to secret mournings which can admit of no consolation, they must remain exposed to the examination of another generation who encompass them like centinels, for ever crying to them to turn aside from the fatal path in which they have lost themselves.<sup>37</sup>



This passage alone will suffice to justify the encomiums we have pronounced upon the life of Rollin. Here we find beauties of the highest description expressed with eloquence, and some of those thoughts which never occur but among great writers. We cannot too warmly encourage the author to abandon himself to his genius. Hitherto a timidity natural to true talent has made him seek subjects not of the most elevated kind, but he ought perhaps to endeavour to quit this temperate zone, which confines his imagination within too narrow bounds. One easily perceives throughout the life of Rollin, that he has every where sacrificed some of the riches he possesses. In speaking of the *good rector of the University*, he condemned himself to temperance and moderation; he feared that he should wound his modest virtues in shedding too great a lustre over them. One might say that he always kept in view that law of the ancients, which only permitted the praises of the Gods to be sung to the most grave, and the sweetest tones of the lyre.



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ON THE MEMOIRS OF LOUIS XIV.

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FOR some time past the Journals have announced to us *Works of Louis XIV.* This title shocked many persons who still attach some value to precision of terms and decorum of language. They observed that the term *Works* could only be applied with propriety to an author's own productions, when he presents them himself to the public; that this author besides must belong to the ordinary ranks of society, and that he must have written not merely *Historical Memoirs* but works of science or literature; that in any case a king is not an author by profession, consequently he never publishes *Works*.

It is true that, going back to antiquity, the early Roman emperors cultivated letters; but these emperors were only simple citizens before they were raised to the purple. Cæsar was merely the commander of a legion when he



wrote his *History of the Conquest of Gaul*, and the *Commentaries* of the captain have since contributed to the glory of the emperor. If the *Maxims of Marcus Aurelius* to this day reflect credit on his memory, Claudius and Nero drew upon themselves the contempt of the Roman people for having aspired to the honours of poets and literati.

In the Christian monarchies where the royal dignity has been better understood, we have rarely seen the sovereign descend into those lists where victory could scarcely be obtained by them without some mixture of degradation, because the adversary was scarcely ever even noble. Some German princes who have governed ill, or who have even lost their sovereignty in giving themselves up to the study of the sciences, excite our contempt rather than our admiration: Denys, the master of a school at Corinth, was also a king and a man of letters. A Bible is still to be seen at Vienna illustrated with notes from the hand of Charlemagne; but this monarch wrote them only for his own use, as an effusion of his piety. Charles V, Francis I, Henry IV, Charles



IX, all loved learning and patronized it without, ever pretending to become authors. Some Queens of France have left behind them verses, novels, memoirs ; their dignity has been pardoned in favour of their sex. England alone, who has afforded us many dangerous examples, enumerates several authors among her monarchs ; Alfred, Henry VIII and James I, really composed books. But the *royal author*, by distinction, in these modern ages is the great Frederick. Has this prince lost renown, or has he gained it by the publication of his *Works*?—this is a question we should answer without hesitation were we only to consult our own feelings.

We were at first somewhat consoled on opening the collection, which we are about to examine. In the first place the publication has no claim whatever to be called *Works* ; it is simply memoirs compiled by a father for the instruction of his son. And who ought to watch over the education of his children, if not a king?—can a love for his duties, and an admiration of virtue ever be too warmly inculcated upon the mind of a prince, on whom the happiness of so



many people depends. Full of a just respect for the memory of Louis XIV we ran over with some anxiety the writings of this great monarch. It would have been mortifying to lose in any degree our admiration of him ; and it was with extreme pleasure that we found Louis XIV here such as he has descended to posterity, such as Madame de Motteville has painted him : “ His extraordinary good sense, and his good intentions,” she says, “ implanted in his mind the seeds of *Universal science* which were concealed from those who did not see him in private. To those who did thus know him he appeared at once a profound politician in State affairs and a deep Theologian in matters relating to the church ; he was exact in concerns of finance, he spoke with justness, always took the good side in counsel, and entered warmly into the affairs of individuals ; he was at the same time the enemy of all intrigue and flattery, and was very severe towards the great people of the country whom he suspected of having any ambition to govern. He was pleasant in his manners, polite and easy of access to every body, but with a serious and



dignified air, which inspired the public with respect and fear.”

Such are precisely the qualities we find, and the character we feel in the *Collection of the Thoughts of this prince*. The *Works*, as they are called, consist: 1st of Memoirs addressed to the Grand Dauphin. These begin in 1661, and conclude in 1665.—2ndly. Military Memoirs relative to the years 1673 and 1678.—3rdly. Reflections upon the trade of a king.—4thly. Instructions to Philip V.—5thly. Eighteen letters to the same prince and one letter to Madame de Maintenon.

We were before in possession of a Collection of Letters of Louis XIV, and a translation by him of the Commentaries of Cæsar.\* It is believed that Pelisson or Racine overlooked the *Memoirs* which are just published, but it is certain that the original sketch of them is from Louis himself.†

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\* Voltaire denies this translation to be Louis the Fourteenth's.

† To judge by the style I should believe Pelisson to have had a very large share in this work; at least it appears to me that his phrases so symmetrical, and arranged with



We trace every where his religious, moral, and political principles, and the notes added with his own hand to the margin of the Memoirs are not inferior to the text either in the style or in the thoughts.

It is besides a fact well attested by all writers that Louis expressed himself in a style particularly dignified: "He spoke little and well," says Madame de Motteville, "There was in the words he used a force which inspired the heart with love or fear, according as they were wild or severe"—"He always expressed himself nobly and with great precision," says M. de Voltaire; he would even have excelled in the graces of language if he had chosen to make them his study." Monchenay relates that he was one day reading Boileau's *Epistle upon the*

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so much art are in many places to be detected. Be this as it may, the *Thoughts of Louis XIV.* arranged by a Racine or a Pelisson form a monument which deserves to be highly prized by the world. It is very possible that the *Memoirs* might also be reviewed by Roses Marquis de Coye a man of considerable talents who was secretary to Louis.



*passage of the Rhine before Mesdames de Thiange and de Montespan*" which he read with *tones so enchanting* that Madame de Montespan snatched the book from his hand exclaiming "that there was something supernatural in it, and that she had never heard any thing so well delivered."

That neatness of thought, that nobleness in the execution, that delicacy of ear so sensible to fine poetry, form at the first impression, a prejudice in favour of the style of these memoirs, and would prove, if farther proof were requisite, that Louis XIV was very capable of writing them. By citing some passages we shall make the work better known to the reader.

The king, speaking of the different measures which he pursued at the beginning of his reign, adds: "I must acknowledge that although I had reason before to be satisfied with my own conduct, the eulogiums which novelty now drew upon me, gave me continual subject of uneasiness, in the fears with which I was impressed that I did not merit them sufficiently. For, in short, and I am happy in an opportunity of ob-



erving this to you, my son, praise is a very delicate thing; it is far from an easy matter to restrain ourselves from being dazzled by it; much light is necessary to know how to discern truly those that flatter, from those that really admire us.

“But however obscure in this respect may be the intentions of our courtiers, there is a certain means of profiting by all they say to our advantage, and this means is no other than to examine ourselves very severely with reference to every word of praise bestowed on us. For when we hear any praise given which we are sure we do not deserve, we shall immediately consider it, according to the disposition of those by whom it is given, either as a malignant reproach for some defect, which we shall endeavour to correct, or as a secret exhortation to the acquisition of some virtue in which we feel that we are defective.”

Nothing more delicate, or more discerning, was ever said upon the subject of flatterers; a man who could so justly appreciate the value of praise undoubtedly well deserved to be praised. This passage is particularly remarkable from a



certain resemblance it bears to many of the precepts in Telemachus. At this illustrious period reason inspired the prince and the subject with the same language.

The following passage, written entirely by the hand of Louis, is not one of the least fine in the Memoirs. " It is not only in important negociations that princes ought to be cautious what they say, the same caution ought to be observed in the most common, in the most familiar conversations. This is undoubtedly a painful restraint, but it is absolutely necessary that persons of our condition should never say any thing lightly. We must by no means entertain the idea that a sovereign, because he has authority to do every thing, has also a licence to say every thing; on the contrary, the greater, and the more respected he is, the more circumspect ought he to be. Things which would be nothing in the mouth of a private man, often become important in that of a prince. The least mark of contempt shewn by him to any individual, inflicts on the heart of that man an incurable wound. A man can console himself for any



keen raillery, even for words of contempt aimed at him by others, either in the idea that he shall soon have an opportunity of returning them in kind, or by persuading himself that what has been said did not make the same impression upon others who heard it, as upon himself. But he to whom the sovereign should have spoken in such a strain, feels the affront with so much the more impatience because he sees no hope of redress. It is true that he may speak ill of the prince from whom he has received the offence, but he can only say it in secret when it will not be heard by the offender, and that takes off all the sweets of vengeance. Neither can he flatter himself that what was said was either not heard, or not approved, because he knows with what applause every thing that comes from persons invested with authority is received."

The generosity of these sentiments is no less affecting than it is admirable. A monarch who could give such lessons to his son had undoubtedly the true heart of a king; he was worthy to command a people whose first blessing is honour.



The piece given in this collection entitled, *On the trade of a King*, had been cited in the *age of Louis XIV.* “It is a testimony to posterity,” said Voltaire, “in favour of uprightnes and magnanimity of soul.” We are sorry that the Editor of the *Memoirs*, who, for the rest, seems full of candour and modesty, gave this piece such a title: *On the trade of a King*. Louis made use of this expression in the course of his *Recollections*, but it is not probable that he meant to employ it as a title; it seems indeed more probable that he would have corrected the expression if he could have foreseen that what he wrote was one day to be made public. Royalty is not a *trade*, it is a character; the anointed of the Lord is not an actor who plays a part, he is a magistrate who fills a function; people do not practise the *trade* of a king as they do that of a mountebank. Louis XIV. in a moment of disgust, thinking of nothing but the fatigues of royalty, might call it a *trade*, and found it perhaps a very painful *trade*; but let us be cautious not to take the word in too literal a sense. This would be to teach mankind that every thing here



below is a *trade*, that we in this world are all but a sort of empirics, mounted on stages, to sell our merchandise to any dupe whom we can persuade to buy it. Such a view of society would lead to very fatal consequences.

Voltaire has besides cited the *Instructions to Philip V*, but retrenching the first articles. It is distressing to find this great man, so distinguished in the literary history of the last century, often acting a part little worthy of an honest mind, and superior genius. We shall easily perceive why the historian of Louis XIV. omitted the articles alluded to. They are as follow.

1. Never fail in any of your duties, especially towards God.
2. Preserve, always, all the purity in which you were educated.
3. Cause God to be honoured wherever you have any power; promote his glory; be yourself the first to set an example of glorifying him, it is one of the greatest goods that a king can do.
4. Declare yourself always on the side of virtue, against vice.



Saint Louis, dying, extended upon his bed of ashes before the ruins of Carthage, gave nearly the same advice to his son: " My son-in-law, the first thing that I teach and command thee to observe is, that thou love God with all thy heart, and take care not to do any thing which may displease him. If God should send thee adversity receive it with submission and return him thanks for it; if he give thee prosperity thank him also very humbly, for we ought not to make war with God for the gifts which he bestows upon us. Cherish mildness of heart, and compassion for the poor, and do not oppress thy people with too heavy taxes and subsidies. Fly the company of the wicked."

We are pleased to see two of our greatest princes, at two epochs, so remote from each other deliver to their sons like principles of religion and justice. If the language of Joinville, and that of Racine did not instruct us that an interval of four centuries separated the reign of Saint Louis from that of Louis XIV we might believe the instruction to be of the same age. While every thing is constantly changing in



the world, it is delightful to see that royal bosoms guard incorruptibly the sacred deposits of truth and virtue.

One of the things which fascinates us the most in these memoirs is, that we find Louis XIV often confessing his faults to his son. "People" says he, "attack the heart of a king, as they attack a strong place; their first care is to seize on all the posts by which it may be approached. A clever woman applies herself in the first place to keeping at a distance every thing which is not attached to her interests; she excites suspicion in one, disgust in another, till at length she and her friends may obtain a favourable hearing, and if we are not on our guard against these practices, we must, to please her alone, displease every one else.

"From the moment a woman is permitted to talk with us upon affairs of importance, it is impossible that she should not make us fall into errors. The tenderness we have for her gives a relish to her false reasonings and inclines us insensibly towards the side she takes, while her natural weakness making her generally pre-



fer the interest excited by trifles, to more solid considerations, occasions her almost always to take the wrong side. Women are eloquent in their expressions, urgent in their intreaties, obstinate in their sentiments, and all this is often occasioned solely by having taken an aversion to some one which they seek to gratify, or from having made some promise, lightly, by which they are embarrassed."

This page is written with singular elegance; if the hand of Racine is any where to be discovered it is here. But, shall we venture to say it, such a knowledge of women proves that the monarch, in making his confession, was not cured of his weakness. The ancients said of certain priests of the Gods: *Many carry the thyrsis, but few are inspired*, and thus it is with the passion by which Louis XIV was subdued, *many affect it but few feel it*; yet when it is truly felt no one can mistake the inspiration of its language.

For the rest, Louis XIV had in the end learnt to know the just value of those attachments which pleasure forms and destroys. He



saw the tears of Madame de La Vallière flow, and he was obliged to support the cries and reproaches of Madame de Montespan. The sister of the celebrated Count de Lautrec, abandoned by Francis I. did not suffer herself to be carried away thus by useless complaints. The king having ordered the jewels, ornamented with emblematic devices, with which in the first moments of his tenderness he had presented her, to be reclaimed, she sent them back melted, and converted into bullion. "Carry these," said she, "to the king; since he has been pleased to revoke what he gave me so liberally, I return his presents and return them in masses of gold. As to the devices, they are so deeply impressed on my thoughts, I cherish them there so tenderly, that I could not support the idea of any one but myself enjoying them, and disposing of them."\*

If we may believe Voltaire, the bad education which Louis XIV received, deprived him of the advantages a prince derives from the lessons afforded by history. The want of this

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\* Brantome.



knowledge is not to be perceived in the memoirs; the king appears on the contrary to have ample ideas of modern history, and to be far from deficient in acquaintance with the histories of Greece and Rome. He reasons on political subjects with an astonishing sagacity; he makes us feel perfectly, in speaking of Charles II, king of England, the vice of those states which are governed by deliberative bodies; he speaks of the disorders of anarchy like a prince who had witnessed them in his youth; he knew very well what was defective in France, and what she could attain, what rank she ought to hold among nations. "Being persuaded," he says, "that the French infantry had hitherto not been very good, I was anxious to find out the means of improving it."—And again he says elsewhere: "If a prince have but subjects he ought to have soldiers; and whoever having a state well-peopled fails to have good troops has nothing to reproach with it but his own idleness and want of application."

We know well, in fact, that it was Louis XIV who created our army and who surrounded



France with that line of strong fortresses which rendered it unattackable. We see how he regretted the time when his people were masters of the world. "When the title of Emperor," he says, "was conferred on our house, it was in possession of France, the Low Countries, Germany, Italy, and the greater part of Spain, which it had divided among several individuals, reserving to itself the right of supreme sovereignty over all. The bloody defeats of many, who came both from the north and the south, spread so widely the terror of our arms, that the whole earth seemed to tremble at the name alone of the French, and at the sound of the imperial dignity."

These passages prove that Louis XIV knew France well, and had studied its history. Had he carried his researches still farther back, he would have seen that the Gauls, our first ancestors, had equally subdued the earth, in fact; when we go beyond our boundaries, we do but reclaim our ancient inheritance. The iron sword of a Gaul alone served as a counterpoise against the empire of the world. "The news arrived from



the west to the east," says a historian, "that a hyperborean nation had taken a Grecian town in Italy, called Rome." The name of Gaul signifies *traveller* ; at the first appearance of this powerful race, the Romans declared that they were born for the ruin of towns and the destruction of the human species.

Wherever any thing great has been effected, we see our ancestors bearing a part in it. The Gauls alone were not silent at the sight of Alexander, before whom the whole earth besides was silent. "Do you not feel my power," said the conqueror of Asia, to their deputies. "We fear only one thing," they replied, "that the heavens should fall on our heads." Caesar could only conquer by sowing dissensions among them, and it took him more time to subdue them, than to subdue Pompey and the rest of the world.

All the most celebrated places in the universe have been subjected to our great progenitors. Not only was Rome taken by them, but they ravaged Greece, they occupied Byzantium, they encamped upon the plains of Troy, they took possession of the kingdom of Mithridates, and



carrying their arms beyond Taurus, subdued those Scythians, who had never been subdued by any one. The valour of the Gauls every where decided the fate of empires; Asia was rendered tributary to them; the most renowned princes of this part of the world, an Antiochus an Antigonus, courted these formidable warriors, and kings fallen from their thrones retired under the shelter of their swords. They constituted the principal strength of Haunibal's army; ten thousand of them, alone, defended the crown of Alexander, against Paulus Emilius, when Perseus saw the Empire of the Greeks pass under the yoke of the Latins. At the battle of Actium it was again the Gauls that disposed of the sceptre of the world, since they decided the victory by ranging themselves under the standard of Augustus.

It is thus that the fate of kingdoms has appeared in every age to be dependant on the soil of Gaul, as a land of fate, stamped with a mysterious signet. All nations of the earth seem successively to have heard that voice which said to Seditius in the middle of the night:



“ Go, Seditius, say to the tribunes that the Gauls will be here to-morrow.”

The Memoirs of Louis XIV will increase his fame; they do not display any thing mean, they do not reveal any of those shameful secrets which the human heart too often conceals in its deep abysses. Seen nearer, in the familiar scenes of his life, Louis XIV does not cease to be *Louis the Great*; we are delighted at being convinced that so fine a *bust* had not an *empty head*, and that the soul corresponded with the grandeur of the exterior. “ He is a prince,” as Boileau said, “ who never spoke without thinking; his most unimportant replies breathe the sovereign, yet in his domestic life he seems to receive the law rather than to give it.” This is an eulogium which the memoirs confirm in every point of view.

Many things in which the magnanimity of this monarch were displayed are well known. The prince de Condé told him one day that he had seen a figure of Henry IV tied to a stake, stuck through with a poignard, having an inscription over it of a very odious kind towards



the reigning prince. "*I can reconcile myself to it,*" said Louis, "they did not do so much for the *Sluggard Kings.*" (*Rois Fainéans.*) It is said that in the latter years of his life he found, under his napkin, when he was sitting down to dinner, a billet conceived nearly in the following terms. "The king stands erect in the *Place of Victory* and in the *Place Vendôme*; \* when will he be seated at St. Denis."—Louis took the billet, and throwing it over his head said aloud: *When it shall please God.* When he was near breathing his last sigh, he ordered the great Lords of his court to be summoned around him. "Gentlemen," said he, I entreat your pardon for the bad example I have set you; I return you thanks for the friendship you have always shown me; I intreat you to shew the same fidelity to my grandson. I feel my heart melted, I see that you are no less affected; fare-

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\* Alluding to statues of him in both those *Places* at Paris. The *Place of Victory*. (*Place des Victoires*) received its name from this statue where Louis was represented as crowned by victory. The statue was destroyed in the revolution.—*Translator.*



well, Gentlemen, sometimes think of me."—To his physician, who was weeping, he said: *Did you suppose me immortal?*—Madame de La Fayette, in her writings, has said of this prince that he would be found without all dispute *one of the greatest of kings, and one of the most honest men in his kingdom.* This did not prevent the people insulting the bier at his funeral, and forbearing to sing the *Te Deum.* *Numquid cognoscentur mirabilia tua, et justitia tua in terrâ oblivionis.*

What remains to be added to the eulogium of a prince who civilized Europe, and raised France to such a degree of splendor? Nothing but the following passage, taken from his Memoirs. "You ought, my son, above all things to understand that we cannot shew too much respect to him who makes us respected by so many millions of men. The most essential part of true policy, is that which teaches us to serve him well; the submission we pay to him is the finest lesson we can give to those from whom submission is due to us; and we transgress the laws of prudence no less than those of justice,



when we fail in due veneration for him, of whom we are only the lieutenants.

“ Though we should have armed all our subjects for the defence of his glory ; though we should have raised again his altars which had been overthrown ; though we should have made his name known in the most remote corners of the earth, but a small part of our duty would be performed ; we should not, without doubt, effect that which he desires, if we were ourselves wanting in submission to the yoke of his commandments. Those actions which make the greatest noise, which shine with the greatest lustre, are not always those that please him the most ; what passes in secret in our hearts is often that which he observes with the greatest attention. He is infinitely jealous of his glory, but he knows better than we do in what it consists. He has, perhaps, only made us so great that he might be the more honoured by our respect, and if we fail in accomplishing his designs, he may abandon us to be mingled with the dust, whence he drew us.

“ Several of my ancestors who have been



anxious to give similiar counsel to their successors waited to do it till on the very last verge of life. I shall not follow their example, I give it you now, my son, I shall inculcate it upon you whenever I find a favourable opportunity. For, besides that I think we cannot too-early impress on the minds of young people ideas of this vast importance, it is probable that what these princes said, at so urgent a moment, may have failed of effect from being ascribed to the danger in which they found themselves. Instead of this, in speaking to you now, I am assured that the vigour of my age, the disembarassed state of my mind, and the flourishing situation of my affairs, can never leave any room for what I say to be imputed either to weakness or disguise." It was in 1661 that Louis gave this sublime lesson to his son.

*Note by the Editor.*

The appearance of the above article gave occasion to an anonymous letter from a pretended *Bearnese Chevalier*, addressed to the



*Gazette of France*, no less elegant in its style, than just in its ideas. I subjoin the principal passages of it.

“A criticism from the pen of M. de Chateaubriand, upon the Memoirs published under the name of Louis XIV. has been remitted to me. With these Memoirs I was not unacquainted; they were compiled under the *inspection* of Louis, without being compiled *by him*. His familiar conversations were collected in this way, and he did not disapprove the form into which they were put. I shall not ascribe them to Pelisson, he would not have said of Fouquet what Louis XIV. thought of him; and having had the courage to defend him at the hazard of his life, he would never have lent his pen to his master, to asperse the friend he before praised, and thus dishonour himself. The president Roses, the intimate secretary of Louis, appears to me to have been the sole compiler of these Memoirs, and the marginal note which was supposed to be the hand-writing of the king, is probably that of his secretary. The Duke de St. Simon, assures us that Roses could



imitate the hand-writing of his master so well, that it was impossible not to be misled by it. Be this as it may, the Memoirs are certainly not unworthy of the name they bear. Alexander forbade any others but Lysippus and Apelles to represent his features, lest, they might be disgraced by vulgar hands. Louis XIV. did better, he never suffered himself to be seen in a situation in which his could be disgraced; all his actions were stamped with true dignity, he was a king even in the eyes of his *valet-de-chambre*. In public his answers were noble, in private his familiarity was equally noble. Never did he suffer himself to offend any one; he had an innate feeling of great things, his taste was pure, he was the first to discern the merit of Boileau, of Racine, and of Molière. What occasion had he to have his name enrolled among royal authors?—His great work, the only one incontestably his, is the illustrious age which bears his name.

“ But that M. de Chateaubriand should take occasion from the new character in which Louis has been brought forward to declaim



against kings who wielded the pen;—that he should assume that *a king cannot descend into the lists where even victory must be a sort of degradation, since the adversary can scarcely ever be noble*;—that he would have an author *taken only from the ordinary ranks of society*,—

I cannot but find these sentiments somewhat offensive, and involving a sort of literary heresy.

“That a man of exalted rank should neglect the duties of his station to devote himself to literature,—that he should be writing an ode when he ought to be issuing some order of importance to the state,—that like the Vizier of whom M. de Tott speaks, he should be endeavouring to bring the voices of two Canary-birds to an accord with each other, while the Russians were penetrating into the Black Sea,—these are things which cannot be too severely condemned,—such men ought indeed to be discarded into the middling ranks of society, that they may abandon themselves to their frivolous pursuits, without the state being thereby endangered. But observe that it is not their love of letters which renders them unfit to be public



functionaries, it is their want of capacity; the cultivation of letters may, on the contrary, make them feel the incapacity which the ignorant are far from ever suspecting in themselves. It was thus that Christina determined to abdicate royalty, the duties of which she felt herself incapable of fulfilling; but I do not know in history of any great man who being called to the exercise of important functions, has not found literary attainments a powerful assistance in the exercise of his ministry, and acquired through their means, that authority of esteem which is even more commanding among men than force itself. I would wish M. de Chateaubriand to observe, that the greater part of our ancient classic authors were also statesmen. Among the Greeks, Sophocles, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Demosthenes; among the Romans, Cæsar, Cicero, Varro, Cato, Seneca, the two Plinys, and Tacitus, were all the first magistrates in their country. I would remind him of a curious remark made by the sage Fleury. "Among the Greeks," he says, "the most considerable and the most noble persons regarded the study of



philosophy and eloquence, as reflecting honour upon them. Pythagoras was of the royal race, Plato descended by the paternal side from king Codrus, and by his mother from Solon. Xenophon was one of the first captains of his age, and from that time letters were held in so much honour, and became so much the distinguishing mark of persons of quality, that the name of *idiot*, which in Greek properly signifies only a private man, was applied to all who were ignorant and uneducated. Among the race of the kings of Egypt, of Syria, and of Macedonia, successors to Alexander, were included several poets, grammarians, and philosophers. It is, indeed, very reasonable that in every country, those who have the most polished minds, who are endowed with the greatest talents, who have fortunes that place them above any care for the necessaries of life, or who, being called to offices of distinction, are required more than any others to make themselves useful to society, should devote their leisure hours to the sciences, should endeavour to extend their talents and their knowledge.



“ It is very singular, that Cardinal Fleury, born in an obscure station, should consider learning as the peculiar portion of distinguished rank, while M. de Chateaubriand, whose name belongs to the class of ancient nobility, would spurn it to the lower classes of society. Shall we say that this is in him the remains of prejudices imbibed in his infancy, prejudices of which the most enlarged minds can scarcely ever wholly divest themselves? Or would he recur to the times when a country squire living in his gloomy mansion, despised every gentleman, who, instead of being a sportsman, cultivated letters.

“ The ridicule which our comic poets have endeavoured to excite never was general. The love of letters has always distinguished the chiefs of the state; our literature, indeed, included in its origin some most illustrious names. The first Troubadours were princes and knights, as William Duke of Aquitaine, Theobald Count of Champagne, Louis Duke of Orleans, René Comt of Provence, and Gaston de Foix sovereign of Bearn. The whole house of Valois were celebrated for their love of literature and the fine,



arts; this was equally the case with the house of Foix, and the sister of Lautrec who was of this family, the celebrated Countess de Chateaubriand, perhaps carried into her husband's family, that love of letters which has become hereditary in it. Flechier pronounces the eulogium of Madam de Montausier, who, "born of the ancient house of Chateaubriand, and become a widow, restraining transcendent beauty, and the prime of youth under the laws of an austere virtue and an exact modesty, sacrificed all the pleasures of life to the education of her children." She formed the heart of that Montausier, who was judged worthy to share with Bossuet the charge of educating a king. Was it for the author of the *Genius of Christianity*, to despise this distinguished branch of his ancestors.

"Who among us, in reading the works of De Thou, of Sully, of Rochefoucault, of Malherbe, of Fénelon, of Montesquieu, of Malesherbes, and of Montaigne, could recur to the idea that the origin of their house is lost in the remoteness of time. We will keep an account of



what they have left behind to live after them, not of what their ancestors have done before them. I will venture to assert, that posterity may very possibly forget the existence of a M. de Chateaubriand who was counsellor to the discreet Charles V, and of another who was in the army of Henry IV, but that it will never forget the author of the *Genius of Christianity*.

“ I hope M. de Chateaubriand will pardon me, for having thus broke a lance with him, in honour of letters, and that he will excuse me if, in defiance of the usages of chivalry, I do not raise up the vizor of my casque.”

To this Letter M. de Chateaubriand answered by the following *Dissertation upon Men of Letters*.



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## ON MEN OF LETTERS.

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THE *Defence of the Genius of Christianity*\* has been hitherto the only answer I have made to all the criticisms with which the world has thought proper to honour me. I have the happiness, or the misfortune, to find my name brought forward pretty often, in polemical works, in pamphlets, in satires. When the criticism is just I correct myself, when it is jocose I laugh, when it is gross I forget it. A new antagonist has just entered the lists, calling himself a *Bearnese Chevalier*. It is singular that this Chevalier reproaches me with Gothic prejudices and a contempt of letters. I will acknowledge freely that I cannot think of the days

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\* The Editor hopes that the reader will not be sorry to find this Defence at the end of the present collection.



of chivalry with calmness and indifference, and that when I hear of tournaments, of challenges, of strifes, of single combats, I am ready, like Don Quixote, to arm myself and run about the country as a champion for the redress of wrongs. I come then to answer the challenge of my adversary. I might, indeed, refuse to exchange the stroke of a lance with him since he has not declared his name, nor raised the vizor of his casque after the first thrust; but, in consideration of his having observed the other laws of the joust, religiously, by carefully avoiding to strike at the *head* or the *heart*, I will consider him as a loyal knight and take up his gage.

And yet what is the subject of our quarrel. Are we about to fight, as, indeed, was by no means uncommon among the *preux chevaliers*, without knowing why. I am very ready to maintain that the lady of my heart is incomparably more beautiful than the mistress of my adversary; but how, if by chance we should both serve the same fair? This is in fact the case. I am in good truth of the same opinion with the *Bearnese Chevalier*, or rather my love



is directed to the same object, and like him I am ready to prosecute, as a felon, any one who shall dare to make an attack on the Muses.

Let us change our language and come to the fact. I will venture to say that the critic who attacks me with so much taste, learning, and politeness, but perhaps with a little pique, has not understood my idea. When I object to kings intermeddling in the strifes of Parnassus, am I very much in the wrong. A king ought undoubtedly to love letters, even to cultivate them to a certain extent, and to protect them in his states. But is it necessary that he should write books? Can the sovereign judge expose himself without inconvenience to be judged? Is it good that a monarch should, like an ordinary man, make the world acquainted with the exact measure of his talents, and throw himself upon the indulgence of his subjects in a preface? It seems to me that the Gods ought not to shew themselves so unmasked to mankind: Homer places a barrier of clouds at the gate of Olympus.

As to the other expression, that *an author ought to be taken from the ordinary ranks of*



*society*, I ask pardon of my censor, but I did not mean to imply the sense in which he takes it. In the place where it is introduced it relates only to kings; it can relate only to kings. I am not absurd enough to desire that letters should be abandoned exactly to the *illiterate* part of society; they do not belong exclusively to any particular class, they are the resource of all who *think*; they are not an attribute of rank but a distinction of mind. I am very well aware that Montaigne, Malherbe, Descartes, La Rochefoucault, Fénelon, Bossuet, La Bruyère, even Boileau, Montesquieu and Buffon belonged more or less to the ancient body of the nobility, either by the sword, or by the gown. I know well that a fine genius cannot dishonour an illustrious name; but, since my critic will force me to say it, I think there is far less danger in cultivating the Muses in an obscure station, than in an elevated one. The man who has nothing particularly to attract observation exposes little to the danger of shipwreck; if he do not succeed in letters, his mania of writing will not have deprived him of any real advantage, and his rank



of author forgotten; nothing will be added to the natural obscurity which attended him in another career.

It is not the same with one who holds a distinguished place in the world, whether from his fortune, his dignity, or the recollections attached to his ancestors. Such a man would do well to balance for a long time before he enters the lists where a fall would be fatal. A moment of vanity may destroy the happiness of his whole life. When we have much to lose, we ought not to write, unless forced into it, as it were, by our genius, and awed by the presence of the god: *fera corda domans*. A great talent is a great reason, and we may answer to all with glory. But if we do not feel in ourselves this *mens divini*, let us take good heed against that itch which may seize us for writing.

Nor be, tho' strongly urg'd, the name in haste

Of honest man, which now you bear, laid down

While that of wretched author is embrac'd

Giv'n by a sordid printer's voice alone.

If I should catch some Duguesclin rhyming,  
without the consent of Apollo, some wretched



poem, I should exclaim: "Sir Bertrand change your pen for the iron sword of the good Constable. When you shall be on the breach remember to invoke, like your ancestor, *Our Lady of Guesclin*. This is not the muse who sings towns taken, but who inspires the soul to take them."

On the contrary, if a member of one of those families who make a figure in our history were to come before the world in an Essay full of strength, of fire, of solidity, do not fear that I should attempt to check and discourage him. Although his opinions should be directly in opposition to my own, though his book should wound not only my mind but my heart, I should see nothing but the talent displayed; I should be sensible to nothing but the merit of the work; I should gladly take the young writer by the hand and introduce him in his new career; my experience should point out to him the rock on which he might split, and like a good brother in arms I should rejoice at his success.

I hope that the *Chevalier* who attacks me will approve these sentiments; but that is not



sufficient, I will not leave him in any doubt with respect to my modes of thinking on the subject of letters and of those who cultivate them. This will lead me into a discussion of some extent ; may the interest which the subject involves obtain my pardon for being diffuse.

Ah, how could I calumniate letters !—I must be ungrateful indeed since they have formed the charm of my life. I have had my misfortunes like others ; for we may say of chagrins amongst mankind what Lucretius says of the torch of life :

*Quasi cursores, vitæ lampada tradunt.*

But I have always found in study noble reasons which enabled me patiently to support my troubles. Often, seated by the side of a road in Germany, not knowing what was next to become my lot, I have forgot my troubles, and the authors of my troubles, in thinking over some agreeable chimera which the compassionate muses presented to my fancy. I carried my manuscript with me, as my sole wealth, in wandering over the deserts of the New World ; and more than once the pictures of nature traced in an indian hut have consoled me at the door



of a cottage in Westphalia, when entrance was refused me.

Nothing can so effectually dissipate the troubles of the heart as study, nothing can so well restore to perfect concord the harmonies of the soul. When, fatigued with the storms of the world, we take refuge in the sanctuary of the Muses, we feel that we breathe a more tranquil air, and the spirits are soon calmed by its benign influence. Cicero had witnessed the calamities of his country; he had seen in Rome the executioner seated with the victim who, by a fortunate chance alone had escaped his sword, and enjoying the same consideration as that victim;—he had seen the hand that was bathed with the blood of the citizens, and that which had been only raised for their defence pressed with equal cordiality;—he had seen virtue become a subject of scandal in the days of guilt, as guilt is an object of horror in the days of virtue;—he had seen the degenerate Romans pervert the language of Scipio to excuse their degeneracy, calling resolution obstinacy, generosity folly, courage imprudence and seeking an interested



motive for honourable actions that they might not have the sweet sensation of esteeming something;—he had seen his friends by degrees grow cold to him, their hearts repel the warm effusions of his own, his pains cease to be theirs, their opinions become estranged from his, till carried away, or broke by the Wheel of Fortune, he was left by them in a profound solitude. To these pains so great, so difficult to be borne were added domestic chagrins: “My daughter remained to me,” he writes to Sulpitius, “that was a constant support, one to which I could always have recourse; the charm of her society made me almost forget my troubles; but the frightful wound which I have received in losing her, uncloses again all those I had thought healed. I am driven from my house, and from the Forum.

And what did Cicero do in a situation so lamentable?—he had recourse to study. “I have reconciled myself with my books,” says he to Varro, “they invite me to a renewal of our ancient intercourse; they tell me that you have been wiser than me in never having forsaken them.”



The Muses, who permit us to chuse our society, are above all a powerful resource in times of political chagrin. When fatigued with living in the midst of the Tigellinusses, and the Narcissusses, they transport us into the society of the Catos and the Fabricii. For what concerns the pains of the heart, though study cannot indeed restore to us the friends whose loss we deplore, it softens the chagrins occasioned by the separation, in mingling the recollection of them with all the purest sentiments of life, with all the most sublime images of nature.

Let us now examine the accusations urged against *men of letters*, most of which appear to me unfounded; mediocrity often consoles itself by calumny. It is urged that *men of letters are not fit for the transaction of business*. Strange idea! that the genius, requisite to produce the *spirit of the laws* was not deficient to conduct the office of a minister. What? cannot those who sound so ably the depths of the human heart unravel the intrigues arising from the passions around them? The more we know men, the less are we to be considered capable of go-



verning them?—But this is a sophism which all experience contradicts. The two greatest statesmen of antiquity, Demosthenes, and still more Cicero, were *men of letters* in the most rigid sense of the term. Never, perhaps did a finer literary genius than Cæsar exist, and it appears that this descendant of Anchises and Venus understood tolerably well how to conduct business. We may cite in England Sir Thomas More, Lords Clarendon, Bacon and Bolingbroke; in France MM. de L. Hopital, Lamoignon, d'Aguesseau, Malesherbes, and the greater part of those first ministers who have been furnished by the church. Nothing could persuade me that Bossuet's was not a head capable of conducting a kingdom, nor that the severe and judicious Boileau would not have made an excellent administrator.

Judgment and good sense are the two qualities necessary above all others to a statesman, and it is to be remarked that they are also those which ought to predominate in a literary head well organized. Fancy and imagination, are not, as people are too apt to suppose, the proper



bases of true talent, it is good sense, I repeat it, good sense, with a happy turn of expression. Every work of imagination, must be short-lived if the ideas are deficient in a certain logical precision binding them in a connected chain, and giving the reader the pleasure of reason even in the midst of trifling. Cast your eyes over the most celebrated works in our literature; after a strict examination you will find that this superiority is derived from a latent good sense, from admirable reasoning; those are as it were the skeleton of the edifice. Whatever is false in itself, finishes by displeasing; man has within him a native principle of uprightness which cannot be offended with impunity. Thence comes it that the works of the sophists can never obtain more than a transient success; they shine at first with a false lustre, and are soon lost in oblivion.

The idea which we are examining, respecting *men of letters*, has only been entertained because authors of ordinary capacities have been confounded with authors of real merit. The first class are not *incapable* because they are *men of letters*; but merely because their ca-



pacities are ordinary; and this is an excellent remark made by my critic. It is precisely in the two qualities which I have mentioned, judgment and good sense, that their works are deficient. You will perhaps find in them flashes of genius or imagination, a certain knowledge, more or less, of the *trade*, a habit more or less formed of arranging words, and turning periods, but never will you find a stroke of good sense.

These writers have not strength to bring forth an idea which they have a moment before conceived. When you think they are about to take the right path, an evil demon interposes and leads them astray; they change their course instantly, and passing by great beauties without perceiving them, they mingle together indiscriminately under the influence of chance alone, without oecomy and without judgment, the *grave, the sweet, the jocose, the severe*; we know not what they aim at proving, towards what point their march is directed, what truths they mean to enforce. I will readily agree that such minds are not in any way fit to conduct public business, but I shall ascribe the blame to *nature*,



not to *letters*; above all things I should be careful not to confound such unfortunate authors with men of real genius.

But if the first literary talents may be capable of filling with glory the first places in the country, Heaven forbid that I should recommend to them ever to aspire to those places. The greater part of men of high-birth might conduct the public ministry as well as they would; but no one could replace the fine works of which posterity would be deprived, by their devoting themselves to other cares. Is it not now much more for our advantage and for his own, that Racine created *with his hand such pompous wonders* than that he should have filled, even with the highest distinction, the places of Luvois and Colbert. I wish that men of talents understood better their high destiny; that they knew how to set a more just value upon the gifts they have received from Heaven. It is not conferring a favour on them to invest them with the great offices of state, it is they who in accepting these offices make an important sacrifice to the country, and confer an essential favour upon it.



Let others expose themselves to storms, I counsel the lovers of study to contemplate them from the shore. "The sea-shore shall become a place of repose for the shepherds," says the scriptures: *erit funicles mavis requies pastorum*. Let us hear, farther, the Roman orator. "I esteem the days that you pass at Tusculum, my dear Varro, as much as the whole duration of life, and I would willingly renounce all the riches of the earth to obtain the liberty of constantly spending my time so deliciously. . . . I imitate it at least, as much as lies in my power, and I seek my repose with true satisfaction in my beloved studies. . . . If the great have judged that, in favour of these studies, my attention to public affairs may be dispensed with, why should I not choose so sweet an occupation."

In a career foreign to their manners and habits, men of letters will find nothing but the ills of ambition, they will experience none of its pleasures. More delicate than other men, how must that delicacy be wounded a hundred times in the day. What horrible things must they have to devour; with what a set of people must



they be obliged to live, and even to smile upon them. Always a mark for the jealousies which true talents never fail to excite, they must be incessantly exposed to calumnies and denunciations of every kind. They will find even in the frankness, the simplicity, the elevation of their characters, dangerous rocks on which they may be wrecked; their virtues will do more harm than their vices, their genius itself will plunge them into snares, which ordinary men would avoid. Happy if they find some favourable opportunity for returning into solitude before death, or exile, interposes, to punish them for having sacrificed their talents to the ingratitude of courts.

I know not whether I ought here to advert to certain jokes which the world has been in the habit of applying to men of letters even from the days of Horace. He who has celebrated Lalagé and Lydia relates, that he threw his buckler before him, on the fields of Phillipi; but the able courtier *boasts*, and his verses have been taken too literally. Thus much, however, is certain, that he speaks of death with a charm



so engaging with a turn of such mild and sweet philosophy, that we could with difficulty persuade ourselves he had any fears of it :

Eheu, fugaces, Posthume, Posthume,

Labuntur anni !

Be this as it may with respect to the voluptuous solitary of Tibur, Xenophon and Cæsar, two eminent literary geniuses, were great Captains ; Eschylus performed prodigies of valour at Salamis ; Socrates yielded the prize of valour only to Alcibiades ; Tibullus was distinguished in the legions of Messala : Petronius and Seneca are celebrated for the firmness they shewed in death. In modern times Dante lived in the midst of battles, and Tasso was one of the bravest among the knights. Our ancient Malherbe, at seventy-three years of age, wanted to have fought the murderer of his son. Subdued as he was by time, he went to the siege of Rochelle expressly to obtain from Louis XIII permission to summon the chevalier de Piles to single combat. La Rochefoucault had made war upon kings. From time immemorial our officers of the engineers and of the Artillery, so brave at the cannon's mouth



have cultivated letters, most of them with success, some with renown. It is well known that the Breton Saint-Foix would not pass over any reflection cast upon him; and another Breton, distinguished in our days as the first grenadier of our armies occupied himself all his life with literary researches. Finally, the men of letters who have been cut off in our revolution have all displayed the utmost courage and resolution at the moment of death. If it be permitted to judge by oneself, I should say with the frankness natural to the descendants of the ancient Celts, soldier, traveller, proscribed, shipwrecked, I never found that the love of letters attached me unreasonably to life. To obey the decrees of religion and honour, it suffices to be a Christian and a Frenchman.

Men of letters, it is farther said, have always flattered people in power; and, according to the vicissitudes of fortune, have come forth alternately to celebrate virtue or to eulogize crimes; to offer incense to the oppressor and the oppressed. Lucan said to Nero, speaking of the proscriptions, and of the civil war:



But if our fates severely have decreed  
 No way but this for Nero to succeed  
 If only thus our heroes can be Gods  
 And earth must pay for their divine abodes ;  
 If heav'n could not the Thunderer obtain  
 Till Giant's wars made room for Jove to reign }  
 'Tis just, ye Gods, nor ought we to complain. }  
 Opprest with death tho' dire Pharsalia groan  
 Tho' Latian blood the Punic ghosts atone,  
 Tho' Pompey's hapless sons renew the war,  
 And Munda view the slaughter'd fleets from far,  
 Tho' meagre famine in Perusia reign  
 Tho' Mutina with battles fill the plain,  
 Tho' Lenca's isle, and wide Ambracia's bay  
 Record the rage of Actium's fatal day,  
 Tho' servile hands are arm'd to man the fleet,  
 And on Sicilian seas the navies meet,  
 All crimes, all horrors, we with joy regard  
 Since thou, oh Cæsar, art the great reward.

*Lucan's Pharsalia, Book, I.*

In all this I have nothing to say by way of  
 excuse for the *men of letters* ; I bow my head  
 with shame and confusion, acknowledging like  
 the physician in Macbeth, that this disease is  
 beyond my practice.



Therein the patient

Must minister unto himself.

Yet may not something be said in extenuation of this degradation ; it is indeed a poor argument that I am going to offer, but it is drawn from the very nature of the human heart. Shew me in the revolutions of empires, in those unhappy times when a whole people, like a corpse, shew no signs of life,—shew me I say any *entire* class of men, who remain unshaken, ever faithful to their honour, and who have not yielded to the force of events, to the weariness of suffering ;—if such a class can be shewn, then will I pass sentence on the men of letters. But if you cannot find me this order of generous citizens, no longer let so heavy an accusation fall exclusively upon the favourites of the Muses ; mourn over human nature at large. The only difference which subsists between the writer and the ordinary man is, that the turpitude of the first is known, and that the baseness of the latter is, from his insignificance, concealed. Happy, in effect, in such times of slavery, is the ordinary man who may be mean with security, who may



with impunity grovel in the mire, certain that his incapacity will preserve him from being handed down to posterity, that his meanness will never be known beyond the present moment.

It remains for me to speak of literary renown; it marches in equal pace with that of kings and heroes. Homer and Alexander, Virgil and Cæsar, equally occupy the voice of Fame. Let us say more, the glory of the Muses is the only one in which nothing accessory has any share. A part of the renown, acquired in arms, may be reflected on the soldiers, may be ascribed to fortune; Achilles conquered the Trojans by the assistance of the Greeks; but Homer composed the Iliad unassisted by any one, and but for him we should not know of the existence of Achilles. For the rest I am so far from holding letters in the contempt imputed to me, that I would not easily yield up the feeble portion of renown which they seem to promise to my humble efforts. I cannot reproach myself with any one having ever been importuned by my pretensions; but, since it must be confessed, I am not insensible to the applauses of my fellow-



countrymen, and I should be wanting in the just pride due to my country, if I considered as nothing the honour of having added one to the number of French names held in esteem among foreign nations.

I here conclude this apology for *men of letters*. I hope that the *Bearnese Chevalier* will be satisfied with my sentiments; Heaven grant that he may be so with my style; for, between ourselves, I suspect him to be somewhat more conversant in literature than entirely suits with a *Chevalier* of the old times. If I must say all I think, it appears to me that in attacking my opinions he has only been defending his own cause. His example will prove, in case it be necessary, that a man who has enjoyed a high distinction in the political orders, and in the first classes of society, may still be eminent for his learning; a discerning and elegant critic, a writer full of amenity, and a poet full of talents. These *Chevaliers* of Bearn have always courted the Muses, and we have not forgotten a certain *Henry* who, besides that he fought *not amiss*, when he quitted his fair Gabrielle lamented their



separation in *verse*. Since, however, my antagonist does not chuse to discover himself, I will avoid mentioning any name; I would only have him understand that I have recognized his colours.

The men of letters, whom I have endeavoured to rescue from the contempt of the ignorant must, in their turn excuse me, if I finish by addressing a few words of advice to them, in which I am ready, myself, to take an ample share. Would we force calumny to be silent, and attract the esteem even of our enemies, let us lay aside that pride and those immoderate pretentions which rendered our class so insupportable in the last century. Let us be moderate in our opinions; indulgent in our criticisms; sincere admirers of whatever deserves to be admired. Full of respect for what is noble in our art, let us never debase our character; let us not complain of destiny, he who complains draws contempt upon himself; let the muses alone, not the public, know whether we are rich or poor; the secret of our indigence ought to be kept the most carefully of any of our secrets; let the unfortunate be sure to find a



support in us, we are the natural defenders of all supplicants; our noblest right is that of drying the tears occasioned by sorrow, and drawing tears down the cheeks of prosperity: *Dolor ipse disertum fecerat*. Let us never prostitute our talents to power; but let us not, on the other hand, ever rail against it; he who condemns with bitterness is very likely to applaud without discernment; there is but one step between complaint and adulation. In short, for the sake of our own glory and for that of our works, we cannot too much attach ourselves to virtue; it is the beauty of the sentiments which creates beauty of style. When the soul is elevated the words fall from on high, and nobleness of expression will always follow nobleness of thought. Horace and the Stagyrte do not teach the whole of the art: there are delicacies and mysteries of language which can only be communicated to the writer by the probity of his own heart, and which can never be taught by the precepts of rhetoric.



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## SPEECH

COMPOSED BY M. DE CHATEAUBRIAND

*For his Reception as a Member of the Imperial  
Institute of France.\**

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WHEN Milton published his *Paradise Lost* not a single voice was raised in the three kingdoms, of Great Britain, to praise a work which, not-

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\* M. de Chateaubriand was elected a member of the Institute in France, in the year 1811, in the place of M. Chenier, a poet well known for the part he took in the French revolution. According to custom the recipient was to pronounce the eulogium of his predecessor; but the friends of M. Chenier knowing how much the memory of the deceased had to fear from the eloquence of M. de Chateaubriand, insisted that the speech of the latter should be communicated to the Institute before it was delivered. It was found, on examination, to be little honorable to M. Chenier, and M. de Chateaubriand was not admitted. His speech, however, though never published was copied by all Paris.

*Note by the Editor.*



withstanding that it abounds with defects, is one of the grandest efforts ever produced by the human mind. The English Homer died forgotten, and his cotemporaries left to posterity the charge of immortalizing him who had sung the Garden of Eden.

Is this one of those instances of great literary injustice which are afforded by almost all ages?—No!—Scarcely breathing from the civil wars the English could not resolve to celebrate the memory of a man who had distinguished himself so much in the days of calamity by the ardour of his opinions. “What shall we reserve,” said they, “for him who devotes himself to the safety of the state, if we lavish honours upon the ashes of a citizen who can, at the most, expect from us only a generous forbearance. Posterity will do justice to the works of Milton, but for us, we owe a lesson to our sons. We ought to teach them, by our silence, that talents are a fatal present when united with violent passions, and that we had far better condemn ourselves to obscurity, than acquire fame through the misfortunes of our country.”



Shall I, Gentlemen, imitate this memorable example, or speak to you of the character and works of M. Chenier?—To reconcile your customs and your opinions, I think I ought to take a middle course between absolute silence, and too close an examination. But whatever may be my words, no gall shall be mingled with them; if you find in me the frankness of my countryman Duclos, I hope I shall prove to you that I have also his moderation.

It would be curious, without doubt, to see what a man in my situation, with my opinions, my principles, could say of him to whose post I am this day raised; it would be interesting to examine the influence of revolutions upon literary attainments, to show how systems may lead talents astray, seducing them into deceitful paths which seem to lead to renown, but terminate in oblivion. If Milton, in spite of his political errors, has left works that posterity admire, it is that Milton, without forsaking his errors, retired from a society which was retiring from him, to seek in religion the only resource for soothing his misfortunes, and



to render it the source of his glory. Deprived of the light of Heaven, he created himself a new earth, a new sun, and quitted, as it were, the world, in which he had experienced nothing but crimes and calamities. He seated in the bowers of Eden that primitive innocence, that holy felicity which reigned in the tents of Jacob and Rachael, and he placed in hell the torments, the passions, the remorse of those men in whose fury he had been a sharer.

Unhappily the works of M. Chenier, although they display the germ of eminent talent, do not shine with the same simplicity, with the same sublime majesty. This author distinguished himself by a mind purely classical; no one was better acquainted with the principles of ancient and modern literature. The drama, eloquence, history, criticism, satire, all were embraced by him, but his writings bear the impression of the disastrous times in which they received their birth. I found myself then, Gentlemen, obliged either to be silent, or to enter into political discussions,

There are some persos who would make



of literature an abstract science, and insulate it in the midst of human affairs. Such will perhaps say to me: "Why keep silence? Consider M. Chenier only, with regard to his literary character;"—that is to say, Gentlemen, that I must trespass upon your patience and upon my own, to repeat to you those common-place things which are to be found every where, and which you know even better than myself. Other times, other manners.—Heirs of a long series of peaceable years, our forefathers might resign themselves to questions purely academic, which did not so much prove their talents as their happiness. But we, the unfortunate remains of a vast shipwreck, we want the means of tasting a calm so perfect; our ideas and our minds have taken a different course; the man has in us superseded the academician; in depriving letters of all that rendered the pursuit of them easy, we no longer contemplate them but through our powerful recollections, and the experience of our adversity. What? after a revolution which has made us run through the events of many ages in a few years, shall a writer be precluded enter-



ing on all moral considerations ; shall he be forbidden to examine the serious side of objects ; shall he pass a frivolous life in agitating grammatical niceties and rules of taste, in dissecting trifling literary periods and phrases ; shall he grow grey, bound in the swathes of his infancy ; shall he not show at the close of his days a countenance furrowed by those long labours, those grave thoughts, often by those masculine griefs which add to the greatness of man. What important cares shall then have whitened his hair ?—the miserable anxieties of self-love, and the puerile sports of wit and fancy.

Certainly, gentlemen, this would be to treat us with a strange degree of contempt ; for my own part, I cannot demean myself, nor reduce myself to a state of childhood, at an age of vigour and reason ; I cannot confine myself in the narrow circle that they would draw around an author. If, for example, I would pronounce the eulogium of the *man of letters*, of the man of superior mind who presides in this assembly,\*

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\* M. de Boufflers.



think you that I could be contented simply to praise in him that light ingenious French spirit, which he received from his mother, and of which he presents among us the most engaging model?—No undoubtedly;—I should decorate with all its lustre, the great name which he bears; I should cite the Duke de Boufflers, who made the Austrians raise the siege of Genoa; I should speak of the marshal, father of that warrior, who disputed the ramparts of Lille with the enemies of France, and consoled by that memorable defence, the old age of a great king. It was of this companion of Turenne that Madame de Maintenon said, *the heart was in him the last thing that died*. Nor should I omit to remount to Louis de Boufflers, called *the Robust*, who shewed in the fight the vigour and courage of Hercules. Thus should I find at the two extremities of this military family, strength and grace, the *Knight* and the *Troubadour*. The French are reputed to be the descendants of Hector; I should rather believe them the offspring of Achilles, since, like that hero, they are



equally skillful with the lyre, and with the sword.

If, gentlemen, I would entertain you with the celebrated poet who has sung nature so enchantingly,\* think you that I could confine myself to remarking the admirable flexibility of a talent which knows how to render with equal success, the regular beauties of Virgil, and the incorrect beauties of Milton?—Undoubtedly not. I should also display this celebrated poet as resolving not to separate himself from his unfortunate countrymen, but following them with his lyre to foreign shores, consoling them by singing their griefs. Illustrious exile! in the midst of a crowd of unknown exiles, to the number of which I myself added; it is true that his age, his infirmities, his talents, his glory, could not shelter him from persecution; fain would they have made him sing verses unworthy of his name,—his muse could only sing the frightful immortality of crime, the consoling immortality of virtue.

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\* M. l'Abbé Delille.



If, finally, gentlemen, I would speak to you of a friend very dear to my heart,\* of one of those friends who, according to Cicero, *render prosperity more brilliant, and lighten adversity*; I should undoubtedly speak of the noble harmony of his verses, which, formed on the great models, are nevertheless distinguished by a tone perfectly original; I should speak with eulogy, of superior talents which never knew a feeling of envy; of talents rejoicing no less in the success of others than in his own; of those talents which for ten years have felt every honour attained by me with that profound and lively joy known only to the most amiable character, and to the warmest friendship;—all this I should celebrate, but I could not omit the political part of my friend's life, I should paint him at the head of one of the first bodies in the state, delivering speeches which are models of grandeur, of moderation, and of amenity. I should represent him as sacrificing the sweet intercourse with

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\* M. de Fontanes, then Grand Master of the University.



the Muses ; to occupations which have no charm but the hope of training up, to the state, children capable of following the glorious steps of their ancestors, while they avoid their errors.

In speaking then of the persons of talent, who compose this assembly, I could never forbear considering them under their moral and social relations. The one is distinguished by a refined, delicate, and sagacious mind, by an urbanity very rare in these times, and still more by the most honourable respect for modern opinions ; another, under the frost of age, has found the fire of youth in pleading the cause of the unfortunate. This latter, an elegant historian, and a pleasing poet, receives added claims to our respect from the recollection of a father and a son mutilated in the service of their country ; that son, giving hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, recalls to our mind the wonders of the evangelical worship, to which he has consecrated himself.\* Are there not many among you, gentlemen, who can relate to the

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\* M. l'Abbé Sicard.



heir of Chancellor d'Aguesseau, how much the name of his ancestor was in former times the subject of admiration in this society.

I pass on to the nurselings of the nine sisters, and I perceive the venerable author of *Œdipus*, in the solitude of Sophocles.\* How much ought we to love these children of Melpomene who have rendered the misfortunes of our fathers so interesting to us. Every French heart shuddered at the presage of the death of Henry IV; the tragic muse has re-established these *preux-chevaliers* so basely betrayed by history.

From our modern Euripides descending to the successors of Anacreon, I pause at the recollection of that amiable man, who, like the poet of Theos, after fifteen lustra, revised the songs which his muse had produced at fifteen years. I will even go, gentlemen, as far as the stormy seas, formerly guarded by the giant Adrancastor, whose waves were appeased by the charming

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\* M. Ducis.



names of Eleonora and Virginia, † to exalt your fame.—*Tibi rident æquora ponti.*

Alas! too many persons of talent among you, have been strangers and wanderers on the earth. Has not poetry sung the art of Neptune in the most harmonious verses; that fatal art which transports us to foreign shores. Shall not French eloquence, after having defended the state and the altar, retire, as to its source, into the country of Ambrose and of Chrysostom.

Why can I not include all the members of this academy in a picture where flattery has not embellished the colours. For if it be true, that envy sometimes obscures the estimable qualities which adorn men of letters, it is even more true that this class of men have commonly distinguished themselves by a hatred of oppression, by devotion to friendship, and by fidelity under misfortunes.

It is thus, gentlemen, that I please myself with considering a subject under all its forms, and

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\* The Chevalier de Parny and M. Bernardin de St. Pierre.



that I love above all things to give importance to letters, by applying them to the highest objects of philosophy and morals. Feeling this independence of mind, I must abstain from examining works on which it is impossible for me to touch without irritating the passions. If I were to speak of the tragedy of Charles IX, could I abstain from revenging the memory of the Cardinal of Lorraine, and discussing the lesson given to kings. Caius Gracchus, Henry VIII, and Fénelon, would offer me in many respects, historical facts equally altered, for the purpose of supporting the same doctrines. If I turn to the satires, I find men immolated, who now hold the first rank in this assembly; yet these satires are written in an easy and elegant style, which reminds us agreeably of the school of Voltaire; and I should have so much the more pleasure in praising them, since I myself could not escape the malice of the author.

But let us turn away from the works which will give occasion to painful recriminations. I would not cloud over the memory of one who was your colleague, and of whom many here are



are still the admirers and the friends. He will owe to that religion which appeared to him so mean, in the writings of its defenders, the peace which I sincerely wish him in the tomb.

But even here, Gentlemen, may I not be so unfortunate as to find myself among dangerous rocks. In paying to the ashes of M. Chenier the tribute of respect claimed by all the dead, I should fear the meeting in my progress with the shades of many others celebrated in a very different way. If interpretations little generous, should impute this involuntary emulation to me as a crime, I must take refuge at the feet of those expiatory altars which a powerful monarch is raising to the manes of injured dynasties.

Oh how happy would it have been for M. Chenier if he had avoided all participation in the public calamities which fell at length upon his own head. He has known, like me, what it is to lose, among popular commotions, a brother tenderly beloved. What would our unfortunate brothers have said, if called on the same day by the sovereign disposer of all things before his



tribunal they had met at so awful a moment?—  
 Would they not have said: “Cease your intestine wars, return to sentiments of love and peace; death strikes all parties equally, and your cruel dissensions have cost us youth and life.”

If my predecessor could hear these words, little consoling to his shade, he would be sensible to the homage which I render to his brother, for he was naturally generous. It was indeed this very generosity which attracted him towards novelties, very seductive without doubt, since they promised to inspire us all with the virtues of a Fabricius; but soon disappointed in his expectations, his temper became soured, his talents were perverted. Transported from amidst the tumultuary scenes of faction to the solitary life of a poet, how could he resign himself wholly to those affectionate sentiments, which constitute the great charm of that life. Happy had it been, if he had never seen any other heaven than the fine heaven of Greece where he was born,—if he had never contemplated



any other ruins than those of Sparta and Athens.

I might perhaps then have met with him in that beautiful country, and we might have sworn eternal friendship to each other on the banks of the Permessus. Or, since it was his destiny to return to the fields of his ancestors, why did he not follow me into the deserts whither I was driven by our tempests. The silence of the forests would have calmed that troubled soul, and the huts of the savages might have reconciled him to the palaces of kings.—Vain wishes!—M. Chenier remained upon the theatre of his agitations and his griefs. Attacked while yet young with a mortal disease, you saw him, gentlemen, decline slowly towards the tomb, and quit for ever. . . . I have never heard any account of his last moments.

We who have lived amid the troubles of revolutions, can none of us escape the attention of history. Who can flatter himself with remaining unspotted in a time of delirium when no one retained the full use of his reason. Let us then exercise the utmost indulgence towards



each other; Let us excuse what we cannot approve. Such is the weakness of human nature, that talents, that genius, that virtue itself are sometimes the occasion of our overstepping the bounds of duty. M. Chenier adored liberty; can that be imputed to him as a crime. The *Chevaliers* themselves if they could quit their tombs, would follow the superior light of our age, we should see an illustrious alliance formed between man and liberty, as under the race of Valois, the gothic battlements crowned with infinite grace, our monuments built according to the orders borrowed from Greece. Is not liberty the greatest good of man, the most urgent want of man. It inflames genius, it elevates the heart, it is as necessary to the friend of the Muses as the air which he breathes. The arts may, to a certain point, live in dependence, because they make use of a language peculiar to themselves, which is not understood by the multitude; but letters, which speak an universal language, languish and die in chains.

How will pages worthy of history ever be traced, if the writer be interdicted every mag-



nanimous sentiment, every forcible and elevated thought. Liberty is so naturally the friend of the sciences and of letters, that they fly with her when she is banished from among any people; it is you, gentlemen, whom she charges to write her annals, to revenge her on her enemies, and to transmit her name and worship to posterity.

That my idea may not be mistaken by any, I here declare that I speak of that liberty which is the child of order, and produced by the laws, not of that daughter of licentiousness, who is the mother of slavery. The author of the tragedy of Charles IX, was not to be condemned for offering up his incense to the first of these deities, but for believing that the rights she confers are incompatible with a monarchical government. A Frenchman was always free at the foot of the throne; it is in his opinions that he places that freedom, which others place in their laws. Liberty is to him a sentiment rather than a principle, he is a citizen by instinct, and a subject by choice. If the writer, whose loss



you lament, had made this distinction, he would not have embraced with equal love the liberty which creates and that which destroys.

Here, gentlemen, I conclude the task which the customs of the academy have delegated to me. On the point of terminating this address, I am struck with an idea which afflicts me deeply. It is not long since M. Chenier delivered some opinions, which he proposed to publish, upon my works, and it is to my lot that it falls at this moment to judge my judge. I say it in all the sincerity of my heart, I had rather be still exposed to the shafts of satire, and live at peace in some solitude, than remind you by my presence here of the rapid succession of men upon the earth; of the sudden appearance of that death which overthrows all our projects and all our hopes, which carries us off in a moment, and sometimes consigns the care of our memory to men whose principles and sentiments are directly in opposition to our own.

This tribunal is a sort of field of battle, where talents by turn shine and vanish. What variety of genius has passed over it; a Corneille,



a Racine, a Boileau, a La Bruyère, a Bossuet, a Fénelon, a Voltaire, a Buffon, a Montesquien? Who may not be alarmed, gentlemen, at the idea that he is about to form a link in this august chain? Oppressed with the weight of these immortal names, not having the powers necessary to make myself recognized as a lawful heir, I will endeavour at least to prove my descent by my sentiments. When my turn shall arrive to yield my place to the orator who is to deliver his oration over my tomb, he may treat my works with severity, but he shall be obliged to say, that I loved my country passionately, that I would have suffered a thousand ills rather than have cost her a single tear, that I would, without hesitation, have sacrificed my life in support of these noble sentiments, the only ones which can give value to life and dignity to death.



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## DEFENCE

### OF THE BEAUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE only noble answer, perhaps, that can be given by an author when attacked, is silence. It is at least the surest way of gaining credit in the public opinion.

If a work be really good, it cannot be affected by censure; if it be bad, it cannot be justified by apologies.

Convinced of these truths, the author of the *Spirit of Christianity* determined not to take any notice of the animadversions of critics, and till the present moment he has adhered to this resolution. He has borne praises without pride, and insults without discouragement: the former are often lavished upon mediocrity, and the latter upon merit. He has with perfect indifference beheld certain critics proceed from abuse to calumny, either because they ascribed the



author's silence to contempt, or because they could not forgive him after their affronts had been offered to him in vain.

Methinks I hear the reader ask: why then does the author now break silence? Why has he deviated from the rule which he laid down for himself? To these questions I reply: Because it is obvious, that under the pretext of attacking the author, there now lurks a design to annihilate that little benefit which the work may be calculated to produce. Because it is neither his own person nor his own talent, real or reputed, that the author is about to defend, but the book itself; and this book he will defend not as *literary*, but as a *religious* work.

The *Beauties of Christianity* have been received by the public with some indulgence. At this symptom of a change in opinion, the spirit of sophistry took the alarm; she considered it as prophetic of the approaching termination of her too long reign. She had recourse to all her weapons, she took every disguise, and even assumed the cloak of religion, to



blast a work written in behalf of religion herself.

Under these circumstances, the author deems it his duty to keep silence no longer. The same spirit which prompted him to write his book, now impels him to step forth in its defence. It is pretty evident that the critics, to whom he alludes in this *defence*, were not honest in their animadversions; they pretended to misconceive the object of the work; they loudly accused it of being profane; they took good care not to perceive that the author treated of the grandeur, the beauty, the poetry of the Christian religion, merely because it had been the fashion for half a century to insist on its meanness, absurdity, and barbarism. When he has explained the reasons which induced him to undertake the work, when he has specified the class of readers to whom it is particularly addressed, he hopes that his intentions and the object of his labours will cease to be mistaken. The author, in his own opinion, cannot give a stronger proof of his devotion to the cause which he has espoused, than in addressing this reply to the critics, in spite of



the repugnance which he has always felt for controversies of the kind.

It has in the first place been asked, whether the author had a right to compose such a work. This is either a serious question or a sneer. If it be serious, the critic proves that he is not much conversant with his subject.

Needs any one be told that in difficult times every Christian is a priest and confessor of Jesus Christ? \* Most of the apologies for the Christian religion have been written by laymen. Were Aristides, St. Justin, Minucius Felix, Arnobius, and Lactantius, priests? It is probable that St. Prosper never embraced the ecclesiastical profession, and yet he defended the faith against the errors of the semi-pelagians; the church daily quotes his works in support of her doctrines. When Nestorius circulated his heresy, he was combated by Eusebius, afterwards bishop of Dorylæum, but who was at the time an advocate. Origen had not yet taken orders when he expounded the Scriptures in Palestine,

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\* S. Nieron, Dial. c. Lucif.



at the solicitation of the prelates of that province themselves. Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, who was jealous of Origen, complained of these discourses as an innovation. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, and Theocritus of Cesaræa, replied, "that it was an ancient and general custom in the church, for bishops to make use indiscriminately of persons possessing piety and some talent for speaking." All ages have afforded similar examples. When Pascal undertook his sublime apology for Christianity; when La Bruyère wrote with such eloquence against Free-thinkers; when Leibnitz defended the principal tenets of the faith; when Newton wrote the explanation of one of the sacred books; when Montesquieu composed those exquisite chapters of his *Spirit of the Laws*, defending the religion of the Gospel, did any one ever think of asking whether they were priests? Even poets have raised their voices in conjunction with these powerful apologists, and the son of Racine has, in harmonious verses, defended that religion which inspired the author of *Athaliah*.



But if it ever behoved laymen to take in hand this sacred cause, it must be by that species of apology which the author of the *Beauties of Christianity* has adopted:—a kind of defence, which the mode of attack imperiously required, and which, considering the spirit of the age, was perhaps the only one that could be expected to be attended with any success. Such an apology could not in fact be undertaken by any but a layman. An ecclesiastic could not, without a manifest violation of propriety, have considered religion in its merely human relations, and have read so many calumnious satires, impious libels and obscure novels, for the purpose of refuting them.

In truth, the critics who have advanced this objection, are fully aware how frivolous, it is, but they hoped in their circuitous way to prevent the good effects that might result from the book. They wished to raise doubts respecting the competency of the author, in order to divide the public opinion, and to alarm those simple minds which suffer themselves to be imposed upon by the apparent ho-



nesty of criticism. Let these timid consciences take courage; or rather, let them fairly examine before they yield to alarm, whether the scrupulous critics, who accuse the author of *laying violent hands on the censor*, who evince such extraordinary tenderness, such anxious solicitude for religion, be not men notorious for their contempt or their neglect of it.

The second objection alledged against the *spirit of Christianity*, has the same purpose as the preceding, but it is more dangerous, inasmuch as it tends to bewilder the ideas, to involve what is perfectly clear in obscurity, and in particular to mislead the reader with regard to the real object of the book.

The same critics, with their wonted zeal for the interests of religion, observe—"It is highly improper to treat of religion under merely human relations, or to consider its literary and poetic beauties. This is inflicting a wound on religion herself; it is a debasement of her dignity, a removal of the veil of the sanctuary, a profanation of the sacred ark, &c. Why did not the author confine himself to theological



arguments? why has he not employed that rigid logic, which introduces none but sound ideas into the heads of children, which confirms the Christian in the faith, edifies the priest, and satisfies the teacher."

This objection may be said to be the only one adduced by the critics; it forms the groundwork of all their censures, whether they treat of the *subject*, the *plan* or the *details* of the work. They never will enter into the spirit of the author, so that he might justly say—"You would suppose that the critic had sworn not to comprehend the state of the question, or to understand any one of the passages which he attacks."\*

The whole force of the argument, as to the latter part of the objection, resolves itself to this—"The author has undertaken to consider Christianity in its relations to poetry, the fine arts, eloquence and literature, he has moreover attempted to shew all the obligations which mankind owe to religion, in a moral, civil, and

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\* Montesquieu's *Defence of the Spirit of the Laws*.

political point of view. Such being his plan, he has not produced a theological work; he has not defended what he never designed to defend; he has not addressed readers to whom he never intended to address himself; he is therefore guilty of having done precisely what he meant to do."

But, supposing that the author has accomplished his object, ought he to have sought that object?

This brings us back to the first part of the objection, so often repeated, that religion must not be considered with relation to merely human, moral and political beauties; that is lessening its dignity, &c. &c.

The author will endeavour to elucidate this principal point of the question in the succeeding paragraphs.

I. In the first place, he has not *attacked*, but *defended*; he has not challenged, but accepted a challenge. This changes at once the state of the question and invalidates the censure. The author has not officiously taken upon himself to extol a religion, hated, despised, and



overwhelmed with ridicule by sophists. The *Beauties of Christianity* would certainly have been a very unseasonable work in the age of Louis XIV.; and the critic, who observes that Massillon would not have published such an apology, has pronounced an incontestible truth. Never would the author have thought of writing his book, had there not existed poems, novels, works of every kind, in which christianity is held up to the derision of the readers. But since these poems, these novels, these works exist, it is necessary to vindicate religion against the sarcasms of impiety; since it has been so generally said and written, that christianity is *barbarous, ridiculous, and an enemy to the arts and genius*, it is of essential importance to demonstrate that it is none of these; and that what is represented as little, mean, destitute of taste, beauty and feeling, by the pen of scandal, may appear grand, noble, simple, dramatic, and divine, under the pen of a religious writer.

II. If it be not permitted to defend religion with reference to its human beauty; if we ought not to use our endeavours to prevent

ridicule being attached to its sublime institutions ; will not one side of this religion always remain unprotected. Against this side will all attacks be directed ; here you will be surprised without defence and ultimately perish. Had not this already nearly happened ? Was it not by means of ridicule and burlesque, that M. de Voltaire was enabled to shake the very foundations of the faith ? Would you answer licentious stories and absurdities with theological arguments and syllogisms ? Will formal argumentation prevent a frivolous age from being seduced by pointed verses, or kept back from the altars by the fear of ridicule ? Do you not know that with the French nation a *bon mot*, an impious witticism, *felix culpa*, have more influence than volumes of sound reasoning and metaphysics ? Persuade youth that an honest man may be a christian without being a fool ; erase from their minds the idea that none but capuchins and simpletons can believe in religion, and your cause will soon be gained. It will then be the time, in order to secure your victory, to resort to theological reasonings ; but begin with mak-



ing them read what you write. What you first stand in need of is a religious work that shall be what is termed popular. Would you conduct your patient in one single excursion to the top of a steep mountain, when he is scarcely able to crawl, shew him at every step varied and pleasing objects; allow him to stop and gather the flowers that present themselves by the way, till proceeding from one resting-place to another, he will at last reach the summit.

III. The author has not written his apology exclusively for *scholars*, for *christians*, for *priests*, for *doctors*\*; he has written more particularly for *persons of literary pursuits* and for the *world*. This has already been observed above, and may be inferred from the two preceding paragraphs. You do not set out from this point, if you constantly pretend to mistake the class of readers to whom the spirit of christianity is especially addressed, and it is evident

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\* And yet it is not genuine Christians, nor the Doctors of the Sorbonne, but the philosophers, as we have already observed, that are so scrupulous in regard to the work. This ought not to be forgotten.



that you do not rightly comprehend the work. It was composed to be read by the most incredulous of literary men, by the gayest of the youthful votaries of fashion, with the same facility as the first turns over the leaves of an impious book, and the second, those of a dangerous novel. "Would you then," exclaimed these well-intended zealots in behalf of religion, "would you then make religion a fashionable thing?" Would to God that this divine religion were the fashion, considering fashion taken in this sense, as signifying the opinion of the world! This indeed might perhaps, to a certain degree, encourage private hypocrisy, but it is certain, on the other hand, that public morals would be gainers by it. The rich man would no longer exert his self-love to corrupt the poor, the master to pervert his servant, the father to give lessons in atheism to his children; the practice of the forms of religion would lead to a belief in its doctrines, and with piety, the age of morals and of virtue would return.

IV. M. de Voltaire, when he attacked



christianity, was too well acquainted with the human mind, not to endeavour to secure what is termed the *opinion of the world*: accordingly he exerted all his talents to make impiety a kind of *bon ton*. He accomplished his purpose, by rendering religion ridiculous in the eyes of frivolous persons. It is this ridicule that the author of the *Beauties of Christianity* has attempted to wipe away; this is the aim of all his labours; the object which should never be lost sight of, by those who would form an impartial judgment of his work. But has the author wiped away this ridicule? That is not the question. You should ask: has he exerted all his efforts to counteract it? Give him credit for what he has attempted, not for what he has actually accomplished. *Permitte divis cætra*. He defends no part of his book but the idea which constitutes its ground-work. To consider christianity in its relations with human society; to shew what changes it has produced in the reason and the passions of man; how it has civilized the Gothic nations; how it has modified the genius of the arts and of letters; how it



has directed the spirit and manners of the people of modern times ; in a word, to develope all the excellencies of this religion, in its relations poetical, moral, political, historical, &c. will always appear to the author one of the finest subjects for a work that can possibly be imagined. As to the manner in which he has executed his work, that he leaves others to determine.

V. But this is not the place for affecting a modesty, which is always suspicious in modern authors, and which deceives nobody. The cause is too great, the interest too important not to authorise us to rise superior to all considerations of human delicacy and respect. Now, if the author counts the number of suffrages, and compares their weight, he cannot persuade himself that he has totally failed in the object of his book. Take an impious picture, place it beside a religious piece, composed on the same subject and borrowed from the *Beauties of Christianity*; and you may venture to assert that the latter, imperfect as it may be, will weaken the dangerous effects of the former. Such is the power of unadorned truth, when



put in competition with the most brilliant falsehood! M. de Voltaire, for example, has frequently diverted himself at the expense of the religious. Beside one of his caricatures place the part relative to the mission, that in which the orders of Hospitallers are represented relieving the traveller in the deserts, the chapter in which the monks are seen devoting themselves to the attendance on the infected, or accompanying the criminal to the scaffold: what irony will not be disarmed, what smile will not be converted into tears? In answer to the charges of ignorance preferred against the religion of Christians, adduce the immense labours of those pious men who preserved the manuscripts of antiquity, and the works of Bossuet and Fénelon in reply to the accusations of bad taste and barbarism. With the caricatures of saints and angels, contrast the sublime effects of Christianity on the dramatic department of poetry, on eloquence and the fine arts; and say whether the impression of ridicule will long be able to maintain its ground. Had the author done nothing more than to set at ease the vanity



of people of the world; had his only success consisted in presenting to the view, of an incredulous age, a series of religious pictures without disgusting that age, still he would think that he had not been wholly unserviceable to the cause of religion.

VI. Pressed by this truth which they have too much sense not to be sensible of, and which is, perhaps, the secret cause of their alarm, the critics have recourse to another subterfuge. "Who," say they, "denies that christianity, like every other religion, has poetical and moral beauties; that its ceremonies are pompous, &c." Who denies this?—why you, yourselves, who but just now made sacred things the butt of your ridicule; you, who finding it impossible to reject convincing evidences, have no other resource than to assert, that nobody has attacked what the author defends. You now acknowledge that there are many excellent points in the monastic institutions. You are affected at the mention of the Monks of St. Bernard, the Missionaries of Paraguay and the Sisters of Charity. You admit that religious ideas are ne-



cessary for dramatic effects, that the morality of the gospel, at the same time that it opposes a barrier to the passions, purifies their flame and increases their energy. You allow that christianity has preserved the arts and sciences from the inundation of the barbarians, and that this alone has transmitted down to your time the language and the works of Greece and Rome; that it has founded your colleges, built or embellished your cities, attempered the despotism of your governments, drawn up your civil codes, mitigated your criminal laws, polished modern Europe, and even brought it into cultivation. Did you admit all this before the publication of a work which is doubtless very imperfect, but which has, nevertheless, collected all these important truths into one single point of view?

VII. The tender solicitude of the critics for the purity of religion has already been remarked: it was, therefore, but natural to expect that they would protest against the two episodes which the author has introduced into his work. This scruple of the critics springs from the grand objection which they have urged against the

whole work; and it is destroyed by the general answer that has just been given to this objection. Once more the author repeats, that he had to combat impious poems and novels with religious poems and novels; he grasped the same arms to which he saw his enemy have recourse: this was a natural and necessary consequence of the species of apology which he had adopted. He strove to furnish example combined with precept. In the theoretical part of his work, he asserted that religion embellishes our existence, corrects without extinguishing the passions, and throws an extraordinary interest over all subjects in which it is employed. He said that its doctrine and its worship blend, in a wonderful manner, with the emotions of the heart and the scenery of nature; finally, that it is the only resource in the great misfortunes of life. It was not sufficient to advance all these positions, it was necessary also that they should be demonstrated. This the author has attempted to do in the two episodes of his work. These episodes were, moreover, a bait to allure that class of readers for which the work is es-



pecially designed. Was then the author so bad a judge of the human heart, when he laid this innocent snare for unbelievers; and is it not probable that many a reader would never have opened the *Beauties of Christianity* had he not looked into the work of René and Atala?

Sai che la corre il mondo ove più versi

Delle sue dolcezze il lusingher Parnasso,

E che 'l verso, condito in molli versi,

I più schivi alletando, ha persuaso.

VIII. All that an impartial critic, who is willing to enter into the spirit of the work, has a right to expect of the author, is, that these episodes should have an obvious tendency to excite a love of religion and to demonstrate its utility. Now he would ask, is not the necessity of monastic institutions shewn in certain disasters of life, and those in particular which are the most afflictive? is not the power of a religion that alone can heal the wounds which all the balsams of the world are unable to cure, irrefragably proved in the History of René? The author there combats, besides, the mania peculiar to the young people of the present day,



that mania which leads directly to suicide. It was J. J. Rousseau who first introduced among us these reveries so vicious and so baneful. By secluding himself from society, and indulging himself in his fanciful dreams, he has led numbers of youth to imagine that there is something romantic in thus casting themselves into the uncertain ocean of life. Göthe's Werther has since developed this germ of poison. The author of the *Beauties of Christianity*, being obliged to introduce into his apology some pictures for the imagination, was solicitous to denounce this new species of vice, and delineate the fatal consequences resulting from the love of solitude carried to excess. The convents formerly afforded retreats for those contemplative minds whom Nature imperiously calls to meditation. They found in the society of their Maker wherewith to fill the void which they felt in their hearts, and often too an occasion to practise rare and sublime virtues. But since the destruction of monasteries and the progress of infidelity, we must expect to see a species of recluses spring up amongst us (as has been



the case in England) who are at once the slaves of passion and philosophers, who, incapable alike of renouncing the vices of the age, and of loving that age, will take the hatred of their fellow-men for elevation and genius, will renounce every duty, divine and human, will cherish in their retirement the vainest chimeras and plunge deeper and deeper into a surly misanthropy, leading either to madness or to the grave.

In order to produce a stronger aversion for these criminal reveries, the author thought it right to take the punishment of René from that circle of calamities, not relating so much to him, individually, as to the whole family of man, and which the ancients ascribed to fatality. He could have chosen the subject of Phædra, had it not been treated by Racine; he had, therefore, nothing left but that of Europa and Thyestes\* among the Greeks, or of Amnon and Ta-

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\* Sen. in Atr. et Th. See also Canace and Macareus, and Caene and Byblis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Heroides*. I rejected, as too abominable, the subject of Myrra, which recurs in that of Lot and his daughters.

mar\* among the Hebrews: and though this subject has likewise been introduced upon the stage, † it is less known than the former. Perhaps too it is the more applicable to the character which the author wishes to pourtray. In fact, the foolish reveries of René began the evil, and his extravagances completed it. By the former, he led astray the imagination of a feeble woman; by the latter, he caused the unhappy creature to unite her fate with his. This unhappiness grows out of the subject, and punishment is the consequence of guilt.

It only remained to sanctify by christianity an event which was, at the same time, borrowed from pagan and sacred antiquity. Even in this respect, the author had not every thing to do; for he found the story, almost naturalized as a christian one, in an old ballad by Pelerin, which the peasantry still sing in several parts of the country. ‡ It is not by the maxims scattered

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\* II. Sam. XIII.

† In the Abufar of M. Ducis.

‡ C'est le Chevalier des Landes,

Malheureux chevalier, &c.



through a work, but by the strength of the impression which the work leaves on the mind, that a person ought to judge of its morality. The sort of mysterious horror, which prevails in the episodes of René, closes and saddens the heart without exciting any criminal emotion. It should not escape observation, that Amelia dies happy and cured, while René dies miserable; so that the person who is really culpable undergoes punishment which his too feeble victim, delivering her wounded soul into the hands of him who restored the sick man upon his bed, feels ineffable delight arise even amidst the afflictions of her bosom. In other respects, the discourse of Father Souël leaves no doubt as to the moral and religious object of the story of René.

IX. With respect to Atala, so many comments have been made, that reference to them all is out of the question. I will content myself with observing, that the critics, who have most severely censured this history, have uniformly acknowledged, that *it rendered the christian religion attractive*, and this is enough for the author. It is in vain that they object to particular



descriptions. It appears to be no less true that the public has not been displeas'd with the old missionary, complete priest as he is, and that the description of our religious ceremonies, in the Indian episode, has given satisfaction. It was Atala who announced, and who perhaps caus'd the Beauties of Christianity to be read. This savage, awok'd christian ideas in a certain class of mankind, and brought to that class the religion of Father Aubry, from the deserts into which it had been banish'd.

X. This idea of calling the imagination to the aid of religious principles is not new. Have we not had in our days the Count de Valmont, or the Wanderings of Imagination? Has not Father Marin at least attempted to insinuate the truths of christianity into the minds of the incredulous by disguising them under the veil of fiction? \* At a still more early period Peter Camus, bishop of

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\* We have ten pious romances from his pen, scatter'd abroad. Their titles are Adelaide of Vitzburi, or the Pious Pensioner; Virginia, or the Christian Virgin; Baron Van Hesden, or the Republic of the Incredulous; Farfalla, or the Converted Actress, &c.



Belley, a prelate remarkable for the austerity of his manners, wrote a vast number of pious romances\* to oppose the influence of the romances issued by d'Urfé. Moreover, St. Francis himself advised him to undertake this species of apology, in pity to mankind, and hoping to call them back into the paths of Religion, by representing her in a dress known to them. In like manner Paul says: "To the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak."† Do those that condemn the author, wish him to have been more scrupulous than Father Marin, Pierre Camus, Saint Francis de Sales, Heliodorus,‡ bishop of Trica, Amyot,§ Grand Almoner of France, or than another famous prelate, who in giving

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\* Dorothea, Alcina, Daphnis, Hyacinthus, &c.

† 1 Corinthians, chap. 9, verse 22.

‡ Author of Theagenes and Chariclea. It is known that the ridiculous story, reported by Nicephorus concerning this romance, is entirely destitute of truth, Socrates, Phocius and other authors do not say a word about the pretended deposition of the bishop of Trica.

§ Translator of Théagenes and Chariclea, as well as of Daphnis and Chloe.

lessons of virtue to a prince—yes, and a *Christian* prince did not scruple to represent the tumult of the passions with equal truth and energy? It is true that Faidigt and Gueudeville reproached Fenelon with having depicted the loves of Eucharis, but their criticisms are forgotten. Telemachus is become a classic book for children, and no one now lays it to the charge of the archbishop of Cambray, that he wished to cure the passions by a too warm display of them; nor are St. Augustin and St. Jerome any longer reproached with having pourtrayed their own weakness and the charms of love in such vivid colours.

XI. But have these censors, (who doubtless know every thing, from the lofty tone in which they pass sentence on the author) really convinced themselves that this mode of defending religion, of rendering it soft and impressive, and of adorning it with the charms of poetry, was so very extraordinary a proceeding? “Who will dare to assert,” exclaimed St. Augustin, “that truth is to remain disarmed against falsehood, and that the enemies of our faith are to have the liberty



of frightening the faithful by hard words, and gratifying them by agreeable recitals, while the Catholics are only allowed to write with a coldness of style which makes their readers fall asleep? It was a severe disciple of Port-Royal who translated this passage of St. Augustin, for it was Pascal himself, and he added to it that there are two things in the truths of our religion “ a divine beauty which renders them amiable, and a sacred majesty which renders them venerable.”\* To demonstrate that rigorous examples are not always those which should be employed in matters of religion he further states† that *the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing about.* The great Arnauld, chief of a most austere school of christianity, attacks the academician of Blois, who also pretended that we ought not to avail ourselves of human eloquence to prove the truths of religion. Ramsay, in his life of Fenelon, speaking of the trea-

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\* Provincial Letters, L. II.

† Reflections of Pascal, chap. 58, p. 170.

‡ In a little treatise, entitled Reflections on the eloquence of preachers.

tise on the existence of a God, by that illustrious prelate, says M. de Cambray knew that the defect of most unbelievers was not in their heads but in their hearts, and that consequently it became requisite every where to inculcate sentiments, which tended to touch, to interest, and take possession of the heart.\* Raymond de Sebonde has left a work, written soon afterwards, with the same views as the Beauties of Christianity. Montaigne undertook the defence of this author against those who assert that Christians are wrong in wishing to support their faith by human argument.† “It is faith alone,” adds Montaigne, “which vividly and certainly comprehends the high mysteries of our religion. But we are not to infer from this truth, that it is otherwise than a most praiseworthy and excellent attempt to combine with the service of our faith the natural and human means which God has granted us. There is no occupation and no undertaking more worthy of Christian man than

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\* History of the Life of Fenelon.

† Montaigne's Essays, v. 4, Book 2. chap. 12.



to aim, by all his studies and reflections, at embellishing, extending, and amplifying the truth of his creed.\*

The author would never end if he were to quote all the writers, who have been of his opinion as to the necessity of rendering religion attractive, and all the books, in which imagination, the fine arts, and poetry have been employed as the means of arriving at this object. An entire religious order, remarkable for its piety, its amenity of manners, and knowledge of the world, was occupied during several ages with this sole idea. No species of eloquence can be interdicted by that wisdom which opens the mouths of the dumb, and loosens the tongues of little infants.

A letter of St. Jerome has descended to us, in which that father justifies himself for having employed Pagan erudition to defend the doctrine of Christianity. Would St. Ambrose have caused St. Augustin to become a member of our church, if he had not employed all the charms

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\* Montaigne's Essays, Vol. 4, Book 2, chap. 12.

of elocution? "Augustin, still quite enchanted with profane eloquence," says Rollin, "only looked in the sermons of St. Ambrose for the beauties of preaching, not for solidity of doctrine, but it was not in his power to separate them." And was it not upon the wings of imagination that St. Augustin, in his turn, was lifted up to the city of God? This father has no difficulty in asserting that we ought to borrow the eloquence of the Pagans, leaving them their falsehoods, as Israel carried away the gold of the Egyptians without touching their idols, for the purpose of embellishing the holy ark.\* It was a truth unanimously recognized by the fathers that it is right to call imagination in aid of religious ideas; nay, these holy men even went so far as to think that God had availed himself of the poetic philosophy of Plato, to lead the human mind into a belief of Christianity.

XII. There is an historic fact, which incontestibly proves the strange blunders of the critics, who have thought the author guilty of

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\* De Doctr. chz. lib. 1. n 7.



innovation, as to the manner in which he has defended Christianity. When Julian, surrounded by his sophists, attacked religion with the weapons of ridicule, as has been done in our days; when he forbade the Galileans to teach or even learn the *belle-lettres*,\* when he despoiled the altars of Christ, hoping thereby to shake the belief of the priests, or at least reduce them to a degraded state of poverty; several of the faithful raised their voices to repel the sarcasms of impiety, and to defend the beauty of the Christian religion. Apollonarius the elder, according to the historian Socrates, rendered all the books of Moses into verse, and composed tragedies as well as comedies from other parts of scripture. Apollonarius the younger, wrote dialogues in imitation of Plato, conveying, in this form, the morality of the Evangelists, and the precepts of the Apostles. That father of the church too, Gregory of Nazianza, surnamed by the distinguished appellation of *the theologian*, combated the sophists with the weapons of poetry. He composed a tragedy on

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\* We are still in possession of Julian's Edict. Jul. p. 2, Vid. Greg. Naz, or 3 cap, 4 Amm. lib. 22.

the death of Jesus Christ, which has descended to us. He explained in metre the doctrine and even the mysteries of the Christian religion.\* The historian of his life positively affirms that this illustrious saint only used his poetic talent to defend christianity against the derision of the impious,† and this is also the opinion of the sage Fleury. “Saint Gregory,” says he, “wished to give those, who were fond of poetry and music, useful subjects for their diversion, and not to leave the Pagans the advantage of believing that they were the only people who could succeed in the *belles-lettres*.”

This species of poetic apology for religion has been continued, almost without interruption, from the time of Julian to our own. It gave a new impulse to the revival of letters. Sannazarius wrote his poem *de partie Virginis*, and Vida his

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\* The Abbé de Billy has collected a hundred and forty-seven poems by this father, to whom St. Jerome and Suidas attribute more than thirty thousand sacred lines.

† Naz. vit. p 12.



*Christiad*, or Life of Christ.\* Buchanan gave to the public his tragedies of Jephtha, and Saint John the Baptist. The Jerusalem Delivered, the Paradise Lost, Polyeuctes, Esther and Athalia have since abundantly demonstrated the beauties of religion. Bossuet in the second chapter of his preface, entitled *De Grandiloquentiâ et suavitate Psalmorum*, Fleury, in his Treatise on Sacred Poetry, Rollin, in his chapter on the Eloquence of Writing, and Lowth, in his excellent work *De sacrâ poësi Hebræorum*, have all found pleasure in admiring the grace and magnificence of religion. But why should I quote so many examples, when any one's good sense will point out to him the truth of what I advance. Though attempts have been made to prove religion ridiculous, it is quite easy to shew that it is beautiful. But to go higher still than I have yet done, God himself caused his worship to be announced by divine poets. In order to

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\* From which this line, on the last sigh of Christ, has been attained :

*Supremamque auram ponens caput, expiravit.*

pourtray the charms of wedlock, he used the mellifluous tones of the royal prophet's harp. Are we then now incapable of describing her beauty, who came from Lebanon,\* who looketh from the top of Shenir and Hermon,† who looketh forth as the morning,‡ who is as fair as the Moon,§ and whose stature is like to a palm-tree? || The new Jerusalem, which St. John saw descending out of Heaven from God, was of radiant splendour, “her light was like unto a stone most precious.” ¶

Sing nations of the Earth ! Jerusalem  
Rises with renovated greater pomp.\*

Yes, let us fearlessly *sing* the praises of

\* Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, *Solomon's Song*, chap. 4, ver. 8.

† *Ibid, ibid.*

‡ *Solomon's Song*, chap. 6, ver. 10.

§ *Ibid, ibid.*

|| *Solomon's Song*, chap. 7, ver. 7.

¶ *Revelations*, chap. 21, ver. 11.

\* *Athalia.*



this sublime religion. Let us defend it against derision ; let us impart their full weight to its beauties, as in the time of Julian, and when similar insults are offered to our altars, let us employ against the modern sophists the same sort of apology which Gregory and the Apollinarii used against Maximus and Libanius.

FINIS.

