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ESSAYS

COLERIDGE'S LECTURES ON SHAKSPEARE AND OTHER POETS AND DRAMATISTS

Fernand Besson.

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LORD BACON

COLERIDGE'S ESSAYS & LECTURES on SHAKSPEARE & Some Other OLD POETS & DRAMATISTS

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In treating of Shakspeare, said one of the best of Coleridge's critics, "he set the sun in heaven." The present volume, imperfect record as it is, contains the greater substance of all that the most inspired English critic said, whether casually or deliberately, of the most inspired poet. Its contents are those of the two posthumous miscellanies of notes for lectures and reports of lectures, which were prepared by Henry Nelson Coleridge and his wife—Coleridge's daughter, Sarah—in 1836, and by Payne Collier in 1856. The first deals principally with the lectures given by Coleridge in 1818, but it contains many notes and memoranda which belong equally to the earlier period. And one suspects Payne Collier's contribution of the 1811-12 lectures, although he was a less unreliable recorder than is usually supposed, to have been in some instances from the earlier publication. Perhaps the best way to read in this double collection is to turn up first the Notes upon Shakspeare's plays—"Hamlet" for preference, in which Coleridge (who was himself an intellectual Hamlet) used to perfection the subtle mirror afforded by his own mind; and then from that to work through the maze of his lectures and poetic homilies. It must be remembered that the whole book, as here constituted, is the tell-tale memorial of the Coleridge who was too indolent to make good his harvest. He had a magnificent intellect, a superb imagination, but no corresponding will-power. The consequence is that his lectures on Shakspeare were imperfectly prepared, often ill-delivered, and left in the end to the mercy of careless reporters. But to those who can discern the god in the cloud, these transcripts are of inestimable value. Intermittent flashes of creative criticism break continually through the misty envelope, and the brilliance is according to the assimilative or the refractive quality of the reader. For, as Coleridge quotes and says, "we are not all Mogul diamonds, to take the light." There are readers that are

sponges, and others that are sand-glasses or strain-bags, who let the creative element escape, and retain only the dregs. There are plentiful dregs in these pages.

A page ought to be added to enable us the better to realise Coleridge, the lecturer, as he appeared to his hearers and contemporaries.

Byron, in one of his letters, says: "We are going in a party to hear the new Art of Poetry by the reformed schismatic."[1] This was toward the end of the course, which according to Crabb Robinson ended with *éclat*. "The room was crowded, and the lecture had several passages more than brilliant." This was after a very fluctuating success. At a December lecture, ostensibly on Romeo and Juliet, he is said to have "surpassed himself in the art of talking in a very interesting way without speaking at all on the subject announced." On the same occasion Charles Lamb whispered to his neighbour in the audience: "This is not much amiss. He promised a lecture on the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet, and he has given us instead one in the *manner* of the nurse." Four times in all were his hearers invited to a lecture on Romeo and Juliet, it seems; and at least three times did he disappoint them. Instead of the expected discourse, "We have," said Crabb Robinson in a letter to Mrs Clarkson, "an immethodical rhapsody. . . . Yet I cannot but be charmed with their *splendida vitia*, and my chief displeasure is occasioned by my being forced to hear the strictures of persons infinitely below Coleridge, without any power of refuting or contradicting them."

For this course of 1811-12, Coleridge did not write out his lectures, and they were nearly all delivered extemporaneously. The Morgans, with whom he was staying at the time, found it hard to get him to make any direct preparation. He would not look into his Shakspeare, although they purposely put it in his way, and an old MS. commonplace book seems to have been his sole remembrancer.

For the course of 1818, he did, on his own declaration, make a more settled preparation, on an eclectic plan of his own.

"During a course of lectures," he writes, "I faithfully employ all the intervening days in collecting and digesting the materials. The day of the lecture I devote to the consideration, what of the

[1] Crabb Robinson speaks of seeing Byron and Rogers at one of the lectures of this course. He says of Bryon: "He was wrapped up, but I recognised his club-foot, and indeed his countenance and general appearance."

mass before me is best fitted to answer the purpose of a lecture, that is, to keep the audience awake and interested during the delivery, and to leave a sting behind," that is, he explains, a wish to study the subject anew, in the light of a new principle. "I take far, far more pains," he adds, "than would go to the set composition of a lecture, both by varied reading and by meditation ; but for the words, illustrations, etc., I know almost as little as any one of the audience . . . what they will be five minutes before the lecture begins."

The 1811-12 lectures were delivered in rooms in Crane Court, Fetter Lane, Fleet Street. The 1818 course was held in rooms at Flower-de-Luce Court—"near the Temple," Gilman says ; but no doubt the Fleur-de-lis Court, off Fetter Lane, is the actual place. Coleridge, it is well to note, gave some earlier courses of lectures in London ; one in 1806-7, at the Royal Institution, was "On the Principles of the Fine Arts" ; and in 1807-8, he actually began five courses of five lectures each on the English poets, of which only the first course, that on Shakspeare, was delivered. But this first course, and its date, are important, because of the old question of Coleridge's debt to Schlegel. Schlegel's lectures were given in 1808, as Mr. Ashe points out in this connection (in his interesting edition of Coleridge's Lectures which was published in 1883). Coleridge himself speaks of one London detached lecture of his, at the "Crown and Anchor," whose date was probably 1817 or 1818.

Other lectures were given in 1813 at the Surrey Institution, on Belles Lettres ; and in Bristol, at the great room of the "White Lion," in 1813-14. After some characteristic delays and disappointments, these Bristol lectures gave immense pleasure to the few elect who went to them. Cottle describes them as of a conversational character, and says, "The attention of his hearers never flagged, and his large dark eyes, and his countenance, in an excited state, glowing with intellect, predisposed his audience in his favour." We gather from other references that they did not bring him much gold, greatly as he and his unlucky family needed it. The London course of 1818 ends his career as a lecturer ; and if it was a rather more profitable adventure, it was hardly one to reinstate his poor fortunes. He was then a man of forty-six. In 1834 he died.

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF HIS PUBLISHED WORKS

Greek Prize Ode on the Slave Trade, Cambridge, 1792. *Monody on the Death of Chatterton* (first draft), 1794. *The Fall of Robespierre: An Historic Drama* (Coleridge and Southey), 1794. Contributions to *The Cambridge Intelligencer* and *The Morning Chronicle*, 1794-1795. *The Watchman*, 1796. *Poems on Various Subjects*, 1796. *The Vision of the Maid of Orleans* (Southey's *Joan of Arc*), republished as *The Destiny of Nations*, 1796. *Ode on the Departing Year*, 1796. Contributions to *The Monthly Magazine*, 1796-1797. *Fears in Solitude; France, an Ode; Frost at Midnight*, 1798. *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798 (containing "The Ancient Mariner" and other poems). Contributions to *The Morning Post*, 1798-1802. *Poems in Annual Anthology*, 1799-1800. *Wallenstein* (from the German of Schiller), 1800. Contributions in Prose and Verse to *The Courier*, 1807-1811. *The Friend*, 1 June, 1809, to 15 March, 1810. Contributions to Southey's *Omniana*, 1812. *Remorse*, 1813 (remodelled from *Osorio*, written in 1797; pub. 1873). *Essays on the Fine Arts* (Felix Farley's *Bristol Journal*, 1814). *Christabel; Kubla Khan; Pains of Sleep*, 1816 (first and second parts of *Christabel*, written 1797 and 1800). *The Statesman's Manual; or, The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight*, 1816. *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817. *Zapolya: A Christmas Tale*, 1817. *Biographia Literaria*, 1817. *On Method* (Essay forming the General Introduction to *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, 1817-1818). Contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1819-1822. *Aids to Reflection*, 1825. *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, 1830.

A Moral and Political Lecture, 1795. *Conciones ad Populam; or, Addresses to the People*, 1795. *The Plot Discovered: An Address to the People*, 1795.

First Collected Edition of Poems and Dramas, 1828.

POSTHUMOUS WORKS

Specimens of his Table Talk (Edited by H. N. Coleridge), 1835. *Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Edited by T. Allsop), 1836, 58, 64. *Literary Remains* (Edited by H. N. Coleridge), 1836-1839. *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (Edited by H. N. Coleridge), 1840. *Hints towards the Formation of a more Comprehensive Theory of Life* (Edited by S. B. Watson), 1848. *Notes and Lectures upon Shakspeare and some of the Old Dramatists* (Edited by

Sara Coleridge), 1849. *Essays on his own Times* (Edited by S. Coleridge), 3 vols., 1850. *Notes upon English Divines* (Edited by Derwent Coleridge), 1853. *Notes: Theological, Political, and Miscellaneous* (Edited by D. Coleridge), 1853. *Lectures on Shakespeare*, from Notes by J. P. Collier, 1856. *Poetical and Dramatic Works*, founded on the Author's latest edition of 1834 (Edited by R. H. Shepherd), 4 vols., London and Boston, 1877-1881. *Complete Works* (Edited by Professor Shedd), 1884. *Miscellanies: Æsthetic and Literary* (Edited by T. Ashe), 1885. *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Edited by James Dyke Campbell), 1893. *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 1785-1834 (Edited by E. H. Coleridge), 2 vols., 1895.

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A COURSE OF LECTURES

LECTURES ON SHAKSPEARE AND MILTON.

To

JOSEPH HENRY GREEN, Esq.

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

THE APPROVED FRIEND

OF COLERIDGE

THESE VOLUMES ARE GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

A

PREFACE

TO THE 1836 EDITION OF 'LITERARY REMAINS'

MR. COLERIDGE by his will, dated in September, 1829, authorized his executor, if he should think it expedient, to publish any of the notes or writing made by him (Mr. C.) in his books, or any other of his manuscripts or writings, or any letters which should thereafter be collected from, or supplied by, his friends or correspondents. Agreeably to this authority, an arrangement was made, under the superintendence of Mr. Green, for the collection of Coleridge's literary remains; and at the same time the preparation for the press of such part of the materials as should consist of criticism and general literature, was entrusted to the care of the present Editor. The volumes now offered to the public are the first results of that arrangement. They must in any case stand in need of much indulgence from the ingenuous reader;—*multa sunt condonanda in opere postumo;* but a short statement of the difficulties attending the compilation may serve to explain some apparent anomalies, and to preclude some unnecessary censure.

The materials were fragmentary in the extreme—Sibylline leaves;—notes of the lecturer, memoranda of the investigator, out-pourings of the solitary and self-communing student. The fear of the press was not in

them. Numerous as they were, too, they came to light, or were communicated, at different times, before and after the printing was commenced; and the dates, the occasions, and the references, in most instances remained to be discovered or conjectured. To give to such materials method and continuity, as far as might be,—to set them forth in the least disadvantageous manner which the circumstances would permit,—was a delicate and perplexing task; and the Editor is painfully sensible that he could bring few qualifications for the undertaking, but such as were involved in a many years' intercourse with the author himself, a patient study of his writings, a reverential admiration of his genius, and an affectionate desire to help in extending its beneficial influence.

The contents of these volumes are drawn from a portion only of the manuscripts entrusted to the Editor: the remainder of the collection, which, under favourable circumstances, he hopes may hereafter see the light, is at least of equal value with what is now presented to the reader as a sample. In perusing the following pages, the reader will, in a few instances, meet with disquisitions of a transcendental character, which, as a general rule, have been avoided: the truth is, that they were sometimes found so indissolubly intertwined with the more popular matter which preceded and followed, as to make separation impracticable. There are very many to whom no apology will be necessary in this respect; and the Editor only adverts to it for the purpose of obviating, as far as may be, the possible complaint of the more general reader. But there is another point to which, taught by past experience, he attaches more importance, and as to which, therefore, he ventures to put in a more express

and particular caution. In many of the books and papers, which have been used in the compilation of these volumes, passages from other writers, noted down by Mr. Coleridge as in some way remarkable, were mixed up with his own comments on such passages, or with his reflections on other subjects, in a manner very embarrassing to the eye of a third person undertaking to select the original matter, after the lapse of several years. The Editor need not say that he has not knowingly admitted any thing that was not genuine, without an express declaration as in Vol. I. p. 1 ;[1] and in another instance, Vol. II. p. 379,[2] he has intimated his own suspicion ; but, besides these, it is possible that some cases of mistake in this respect may have occurred. There may be one or two passages—they cannot well be more—printed in these volumes, which belong to other writers ; and if such there be, the Editor can only plead in excuse, that the work has been prepared by him amidst many distractions, and hope that, in this instance at least, no ungenerous use will be made of such a circumstance to the disadvantage of the author, and that persons of greater reading or more retentive memories than the Editor, who may discover any such passages, will do him the favour to communicate the fact.

To those who have been kind enough to communicate books and manuscripts for the purpose of the present publication, the Editor and, through him, Mr. Coleridge's executor return their grateful thanks. In most cases a specific acknowledgment has been made. But, above and independently of all others, it is to Mr. and Mrs.

[1] The Editor is here speaking of his note to *the Fall of Robespierre*, published in the former Vol. i. of the *Literary Remains*, shewing that the second and third acts were by Mr. Southey.

[2] This reference is to his remark on an extract from Crashaw's *Hymn to the name of Jesus*, printed in Vol. ii. of the *Lit. Rem.* as first published.

Gillman, and to Mr. Green himself, that the public are indebted for the preservation and use of the principal part of the contents of these volumes. The claims of those respected individuals on the gratitude of the friends and admirers of Coleridge and his works are already well known, and in due season those claims will receive additional confirmation.

With these remarks, sincerely conscious of his own inadequate execution of the task assigned to him, yet confident withal of the general worth of the contents of the following pages—the Editor commits the reliques of a great man to the indulgent consideration of the Public.

Lincoln's Inn,
August 11, 1836.

LITERARY REMAINS

Extract from a Letter written by Mr. Coleridge, in February, 1818, to a gentleman who attended the course of Lectures given in the spring of that year.

My next Friday's lecture will, if I do not grossly flatter-blind myself, be interesting, and the points of view not only original, but new to the audience. I make this distinction, because sixteen or rather seventeen years ago, I delivered eighteen lectures on Shakspeare, at the Royal Institution; three-fourths of which appeared at that time startling paradoxes, although they have since been adopted even by men, who then made use of them as proofs of my flighty and paradoxical turn of mind; all to prove that Shakspeare's judgment was, if possible, still more wonderful than his genius; or rather, that the contradistinction itself between judgment and genius rested on an utterly false theory. This, and its proofs and grounds have been—I should not have said adopted, but produced as their own legitimate children by some, and by others the merit of them attributed to a foreign writer, whose lectures were not given orally till two years after mine, rather than to their countryman; though I dare appeal to the most adequate judges, as Sir George Beaumont, the Bishop of Durham, Mr. Sotheby, and afterwards to Mr. Rogers and Lord Byron, whether there is one single principle in Schlegel's work (which is not an admitted drawback from its merits), that was not established and applied in detail by me. Plutarch tells us, that egotism is a venial fault in the unfortunate, and justifiable in the calumniated, &c.

* * * * * * *

Extract from a Letter to J. Briton, Esq.

28th Feb., 1819, Highgate.

DEAR SIR,—First permit me to remove a very natural, indeed almost inevitable, mistake, relative to my lectures: namely, that I *have* them, or that the lectures of one place or season are in any way repeated in another. So far from it, that on any point that I had ever studied (and on no other should I dare discourse—I mean, that I would not lecture on any subject for which I had to *acquire* the main knowledge, even though a month's or three months' previous time were allowed me; on no subject that had not employed my thoughts for a large portion of my life since earliest manhood, free of all outward and particular purpose)—on any point within my habit of thought, I should greatly prefer a subject I had never lectured on, to one which I had repeatedly given; and those who have attended me for any two seasons successively will bear witness, that the lecture given at the London Philosophical Society, on the *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, was as different from that given at the Crown and Anchor, as if they had been by two individuals who, without any communication with each other, had only mastered the same principles of philosophic criticism. This was most strikingly evidenced in the coincidence between my lectures and those of Schlegel; such, and so close, that it was fortunate for my moral reputation that I had not only from five to seven hundred ear witnesses that the passages had been given by me at the Royal Institution two years before Schlegel commenced his lectures at Vienna, but that notes had been taken of these by several men and ladies of high rank. The fact is this; during a course of lectures, I faithfully employ all the intervening days in collecting and digesting the materials, whether I have or have not lectured on the same subject before, making no difference. The day of the lecture, till the hour of commencement, I devote to the consideration, what of the mass before me is best fitted to answer the purposes of a lecture, that is, to keep the audience awake and interested during the delivery, and to leave a sting behind, that is, a disposition to study the subject anew, under

the light of a new principle. Several times, however, partly from apprehension respecting my health and animal spirits, partly from the wish to possess copies that might afterwards be marketable among the publishers, I have previously written the lecture; but before I had proceeded twenty minutes, I have been obliged to push the MS. away, and give the subject a new turn. Nay, this was so notorious, that many of my auditors used to threaten me, when they saw any number of written papers upon my desk, to steal them away; declaring they never felt so secure of a good lecture as when they perceived that I had not a single scrap of writing before me. I take far, far more pains than would go to the set composition of a lecture, both by varied reading and by meditation; but for the words, illustrations, &c., I know almost as little as any one of the audience (that is, those of any thing like the same education with myself) what they will be five minutes before the lecture begins. Such is my way, for such is my nature; and in attempting any other, I should only torment myself in order to disappoint my auditors—torment myself during the delivery, I mean; for in all other respects it would be a much shorter and easier task to deliver them from writing. I am anxious to preclude any semblance of affectation; and have therefore troubled you with this lengthy preface before I have the hardihood to assure you, that you might as well ask me what my dreams were in the year 1814, as what my course of lectures was at the Surrey Institution. *Fuimus Troes.*

SHAKSPEARE,

With introductory matter on Poetry, the Drama, and the Stage.

DEFINITION OF POETRY.

POETRY is not the proper antithesis to prose, but to science. Poetry is opposed to science, and prose to metre. The proper and immediate object of science is the acquirement, or communication, of truth; the proper and immediate object of poetry is the com-

munication of immediate pleasure. This definition is useful; but as it would include novels and other works of fiction, which yet we do not call poems, there must be some additional character by which poetry is not only divided from opposites, but likewise distinguished from disparate, though similar, modes of composition. Now how is this to be effected? In animated prose, the beauties of nature, and the passions and accidents of human nature, are often expressed in that natural language which the contemplation of them would suggest to a pure and benevolent mind; yet still neither we nor the writers call such a work a poem, though no work could deserve that name which did not include all this, together with something else. What is this? It is that pleasurable emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition;—and in order to understand this, we must combine a more than ordinary sympathy with the objects, emotions, or incidents contemplated by the poet, consequent on a more than common sensibility, with a more than ordinary activity of the mind in respect of the fancy and the imagination. Hence is produced a more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart, united with a constant activity modifying and correcting these truths by that sort of pleasurable emotion, which the exertion of all our faculties gives in a certain degree; but which can only be felt in perfection under the full play of those powers of mind, which are spontaneous rather than voluntary, and in which the effort required bears no proportion to the activity enjoyed. This is the state which permits the production of a highly pleasurable whole, of which each part shall also communicate for itself a distinct and conscious pleasure; and hence arises the definition, which I trust is now intelligible, that poetry, or rather a poem, is a species of composition, opposed to science, as having intellectual pleasure for its object, and as attaining its end by the use of language natural to us in a state of excitement,—but distinguished from other species of composition, not excluded by the former criterion, by permitting a pleasure from the whole consistent with a consciousness of pleasure from the component parts;—and the perfection of which

is, to communicate from each part the greatest immediate pleasure compatible with the largest sum of pleasure on the whole. This, of course, will vary with the different modes of poetry;—and that splendour of particular lines, which would be worthy of admiration in an impassioned elegy, or a short indignant satire, would be a blemish and proof of vile taste in a tragedy or an epic poem.

It is remarkable, by the way, that Milton in three incidental words has implied all which for the purposes of more distinct apprehension, which at first must be slow-paced in order to be distinct, I have endeavoured to develope in a precise and strictly adequate definition. Speaking of poetry, he says, as in a parenthesis, "which is simple, sensuous, passionate." How awful is the power of words!—fearful often in their consequences when merely felt, not understood; but most awful when both felt and understood!—Had these three words only been properly understood by, and present in the minds of, general readers, not only almost a library of false poetry would have been either precluded or still-born, but, what is of more consequence, works truly excellent and capable of enlarging the understanding, warming and purifying the heart, and placing in the centre of the whole being the germs of noble and manlike actions, would have been the common diet of the intellect instead. For the first condition, simplicity,—while, on the one hand, it distinguishes poetry from the arduous processes of science, labouring towards an end not yet arrived at, and supposes a smooth and finished road, on which the reader is to walk onward easily, with streams murmuring by his side, and trees and flowers and human dwellings to make his journey as delightful as the object of it is desirable, instead of having to toil with the pioneers and painfully make the road on which others are to travel,—precludes, on the other hand, every affectation and morbid peculiarity;—the second condition, sensuousness, insures that framework of objectivity, that definiteness and articulation of imagery, and that modification of the images themselves, without which poetry becomes flattened into mere didactics of practice, or evaporated into a hazy, unthoughtful, day-dreaming; and the third condition, passion, provides that

neither thought nor imagery shall be simply objective, but that the *passio vera* of humanity shall warm and animate both.

To return, however, to the previous definition, this most general and distinctive character of a poem originates in the poetic genius itself; and though it comprises whatever can with any propriety be called a poem (unless that word be a mere lazy synonyme for a composition in metre,) it yet becomes a just, and not merely discriminative, but full and adequate, definition of poetry in its highest and most peculiar sense, only so far as the distinction still results from the poetic genius, which sustains and modifies the emotions, thoughts, and vivid representations of the poem by the energy without effort of the poet's own mind,—by the spontaneous activity of his imagination and fancy, and by whatever else with these reveals itself in the balancing and reconciling of opposite or discordant qualities, sameness with difference, a sense of novelty and freshness with old or customary objects, a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order, self-possession and judgment with enthusiasm and vehement feeling,—and which, while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature, the manner to the matter, and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the images, passions, characters, and incidents of the poem :—

> Doubtless, this could not be, but that she turns
> Bodies to *spirit* by sublimation strange,
> As fire converts to fire the things it burns—
> As we our food into our nature change !
>
> From their gross matter she abstracts *their* forms,
> And draws a kind of quintessence from things,
> Which to her proper nature she transforms
> To bear them light on her celestial wings !
>
> *Thus* doth she, when from *individual states*
> She doth abstract the universal kinds,
> *Which then reclothed in divers names and fates*
> *Steal access thro' our senses to our minds.*[1]

[1] Sir John Davies on the Immortality of the Soul, sect. iv. The words and lines in italics are substituted to apply these verses to the poetic genius. The greater part of this latter paragraph may be found adopted, with some alterations, in the *Biographia Literaria*, vol. ii. c. 14; but I have thought it better in this instance and some

GREEK DRAMA.

It is truly singular that Plato,—whose philosophy and religion were but exotic at home, and a mere opposition to the finite in all things, genuine prophet and anticipator as he was of the Protestant Christian æra,—should have given in his Dialogue of the Banquet, a justification of our Shakspeare. For he relates that, when all the other guests had either dispersed or fallen asleep, Socrates only, together with Aristophanes and Agathon, remained awake, and that, while he continued to drink with them out of a large goblet, he compelled them, though most reluctantly, to admit that it was the business of one and the same genius to excel in tragic and comic poetry, or that the tragic poet ought, at the same time, to contain within himself the powers of comedy.[1] Now, as this was directly repugnant to the entire theory of the ancient critics, and contrary to all their experience, it is evident that Plato must have fixed the eye of his contemplation on the innermost essentials of the drama, abstracted from the forms of age or country. In another passage he even adds the reason, namely, that opposites illustrate each other's nature, and in their struggle draw forth the strength of the combatants, and display the conqueror as sovereign even on the territories of the rival power.

Nothing can more forcibly exemplify the separative spirit of the Greek arts than their comedy as opposed to their tragedy. But as the immediate struggle of contraries supposes an arena common to both, so both were alike ideal; that is, the comedy of Aristophanes rose to as great a distance above the ludicrous of real life, as the tragedy of Sophocles above its tragic events and passions,—and it is in this one point, of absolute

others, to run the chance of bringing a few passages twice over to the recollection of the reader, than to weaken the force of the original argument by breaking the connection. *Ed.*

[1] —— ἐξεγρόμενος δὲ ἰδεῖν τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους καθεύδοντας καὶ οἰχομένους, Ἀγάθωνα δὲ καὶ Ἀριστοφάνην καὶ Σωκράτη ἔτι μόνους ἐγρηγορέναι, καὶ πίνειν ἐκ φιάλης μεγάλης ἐπιδεξιά. τὸν οὖν Σωκράτη αὐτοῖς διαλέγεσθαι· καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ὁ Ἀριστόδημος οὐκ ἔφη μεμνῆσθαι τὸν λόγον· (οὔτε γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς παραγενέσθαι, ὑπονυστάζειν τε) τὸ μέντοι κεφάλαιον ἔφη, προσαναγκάζειν τὸν Σωκράτη ὁμολογεῖν αὐτοὺς τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀνδρὸς εἶναι κωμῳδίαν καὶ τραγωδίαν ἐπίστασθαι ποιεῖν, καὶ τὸν τέχνῃ τραγῳδοποιὸν ὄντα, καὶ κωμῳδοποιὸν εἶναι. Symp. sub fine.

ideality, that the comedy of Shakspeare and the old comedy of Athens coincide. In this also alone did the Greek tragedy and comedy unite; in every thing else they were exactly opposed to each other. Tragedy is poetry in its deepest earnest; comedy is poetry in unlimited jest. Earnestness consists in the direction and convergence of all the powers of the soul to one aim, and in the voluntary restraint of its activity in consequence; the opposite, therefore, lies in the apparent abandonment of all definite aim or end, and in the removal of all bounds in the exercise of the mind,—attaining its real end, as an entire contrast, most perfectly, the greater the display is of intellectual wealth squandered in the wantonness of sport without an object, and the more abundant the life and vivacity in the creations of the arbitrary will.

The later comedy, even where it was really comic, was doubtless likewise more comic, the more free it appeared from any fixed aim. Misunderstandings of intention, fruitless struggles of absurd passion, contradictions of temper, and laughable situations there were; but still the form of the representation itself was serious; it proceeded as much according to settled laws, and used as much the same means of art, though to a different purpose, as the regular tragedy itself. But in the old comedy the very form itself is whimsical; the whole work is one great jest, comprehending a world of jests within it, among which each maintains its own place without seeming to concern itself as to the relation in which it may stand to its fellows. In short, in Sophocles, the constitution of tragedy is monarchical, but such as it existed in elder Greece, limited by laws, and therefore the more venerable,—all the parts adapting and submitting themselves to the majesty of the heroic sceptre: —in Aristophanes, comedy, on the contrary, is poetry in its most democratic form, and it is a fundamental principle with it, rather to risk all the confusion of anarchy, than to destroy the independence and privileges of its individual constituents,—place, verse, characters, even single thoughts, conceits, and allusions, each turning on the pivot of its own free will.

The tragic poet idealizes his characters by giving to the spiritual part of our nature a more decided prepon-

derance over the animal cravings and impulses, than is met with in real life: the comic poet idealizes his characters by making the animal the governing power, and the intellectual the mere instrument. But as tragedy is not a collection of virtues and perfections, but takes care only that the vices and imperfections shall spring from the passions, errors, and prejudices which arise out of the soul;—so neither is comedy a mere crowd of vices and follies, but whatever qualities it represents, even though they are in a certain sense amiable, it still displays them as having their origin in some dependence on our lower nature, accompanied with a defect in true freedom of spirit and self-subsistence, and subject to that unconnection by contradictions of the inward being, to which all folly is owing.

The ideal of earnest poetry consists in the union and harmonious melting down, and fusion of the sensual into the spiritual,—of man as an animal into man as a power of reason and self-government. And this we have represented to us most clearly in the plastic art, or statuary; where the perfection of outward form is a symbol of the perfection of an inward idea; where the body is wholly penetrated by the soul, and spiritualized even to a state of glory, and like a transparent substance, the matter, in its own nature darkness, becomes altogether a vehicle and fixture of light, a means of developing its beauties, and unfolding its wealth of various colours without disturbing its unity, or causing a division of the parts. The sportive ideal, on the contrary, consists in the perfect harmony and concord of the higher nature with the animal, as with its ruling principle and its acknowledged regent. The understanding and practical reason are represented as the willing slaves of the senses and appetites, and of the passions arising out of them. Hence we may admit the appropriateness to the old comedy, as a work of defined art, of allusions and descriptions, which morality can never justify, and, only with reference to the author himself, and only as being the effect or rather the cause of the circumstances in which he wrote, can consent even to palliate.

The old comedy rose to its perfection in Aristophanes, and in him also it died with the freedom of Greece. Then arose a species of drama, more fitly called, dramatic

entertainment than comedy, but of which, nevertheless, our modern comedy (Shakspeare's altogether excepted) is the genuine descendant. Euripides had already brought tragedy lower down and by many steps nearer to the real world than his predecessors had ever done, and the passionate admiration which Menander and Philemon expressed for him, and their open avowals that he was their great master, entitle us to consider their dramas as of a middle species, between tragedy and comedy,—not the tragi-comedy, or thing of heterogeneous parts, but a complete whole, founded on principles of its own. Throughout we find the drama of Menander distinguishing itself from tragedy, but not, as the genuine old comedy, contrasting with, and opposing it. Tragedy, indeed, carried the thoughts into the mythologic world, in order to raise the emotions, the fears, and the hopes, which convince the inmost heart that their final cause is not to be discovered in the limits of mere mortal life, and force us into a presentiment, however dim, of a state in which those struggles of inward free will with outward necessity, which form the true subject of the tragedian, shall be reconciled and solved;—the entertainment or new comedy, on the other hand, remained within the circle of experience. Instead of the tragic destiny, it introduced the power of chance; even in the few fragments of Menander and Philemon now remaining to us, we find many exclamations and reflections concerning chance and fortune, as in the tragic poets concerning destiny. In tragedy, the moral law, either as obeyed or violated, above all consequences—its own maintenance or violation constituting the most important of all consequences—forms the ground; the new comedy, and our modern comedy in general, (Shakspeare excepted as before) lies in prudence or imprudence, enlightened or misled self-love. The whole moral system of the entertainment exactly like that of fable, consists in rules of prudence, with an exquisite conciseness, and at the same time an exhaustive fulness of sense. An old critic said that tragedy was the flight or elevation of life, comedy (that of Menander) its arrangement or ordonnance.

Add to these features a portrait-like truth of character, —not so far indeed as that a *bona fide* individual should be described or imagined, but yet so that the features

which give interest and permanence to the class should be individualized. The old tragedy moved in an ideal world,—the old comedy in a fantastic world. As the entertainment, or new comedy, restrained the creative activity both of the fancy and the imagination, it indemnified the understanding in appealing to the judgment for the probability of the scenes represented. The ancients themselves acknowledged the new comedy as an exact copy of real life. The grammarian, Aristophanes, somewhat affectedly exclaimed :—" O Life and Menander ! which of you two imitated the other ? " In short the form of this species of drama was poetry, the stuff or matter was prose. It was prose rendered delightful by the blandishments and measured motions of the muse. Yet even this was not universal. The mimes of Sophron, so passionately admired by Plato, were written in prose, and were scenes out of real life conducted in dialogue. The exquisite Feast of Adonis (Συρακούσιαι ἢ Ἀδωνιάζουσαι) in Theocritus, we are told, with some others of his eclogues, were close imitations of certain mimes of Sophron —free translations of the prose into hexameters.

It will not be improper, in this place, to make a few remarks on the remarkable character and functions of the chorus in the Greek tragic drama.

The chorus entered from below, close by the orchestra, and there, pacing to and fro during the choral odes, performed their solemn measured dance. In the centre of the *orchestra*, directly over against the middle of the *scene*, there stood an elevation with steps in the shape of a large altar, as high as the boards of the *logeion* or moveable stage. This elevation was named the *thymele*, (θυμέλη) and served to recall the origin and original purpose of the chorus, as an altar-song in honour of the presiding deity. Here, and on these steps the persons of the chorus sate collectively, when they were not singing ; attending to the dialogue as spectators, and acting as (what in truth they were) the ideal representatives of the real audience, and of the poet himself in his own character, assuming the supposed impressions made by the drama, in order to direct and rule them. But when the chorus itself formed part of the dialogue, then the leader of the band, the foreman or *coryphæus*, ascended, as some think, the level summit of the *thymele* in order

to command the stage, or, perhaps, the whole chorus advanced to the front of the orchestra, and thus put themselves in ideal connection, as it were, with the *dramatis personæ* there acting. This *thymele* was in the centre of the whole edifice, all the measurements were calculated, and the semicircle of the amphitheatre was drawn, from this point. It had a double use, a twofold purpose; it constantly reminded the spectators of the origin of tragedy as a religious service, and declared itself as the ideal representative of the audience by having its place exactly in the point, to which all the radii from the different seats or benches converged.

In this double character, as constituent parts, and yet at the same time as spectators, of the drama, the chorus could not but tend to enforce the unity of place; —not on the score of any supposed improbability, which the understanding or common sense might detect in a change of place;—but because the senses themselves put it out of the power of any imagination to conceive a place coming to, and going away from the persons, instead of the persons changing their place. Yet there are instances, in which, during the silence of the chorus, the poets have hazarded this by a change in that part of the scenery which represented the more distant objects to the eye of the spectator—a demonstrative proof, that this alternately extolled and ridiculed unity (as ignorantly ridiculed as extolled) was grounded on no essential principle of reason, but arose out of circumstances which the poet could not remove, and therefore took up into the form of the drama, and co-organised it with all the other parts into a living whole.

The Greek tragedy may rather be compared to our serious opera than to the tragedies of Shakspeare; nevertheless, the difference is far greater than the likeness. In the opera all is subordinated to the music, the dresses and the scenery;—the poetry is a mere vehicle for articulation, and as little pleasure is lost by ignorance of the Italian language, so is little gained by the knowledge of it. But in the Greek drama all was but as instruments and accessaries to the poetry; and hence we should form a better notion of the choral music from the solemn hymns and psalms of austere church music than from any species of theatrical singing. A single flute or pipe

was the ordinary accompaniment; and it is not to be supposed, that any display of musical power was allowed to obscure the distinct hearing of the words. On the contrary, the evident purpose was to render the words more audible, and to secure by the elevations and pauses greater facility of understanding the poetry. For the choral songs are, and ever must have been, the most difficult part of the tragedy; there occur in them the most involved verbal compounds, the newest expressions, the boldest images, the most recondite allusions. Is it credible that the poets would, one and all, have been thus prodigal of the stores of art and genius, if they had known that in the representation the whole must have been lost to the audience,—at a time too, when the means of after publication were so difficult and expensive, and the copies of their works so slowly and narrowly circulated?

The masks also must be considered—their vast variety and admirable workmanship. Of this we retain proof by the marble masks which represented them; but to this in the real mask we must add the thinness of the substance and the exquisite fitting on to the head of the actor; so that not only were the very eyes painted with a single opening left for the pupil of the actor's eye, but in some instances, even the iris itself was painted, when the colour was a known characteristic of the divine or heroic personage represented.

Finally, I will note down those fundamental characteristics which contradistinguish the ancient literature from the modern generally, but which more especially appear in prominence in the tragic drama. The ancient was allied to statuary, the modern refers to painting. In the first there is a predominance of rhythm and melody, in the second of harmony and counterpoint. The Greeks idolized the finite, and therefore were the masters of all grace, elegance, proportion, fancy, dignity, majesty—of whatever, in short, is capable of being definitely conveyed by defined forms or thoughts: the moderns revere the infinite, and affect the indefinite as a vehicle of the infinite;—hence their passions, their obscure hopes and fears, their wandering through the unknown, their grander moral feelings, their more august conception of man as man, their future rather than their past—in a word, their sublimity.

PROGRESS OF THE DRAMA.

Let two persons join in the same scheme to ridicule a third, and either take advantage of, or invent, some story for that purpose, and mimicry will have already produced a sort of rude comedy. It becomes an inviting treat to the populace, and gains an additional zest and burlesque by following the already established plan of tragedy; and the first man of genius who seizes the idea, and reduces it into form,—into a work of art,—by metre and music, is the Aristophanes of the country.

How just this account is will appear from the fact that in the first or old comedy of the Athenians, most of the *dramatis personæ* were living characters introduced under their own names; and no doubt, their ordinary dress, manner, person and voice were closely mimicked. In less favourable states of society, as that of England in the middle ages, the beginnings of comedy would be constantly taking place from the mimics and satirical minstrels; but from want of fixed abode, popular government, and the successive attendance of the same auditors, it would still remain in embryo. I shall, perhaps, have occasion to observe that this remark is not without importance in explaining the essential differences of the modern and ancient theatres.

Phenomena, similar to those which accompanied the origin of tragedy and comedy among the Greeks, would take place among the Romans much more slowly, and the drama would, in any case, have much longer remained in its first irregular form from the character of the people, their continual engagements in wars of conquest, the nature of their government, and their rapidly increasing empire. But, however this might have been, the conquest of Greece precluded both the process and the necessity of it; and the Roman stage at once presented imitations or translations of the Greek drama. This continued till the perfect establishment of Christianity. Some attempts, indeed, were made to adapt the persons of Scriptural or ecclesiastical history to the drama; and sacred plays, it is probable, were not unknown in Constantinople under the emperors of the East. The first of the kind is, I believe, the only one preserved,—

namely, the Χριστὸς Πάσχων, or, "Christ in his sufferings," by Gregory Nazianzen,—possibly written in consequence of the prohibition of profane literature to the Christians by the apostate Julian.[1] In the West, however, the enslaved and debauched Roman world became too barbarous for any theatrical exhibitions more refined than those of pageants and chariot-races; while the spirit of Christianity, which in its most corrupt form still breathed general humanity, whenever controversies of faith were not concerned, had done away the cruel combats of the gladiators, and the loss of the distant provinces prevented the possibility of exhibiting the engagements of wild beasts.

I pass, therefore, at once to the feudal ages which soon succeeded, confining my observation to this country; though, indeed, the same remark with very few alterations will apply to all the other states, into which the great empire was broken. Ages of darkness succeeded;—not, indeed, the darkness of Russia or of the barbarous lands unconquered by Rome; for from the time of Honorius to the destruction of Constantinople and the consequent introduction of ancient literature into Europe, there was a continued succession of individual intellects; —the golden chain was never wholly broken, though the connecting links were often of baser metal. A dark cloud, like another sky, covered the entire cope of heaven, —but in this place it thinned away, and white stains of light showed a half eclipsed star behind it,—in that place it was rent asunder, and a star passed across the opening in all its brightness, and then vanished. Such stars exhibited themselves only; surrounding objects did not partake of their light. There were deep wells of knowledge, but no fertilizing rills and rivulets. For the drama, society was altogether a state of chaos, out of which it was, for a while at least, to proceed anew, as if there had been none before it. And yet it is not undelightful to contemplate the eduction of good from evil. The ignorance of the great mass of our countrymen was the efficient cause of the reproduction of the drama; and the preceding darkness and the returning light were alike necessary in order to the creation of a Shakspeare.

[1] A.D. 363. But I believe the prevailing opinion amongst scholars now is, that the Χριστὸς Πάσχων is not genuine. *Ed.*

The drama re-commenced in England, as it first began in Greece, in religion. The people were not able to read, —the priesthood were unwilling that they should read; and yet their own interest compelled them not to leave the people wholly ignorant of the great events of sacred history. They did that, therefore, by scenic representations, which in after ages it has been attempted to do in Roman Catholic countries by pictures. They presented Mysteries, and often at great expense; and reliques of this system still remain in the south of Europe, and indeed throughout Italy, where at Christmas the convents and the great nobles rival each other in the scenic representation of the birth of Christ and its circumstances. I heard two instances mentioned to me at different times, one in Sicily and the other in Rome, of noble devotees, the ruin of whose fortunes was said to have commenced in the extravagant expense which had been incurred in presenting the *præsepe* or manger. But these Mysteries, in order to answer their design, must not only be instructive, but entertaining; and as, when they became so, the people began to take pleasure in acting them themselves—in interloping,—(against which the priests seem to have fought hard and yet in vain) the most ludicrous images were mixed with the most awful personations; and whatever the subject might be, however sublime, however pathetic, yet the Vice and the Devil, who are the genuine antecessors of Harlequin and the Clown, were necessary component parts. I have myself a piece of this kind, which I transcribed a few years ago at Helmstadt, in Germany, on the education of Eve's children, in which after the fall and repentance of Adam, the offended Maker, as in proof of his reconciliation, condescends to visit them, and to catechise the children,—who with a noble contempt of chronology are all brought together from Abel to Noah. The good children say the ten Commandments, the Belief and the Lord's Prayer; but Cain and his rout, after he had received a box on the ear for not taking off his hat, and afterwards offering his left hand, is prompted by the devil so to blunder in the Lord's Prayer as to reverse the petitions and say it backward![1]

[1] See vol. i. p. 76, where this is told more at length and attributed to Hans Sachs. *Ed.* Vol. ii. pp. 16, 17, 2nd edit. S. C.

Unaffectedly I declare I feel pain at repetitions like these, however innocent. As historical documents they are valuable; but I am sensible that what I can read with my eye with perfect innocence, I cannot without inward fear and misgivings pronounce with my tongue.

Let me, however, be acquitted of presumption if I say that I cannot agree with Mr. Malone, that our ancestors did not perceive the ludicrous in these things, or that they paid no separate attention to the serious and comic parts. Indeed his own statement contradicts it. For what purpose should the Vice leap upon the Devil's back and belabour him, but to produce this separate attention? The people laughed heartily, no doubt. Nor can I conceive any meaning attached to the words "separate attention," that is not fully answered by one part of an exhibition exciting seriousness or pity, and the other raising mirth and loud laughter. That they felt no impiety in the affair is most true. For it is the very essence of that system of Christian polytheism, which in all its essentials is now fully as gross in Spain, in Sicily and the south of Italy, as it ever was in England in the days of Henry VI.—(nay, more so, for a Wicliffe had not then appeared only, but scattered the good seed widely,) it is an essential part, I say, of that system to draw the mind wholly from its own inward whispers and quiet discriminations, and to habituate the conscience to pronounce sentence in every case according to the established verdicts of the church and the casuists. I have looked through volume after volume of the most approved casuists,—and still I find disquisitions whether this or that act is right, and under what circumstances, to a minuteness that makes reasoning ridiculous, and of a callous and unnatural immodesty, to which none but a monk could harden himself, who has been stripped of all the tender charities of life, yet is goaded on to make war against them by the unsubdued hauntings of our meaner nature, even as dogs are said to get the *hydrophobia* from excessive thirst. I fully believe that our ancestors laughed as heartily, as their posterity do at Grimaldi;—and not having been told that they would be punished for laughing, they thought it very innocent;—and if their priest had left out murder in the catalogue of their prohibitions (as indeed they did under

certain circumstances of heresy), the greater part of them, —the moral instincts common to all men having been smothered and kept from development,—would have thought as little of murder.

However this may be, the necessity of at once instructing and gratifying the people produced the great distinction between the Greek and the English theatres ;—for to this we must attribute the origin of tragi-comedy, or a representation of human events more lively, nearer the truth, and permitting a larger field of moral instruction, a more ample exhibition of the recesses of the human heart, under all the trials and circumstances that most concern us, than was known or guessed at by Æschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides ;—and at the same time we learn to account for, and—relatively to the author—perceive the necessity of, the Fool or Clown or both, as the substitutes of the Vice and the Devil, which our ancestors had been so accustomed to see in every exhibition of the stage, that they could not feel any performance perfect without them. Even to this day in Italy, every opera—(even Metastasio obeyed the claim throughout)—must have six characters, generally two pairs of cross lovers, a tyrant and a confidant, or a father and two confidants, themselves lovers ;—and when a new opera appears, it is the universal fashion to ask—which is the tyrant, which the lover ? &c.

It is the especial honour of Christianity, that in its worst and most corrupted form it cannot wholly separate itself from morality ;—whereas the other religions in their best form (I do not include Mohammedanism, which is only an anomalous corruption of Christianity, like Swedenborgianism,) have no connection with it. The very impersonation of moral evil under the name of Vice, facilitated all other impersonations ; and hence we see that the Mysteries were succeeded by Moralities, or dialogues and plots of allegorical personages. Again, some character in real history had become so famous, so proverbial, as Nero for instance, that they were introduced instead of the moral quality, for which they were so noted ;—and in this manner the stage was moving on to the absolute production of heroic and comic real characters, when the restoration of literature, followed by the ever-blessed Reformation, let in upon the kingdom not only new knowledge, but new motive. A useful rivalry commenced between the metropolis on the

one hand, the residence, independently of the court and nobles, of the most active and stirring spirits who had not been regularly educated, or who, from mischance or otherwise, had forsaken the beaten track of preferment,—and the universities on the other. The latter prided themselves on their closer approximation to the ancient rules and ancient regularity—taking the theatre of Greece, or rather its dim reflection, the rhetorical tragedies of the poet Seneca, as a perfect ideal, without any critical collation of the times, origin, or circumstances;—whilst, in the mean time, the popular writers, who could not and would not abandon what they had found to delight their countrymen sincerely, and not merely from inquiries first put to the recollection of rules, and answered in the affirmative, as if it had been an arithmetical sum, did yet borrow from the scholars whatever they advantageously could, consistently with their own peculiar means of pleasing.

And here let me pause for a moment's contemplation of this interesting subject.

We call, for we see and feel, the swan and the dove both transcendantly beautiful. As absurd as it would be to institute a comparison between their separate claims to beauty from any abstract rule common to both, without reference to the life and being of the animals themselves,—or as if, having first seen the dove, we abstracted its outlines, gave them a false generalization, called them the principles or ideal of bird-beauty, and then proceeded to criticise the swan or the eagle;—not less absurd is it to pass judgment on the works of a poet on the mere ground that they have been called by the same class-name with the works of other poets in other times and circumstances, or on any ground, indeed, save that of their inappropriateness to their own end and being, their want of significance, as symbols or physiognomy.

O! few have there been among critics, who have followed with the eye of the imagination the imperishable yet ever wandering spirit of poetry through its various metempsychoses, and consequent metamorphoses;—or who have rejoiced in the light of clear perception at beholding with each new birth, with each rare *avatar*, the human race frame to itself a new body, by assimilating materials of nourishment out of its new circum-

stances, and work for itself new organs of power appropriate to the new sphere of its motion and activity!

I have before spoken of the Romance, or the language formed out of the decayed Roman and the Northern tongues; and comparing it with the Latin, we find it less perfect in simplicity and relation—the privileges of a language formed by the mere attraction of homogeneous parts;—but yet more rich, more expressive and various, as one formed by more obscure affinities out of a chaos of apparently heterogeneous atoms. As more than a metaphor,—as an analogy of this, I have named the true genuine modern poetry the romantic; and the works of Shakspeare are romantic poetry revealing itself in the drama. If the tragedies of Sophocles are in the strict sense of the word tragedies, and the comedies of Aristophanes comedies, we must emancipate ourselves from a false association arising from misapplied names, and find a new word for the plays of Shakspeare. For they are, in the ancient sense, neither tragedies nor comedies, nor both in one,—but a different *genus*, diverse in kind, and not merely different in degree. They may be called romantic dramas, or dramatic romances.

A deviation from the simple forms and unities of the ancient stage is an essential principle, and, of course, an appropriate excellence, of the romantic drama. For these unities were to a great extent the natural form of that which in its elements was homogeneous, and the representation of which was addressed pre-eminently to the outward senses;—and though the fable, the language and the characters appealed to the reason rather than to the mere understanding, inasmuch as they supposed an ideal state rather than referred to an existing reality,—yet it was a reason which was obliged to accommodate itself to the senses, and so far became a sort of more elevated understanding. On the other hand, the romantic poetry — the Shakspearian drama — appealed to the imagination rather than to the senses, and to the reason as contemplating our inward nature, and the workings of the passions in their most retired recesses. But the reason, as reason, is independent of time and space; it has nothing to do with them: and hence the certainties of reason have been called eternal truths. As for example —the endless properties of the circle:—what connection

have they with this or that age, with this or that country? —The reason is aloof from time and space; the imagination is an arbitrary controller over both;—and if only the poet have such power of exciting our internal emotions as to make us present to the scene in imagination chiefly, he acquires the right and privilege of using time and space as they exist in imagination, and obedient only to the laws by which the imagination itself acts. These laws it will be my object and aim to point out as the examples occur, which illustrate them. But here let me remark what can never be too often reflected on by all who would intelligently study the works either of the Athenian dramatists, or of Shakspeare, that the very essence of the former consists in the sternest separation of the diverse in kind and the disparate in the degree, whilst the latter delights in interlacing, by a rainbow-like transfusion of hues, the one with the other.

And here it will be necessary to say a few words on the stage and on stage-illusion.

A theatre, in the widest sense of the word, is the general term for all places of amusement through the ear or eye, in which men assemble in order to be amused by some entertainment presented to all at the same time and in common. Thus, an old Puritan divine says:—"Those who attend public worship and sermons only to amuse themselves, make a theatre of the church, and turn God's house into the devil's. *Theatra ædes diabololatricæ.*" The most important and dignified species of this *genus* is, doubtless, the stage, (*res theatralis histrionica*), which, in addition to the generic definition above given, may be characterized in its idea, or according to what it does, or ought to, aim at, as a combination of several or of all the fine arts in an harmonious whole, having a distinct end of its own, to which the peculiar end of each of the component arts, taken separately, is made subordinate and subservient,—that, namely, of imitating reality—whether external things, actions, or passions—under a semblance of reality. Thus, Claude imitates a landscape at sunset, but only as a picture; while a forest-scene is not presented to the spectators as a picture, but as a forest; and though, in the full sense of the word, we are no more deceived by the one than by the other, yet are our feelings very differently

affected; and the pleasure derived from the one is not composed of the same elements as that afforded by the other, even on the supposition that the *quantum* of both were equal. In the former, a picture, it is a condition of all genuine delight that we should not be deceived; in the latter, stage-scenery, (inasmuch as its principal end is not in or for itself, as is the case in a picture, but to be an assistance and means to an end out of itself) its very purpose is to produce as much illusion as its nature permits. These, and all other stage presentations, are to produce a sort of temporary half-faith, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is. I have often observed that little children are actually deceived by stage-scenery, never by pictures; though even these produce an effect on their impressible minds, which they do not on the minds of adults. The child, if strongly impressed, does not indeed positively think the picture to be the reality; but yet he does not think the contrary. As Sir George Beaumont was shewing me a very fine engraving from Rubens, representing a storm at sea without any vessel or boat introduced, my little boy, then about five years old, came dancing and singing into the room, and all at once (if I may so say) *tumbled in* upon the print. He instantly started, stood silent and motionless, with the strongest expression, first of wonder and then of grief in his eyes and countenance, and at length said, "And where is the ship? But that is sunk, and the men are all drowned!" still keeping his eyes fixed on the print. Now what pictures are to little children, stage illusion is to men, provided they retain any part of the child's sensibility; except, that in the latter instance, the suspension of the act of comparison, which permits this sort of negative belief, is somewhat more assisted by the will, than in that of a child respecting a picture.

The true stage-illusion in this and in all other things consists—not in the mind's judging it to be a forest, but, in its remission of the judgment that it is not a forest. And this subject of stage-illusion is so important, and so many practical errors and false criticisms may arise, and indeed have arisen, either from reasoning on it as actual

delusion, (the strange notion, on which the French critics built up their theory, and on which the French poets justify the construction of their tragedies), or from denying it altogether, (which seems the end of Dr. Johnson's reasoning, and which, as extremes meet, would lead to the very same consequences, by excluding whatever would not be judged probable by us in our coolest state of feeling, with all our faculties in even balance), that these few remarks will, I hope, be pardoned, if they should serve either to explain or to illustrate the point. For not only are we never absolutely deluded—or any thing like it, but the attempt to cause the highest delusion possible to beings in their senses sitting in a theatre, is a gross fault, incident only to low minds, which, feeling that they cannot affect the heart or head permanently, endeavour to call forth the momentary affections. There ought never to be more pain than is compatible with co-existing pleasure, and to be amply repaid by thought.

Shakspeare found the infant stage demanding an intermixture of ludicrous character as imperiously as that of Greece did the chorus, and high language accordant. And there are many advantages in this;—a greater assimilation to nature, a greater scope of power, more truths, and more feelings;—the effects of contrast, as in Lear and the Fool; and especially this, that the true language of passion becomes sufficiently elevated by your having previously heard, in the same piece, the lighter conversation of men under no strong emotion. The very nakedness of the stage, too, was advantageous,—for the drama thence became something between recitation and a re-presentation; and the absence or paucity of scenes allowed a freedom from the laws of unity of place and unity of time, the observance of which must either confine the drama to as few subjects as may be counted on the fingers, or involve gross improbabilities, far more striking than the violation would have caused. Thence, also, was precluded the danger of a false ideal,—of aiming at more than what is possible on the whole. What play of the ancients, with reference to their ideal, does not hold out more glaring absurdities than any in Shakspeare? On the Greek plan a man could more easily be a poet than a dramatist; upon our plan more easily a dramatist than a poet.

THE DRAMA GENERALLY, AND PUBLIC TASTE.

UNACCUSTOMED to address such an audience, and having lost by a long interval of confinement the advantages of my former short schooling, I had miscalculated in my last Lecture the proportion of my matter to my time, and by bad economy and unskilful management, the several heads of my discourse failed in making the entire performance correspond with the promise publicly circulated in the weekly annunciation of the subjects, to be treated. It would indeed have been wiser in me, and perhaps better on the whole, if I had caused my Lectures to be announced only as continuations of the main subject. But if I be, as perforce I must be, gratified by the recollection of whatever has appeared to give you pleasure, I am conscious of something better, though less flattering, a sense of unfeigned gratitude for your forbearance with my defects. Like affectionate guardians, you see without disgust the awkwardness, and witness with sympathy the growing pains, of a youthful endeavour, and look forward with a hope, which is its own reward, to the contingent results of practice—to its intellectual maturity.

In my last address I defined poetry to be the art, or whatever better term our language may afford, of representing external nature and human thoughts, both relatively to human affections, so as to cause the production of as great immediate pleasure in each part, as is compatible with the largest possible sum of pleasure on the whole. Now this definition applies equally to painting and music as to poetry; and in truth the term poetry is alike applicable to all three. The vehicle alone constitutes the difference; and the term 'poetry' is rightly applied by eminence to measured words, only because the sphere of their action is far wider, the power of giving permanence to them much more certain, and incomparably greater the facility, by which men, not defective by nature or disease, may be enabled to derive habitual pleasure and instruction from them. On my mentioning these considerations to a painter of great