positive divine law, or to any merely barbarous and irrational customs. Wars undertaken only on this score are commonly suspicious. But he goes on to determine that war may be justly waged against those who deny the being and providence of God, though not against idolaters, much less for the sake of compelling any nation to embrace Christianity, unless they prosecute its professors, in which case they are justly liable to punishment. He pronounces strongly in this place against the prosecution of heretics.[u]

121. This is the longest chapter in the work of Grotius. Several of his positions, as the reader may probably have observed, would not bear a close scrutiny; the rights of individuals in a state of nature, of magistrates in civil society, and of independent communities, are not kept sufficiently distinct; the equivocal meaning of right, as it exists correlatively between two parties, and as it comprehends the general obligations of moral law, is not always guarded against. It is, notwithstanding these defects, a valuable commentary, regard being had to the time when it appeared, on the principles both of penal jurisprudence and of the rights of war.

Their responsibility.

122. It has been a great problem, whether the liability to punishment can be transmitted from one person to another. This may be asked as to those who have been concerned in the crime, and those who have not. In the first case, they are liable as for their own offence, in having commanded, connived at, permitted, assisted, the actors in the crime before or after its perpetration. States are answerable for the delinquencies of their subjects when unpunished. They are also bound either to punish, or to deliver up, those who take refuge within their dominions from the justice of their own country. He seems, however, to admit afterwards, that they need only command such persons to quit the country. But they have a right to inquire into and inform themselves of the guilt alleged, the ancient privileges of suppliants being established for the sake of those who have been unjustly persecuted at home. The practice of modern Europe, he owns, has limited this right of demanding the delivery or punish-

[u] C. 20.

ment of refugees within narrow bounds. As to the punishment of those who have been wholly innocent of the offence, Grotius holds it universally unjust, but distinguishes it from indirect evil, which may often fall on the innocent. Thus, when the estate of a father is confiscated, his children suffer, but are not punished; since their succession was only a right contingent on his possession at his death.[x] It is a consequence from this principle, that a people so far subject to its sovereign as to have had no control upon his actions cannot justly incur punishment on account of them.

Insufficient causes of war.

123. After distinguishing the causes of war into pretexts and motives, and setting aside wars without any assignable justification as mere robberies, he mentions several pretexts which he deems insufficient, such as the aggrandisement of a neighbour, his construction of fortresses, the right of discovery where there is already a possessor, however barbarous, the necessity of occupying more land. And here he denies, both to single men and to a people, the right of taking up arms in order to recover their liberty. He laughs at the pretended right of the emperor or of the pope to govern the world; and concludes with a singular warning against wars undertaken upon any pretended explanation of Scriptural prophecies.[y]

Duty of avoiding it.

It will be anticipated, from the scrupulousness of Grotius in all his casuistry, that he enjoins sovereigns to abstain from war in a doubtful cause, and to use all convenient methods of avoiding it by conference, arbitration, or even by lot. Single combat itself, as a mode of lot, he does not wholly reject in this place. In answer to a question often put, Whether a war can be just on both sides? he replies that, in relation to the cause or subject, it cannot be so, since there cannot be two opposite rights; but since men may easily be

[x] C. 21, § 10. Hence it would follow, by the principle of Grotius, that our law of forfeiture in high treason is just, being part of the direct punishment of the guilty; but that of attainder, or corruption of blood, is unjust, being an infliction on the innocent alone. I incline to concur in this distinction, and think it at least plausible, though it was seldom or never taken in the discussions concerning those two laws. Confiscation is no more unjust towards the posterity of an offender than fine, from which of course it only differs in degree; and, on the other hand, the law has as much right to exclude that posterity from enjoying property at all, as from enjoying that which descends from a third party through the blood, as we call it, of a criminal ancestor.

[y] C. 22.

deceived as to the real right, a war may be just on both sides with respect to the agents.[z] In another part of his work he observes that resistance, even where the cause is not originally just, may become such by the excess of the other party.

And expediency.

124. The duty of avoiding war, even in a just cause, as long as possible, is rather part of moral virtue in a large sense than of mere justice. But, besides the obligations imposed on us by humanity and by Christian love, it is often expedient for our own interests to avoid war. Of this, however, he says little, it being plainly a matter of civil prudence with which he has no concern.[a] Dismissing, therefore, the subject of this chapter, he comes to the justice of wars undertaken for the sake of others. Sovereigns, he conceives, are not bound to take up arms in defence of any one of their subjects who may be unjustly treated. Hence, a state may abandon those whom it cannot protect without great loss to the rest; but whether an innocent subject may be delivered up to an enemy is a more debated question. Soto and Vasquez, casuists of great name, had denied this; Grotius, however, determines it affirmatively. This seems a remarkable exception from the general inflexibility of his adherence to the rule of right. For on what principle of strict justice can a people, any more than private persons, sacrifice, or put in jeopardy, the life of an innocent man? Grotius is influenced by the supposition that the subject ought voluntarily to surrender himself into the hands of the enemy for the public good; but no man forfeits his natural rights by refusing to perform an action not of strict social obligation.[b]

War for the sake of other subjects.

Allies.

125. Next to subjects are allies, whom the state has bound itself to succour; and friendly powers, though without alliance, may also be protected from unjust attack. This extends even to all mankind; though war in behalf of strangers is not obligatory. It is also lawful to deliver the subjects of others from extreme manifest oppression of their rulers; and though this has often been a mere pretext, we are

Strangers.

[z] C. 23. [a] C. 24. [b] C. 25.

not on that account to deny the justice of an honest interference. He even thinks the right of foreign powers, in such a case, more unequivocal than that of the oppressed people themselves. At the close of this chapter he protests strongly against those who serve in any cause for the mere sake of pay, and holds them worse than the common executioner, who puts none but criminals to death.[c]

None to serve in an unjust war

126. In the twenty-sixth and concluding chapter of this second book, Grotius investigates the lawfulness of bearing arms at the command of superiors, and determines that subjects are indispensably bound not to serve in a war which they conceive to be clearly unjust. He even inclines, though admitting the prevailing opinion to be otherwise, to think that, in a doubtful cause, they should adhere to the general moral rule in case of doubt, and refuse their personal service. This would evidently be impracticable, and ultimately subversive of political society. It, however, denotes the extreme scrupulosity of his mind. One might smile at another proof of this, where he determines that the hangman, before the performance of his duty, should satisfy himself as to the justice of the sentence.[d]

Rights in war.

127. The rights of war, that is, of commencing hostility, have thus far been investigated with a comprehensiveness that has sometimes almost hidden the subject. We come now, in the third book, to rights in war. Whatever may be done in war is permitted either by the law of nature or that of nations. Grotius begins with the first. The means morally, though not physically, necessary to attain a lawful end are themselves lawful; a proposition which he seems to understand relatively to the rights of others, not to the absolute moral quality of actions; distinctions which are apt to embarrass him. We have, therefore, a right to employ force against an enemy, though it may be the cause of suffering to innocent persons. The principles of natural law authorise us to prevent neutrals from furnishing an enemy with the supplies of war, or with anything else essential for his resistance to our just demands

[c] C. 25. [d] C. 26.

of redress, such as provisions in a state of siege. And it is remarkable that he refers this latter question to natural law, because he had not found any clear decision of it by the positive law of nations.[e]

Use of deceit.

128. In acting against an enemy force is the nature of war. But it may be inquired whether deceit is not also a lawful means of success? The practice of nations and the authority of most writers seem to warrant it. Grotius dilates on different sorts of artifice, and, after admitting the lawfulness of such as deceive by indications, comes to the question of words equivocal or wholly false. This he first discusses on the general moral principle of veracity, more prolixly, and with more deference to authority, than would suit a modern reader; yet this basis is surely indispensable for the support of any decision in public casuistry. The right, however, of employing falsehood towards an enemy, which he generally admits, does not extend to promises, which are always to be kept, whether express or implied, especially when confirmed by oath. And more greatness of mind, as well as more Christian simplicity, would be shown by abstaining wholly from falsehood in war. The law of nature does not permit us to tempt any one to do that which in him would be criminal, as to assassinate his sovereign, or to betray his trust. But we have a right to make use of his voluntary offers.[f]

Rules and customs of nations. Reprisals.

129. Grotius now proceeds from the consideration of natural law or justice to that of the general customs of mankind, in which, according to him, the arbitrary law of nations consists. By this, in the first place, though naturally no one is answerable for another, it has been established that the property of every citizen is, as it were, mortgaged for the liabilities of the state to which he belongs. Hence, if justice is refused to us by the sovereign, we have a right to indemnification out of the property of his subjects. This is commonly called reprisals; and it is a right which every private person would enjoy, were it not for the civil laws of most countries, which compel him to obtain the authorisation of his own sovereign, or

[e] L. iii. c. 1. [f] Id.

of some tribunal. By an analogous right the subjects of a foreign state have sometimes been seized in return for one of our own subjects unjustly detained by their government.[g]

Declarations of war.

130. A regular war, by the law of nations, can only be waged between political communities. Wherever there is a semblance of civil justice and fixed law, such a community exists, however violent may be its actions. But a body of pirates or robbers are not one. Absolute independence, however, is not required for the right of war. A formal declaration of war, though not necessary by the law of nature, has been rendered such by the usage of civilised nations. But it is required even by the former, that we should demand reparation for an injury, before we seek redress by force. A declaration of war may be conditional or absolute; and it has been established as a ratification of regular hostilities, that they may not be confounded with the unwarranted acts of private men. No interval of time is required for their commencement after declaration.[h]

Rights by law of nations over enemies.

131. All is lawful during war, in one sense of the word, which by the law and usage of nations is dispunishable. And this, in formal hostilities, is as much the right of one side as of the other. The subjects of our enemy, whether active on his side or not, become liable to these extreme rights of slaughter and pillage; but it seems that, according to the law of nations, strangers should be exempted from them, unless by remaining in the country they serve his cause. Women, children, and prisoners may be put to death; quarter or capitulation for life refused. On the other hand, if the law of nations is less strict in this respect than that of nature, it forbids some things which naturally might be allowable means of defence, as the poisoning an enemy, or the wells from which he is to drink. The assassination of an enemy is not contrary to the law of nations, unless by means of traitors, and even this is held allowable against a rebel or robber, who are not protected by the rules of formal war. But the violation of women is contrary to the law of

[g] C. 2. [h] C. 3.

nations.[i] The rights of war with respect to enemies' property are unlimited, without exception even of churches or sepulchral monuments, sparing always the bodies of the dead.[k]

132. By the law of nature, Grotius thinks that we acquire a property in as much of the spoil as is sufficient to indemnify us, and to punish the aggressor. But the law of nations carries this much farther, and gives an unlimited property in all that has been acquired by conquest, which mankind are bound to respect. This right commences as soon as the enemy has lost all chance of recovering his losses; which is, in movables, as soon as they are in a place within our sole power. The transfer of property in territories is not so speedy. The goods of neutrals are not thus transferred, when found in the cities or on board the vessels of an enemy. Whether the spoil belongs to the captors, or to their sovereign, is so disputed a question, that it can hardly be reckoned a part of that law of nations, or universal usage, with which Grotius is here concerned. He thinks, however, that what is taken in public enterprises appertains to the state; and that this has been the general practice of mankind. The civil laws of each people may modify this, and have frequently done so.[m]

Prisoners become slaves.

133. Prisoners, by the law of nations, become slaves of the captor, and their posterity also. He may treat them as he pleases with impunity. This has been established by the custom of mankind, in order that the conqueror might be induced to spare the lives of the vanquished. Some theologians deny the slave, even when taken in an unjust war, the right of making his escape, from whom Grotius dissents. But he has not a right, in conscience, to resist the exercise of his master's authority. This law of nations as to the slavery of prisoners, as he admits, has not been universally received, and is now abolished in Christian countries out of respect to religion.[n] But, strictly, as an individual may be reduced into slavery, so may a whole conquered people. It is of course at the discretion of the conqueror to remit a portion of his right, and to leave as much of their liberties and possessions untouched as he pleases.[o]

[i] C. 4. [k] C. 5. [m] C. 6. [n] C. 7. [o] C. 8.

134. The next chapter relates to the right of postliminium, one depending so much on the peculiar fictions of the Roman jurists, that it seems strange to discuss it as part of an universal law of nations at all. Nor does it properly belong to the rights of war, which are between belligerent parties. It is certainly consonant to natural justice that a citizen returning from captivity should be fully restored to every privilege and all property that he had enjoyed at home. In modern Europe there is little to which the jus postliminii can even by analogy be applied. It has been determined, in courts of admiralty, that vessels recaptured after a short time do not revert to their owner. This chapter must be reckoned rather episodical.[p]

Right of postliminium.

135. We have thus far looked only at the exterior right, accorded by the law of nations to all who wage regular hostilities in a just or unjust quarrel. This right is one of impunity alone, but before our own conscience, or the tribunal of moral approbation in mankind, many things hitherto spoken of as lawful must be condemned. In the first place, an unjust war renders all acts of force committed in its prosecution unjust, and binds the aggressor before God to reparation. Every one, general or soldier, is responsible in such cases for the wrong he has commanded or perpetrated. Nor can any one knowingly retain the property of another obtained by such a war, though he should come to the possession of it with good faith.[q] And as nothing can be done, consistently with moral justice, in an unjust war, so, however legitimate our ground for hostilities may be, we are not at liberty to transgress the boundaries of equity and humanity. In this chapter, Grotius, after dilating with a charitable abundance of examples and authorities in favour of clemency in war, even towards those who have been most guilty in provoking it, specially indicates women, old men, and children, as always to be spared, extending this also to all whose occupations are not military. Prisoners are not to be put to death, nor are towns to be refused terms of capitulation. He denies that the law of retaliation, or the necessity of striking terror, or

Moral limitation of rights in war.

[p] C. 9. [q] C. 10.

the obstinate resistance of an enemy, dispenses with the obligation of saving his life. Nothing but some personal crime can warrant the refusal of quarter or the death of a prisoner. Nor is it allowable to put hostages to death.[r]

Moderation required as to spoil.

136. All unnecessary devastation ought to be avoided, such as the destruction of trees, of houses, especially ornamental and public buildings, and of everything not serviceable in war, nor tending to prolong it, as pictures and statues. Temples and sepulchres are to be spared for the same or even stronger reasons. Though it is not the object of Grotius to lay down any political maxims, he cannot refrain in this place from pointing out several considerations of expediency, which should induce us to restrain the licence of arms within the limits of natural law.[s] There is no right by nature to more booty, strictly speaking, than is sufficient for our indemnity, wherein are included the expenses of the war. And the property of innocent persons, being subjects of our enemies, is only liable in failure of those who are primarily aggressors.[t]

And as to prisoners.

137. The persons of prisoners are only liable, in strict moral justice, so far as is required for satisfaction of our injury. The slavery into which they may be reduced ought not to extend farther than an obligation of perpetual servitude in return for maintenance. The power over slaves by the law of nature is far short of what the arbitrary law of nations permits, and does not give a right of exacting too severe labour, or of inflicting punishment beyond desert. The peculium, or private acquisitions of a slave by economy or donation, ought to be reckoned his property. Slaves, however, captured in a just war, though one in which they have had no concern, are not warranted in conscience to escape and recover their liberty. But the children of such slaves are not in servitude by the law of nature, except so far as they have been obliged to their master for subsistence in infancy. With respect to prisoners, the better course is to let them redeem themselves by a ransom, which ought to be moderate.[u]

138. The acquisition of that sovereignty which was

[r] C. 11. [s] C. 12. [t] C. 13. [u] C. 14.

enjoyed by a conquered people, or by their rulers, is not only legitimate, so far as is warranted by the punishment they have deserved, or by the value of our own loss, but also so far as the necessity of securing ourselves extends. This last is what is often unsafe to remit out of clemency. It is a part of moderation in victory to incorporate the conquered with our own citizens on equal terms, or to leave their independence on reasonable precautions for our own security. If this cannot be wholly conceded, their civil laws and municipal magistracies may be preserved, and, above all, the free exercise of their religion. The interests of conquerors are as much consulted, generally, as their reputation, by such lenient use of their advantages.[x]

Also in conquest.

139. It is consonant to natural justice that we should restore to the original owners all of which they have been despoiled in an unjust war, when it falls into our hands by a lawful conquest, without regard to the usual limits of postliminium. Thus, if an ambitious state comes to be stripped of its usurpations, this should be not for the benefit of the conqueror, but of the ancient possessors. Length of time, however, will raise the presumption of abandonment.[y] Nothing should be taken in war from neutral states, except through necessity and with compensation. The most ordinary case is that of the passage of troops. The neutral is bound to strict impartiality in a war of doubtful justice.[z] But it seems to be the opinion of Grotius, that by the law of nature, every one, even a private man, may act in favour of the innocent party as far as the rights of war extend, except that he cannot appropriate to himself the possessions of the enemy; that right being one founded on indemnification. But civil and military laws have generally restrained this to such as obey the express order of their government.[a]

And in restitution to right owners.

140. The licence of war is restrained either by the laws of nature and nations, which have been already discussed, or by particular engagement. The obligation of promises extends to enemies, who are still parts of the great society of mankind. Faith is to be kept even with tyrants, robbers, and

Promises to enemies and pirates.

[x] C. 15. [y] C. 16. [z] C. 17. [a] C. 19.

pirates. He here again adverts to the case of a promise made under an unjust compulsion; and possibly his reasoning on the general principle is not quite put in the most satisfactory manner. It would now be argued that the violation of engagements towards the worst of mankind, who must be supposed to have some means of self-defence, on account of which we propose to treat with them, would produce a desperation among men in similar circumstances injurious to society. Or it might be urged, that men do not lose by their crimes a right to the performance of all engagements, especially when they have fulfilled their own share in them, but only of such as involve a positive injustice towards the other party. In this place he repeats his former doctrine, that the most invalid promise may be rendered binding by the addition of an oath. It follows, from the general rule, that a prince is bound by his engagements to rebel subjects; above all, if they have had the precaution to exact his oath. And thus a change in the constitution of a monarchy may legitimately take place, and it may become mixed instead of absolute by the irrevocable concession of the sovereign. The rule, that promises made under an unjust compulsion are not obligatory, has no application in a public and regular war.[b] Barbeyrac remarks on this, that if a conqueror, like Alexander, subdues an unoffending people with no specious pretext at all, he does not perceive why they should be more bound in conscience to keep the promises of obedience they may have been compelled to enter into, than if he had been an ordinary bandit. And this remark shows us, that the celebrated problem in casuistry, as to the obligation of compulsory promises, has far more important consequences than the payment of a petty sum to a robber. In two cases, however, Grotius holds that we are dispensed from keeping an engagement towards an enemy. One of these is, when it has been conditional, and the other party has not fulfilled his part of the convention. This is of course obvious, and can only be open to questions as to the precedence of the condition.

[b] C. 19, § 11. There seems, as has been intimated above, to be some inconsistency in the doctrine of Grotius with respect to the general obligation of such promises, which he maintains in the second book; and now, as far as I collect his meaning, denies by implication.

The other case is where we retain what is due to us by way of compensation, notwithstanding our promise. This is permissible in certain instances.[c]

141. The obligation of treaties of peace depends on their being concluded by the authority which, according to the constitution of the state, is sovereign for this purpose. Kings who do not possess a patrimonial sovereignty cannot alienate any part of their dominions without the consent of the nation or its representative; they must even have the consent of the city or province which is thus to be transferred. In patrimonial kingdoms, the sovereign may alienate the whole, but not always a part, at pleasure. He seems, however, to admit an ultimate right of sovereignty, or *dominium eminens*, by which all states may dispose of the property of their subjects, and consequently alienate it for the sake of a great advantage, but subject to the obligation of granting them an indemnity. He even holds that the community is naturally bound to indemnify private subjects for the losses they sustain in war, though this right of reparation may be taken away by civil laws. The right of alienation by a treaty of peace is only questionable between the sovereign and his subjects; foreign states may presume its validity in their own favour.[d]

Treaties concluded by competent authority.

142. Treaties of peace are generally founded on one of two principles; that the parties shall return to the condition wherein they were before the commencement of hostilities, or that they shall retain what they possess at their conclusion. The last is to be presumed in a case of doubtful interpretation. A treaty of peace extinguishes all public grounds of quarrel, whether known to exist or not, but does not put an end to the claims of private men subsisting before the war, the extinguishment of which is never to be presumed. The other rules of interpretation which he lays down are, as usual with him, derived rather from natural equity than the practice of mankind, though with no neglect or scorn of the latter. He maintains the right of giving an asylum to the banished, but not of receiving large bodies of men who abandon their country.[e]

Matters relating to them.

[c] C. 19. [d] C. 20. [e] Id.

143. The decision of lot may be adopted in some cases, in order to avoid a war, wherein we have little chance of resisting an enemy. But that of single combat, according to Grotius's opinion, though not repugnant to the law of nature, is incompatible with Christianity; unless in the case where a party, unjustly assailed, has no other means of defence. Arbitration by a neutral power is another method of settling differences, and in this we are bound to acquiesce. Wars may also be terminated by implicit submission or by capitulation. The rights which this gives to a conqueror have been already discussed. He concludes this chapter with a few observations upon hostages and pledges. With respect to the latter he holds that they may be reclaimed after any lapse of time, unless there is a presumption of tacit abandonment.[f]

Truces and conventions.

144. A truce is an interval of war, and does not require a fresh declaration at its close. No act of hostility is lawful during its continuance; the infringement of this rule by either party gives the other a right to take up arms without delay. Safe conducts are to be construed liberally, rejecting every meaning of the words which does not reach their spirit. Thus a safe conduct to go to a place implies the right of returning unmolested. The ransom of prisoners ought to be favoured.[g] A state is bound by the conventions in war made by its officers, provided they are such as may reasonably be presumed to lie within their delegated authority, or such as they have a special commission to warrant, known to the other contracting party. A state is also bound by its tacit ratification in permitting the execution of any part of such a treaty, though in itself not obligatory, and also by availing itself of any advantage thereby. Grotius dwells afterwards on many distinctions relating to this subject, which however, as far as they do not resolve themselves into the general principle, are to be considered on the ground of positive regulation.[h]

Those of private persons.

145. Private persons, whether bearing arms or not, are as much bound as their superiors by the engagements they contract with an enemy. This applies particularly to the parole of a prisoner.

[f] C. 20. [g] C. 21. [h] C. 22.

The engagement not to serve again, though it has been held null by some jurists, as contrary to our obligation towards our country, is valid. It has been a question, whether the state ought to compel its citizens to keep their word towards the enemy? The better opinion is that it should do so; and this has been the practice of the most civilized nations.[l] Those who put themselves under the protection of a state engage to do nothing hostile towards it. Hence such actions as that of Zopyrus, who betrayed Babylon under the guise of a refugee, are not excusable. Several sorts of tacit engagements are established by the usage of nations, as that of raising a white flag in token of a desire to suspend arms. These are exceptions from the general rule which authorises deceit in war.[k] In the concluding chapter of the whole treatise Grotius briefly exhorts all states to preserve good faith and to seek peace at all times, upon the mild principles of Christianity.[m]

Objections to Grotius made by Paley unreasonable.

146. If the reader has had the patience to make his way through the abstract of Grotius, De Jure Belli, that we have placed before him, he will be fully prepared to judge of the criticisms made upon this treatise by Paley and Dugald Stewart. "The writings of Grotius and Puffendorf," says the former, "are of too forensic a cast, too much mixed up with civil law and with the jurisprudence of Germany, to answer precisely the design of a system of ethics, the direction of private consciences in the general conduct of human life." But it was not the intention of Grotius (we are not at present concerned with Puffendorf) to furnish a system of ethics; nor did any one ever hold forth his treatise in this light. Upon some most important branches of morality he has certainly dwelt so fully as to answer the purpose of "directing the private conscience in the conduct of life." The great aim, however, of his inquiries was to ascertain the principles of natural right applicable to independent communities.

147. Paley, it must be owned, has a more specious ground of accusation in his next charge against Grotius for the profusion of classical quotations. "To any thing more than ornament they can make no claim. To pro-

[l] C. 23. [k] C. 24. [m] C. 25.

pose them as serious arguments, gravely to attempt to establish or fortify a moral duty by the testimony of a Greek or Roman poet, is to trifle with the reader, or rather take off his attention from all just principles in morals."

148. A late eminent writer has answered this from the text of Grotius, but in more eloquent language than Grotius could have enployed. "Another answer," says Mackintosh, "is due to some of those who have criticised Grotius, and that answer might be given in the words of Grotius himself. He was not of such a stupid and servile cast of mind, as to quote the opinions of poets or orators, of historians and philosophers, as those of judges from whose decision there was no appeal. He quotes them, as he tells us himself, as witnesses, whose conspiring testimony, mightily strengthened and confirmed by their discordance on almost every other subject, is a conclusive proof of the unanimity of the whole human race on the great rules of duty and the fundamental principles of morals. On such matters, poets and orators are the most unexceptionable of all witnesses; for they address themselves to the general feelings and sympathies of mankind; they are neither warped by system, nor perverted by sophistry; they can attain none of their objects, they can neither please nor persuade, if they dwell on moral sentiments not in unison with those of their readers. No system of moral philosophy can surely disregard the general feelings of human nature, and the according judgment of all ages and nations. But where are these feelings and that judgment recorded and preserved? In those very writings which Grotius is gravely blamed for having quoted. The usages and laws of nations, the events of history, the opinions of philosophers, the sentiments of orators and poets, as well as the observation of common life, are, in truth, the materials out of which the science of morality is formed; and those who neglect them are justly chargeable with a vain attempt to philosophise without regard to fact and experience, the sole foundation of all true philosophy." [a]

Reply of Mackintosh.

149. The passage in Grotius which has suggested this

[a] Mackintosh, Discourse on the Study of the Law of Nature and Nations, p. 23 (edit. 1828).

noble defence will be found above. It will be seen on reference to it, that he proposes to quote the poets and orators cautiously, and rather as ornamental than authoritative supports of his argument. In no one instance, I believe, will he be found to "enforce a moral duty," as Paley imagines, by their sanction. It is nevertheless to be fairly acknowledged, that he has sometimes gone a good deal farther than the rules of a pure taste allow in accumulating quotations from the poets, and that, in an age so impatient of prolixity as the last, this has stood much in the way of the general reader.

Censures of Stewart.

150. But these criticisms of Paley contain very trifling censure in comparison with the unbounded scorn poured on Grotius by Dugald Stewart, in his first Dissertation on the Progress of Philosophy. I have never read these pages of an author whom I had unfortunately not the opportunity of personally knowing, but whose researches have contributed so much to the delight and advantage of mankind, without pain and surprise. It would be too much to say that, in several parts of this Dissertation, by no means in the first class of Stewart's writings, other proofs of precipitate judgment do not occur; but that he should have spoken of a work so distinguished by fame, and so effective, as he himself admits, over the public mind of Europe, in terms of unmingled depreciation, without having done more than glanced at some of its pages, is an extraordinary symptom of that tendency towards prejudices, hasty but inveterate, of which this eminent man seems to have been not a little susceptible. The attack made by Stewart on those who have taken the law of nature and nations as their theme, and especially on Grotius, who stands forward in that list, is protracted for several pages, and it would be tedious to examine every sentence in succession. Were I to do so, it is not, in my opinion, an exaggeration to say that almost every successive sentence would lie open to criticism. But let us take the chief heads of accusation.

Answer to them.

151. "Grotius," we are told, "under the title, De Jure Belli ac Pacis, has aimed at a complete system of natural law. Condillac says, that he chose the title in order to excite a more general curiosity." The total erroneousness of this passage must

appear to every one who has seen what Grotius declares to have been his primary object. He chose the title because it came nearest to express that object—the ascertainment of laws binding on independent communities in their mutual relations, whether of war or peace. But as it was not possible to lay down any solid principles of international right till the notions of right of sovereignty, of dominion over things and persons, of war itself, were clearly established, it became indispensable to build upon a more extensive basis than later writers on the law of nations, who found the labour performed to their hands, have thought necessary. All ethical philosophy, even in those parts which bear a near relation to jurisprudence and to international law, was in the age of Grotius a chaos of incoherent and arbitrary notions, brought in from various sources; from the ancient schools, from the Scriptures, the fathers, the canons, the casuistical theologians, the rabbins, the jurists, as well as from the practice and sentiments of every civilized nation, past and present, the Jews, the Greeks and Romans, the trading republics, the chivalrous kingdoms of modern Europe. If Grotius has not wholly disentangled himself from this bewildering maze, through which he painfully traces his way by the lights of reason and revelation, he has at least cleared up much, and put others still oftener in the right path, where he has not been able to follow it. Condillac, as here quoted by Stewart, has anticipated Paley's charge against Grotius, of labouring to support his conclusions by the authority of others, and of producing a long string of quotations to prove the most indubitable propositions. In what degree this very exaggerated remark is true we have already seen. But it should be kept in mind, that neither the disposition of the age in which Grotius lived, nor the real necessity of illustrating every part of his inquiries by the precedent usages of mankind, would permit him to treat of moral philosophy as of the abstract theorems of geometry. If his erudition has sometimes obstructed or misled him, which perhaps has not so frequently happened as these critics assume, it is still true that a contemptuous ignorance of what has been done or has been taught, such as belonged to the school of Condillac and to that of Paley, does not very well

qualify the moral philosopher for inquiry into the principles which are to regulate human nature.

152. "Among the different ideas," Stewart observes, "which have been formed of natural jurisprudence, one of the most common, especially in the earlier systems, supposes its object to be, to lay down those rules of justice which would be binding on men living in a social state without any positive institutions; or, as it is frequently called by writers on this subject, living together in a state of nature. This idea of the province of jurisprudence seems to have been uppermost in the mind of Grotius in various parts of his treatise." After some conjectures on the motives which led the early writers to take this view of national law, and admitting that the rules of justice are in every case precise and indispensable, and that their authority is altogether independent of that of the civil magistrate, he deems it "obviously absurd to spend much time in speculating about the principles of this natural law, as applicable to men before the institution of governments." It may possibly be as absurd as he thinks it. But where has Grotius shown that this condition of natural society was uppermost in his thoughts? Of the state of nature, as it existed among individuals before the foundation of any civil institutions, he says no more than was requisite in order to exhibit the origin of those rights which spring from property and government. But that he has, in some part especially of his second book, dwelt upon the rules of justice binding on men subsequent to the institution of property, but independently of positive laws, is most certain; nor is it possible for any one to do otherwise who does not follow Hobbes in confounding moral with legal obligation; a theory to which Mr. Stewart was of all men the most averse.

153. Natural jurisprudence is a term that is not always taken in the same sense. It seems to be of English origin; nor am I certain, though my memory may deceive me, that I have ever met with it in Latin or in French. Strictly speaking, as jurisprudence means the science of law, and is especially employed with respect to the Roman, natural jurisprudence must be the science of morals, or the law of nature. It is, therefore, in this sense, co-extensive with ethics, and comprehends the rules of temperance, liberality, and benevolence, as

much as those of justice. Stewart, however, seems to consider this idea of jurisprudence as an arbitrary extension of the science derived from the technical phraseology of the Roman law. "Some vague notion of this kind," he says, "has manifestly given birth to many of the digressions of Grotius." It may have been seen by the analysis of the entire treatise of Grotius, above given, that none of his digressions, if such they are to be called, have originated in any vague notion of an identity, or proper analogy, between the strict rules of justice and those of the other virtues. The Aristotelian division of justice into commutative and distributive, which Grotius has adopted, might seem in some respect to bear out this supposition; but it is evident, from the context of Stewart's observations, that he was referring only to the former species, or justice in its more usual sense, the observance of perfect rights, whose limits may be accurately determined, and whose violation may be redressed.

154. Natural jurisprudence has another sense imposed upon it by Adam Smith. According to this sense, its object, in the words of Stewart, is "to ascertain the general principles of justice which ought to be recognised in every municipal code, and to which it ought to be the aim of every legislator to accommodate his institutions." Grotius, in Smith's opinion, was "the first who attempted to give the world anything like a system of those principles which ought to run through, and to be the foundation of, the laws of all nations; and his treatise on the laws of peace and war, with all its imperfections, is, perhaps, at this day the most complete book that has yet been given on the subject."

155. The first, probably, in modern times, who conceived the idea of an universal jurisprudence was Lord Bacon. He places among the desiderata of political science the province of universal justice or the sources of law. "Id nunc agatur, ut fontes justitiæ et utilitatis publicæ petantur, et in singulis juris partibus character quidam et idea justi exhibeatur, ad quem particularium regnorum et rerumpublicarum leges probare, atque inde emendationem moliri, quisque, cui hæc cordi erit et curæ, possit."* The maxims which follow are an admirable

* De Augmentis, lib. viii.

illustration of the principles which should regulate the enactment and expression of laws, as well as of much that should guide, in a general manner, the decision of courts of justice. They touch very slightly, if at all, any subject which Grotius has handled; but certainly come far closer to natural jurisprudence, in the sense of Smith, inasmuch as they contain principles which have no limitation to the circumstances of particular societies. These maxims of Bacon, and all others that seem properly to come within the province of jurisprudence in this sense, which is now become not uncommon, the science of universal *law*, are resolvable partly into those of natural justice, partly into those of public expediency. Little, however, could be objected against the admission of universal jurisprudence, in this sense, among the sciences. But if it is meant that any systematic science, whether by the name of jurisprudence or legislation, can be laid down as to the principles which ought to determine the institutions of all nations, or that, in other words, the laws of each separate community ought to be regulated by any universal standard, in matters not depending upon eternal justice, we must demur to receiving so very disputable a proposition. It is probable that Adam Smith had no thoughts of asserting it; yet his language is not very clear, and he seems to have assigned some object to Grotius distinct from the establishment of natural and international law. "Whether this was," says Stewart, "or was not, the leading object of Grotius, it is not material to decide; but if this was his object, it will not be disputed that he has executed his design in a very desultory manner, and that he often seems to have lost sight of it altogether, in the midst of those miscellaneous speculations on political, ethical, and historical subjects, which form so large a portion of his treatise, and which so frequently succeed each other without any apparent connexion or common aim."

156. The unfairness of this passage it is now hardly incumbent upon me to point out. The reader has been enabled to answer that no political speculation will be found in the volume De Jure Belli ac Pacis, unless the disquisition on the origin of human society is thus to be denominated; that the instances continually adduced from history are always in illustration of the main argument;

and that what are here called ethical speculations are in fact the real subject of the book, since it avowedly treats of obligations on the conscience of mankind, and especially of their rulers. Whether the various topics in this treatise "succeed each other without apparent connexion or common aim," may best be seen by the titles of the chapters, or by the analysis of their contents. There are certainly a very few of these that have little in common, even by deduction or analogy, with international law, though scarce any, I think, which do not rise naturally out of the previous discussion. Exuberances of this kind are so common in writers of great reputation that where they do not transgress more than Grotius has done, the censure of irrelevancy has been always reckoned hyper-critical.

157. "The Roman system of jurisprudence," Mr. Stewart proceeds, "seems to have warped in no inconsiderable degree the notions of Grotius on all questions connected with the theory of legislation, and to have diverted his attention from that philosophical idea of law so well expressed by Cicero: 'Non a prætoris edicto, neque a duodecim tabulis, sed penitus ex intima philosophia hauriendam juris disciplinam.' In this idolatry, indeed, of the Roman law, he has not gone so far as some of his commentators, who have affirmed that it is only a different name for the law of nature; but that his partiality for his professional pursuits has often led him to overlook the immense difference between the state of society in ancient and modern Europe will not, I believe, now be disputed." It is probable that it will be disputed by all who are acquainted with Grotius. The questions connected with the theory of legislation which he has discussed are chiefly those relating to the acquisition and alienation of property in some of the earlier chapters of the second book. That he has not in these disquisitions adopted all the determinations of the Roman jurists is certain; whether he may in any particular instance have adhered to them more than the best theory of legislation would admit is a matter of variable opinion. But Stewart, wholly unacquainted with the civil laws, appears to have much underrated their value. In most questions of private right they form the great basis of every modern legislation; and as all civilised nations, including our own, have derived a large portion of their jurisprudence from

this source, so even the theorists, who would disdain to be ranked as disciples of Paullus and Papinian, are not ashamed to be their plagiaries.

158. It has been thrown out against Grotius by Rousseau[p]—and the same insinuation may be found in other writers—that he confounds the fact with the right, and the duties of nations with their practice. How little foundation there is for this calumny is sufficiently apparent to our readers. Scrupulous, as a casuist, to an excess hardly reconcilable with the security and welfare of good men, he was the first, beyond the precincts of the confessional or the church, to pour the dictates of a saint-like innocence into the ears of princes. It is true that in recognising the legitimacy of slavery, and in carrying too far the principles of obedience to government, he may be thought to have deprived mankind of some of their security against injustice; but this is exceedingly different from a sanction to it. An implicit deference to what he took for divine truth was the first axiom in the philosophy of Grotius. If he was occasionally deceived in his application of this principle, it was but according to the notions of his age; but those who wholly reject the authority must of course want a common standard by which his speculations in moral philosophy can be reconciled with their own.

Grotius vindicated against Rousseau.

159. I must now quit a subject upon which, perhaps, I have dwelt too long. The high fame of Dugald Stewart has rendered it a sort of duty to vindicate from his hasty censures the memory of one still more illustrious in reputation, till the lapse of time and the fickleness of literary fashion conspired with the popularity of his assailants to magnify his defects, and meet the very name of his famous treatise with a kind of scornful ridicule. That Stewart had never read much of Grotius, or even gone over the titles of his chapters, is very manifest; and he displays a similar ignorance as to the other writers on natural law, who for more than a century afterwards, as he admits himself, exercised a great influence over the studies of Europe. I have commented upon very few, comparatively, of the slips which occur in his pages on this subject.

[p] Contrat Social.

160. The arrangement of Grotius has been blamed as unscientific by a more friendly judge, Sir James Mackintosh. Though I do not feel very strongly the force of his objections, it is evident that the law of nature might have been established on its basis, before the author passed forward to any disquisition upon its reference to independent communities. This would have changed a good deal the principal object that Grotius had in view, and brought his treatise, in point of method, very near to that of Puffendorf. But assuming, as he did, the authority recognised by those for whom he wrote, that of the Scriptures, he was less inclined to dwell on the proof which reason affords for a natural law, though fully satisfied of its validity even without reference to the Supreme Being.

His arrangement.

161. The real faults of Grotius, leading to erroneous determinations, seem to be rather an unnecessary scrupulousness, and somewhat of old theological prejudice, from which scarce any man in his age, who was not wholly indifferent to religion, had liberated himself. The notes of Barbeyrac seldom fail to correct this leaning. Several later writers on international law have treated his doctrine of an universal law of nations founded on the agreement of mankind as an empty chimera of his invention. But if he only meant by this the tacit consent, or, in other words, the general custom of civilised nations, it does not appear that there is much difference between his theory and that of Wolf or Vattel.

His defects.

CHAPTER V.

HISTORY OF POETRY FROM 1600 TO 1650.

Sect. I.—On Italian Poetry.

Characters of the Poets of the Seventeenth Century — Sometimes too much depreciated — Marini — Tassoni — Chiabrera.

1. At the close of the sixteenth century, few remained in Italy to whom posterity has assigned a considerable reputation for their poetry. But the ensuing period has stood lower, for the most part, in the opinion of later ages than any other since the revival of letters. The *seicentisti*, the writers of the seventeenth century, were stigmatised in modern criticism, till the word has been associated with nothing but false taste and everything that should be shunned and despised. Those who had most influence in leading the literary judgment of Italy went back, some almost exclusively to the admiration of Petrarch and his contemporaries, some to the various writers who cultivated their native poetry in the sixteenth century. Salvini is of the former class, Muratori of the latter.[a]

Low estimation of the seicentisti.

2. The last age, that is, the concluding twenty years of the eighteenth century, brought with it, in many respects, a change of public sentiment in Italy. A masculine turn of thought, an expanded grasp of philosophy, a thirst, ardent to excess, for great exploits and noble praise, has distinguished the Italian people of the last fifty years from their progenitors of several preceding generations. It is possible that the enhanced relative importance of the Lombards in their national literature may have not been without its influence in rendering the public taste less fastidious as

Not quite so great as formerly.

[a] Muratori, Della Perfetta Poesia, is one of the best books of criticism in the Italian language; in the second volume are contained some remarks by Salvini, a bigoted Florentine.

to purity of language, less fine in that part of æsthetic discernment which relates to the grace and felicity of expression, while it became also more apt to demand originality, nervousness, and the power of exciting emotion. The writers of the seventeenth century may, in some cases, have gained by this revolution; but those of the preceding ages, especially the Petrarchists whom Bembo had led, have certainly lost ground in national admiration.

Praise of them by Rubbi.

3. Rubbi, editor of the voluminous collection called Parnaso Italiano, had the courage to extol the "seicentisti" for their genius and fancy, and even to place them, in all but style, above their predecessors. "Give them," he says, "but grace and purity, take from them their capricious exaggerations, their perpetual and forced metaphors, you will think Marini the first poet of Italy, and his followers, with their fulness of imagery and personification, will make you forget their monotonous predecessors. I do not advise you to make a study of the seicentisti; it would spoil your style, perhaps your imagination; I only tell you that they were the true Italian poets; they wanted a good style, it is admitted, but they were so far from wanting genius and imagination, that these perhaps tended to impair their style." [b]

Also by Salfi.

4. It is probable that every native critic would think some parts of this panegyric, and especially the strongly hyperbolical praise of Marini, carried too far. But I am not sure that we should be wrong in agreeing with Rubbi, that there is as much *catholic* poetry, by which I mean that which is good in all ages and countries, in some of the minor productions of the seventeenth as in those of the sixteenth age. The sonnets, especially, have more individuality and more meaning. In this, however, I should wish to include the latter portion of the seventeenth century. Salfi, a writer of more taste and judgment than Rubbi, has recently taken the same side, and remarked the superior originality, the more determined individuality, the greater variety of subjects, above all, what the Italians

[b] Parnaso Italiano, vol. xli. (Avvertimento.) Rubbi, however, gives but two out of his long collection in fifty volumes, to the writers of the seventeenth century.

now most value, the more earnest patriotism of the later poets.[c] Those immediately before us, belonging to the first half of the century, are less numerous than in the former age; the sonnetteers especially have produced much less; and in the collections of poetry, even in that of Rubbi, notwithstanding his eulogy, they take up very little room. Some, however, have obtained a durable renown, and are better known in Europe than any, except the Tassos, that flourished in the last fifty years of the golden age.

Adone of Marini.

5. It must be confessed that the praise of a masculine genius, either in thought or language, cannot be bestowed on the poet of the seventeenth century whom his contemporaries most admired, Giovanni Battista Marini. He is, on the contrary, more deficient than all the rest in such qualities, and is indebted to the very opposite characteristics for the sinister influence which he exerted on the public taste. He was a Neapolitan by birth, and gave to the world his famous Adone in 1623. As he was then fifty-four years old, it may be presumed, from the character of the poem, that it was in great part written long before; and he had already acquired a considerable reputation by his other works. The Adone was received with an unbounded and ill-judging approbation: ill-judging in a critical sense, because the faults of this poem are incapable of defence; but not unnatural, as many parallel instances of the world's enthusiasm have shown. No one had before carried the corruption of taste so far; extravagant metaphors, false thoughts, and conceits on equivocal words, are very frequent in the Adone; and its author stands accountable in some measure for his imitators, who during more than half a century looked up to Marini with emulous folly, and frequently succeeded in greater deviations from pure taste without his imagination and elegance.

Its character.

6. The Adone is one of the longest poems in the world, containing more than 45,000 lines. He has shown some ingenuity in filling up the canvas of so slight a story by additional incidents from his own invention, and by long episodes allusive to the times in which he lived. But the subject, expanded so

[c] Salfi, Hist. Litt. de l'Italie (continuation de Ginguéné), vol. xii. p. 424.

interminably, is essentially destitute of any superior interest, and fit only for an enervated people, barren of high thoughts and high actions, the Italy, notwithstanding some bright exceptions, of the seventeenth century. If we could overcome this essential source of weariness, the Adone has much to delight our fancy and our ear. Marini is, more than any other poet, the counterpart of Ovid; his fertility of imagination, his ready accumulation of circumstances and expressions, his easy flow of language, his harmonious versification, are in no degree inferior; his faults are also the same; for in Ovid we have all the overstrained figures and false conceits of Marini. But the Italian poet was incapable of imitating the truth to nature and depth of feeling which appear in many parts of his ancient prototype, nor has he as vigorous an expression. Never does Marini rise to any high pitch; few stanzas, perhaps, are remembered by natives for their beauty, but many are graceful and pleasing, all are easy and musical.[d] "Perhaps," says Salfi, "with the exception of Ariosto, no one has been more a poet by nature than he;"[e] a praise, however, which may justly seem hyperbolical to those who recall their attention to the highest attributes of poetry.

And popularity.

7. Marini belongs to that very numerous body of poets who, delighted with the spontaneity of their ideas, never reject any that arise; their parental love forbids all preference, and an impartial law of gavelkind shares their page among all the offspring of their brain. Such were Ovid and Lucan, and

[d] Five stanzas of the seventh canto, being a choral song of satyrs and bacchanti, are thrown into *versi sdruccioli*, and have been accounted by the Italians an extraordinary effort of skill, from the difficulty of sustaining a metre which is not strong in rhymes with so much spirit and ease. Each verse also is divided into three parts, themselves separately *sdruccioli*, though not rhyming. One stanza will make this clear:—

Hor d' ellera s' adornino, e di pampino
I giovani, e le vergini più tenere,
E gemine nell' anima si stampino
L' imagine di Libero, e di Venere.
Tutti ardano, s' accendano, ed avampino,
Qual Semele, ch' al folgore fù cenere;
E cantino a Cupidine, ed a Bromio,
Con numeri poetici un encomio.

Cant. vii. st. 118.

Though this metrical skill may not be of the highest merit in poetry, it is no more to be slighted than facility of touch in a painter.

[e] Vol. xiv. p. 147. The character of Marini's poetry which this critic has given, is in general very just, and in good taste. Corniani (vii. 123) has also done justice, and no more than justice, to Marini. Tiraboschi has hardly said enough in his favour; and as to Muratori, it was his business to restore and maintain a purity of taste, which rendered him severe towards the excesses of such poets as Marini.

such have been some of our own poets of great genius and equal fame. Their fertility astonishes the reader, and he enjoys for a time the abundant banquet; but satiety is too sure a consequence, and he returns with less pleasure to a second perusal. The censure of criticism falls invariably, and sometimes too harshly, on this sort of poetry; it is one of those cases where the critic and the world are most at variance; but the world is apt, in this instance, to reverse its own judgment, and yield to the tribunal it had rejected. "To Marini," says an eminent Italian writer, "we owe the lawlessness of composition: the ebullition of his genius, incapable of restraint, burst through every bulwark, enduring no rule but that of his own humour, which was all for sonorous verse, bold and ingenious thoughts, fantastical subjects, a phraseology rather Latin than Italian, and in short aimed at pleasing by a false appearance of beauty. It would almost pass belief how much this style was admired, were it not so near our own time that we hear as it were the echo of its praise; nor did Dante, or Petrarch, or Tasso, or perhaps any of the ancient poets, obtain in their lives so much applause."[f] But Marini, who died in 1625, had not time to enjoy much of this glory. The length of this poem, and the diffuseness which produces its length, render it nearly impossible to read through the Adone; and it wants that inequality which might secure a preference to detached portions. The story of Psyche in the fourth canto may perhaps be as fair a specimen of Marini as could be taken; it is not easy to destroy the beauty of that fable, nor was he unfitted to relate it with grace and interest; but he has displayed all the blemishes of his own style.[g]

8. The Secchia Rapita of Alessandro Tassoni, published at Paris in 1622, is better known in Europe than might have been expected from its local subject, idio-

[f] Crescimbeni, ii. 470.

[g] The Adone has been frequently charged with want of decency. It was put to the ban of the Roman inquisition, and grave writers have deemed it necessary to protest against its licentiousness. Andrès even goes so far as to declare, that no one can read the Adone whose heart as well as taste is not corrupt; and that, both for the sake of good morals and good poetry, it should be taken out of every one's hands. After such invectives, it may seem extraordinary that, though the poem of Marini must by its nature be rather voluptuous, it is by far less open to such an objection than the Orlando Furioso, nor more, I believe, than the Faery Queen. No charge is apt to be made so capriciously as this.

matic style, and unintelligible personalities. It turns, as the title imports, on one of the petty wars, frequent among the Italian cities as late as the beginning of the fourteenth century, wherein the Bolognese endeavoured to recover the bucket of a well, which the citizens of Modena in a prior incursion had carried off. Tassoni, by a poetical anachronism, mixed this with an earlier contest of rather more dignity between the little republics, wherein Enzio, king of Sardinia, a son of Frederic II., had been made prisoner. He has been reckoned by many the inventor, or at least the reproducer in modern times, of the mock-heroic style.[h] Pulci, however, had led the way; and when Tassoni claims originality, it must be in a very limited view of the execution of his poem. He has certainly more of parody than Pulci could have attempted; the great poems of Ariosto and Tasso, especially the latter, supply him with abundant opportunities for this ingenious and lively, but not spiteful, exercise of wit, and he has adroitly seized the ridiculous side of his contemporary Marini. The combat of the cities, it may be observed, is serious enough, however trifling the cause, and has its due proportion of slaughter; but Tassoni, very much in the manner of the Morgante Maggiore, throws an air of ridicule over the whole. The episodes are generally in a still more comic style. A graceful facility and a light humour, which must have been incomparably better understood by his countrymen and contemporaries, make this a very amusing poem. It is exempt from the bad taste of the age; and the few portions where the burlesque tone disappears are versified with much elegance. Perhaps it has not been observed, that the Count de Culagne, one of his most ludicrous characters, bears a certain resemblance to Hudibras, both by his awkward and dastardly appearance as a

Secchia Rapita of Tassoni.

[h] Boileau seems to acknowledge himself indebted to Tassoni for the Lutrin; and Pope may have followed both in the first sketch of the Rape of the Lock, though what he has added is a purely original conception. But in fact the mock-heroic or burlesque style, in a general sense, is so natural, and moreover so common, that it is idle to talk of its inventor. What else is Rabelais, Don Quixote, or, in Italian, the romance of Bertoldo, all older than Tassoni? What else are the popular tales of children, John the Giganticide, and many more? The poem of Tassoni had a very great reputation. Voltaire did it injustice though it was much in his own line.

knight, and by his ridiculous addresses to the lady whom he woos.[i] None, however, will question the originality of Butler.

9. But the poet of whom Italy has, in later times, been far more proud than of Marini or Tassoni was Chiabrera. Of his long life the greater part fell within the sixteenth century; and some of his poems were published before its close; but he has generally been considered as belonging to the present period. Chiabrera is the founder of a school in the lyric poetry of Italy, rendered afterwards more famous by Guidi, which affected the name of Pindaric. It is the Theban lyre which they boast to strike: it is from the fountain of Dirce that they draw their inspiration; and these allusions are as frequent in their verse, as those to Valclusa and the Sorga in the followers of Petrarch. Chiabrera borrowed from Pindar that grandeur of sound, that pomp of epithets, that rich swell of imagery, that unvarying majesty of conception, which distinguish the odes of both poets. He is less frequently harsh or turgid, though the latter blemish has been sometimes observed in him, but wants also the masculine condensation of his prototype; nor does he deviate so frequently, or with so much power of imagination, into such digressions as those which generally shade from our eyes, in a skilful profusion of ornament, the victors of the Grecian games whom Pindar professes to celebrate. The poet of the house of Medici and of other princes of Italy, great at least in their own time, was not so much compelled to desert his immediate subject, as he who was paid for an ode by some wrestler or boxer, who could only become worthy of heroic song by attaching his name to the ancient glories of his native city. The profuse employment of mythological allusions, frigid as it appears at present, was so customary, that we can hardly impute to it much blame; and it seemed peculiarly appropriate to a style which was studiously formed on the Pindaric model.[k] The odes of Chiabrera

Chiabrera.

[i] Cantos X. and XI. It was intended as a ridicule on Marini, but represents a real personage. Salfi, xiii. 147.

[k] Salfi justifies the continual introduction of mythology by the Italian poets, on the ground that it was a part of their national inheritance, associated with the monuments and recollections of their glory. This would be more to the purpose if their mythology had not been almost exclusively Greek. But perhaps all that was of classical antiquity might

are often panegyrical, and his manner was well fitted for that style, though sometimes we have ceased to admire those whom he extols. But he is not eminent for purity of taste, nor, I believe, of Tuscan language; he endeavoured to force the idiom, more than it would bear, by constructions and inversions borrowed from the ancient tongues; and these odes, splendid and noble as they are, bear, in the estimation of critics, some marks of the seventeenth century.[m] The satirical epistles of Chiabrera are praised by Salfi as written in a moral Horatian tone, abounding with his own experience and allusions to his time.[n] But in no other kind of poetry has he been so highly successful as in the lyric; and, though the Grecian robe is never cast away, he imitated Anacreon with as much skill as Pindar. "His lighter odes," says Crescimbeni, "are most beautiful and elegant, full of grace, vivacity, spirit, and delicacy, adorned with pleasing inventions, and differing in nothing but language from those of Anacreon. His dithyrambics I hold incapable of being excelled, all the qualities required in such compositions being united with a certain nobleness of expression which elevates all it touches upon."[o]

10. The greatest lyric poet of Greece was not more the model of Chiabrera than his Roman competitor was of Testi. "Had he been more attentive to the choice of his expression," says Crescimbeni, "he might have earned the name of the Tuscan Horace." The faults of his age are said to be frequently discernible in Testi; but there is, to an ordinary reader, an Horatian elegance, a certain charm of grace and ease in his canzoni, which render them pleasing. One of these, beginning, Ruscelletto orgoglioso, is highly admired by Muratori, the best, perhaps, of the Italian critics, and one not slow to censure any defects of taste. It apparently alludes to some enemy in the court of Modena.[p] The character of Testi was ambitious and restless, his life spent in seeking and partly in enjoying public offices, but terminated in prison. He had taken, says a later writer, Horace for his model; and perhaps like him he wished to appear sometimes a

be blended in their sentiments with the memory of Rome.

[m] Salfi, xii. 250.

[n] Id. xiii. 2012.

[o] Storia della Volgar Poesia, ii. 483.

[p] This canzone is in Mathias, Componimenti Lirici, ii. 198.

stoic, sometimes an epicurean; but he knew not like him how to profit by the lessons either of Zeno or Epicurus, so as to lead a tranquil and independent life.[q]

His followers.

11. The imitators of Chiabrera were generally unsuccessful; they became hyperbolical and exaggerated. The Translation of Pindar by Alessandro Adimari, though not very much resembling the original, has been praised for its own beauty. But these poets are not to be confounded with the Marinists, to whom they are much superior. Ciampoli, whose Rime were published in 1628, may perhaps be the best after Chiabrera.[r] Several obscure epic poems, some of which are rather to be deemed romances, are commemorated by the last historian of Italian literature. Among these is the Conquest of Granada by Graziani, published in 1650. Salfi justly observes that the subject is truly epic; but the poem itself seems to be nothing but a series of episodical intrigues without unity. The style, according to the same writer, is redundant, the similes too frequent and monotonous; yet he prefers it to all the heroic poems which had intervened since that of Tasso.[s]

SECT. II.—ON SPANISH POETRY.

Romances — The Argensolas — Villegas — Gongora, and his School.

The styles of Spanish Poetry.

12. THE Spanish poetry of the sixteenth century might be arranged in three classes. In the first we might place that which was formed in the ancient school, though not always preserving its characteristics; the short trochaic metres, employed in the song or the ballad, altogether national, or aspiring to be such, either in their subjects or in their style. In the second would stand that to which the imitation of the Italians had given rise, the school of Boscan and Garcilasso; and with these we might place also the epic poems, which do not seem to be essentially different from similar productions of Italy. A third and not inconsiderable division, though less extensive than the others, is composed of the poetry of good sense; the di-

[q] Salfi, xii. 281.

[r] Salfi, p. 303. Tiraboschi, xi. 364. Baillet, on the authority of others, speaks less honourably of Ciampoli. N. 1451.

[s] Id. vol. xiii. p. 94—129.

dactic, semi-satirical, Horatian style, of which Mendoza was the founder, and several specimens of which occur in the Parnaso Español of Sedano.

The romances.

13. The romances of the Cid and many others are referred by the most competent judges to the reign of Philip III.[t] These are by no means among the best of Spanish romances, and we should naturally expect that so artificial a style as the imitation of ancient manners and sentiments by poets in wholly a different state of society, though some men of talent might succeed in it, would soon degenerate into an affected mannerism. The Italian style continued to be cultivated; under Philip III., the decline of Spain in poetry, as in arms and national power, was not so striking as afterwards. Several poets belong to the age of that prince, and even that of Philip IV. was not destitute of men of merited reputation.[u] Among the best were two

The brothers Argensola.

brothers, Lupercio and Bartholomew Argensola. These were chiefly distinguished in what I have called the third or Horatian manner of Spanish poetry, though they by no means confined themselves to any peculiar style. "Lupercio," says Bouterwek, "formed his style after Horace with no less assiduity than Luis de Leon; but he did not possess the soft enthusiasm of that pious poet, who in the religious

[t] Duran, Romançero de romances doctrinales, amatorios, festivos, &c. 1829. The Moorish romances, with a few exceptions, and those of the Cid, are ascribed by this author to the latter part of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century. In the preface to a former publication, Romances Moriscos, this writer has said, Casi todos los romances que publicamos en este libro pertenecen al siglo 16^{uno}, y algunos pocos á principio del 17mo. Los autores son desconocidos, pero sus obras han llegado, y merecido llegar á la posteridad. It seems manifest from internal evidence, without critical knowledge of the language, that those relating to the Cid are not of the middle ages, though some seem still inclined to give them a high antiquity. It is not sufficient to say that the language has been modernised; the whole structure of these ballads is redolent of a low age; and if the Spanish critics agree in this, I know not why foreigners should strive against them.—[It is hardly, perhaps, necessary to warn the reader, that the celebrated long poem on the Cid is not reckoned among these romances.—1842.]

[u] Antonio bestows unbounded praise on a poem of the epic class, the Bernardo of Balbuena, published at Madrid in 1624, though he complains that in his own age it lay hid in the corners of booksellers' shops. Balbuena, in his opinion, has left all Spanish poets far behind him. The subject of his poem is the very common fable of Roncesvalles. Dieze, while he denies this absolute pre-eminence of Balbuena, gives him a respectable place among the many epic writers of Spain. But I do not find him mentioned in Bouterwek; in fact, most of these poems are very scarce, and are treasures for the bibliomaniacs.

spirit of his poetry is so totally unlike Horace. An understanding at once solid and ingenious, subject to no extravagant illusion, yet full of true poetic feeling, and an imagination more plastic than creative, impart a more perfect Horatian colouring to the odes, as well as to the canciones and sonnets of Lupercio. He closely imitated Horace in his didactic satires, a style of composition in which no Spanish poet had preceded him. But he never succeeded in attaining the bold combination of ideas which characterises the ode style of Horace; and his conceptions have therefore seldom anything like the Horatian energy. On the other hand, all his poems express no less precision of language than the models after which he formed his style. His odes, in particular, are characterised by a picturesque tone of expression which he seems to have imbibed from Virgil rather than from Horace. The extravagant metaphors by which some of Herrera's odes are deformed were uniformly avoided by Lupercio."[x] The genius of Bartholomew Argensola was very like that of his brother, nor are their writings easily distinguishable; but Bouterwek assigns, on the whole, a higher place to Bartholomew. Dieze inclines to the same judgment, and thinks the eulogy of Nicolas Antonio on these brothers, extravagant as it seems, not beyond their merits.

Villegas.

14. But another poet, Manuel Estevan de Villegas, whose poems, written in very early youth, entitled Amatorias or Eroticas, were published in 1620, has attained a still higher reputation, especially in other parts of Europe. Dieze calls him "one of the best lyric poets of Spain, excellent in the various styles he has employed, but above all in his odes and songs. His original poems are full of genius; his translations of Horace and Anacreon might often pass for original. Few surpass him in harmony of verse; he is the Spanish Anacreon, the poet of the Graces."[y] Bouterwek, a more discriminating judge than Dieze, who is perhaps rather valuable for research than for taste, has observed, that "the graceful luxuriance of the poetry of Villegas has no parallel in modern literature; and, generally speaking, no modern writer has so well succeeded in blending the

[x] Hist. of Spanish Literature, p. 396.

[y] Geschichte der Spanischen Dichtkunst, p. 210.

spirit of ancient poetry with the modern. But constantly to observe that correctness of ideas, which distinguished the classical compositions of antiquity, was by Villegas, as by most Spanish poets, considered too rigid a requisition, and an unnecessary restraint on genius. He accordingly sometimes degenerates into conceits and images, the monstrous absurdity of which is characteristic of the author's nation and age. For instance, in one of his odes, in which he entreats Lyda to suffer her tresses to flow, he says that 'agitated by Zephyr, her locks would occasion a thousand deaths, and subdue a thousand lives;' and then he adds, in a strain of extravagance, surpassing that of the Marinists, 'that the sun himself would cease to give light, if he did not snatch beams from her radiant countenance to illumine the East.' But faults of this glaring kind are by no means frequent in the poetry of Villegas, and the fascinating grace with which he emulates his models, operates with so powerful a charm, that the occasional occurrence of some little affectations, from which he could scarcely be expected entirely to abstain, is easily overlooked by the reader."[z]

Quevedo.

15. Quevedo, who having borne the surname of Villegas, has sometimes been confounded with the poet we have just named, is better known in Europe for his prose than his verse; but he is the author of numerous poems, both serious and comic or satirical. The latter are by much the more esteemed of the two. He wrote burlesque poetry with success, but it is frequently unintelligible except to natives. In satire he adopted the Juvenalian style.[a] A few more might perhaps be added, especially Espinel, a poet of the classic school, Borja de Esquillace, once viceroy of Peru, who is called by Bouterwek the last representative of that style in Spain, but more worthy of praise for withstanding the bad taste of his contemporaries than for any vigour of genius, and Christopher de la Mena.[b] No Portuguese poetry about this time seems to be worthy of notice in European literature, though Manuel Faria y Sousa and a few more might attain a local reputation by sonnets and other amatory verse.

[z] Bouterwek, i. 479.

[a] Id., p. 468.

[b] Id., p. 488.

Defects of taste in Spanish verse.

16. The original blemish of Spanish writing both in prose and verse had been an excess of effort to say everything in an unusual manner, a deviation from the beaten paths of sentiment and language in a wider curve than good taste permits. Taste is the presiding faculty which regulates, in all works within her jurisdiction, the struggling powers of imagination, emotion, and reason. Each has its claim to mingle in the composition; each may sometimes be allowed in a great measure to predominate; and a phlegmatic application of what men call common sense in æsthetic criticism is almost as repugnant to its principles as a dereliction of all reason for the sake of fantastic absurdity. Taste also must determine, by an intuitive sense of right somewhat analogous to that which regulates the manners of polished life, to what extent the most simple, the most obvious, the most natural, and therefore, in a popular meaning, the most true, is to be modified by a studious introduction of the new, the striking, and the beautiful, so that neither what is insipid and trivial, nor yet what is forced and affected, may displease us. In Spain, as we have observed, the latter was always the prevailing fault. The public taste had been formed on bad models, on the Oriental poetry, metaphorical beyond all perceptible analogy, and on that of the Provençals, false in sentiment, false in conception, false in image and figure. The national character, proud, swelling, and ceremonious, conspired to give an inflated tone; it was also grave and sententious rather than lively or delicate, and therefore fond of a strained and ambitious style. These vices of writing are carried to excess in romances of chivalry, which became ridiculous in the eyes of sensible men, but were certainly very popular; they affect also, though in a different manner, much of the Spanish prose of the sixteenth century, and they belong to a great deal of the poetry of that age, though it must be owned that much appears wholly exempt from them, and written in a very pure and classical spirit. Cervantes strove by example and by precept to maintain good taste; and some of his contemporaries took the same line.[e] But they had to fight

[e] Cervantes, in his Viage del Parnaso, praises Gongora, and even imitates his style; but this, Dieze says, is all ironical. Gesch. der Dichtkunst, p. 250.

against the predominant turn of their nation, which soon gave the victory to one of the worst manners of writing that ever disgraced public favour.

Pedantry and far-fetched allusions.

17. Nothing can be more opposite to what is strictly called a classical style, or one formed upon the best models of Greece and Rome, than pedantry. This was nevertheless the weed that overspread the face of literature in those ages when Greece and Rome were the chief objects of veneration. Without an intimate discernment of their beauty it was easy to copy allusions that were no longer intelligible, to counterfeit trains of thought that belonged to past times, to force reluctant idioms into modern form, as some are said to dress after a lady for whom nature has done more than for themselves. From the revival of letters downwards this had been more or less observable in the learned men of Europe, and after that class grew more extensive, in the current literature of modern languages. Pedantry, which consisted in unnecessary, and perhaps unintelligible, references to ancient learning, was afterwards combined with other artifices to obtain the same end, far-fetched metaphors and extravagant conceits. The French versifiers of the latter end of the sixteenth century were eminent in both, as the works of Ronsard and Du Bartas attest. We might, indeed, take the Creation of Du Bartas more properly than the Euphues of our English Lilly, which though very affected and unpleasing, does hardly such violence to common speech and common sense, for the type of the style which, in the early part of the seventeenth century, became popular in several countries, but especially in Spain, through the misplaced labours of Gongora.

Gongora.

18. Luis de Gongora, a man of very considerable talents, and capable of writing well, as he has shown, in different styles of poetry, was unfortunately led by an ambitious desire of popularity to introduce one which should render his name immortal, as it has done in a mode which he did not design. This was his *estilo culto*, as it was usually called, or highly polished phraseology, wherein every word seems to have been out of its natural place. "In fulfilment of this object," says Bouterwek, "he formed for himself, with the most laborious assiduity, a style as uncommon as

affected, and opposed to all the ordinary rules of the Spanish language, either in prose or verse. He particularly endeavoured to introduce into his native tongue the intricate constructions of the Greek and Latin, though such an arrangement of words had never been attempted in Spanish composition. He consequently found it necessary to invent a particular system of punctuation, in order to render the sense of his verses intelligible. Not satisfied with this patchwork kind of phraseology, he affected to attach an extraordinary depth of meaning to each word, and to diffuse an air of superior dignity over his whole style. In Gongora's poetry the most common words received a totally new signification; and in order to impart perfection to his *estilo culto*, he summoned all his mythological learning to his aid."[d] "Gongora," says an English writer, "was the founder of a sect in literature. The style called in Castilian *cultismo* owes its origin to him. This affectation consists in using language so pedantic, metaphors so strained, and constructions so involved, that few readers have the knowledge requisite to understand the words, and still fewer ingenuity to discover the allusion, or patience to unravel the sentences. These authors do not avail themselves of the invention of letters for the purpose of conveying but of concealing their ideas."[e]

The schools formed by him.

19. The Gongorists formed a strong party in literature, and carried with them the public voice. If we were to believe some writers of the seventeenth century, he was the greatest poet of Spain.[f] The age of Cervantes was over, nor was there vitality enough in the criticism of the reign of Philip IV. to resist the contagion. Two sects soon appeared among these *cultoristos*: one who retained that name, and, like their master, affected a certain precision of style; another, called *conceptistos*, which went still greater lengths in extravagance, desirous only, it might seem, of expressing absurd ideas in unnatural language.[g] The prevalence of

[d] Bouterwek, p. 434.

[e] Lord Holland's Lope de Vega, p. 64.

[f] Dieze, p. 250. Nicolas Antonio, to the disgrace of his judgment, maintains this with the most extravagant eulogy on Gongora; and Baillet copies him; but the next age unhesitatingly reversed the sentence. The Portuguese have laid claim to the estilo culto as their property and one of their writers who practises it, Manuel de Faria y Sousa, gives Don Sebastian the credit of having been the first who wrote it in prose.

[g] Bouterwek, p. 438.

such a disease, for no other analogy can so fitly be used, would seem to have been a bad presage for Spain; but in fact, like other diseases, it did but make the tour of Europe, and rage worse in some countries than in others. It had spent itself in France, when it was at its height in Italy and England. I do not perceive the close connexion of the *estilo culto* of Gongora with that of Marini, whom both Bouterwek and Lord Holland suppose to have formed his own taste on the Spanish school. It seems rather too severe an imputation on that most ingenious and fertile poet, who, as has already been observed, has no fitter parallel than Ovid. The strained metaphors of the Adone are easily collected by critics, and seem extravagant in juxtaposition, but they recur only at intervals; while those of Gongora are studiously forced into every line, and are besides incomparably more refined and obscure. His style, indeed, seems to be like that of Lycophron, without the excuse of that prophetical mystery which breathes a certain awfulness over the symbolic language of the Cassandra. Nor am I convinced that our own metaphysical poetry in the reigns of James and Charles had much to do with either Marini or Gongora, except as it bore marks of the same vice, a restless ambition to excite wonder by overstepping the boundaries of nature.

SECT. III.

Malherbe — Regnier — Other French Poets.

Malherbe.

20. MALHERBE, a very few of whose poems belong to the last century, but the greater part to the first twenty years of the present, gave a polish and a grace to the lyric poetry of France which has rendered his name celebrated in her criticism. The public taste of that country is (or I should rather say, used to be) more intolerant of defects in poetry than rigorous in its demands of excellence. Malherbe, therefore, who substituted a regular and accurate versification, a style pure and generally free from pedantic or colloquial phrases, and a sustained tone of what were reckoned elevated thoughts, for the more unequal strains of the sixteenth

century, acquired a reputation which may lead some of his readers to disappointment. And this is likely to be increased by a very few lines of great beauty which are known by heart. These stand too much alone in his poems. In general, we find in them neither imagery nor sentiment that yield us delight. He is less mythological, less affected, less given to frigid hyperboles than his predecessors, but far too much so for any one accustomed to real poetry. In the panegyrical odes Malherbe displays some felicity and skill; the poet of kings and courtiers, he wisely perhaps wrote, even when he could have written better, what kings and courtiers would understand and reward. Polished and elegant, his lines seldom pass the conventional tone of poetry; and while he is never original he is rarely impressive. Malherbe may stand in relation to Horace as Chiabrera does to Pindar: the analogy is not very close; but he is far from deficient in that calm philosophy which forms the charm of the Roman poet, and we are willing to believe that he sacrificed his time reluctantly to the praises of the great. It may be suspected that he wrote verses for others; a practice not unusual, I believe, among these courtly rhymers; at least his Alcandre seems to be Henry IV., Chrysanthe or Oranthe the Princess of Condé. He seems himself in some passages to have affected gallantry towards Mary of Medicis, which at that time was not reckoned an impertinence.

Criticisms upon his poetry.

21. Bouterwek has criticised Malherbe with some justice, but with greater severity.[h] He deems him no poet, which in a certain sense is surely true. But we narrow our definition of poetry too much, when we exclude from it the versification of good sense and select diction. This may probably be ascribed to Malherbe; though Bouhours, an acute and somewhat rigid critic, has pointed out some passages which he deems nonsensical. Another writer of the same age, Rapin, whose own taste was not very glowing, observes that there is much prose in Malherbe; and that, well as he merits to be called correct, he is a little too desirous of appearing so, and often becomes frigid.[i]

[h] Vol. v. p. 238.

[i] Réflexions sur la Poëtique, p. 147. Malherbe a esté le premier qui nous a remis dans le bon chemin, joignant la pureté au grand style; mais comme il commença cette manière, il ne put la

Boileau has extolled him, perhaps, somewhat too highly, and La Harpe is inclined to the same side; but in the modern state of French criticism, the danger is that the Malherbes will be too much depreciated.

Satires of Regnier.

22. The satires of Regnier have been highly praised by Boileau, a competent judge, no doubt, in such matters. Some have preferred Regnier even to himself, and found in this old Juvenal of France a certain stamp of satirical genius which the more polished critic wanted.[k] These satires are unlike all other French poetry of the age of Henry IV.; the tone is vehement, somewhat rugged and coarse, and reminds us a little of his contemporaries Hall and Donne, whom, however, he will generally and justly be thought much to excel. Some of his satires are borrowed from Ovid or from the Italians.[m] They have been called gross and licentious; but this only applies to one, the rest are unexceptionable. Regnier, who had probably some quarrel with Malherbe, speaks with contempt of his elaborate polish. But the taste of France, and especially of that highly cultivated nobility who formed the court of Louis XIII. and his son, no longer endured the rude, though sometimes animated, versification of the older poets. Next to Malherbe in reputation stood Racan and Maynard, both more or less of his school. Of these it was said by their master that Racan wanted the diligence of Maynard, as Maynard did the spirit of Racan, and that a good poet might be made out of the two.[n] A foreigner will in general prefer the former, who seems to have possessed more imagination and sensibility, and a keener relish for rural beauty. Maynard's verses, according to Pelisson, have an ease and elegance that few can imitate, which proceeds from his natural and simple construction.[o] He had more success in epigram than in his sonnets, which Boileau has treated with little respect. Nor does he speak better of Malleville, who chose no other species of verse, but seldom produced a

Racan—Maynard.

porter jusques dans sa perfection; il y a bien de la prose dans ses vers. In another place he says, Malherbe est exact et correct; mais il ne hazarde rien, et par l'envie qu'il a d'être trop sage, il est souvent froid. P. 209.

[k] Bouterwek, p. 246. La Harpe. Biogr. Univ.

[m] Niceron, xi. 397.

[n] Pelisson, Hist. de l'Académie, i. 260. Baillet, Jugemens des Savans (Poëtes), n. 1510. La Harpe, Cours de Littérature. Bouterwek, v. 260.

[o] Idem.

finished piece, though not deficient in spirit and delicacy. Viaud, more frequently known by the name of Théophile, a writer of no great elevation of style, is not destitute of imagination. Such at least is the opinion of Rapin and Bouterwek.[p]

23. The poems of Gombauld were, in general, published before the middle of the century; his epigrams, which are most esteemed, in 1657. These are often lively and neat. But a style of playfulness and gaiety had been introduced by Voiture. French poetry under Ronsard and his school, and even that of Malherbe, had lost the lively tone of Marot, and became serious almost to severity. Voiture, with an apparent ease and grace, though without the natural air of the old writers, made it once more amusing. In reality the style of Voiture is artificial and elaborate, but, like his imitator Prior among us, he has the skill to disguise this from the reader. He must be admitted to have had, in verse as well as prose, a considerable influence over the taste of France. He wrote to please women, and women are grateful when they are pleased. Sarrazin, says his biographer, though less celebrated than Voiture, deserves perhaps to be rated above him; with equal ingenuity, he is far more natural.[q] The German historian of French literature has spoken less respectfully of Sarrazin, whose verses are the most insipid rhymed prose, such as he not unhappily calls *toilet-poetry*.[r] This is a style which finds little mercy on the right bank of the Rhine; but the French are better judges of the merit of Sarrazin.

Voiture.

Sarrazin.

[p] Bouterwek, 252. Rapin says, Théophile a l'imagination grande et le sens petit. Il a des hardiesses heureuses à force de se permettre tout. Réflexions sur la Poëtique, p. 209.

[q] Biogr. Univ. Baillet, n. 1532.

[r] Bouterwek, v. 256. Specimens of all these poets will be found in the collection of Auguis, vol. vi.: and I must own, that, with the exceptions of Malherbe, Regnier, and one or two more, my own acquaintance with them extends little farther.

SECT. IV.

Rise of Poetry in Germany— Opitz and his followers—Dutch Poets.

Low state of German literature.

24. THE German language had never been more despised by the learned and the noble than at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which seems to be the lowest point in its native literature. The capacity was not wanting; many wrote Latin verse with success; the collection made by Gruter is abundant in these cultivators of a foreign tongue, several of whom belong to the close of the preceding age. But among these it is said that whoever essayed to write their own language did but fail, and the instances adduced are very few. The upper ranks began about this time to speak French in common society; the burghers, as usual, strove to imitate them; and what was far worse, it became the mode to intermingle French words with German, not singly and sparingly, as has happened in other times and countries, but in a jargon affectedly piebald and macaronic. Some hope might have been founded on the literary academies, which, in emulation of Italy, sprung up in this period. The oldest is The Fruitful Society (Die fruchtbringende Gesellschaft), known also as the order of Palms, established at Weimar in 1617.[a] Five princes enrolled their names at the beginning. It held forth the laudable purpose of purifying and correcting the mother tongue and of promoting its literature, after the manner of the Italian academies. But it is not unusual for literary associations to promise much and fail of performance; one man is more easily found to lay down a good plan, than many to co-operate in its execution. Probably this was merely the scheme of some more gifted individual, perhaps Werder, who translated Ariosto and Tasso;[b] for little good was effected by the institution. Nor did several others which at different times in the seventeenth century arose over Germany deserve more praise. They copied the academies of Italy in their quaint names and titles, in their by-laws, their petty ceremonials and symbolic distinctions, to which, as we always

Literary Societies.

[a] Bouterwek, x. 35.

[b] Id., x. 29.

find in these self-elected societies, they attached vast importance, and thought themselves superior to the world by doing nothing for it. "They are gone," exclaims Bouterwek, "and have left no clear vestige of their existence." Such had been the meister-singers before them, and little else in effect were the academies, in a more genial soil, of their own age. Notwithstanding this, though I am compelled to follow the historian of German literature, it must strike us that these societies seem to manifest a public esteem for something intellectual, which they knew not precisely how to attain; and it is to be observed that several of the best poets in the seventeenth century belonged to them.

Opitz.

25. A very small number of poets, such as Meckerlin and Spee, in the early part of the seventeenth century, though with many faults in point of taste, have been commemorated by the modern historians of literature. But they were wholly eclipsed by one whom Germany regards as the founder of her poetic literature, Martin Opitz, a native of Silesia, honoured with a laurel crown by the emperor in 1628, and raised to offices of distinction and trust in several courts. The national admiration of Opitz seems to have been almost enthusiastic; yet Opitz was far from being the poet of enthusiasm. Had he been such, his age might not have understood him. His taste was French and Dutch; two countries of which the poetry was pure and correct, but not imaginative. No great elevation, no energy of genius will be found in this German Heinsius or Malherbe. Opitz displayed, however, another kind of excellence. He wrote the language with a purity of idiom, in which Luther alone, whom he chose as his model, was superior; he gave more strength to the versification, and paid a regard to the collocation of syllables according to their quantity, or length of time required for articulation, which the earlier poets had neglected. He is, therefore, reckoned the inventor of a rich and harmonious rhythm; and he also rendered the Alexandrine verse much more common than before.[u] His sense is good; he writes as one conversant with the ancients,

[u] Bouterwek (p. 94) thinks this no advantage; a rhymed prose in Alexandrines overspread the German literature of the seventeenth and first part of the eighteenth century.

and with mankind; if he is too didactic and learned for a poet in the higher import of the word, if his taste appears fettered by the models he took for imitation, if he even retarded, of which we can hardly be sure, the development of a more genuine nationality in German literature, he must still be allowed, in a favourable sense, to have made an epoch in its history.[x]

His followers.

26. Opitz is reckoned the founder of what was called the first Silesian school, rather so denominated from him than as determining the birthplace of its poets. They were chiefly lyric, but more in the line of songs and short effusions in trochaic metre than of the regular ode, and sometimes display much spirit and feeling. The German song always seems to bear a resemblance to the English; the identity of metre and rhythm conspires with what is more essential, a certain analogy of sentiment. Many, however, of Opitz's followers, like himself, took Holland for their Parnassus, and translated their songs from Dutch. Fleming was distinguished by a genuine feeling for lyric poetry; he made Opitz his model, but had he not died young, would probably have gone beyond him, being endowed by nature with a more poetical genius. Gryph or Gryphius, who belonged to the Fruitful Society, and bore in that the surname of the Immortal, with faults that strike the reader in every page, is also superior in fancy and warmth to Opitz. But Gryph is better known in German literature by his tragedies. The hymns of the Lutheran church are by no means the lowest form of

[x] Bouterwek, x. 89–119, has given an elaborate critique of the poetry of Opitz. "He is the father, not of German poetry, but of the modern German language of poetry, der neueren deutschen Dichtersprache," p. 93. The fame of Opitz spread beyond his country, little as his language was familiar. Non periit Germania, Grotius writes to him, in 1631, Opiti doctissime, quæ te habet locupletissimum testem, quid lingua Germanica, quid ingenia Germanica valeant. Epist. 272. And afterwards, in 1638, thanking him for the present of his translation of the Psalms: Dignus erat rex poeta interprete Germanorum poetarum rege; nihil enim tibi blandiens dico; ita sentio à te primum Germanicæ poesi formam datam et habitum quo cum aliis gentibus possit contendere. Ep. 999. Baillet observes, that Opitz passes for the best of German poets, and the first who gave rules to that poetry, and raised it to the state it had since reached; so that he is rather to be accounted its father than its improver. Jugemens des Savans (Poëtes), n. 1436. But reputation is transitory; though ten editions of the poems of Opitz were published within the seventeenth century, which Bouterwek thinks much for Germany at that time, though it would not be so much in some countries, scarce any one, except the lovers of old literature, now asks for these obsolete productions. P. 90.

German poetry. They have been the work of every age since the Reformation; but Dach and Gerhard, who, especially the latter, excelled in these devotional songs, lived about the middle of the seventeenth century. The shade of Luther seemed to protect the church from the profanation of bad taste; or, as we should rather say, it was the intense theopathy of the German nation, and the simple majesty of their ecclesiastical music.[y]

Dutch Poetry.

27. It has been the misfortune of the Dutch, a great people, a people fertile of men of various ability and erudition, a people of scholars, of theologians and philosophers, of mathematicians, of historians, of painters, and, we may add, of poets, that these last have been the mere violets of the shade, and have peculiarly suffered by the narrow limits within which their language has been spoken or known. The Flemish dialect of the southern Netherlands might have contributed to make up something like a national literature, extensive enough to be respected in Europe, if those provinces, which now affect the name of Belgium, had been equally fertile of talents with their neighbours.

Spiegel.

28. The golden age of Dutch literature is this first part of the seventeenth century. Their chief poets are Spiegel, Hooft, Cats, and Vondel. The first, who has been styled the Dutch Ennius, died in 1612; his principal poem, of an ethical kind, is posthumous, but may probably have been written towards the close of the preceding century. "The style is vigorous and concise; it is rich in imagery and powerfully expressed, but is deficient in elegance and perspicuity."[z] Spiegel had rendered much service to his native tongue, and was a member of a literary academy which published a Dutch grammar in 1584. Koornhert and Dousa, with others known to fame, were his colleagues; and be it remembered, to the honour of Holland, that in Germany, or England, or even in France, there was as yet no institution of this kind. But as Holland at the end of the sixteenth century, and for many years afterwards, was pre-eminently the literary country of Europe, it is not surprising that some endeavours were made, though unsuccessfully as to European renown, to cultivate the

y Bouterwek, x. 218. Eichhorn, iv. 888.

z Biogr. Univ.

native language. This language is also more soft, though less sonorous than the German.

Hooft, Cats, Vondel.

29. Spiegel was followed by a more celebrated poet, Peter Hooft, who gave sweetness and harmony to Dutch verse. "The great creative power of poetry," it has been said, "he did not possess; but his language is correct, his style agreeable, and he did much to introduce a better epoch."[a] His amatory and anacreontic lines have never been excelled in the language; and Hooft is also distinguished both as a dramatist and an historian. He has been called the Tacitus of Holland. But here again his praises must by the generality be taken upon trust. Cats is a poet of a different class; ease, abundance, simplicity, clearness, and purity are the qualities of his style; his imagination is gay, his morality popular and useful. No one was more read than Father Cats, as the people call him; but he is often trifling and monotonous. Cats, though he wrote for the multitude, whose descendants still almost know his poems by heart, was a man whom the republic held in high esteem; twice ambassador in England, he died great pensionary of Holland, in 1651. Vondel, a native of Cologne, but the glory, as he is deemed, of Dutch poetry, was best known as a tragedian. In his tragedies, the lyric part, the choruses which he retained after the ancient model, have been called the sublimest of odes. But some have spoken less highly of Vondel.[b]

Danish Poetry.

30. Denmark had no literature in the native language, except a collection of old ballads, full of Scandinavian legends, till the present period; and in this it does not appear that she had more than one poet, a Norwegian bishop, named Arrebo. Nothing, I believe, was written in Swedish. Sclavonian, that is, Polish and Russian, poets there were; but we know so little of those languages, that they cannot enter, at least during so distant a period, into the history of European literature.

[a] Biogr. Univ.

[b] Foreign Quart. Rev. vol. iv. p. 49. For this short account of the Dutch poets I am indebted to Eichhorn, vol. iv. part I., and to the Biographie Universelle.

Sect. V.—On English Poetry.

Imitators of Spenser — The Fletchers — Philosophical Poets — Denham — Donne — Cowley — Historical and Narrative Poets — Shakspeare's Sonnets — Lyric Poets — Milton's Lycidas, and other Poems.

31. The English poets of these fifty years are very numerous, and though the greater part are not familiar to the general reader, they form a favourite study of those who cultivate our poetry, and are sought by all collectors of scarce and interesting literature. Many of them have within half a century been reprinted separately, and many more in the useful and copious collections of Anderson, Chalmers, and other editors. Extracts have also been made by Headley, Ellis, Campbell, and Southey. It will be convenient to arrange them rather according to the schools to which they belonged, than in mere order of chronology.

English Poets numerous in this age.

32. Whatever were the misfortunes of Spenser's life, whatever neglect he might have experienced at the hands of a statesman grown old in cares which render a man insensible to song, his spirit might be consoled by the prodigious reputation of the Faery Queen. He was placed at once by his country above all the great Italian names, and next to Virgil among the ancients; it was a natural consequence that some should imitate what they so deeply reverenced. An ardent admiration for Spenser inspired the genius of two young brothers, Phineas and Giles Fletcher. The first, very soon after the Queen's death, as some allusions to Lord Essex seem to denote, composed, though he did not so soon publish, a poem, entitled The Purple Island. By this strange name he expressed a subject more strange; it is a minute and elaborate account of the body and mind of man. Through five cantos the reader is regaled with nothing but allegorical anatomy, in the details of which Phineas seems tolerably skilled, evincing a great deal of ingenuity in diversifying his metaphors, and in presenting the delineation of his imaginary island with as much justice as possible to the allegory without obtruding it on the reader's view. In the sixth canto he rises to the intellectual and moral

Phineas Fletcher.

faculties of the soul, which occupy the rest of the poem. From its nature it is insuperably wearisome; yet his language is often very poetical, his versification harmonious, his invention fertile. But that perpetual monotony of allegorical persons, which sometimes displeases us even in Spenser, is seldom relieved in Fletcher; the understanding revolts at the confused crowd of inconceivable beings in a philosophical poem; and the justness of analogy, which had given us some pleasure in the anatomical cantos, is lost in tedious descriptions of all possible moral qualities, each of them personified, which can never co-exist in the Purple Island of one individual.

Giles Fletcher.

33. Giles Fletcher, brother of Phineas, in Christ's Victory and Triumph, though his subject has not all the unity that might be desired, had a manifest superiority in its choice. Each uses a stanza of his own; Phineas one of seven lines, Giles one of eight. This poem was published in 1610. Each brother alludes to the work of the other, which must be owing to the alterations made by Phineas in his Purple Island, written probably the first, but not published, I believe, till 1633. Giles seems to have more vigour than his elder brother, but less sweetness, less smoothness, and more affectation in his style. This, indeed, is deformed by words neither English nor Latin, but simply barbarous, such as *elamping*, *eblazon*, *deprostrate*, *purpured*, *glitterand*, and many others. They both bear much resemblance to Spenser: Giles sometimes ventures to cope with him, even in celebrated passages, such as the description of the Cave of Despair.[e] And he has had the honour, in turn, of being followed by Milton, especially in the first meeting of our Saviour with Satan in the Paradise Regained. Both of these brothers are deserving of much praise; they were endowed with minds eminently poetical, and not inferior in imagination to any of their contemporaries. But an injudicious taste, and an excessive fondness for a style which the public was rapidly abandoning, that of allegorical personification, prevented their powers from being effectively displayed.

34. Notwithstanding the popularity of Spenser, and the general pride in his name, that allegorical and ima-

[e] Christ's Vict. and Triumph, ii. 23.

ginative school of poetry, of which he was the greatest ornament, did not by any means exclude a very different kind. The English, or such as by their education gave the tone in literature, had become, in the latter years of the queen, and still more under her successor, a deeply thinking, a learned, a philosophical people. A sententious reasoning, grave, subtle and condensed, or the novel and remote analogies of wit, gained praise from many whom the creations of an excursive fancy could not attract. Hence much of the poetry of James's reign is distinguished from that of Elizabeth, except perhaps her last years, by partaking of the general character of the age; deficient in simplicity, grace, and feeling, often obscure and pedantic, but impressing us with a respect for the man, where we do not recognise the poet. From this condition of public taste arose two schools of poetry, different in character, if not unequal in merit, but both appealing to the reasoning more than to the imaginative faculty as their judge.

Philosophical poetry.

35. The first of these may own as its founder Sir John Davies, whose poem on the Immortality of the Soul, published in 1599, has had its due honour in our last volume. Davies is eminent for perspicuity; but this cannot be said for another philosophical poet, Sir Fulke Greville, afterwards Lord Brooke, the bosom friend of Sir Philip Sidney, and once the patron of Jordano Bruno. The titles of Lord Brooke's poems, A Treatise of Human Learning, A Treatise of Monarchy, A Treatise of Religion, An Inquisition upon Fame and Honour, lead us to anticipate more of sense than fancy. In this we are not deceived; his mind was pregnant with deep reflection upon multifarious learning, but he struggles to give utterance to thoughts which he had not fully endowed with words, and amidst the shackles of rhyme and metre which he had not learned to manage. Hence of all our poets he may be reckoned the most obscure; in aiming at condensation he becomes elliptical beyond the bounds of the language, and his rhymes, being forced for the sake of sound, leave all meaning behind. Lord Brooke's poetry is chiefly worth notice as an indication of that thinking spirit upon political science which was to produce the riper speculations of Hobbes, and Harrington, and Locke.

Lord Brooke.

36. This argumentative school of verse was so much in unison with the character of that generation, that Daniel, a poet of a very different temper, adopted it in his panegyric addressed to James soon after his accession, and in some other poems. It had an influence upon others who trod generally in a different track, as is especially perceived in Giles Fletcher. The Cooper's Hill of Sir John Denham, published in 1643, belongs in a considerable degree to this reasoning class of poems. It is also descriptive, but the description is made to slide into philosophy. The plan is original, as far as our poetry is concerned, and I do not recollect any exception in other languages. Placing himself upon an eminence not distant from Windsor, he takes a survey of the scene; he finds the tower of St. Paul's on his farthest horizon, the Castle much nearer, and the Thames at his feet. These, with the ruins of an abbey, supply in turn materials for a reflecting rather than imaginative mind, and, with a stag-hunt, which he has very well described, fill up the canvas of a poem of no great length, but once of no trifling reputation.

Denham's Cooper's Hill.

37. The epithet, *majestic* Denham, conferred by Pope, conveys rather too much; but Cooper's Hill is no ordinary poem. It is nearly the first instance of vigorous and rhythmical couplets, for Denham is incomparably less feeble than Browne, and less prosaic than Beaumont. Close in thought, and nervous in language like Davies, he is less hard and less monotonous; his cadences are animated and various, perhaps a little beyond the regularity that metre demands; they have been the guide to the finer ear of Dryden. Those who cannot endure the philosophic poetry, must ever be dissatisfied with Cooper's Hill; no personification, no ardent words, few metaphors beyond the common use of speech, nothing that warms, or melts, or fascinates the heart. It is rare to find lines of eminent beauty in Denham; and equally so to be struck by any one as feeble or low. His language is always well chosen and perspicuous, free from those strange turns of expression, frequent in our older poets, where the reader is apt to suspect some error of the press, so irreconcilable do they seem with grammar or meaning. The expletive *do*, which the best of his predecessors use freely, seldom occurs in Denham; and he

has in other respects brushed away the rust of languid and ineffective redundancies which have obstructed the popularity of men with more native genius than himself.[d]

Poets called metaphysical.

38. Another class of poets in the reigns of James and his son were those whom Johnson has called the metaphysical; a name rather more applicable, in the ordinary use of the word, to Davies and Brooke. These were such as laboured after conceits, or novel turns of thought, usually false, and resting upon some equivocation of language, or exceedingly remote analogy. This style Johnson supposes to have been derived from Marini. But Donne, its founder, as Johnson imagines, in England, wrote before Marini. It is, in fact, as we have lately observed, the style which, though Marini has earned the discreditable reputation of perverting the taste of his country by it, had been gaining ground through the latter half of the sixteenth century. It was, in a more comprehensive view, one modification of that vitiated taste which sacrificed all ease and naturalness of writing and speaking for the sake of display. The mythological erudition and Grecisms of Ronsard's school, the euphuism of that of Lilly, the "estilo culto" of Gongora, even the pedantic quotations of Burton and many similar writers, both in England and on the Continent, sprang like the concetti of the Italians, and of their English imitators, from the same source, a dread of being overlooked if they paced on like their neighbours. And when a few writers had set the example of successful faults, a bad style, where no sound principles of criticism had been established, readily

[d] The comparison by Denham between the Thames and his own poetry was once celebrated:—

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My bright example, as it is my theme;
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

Johnson, while he highly extols these lines, truly observes, that "most of the words thus artfully opposed, are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated." Perhaps these metaphors are so naturally applied to style, that no language of a cultivated people is without them. But the ground of objection is, in fact, that the lines contain nothing but wit, and that wit which turns on a play of words. They are rather ingenious in this respect, and remarkably harmonious, which is probably the secret of their popularity; but, as poetry, they deserve no great praise.

gaining ground, it became necessary that those who had not vigour enough to rise above the fashion, should seek to fall in with it. Nothing is more injurious to the cultivation of verse than the trick of desiring, for praise or profit, to attract those by poetry whom nature has left destitute of every quality which genuine poetry can attract. The best, and perhaps the only secure basis for *public* taste, for an æsthetic appreciation of beauty, in a court, a college, a city, is so general a diffusion of classical knowledge, as by rendering the finest models familiar, and by giving them a sort of authority, will discountenance and check at the outset the vicious novelties which always exert some influence over uneducated minds. But this was not yet the case in England. Milton was perhaps the first writer who eminently possessed a genuine discernment and feeling of antiquity; though it may be perceived in Spenser, and also in a very few who wrote in prose.

Donne.

39. Donne is generally esteemed the earliest, as Cowley was afterwards the most conspicuous, model of this manner. Many instances of it, however, occur in the lighter poetry of the queen's reign. Donne is the most inharmonious of our versifiers, if he can be said to have deserved such a name by lines too rugged to seem metre. Of his earlier poems many are very licentious; the later are chiefly devout. Few are good for much; the conceits have not even the merit of being intelligible; it would perhaps be difficult to select three passages that we should care to read again.

Crashaw.

40. The second of these poets was Crashaw, a man of some imagination and great piety, but whose softness of heart, united with feeble judgment, led him to admire and imitate whatever was most extravagant in the mystic writings of Saint Teresa. He was more than Donne a follower of Marini, one of whose poems, The Massacre of the Innocents, he translated with success. It is difficult, in general, to find anything in Crashaw that bad taste has not deformed. His poems were first published in 1646.

Cowley.

41. In the next year, 1647, Cowley's Mistress appeared; the most celebrated performance of the miscalled metaphysical poets. It is a series of short amatory poems, in the Italian style of the age, full

of analogies that have no semblance of truth, except from the double sense of words and thoughts that unite the coldness of subtilty with the hyperbolical extravagance of counterfeited passion. A few anacreontic poems, and some other light pieces of Cowley, have a spirit and raciness very unlike these frigid conceits; and in the ode on the death of his friend Mr. Harvey, he gave some proofs of real sensibility and poetic grace. The Pindaric odes of Cowley were not published within this period. But it is not worth while to defer mention of them. They contain, like all his poetry, from time to time, very beautiful lines, but the faults are still of the same kind; his sensibility and good sense, nor has any poet more, are choked by false taste; and it would be difficult to fix on any one poem in which the beauties are more frequent than the blemishes. Johnson has selected the elegy on Crashaw as the finest of Cowley's works. It begins with a very beautiful couplet, but I confess that little else seems, to my taste, of much value. The Complaint, probably better known than any other poem, appears to me the best in itself. His disappointed hopes give a not unpleasing melancholy to several passages. But his Latin ode in a similar strain is much more perfect. Cowley, perhaps, upon the whole, has had a reputation more above his deserts than any English poet; yet it is very easy to perceive that some who wrote better than he did not possess so fine a genius. Johnson has written the life of Cowley with peculiar care; and as his summary of the poet's character is more favourable than my own, it may be candid to insert it in this place, as at least very discriminating, elaborate, and well expressed.

Johnson's character of him.

42. "It may be affirmed without any encomiastic fervour, that he brought to his poetic labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less;[a] that he was equally qualified for sprightly sallies and for lofty flights; that he was

[a] Was not Milton's Ode on the Nativity written as early as any of Cowley's? And would Johnson have thought Cowley superior in gaiety to Sir John Suckling?

among those who freed translation from servility, and instead of following his author at a distance, walked by his side; and that, if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it."

Narrative poets. Daniel.

43. The poets of historical or fabulous narrative belong to another class. Of these the earliest is Daniel, whose minor poems fall partly within the sixteenth century. His history of the Civil Wars between York and Lancaster, a poem in eight books, was published in 1604. Faithfully adhering to truth, which he does not suffer so much as an ornamental episode to interrupt, and equally studious to avoid the bolder figures of poetry, it is not surprising that Daniel should be little read. It is, indeed, certain that much Italian and Spanish poetry, even by those whose name has once stood rather high, depends chiefly upon merits which he abundantly possesses, a smoothness of rhythm, and a lucid narration in simple language. But that which from the natural delight in sweet sound is enough to content the ear in the southern tongues, will always seem bald and tame in our less harmonious verse. It is the chief praise of Daniel, and must have contributed to what popularity he enjoyed in his own age, that his English is eminently pure, free from affectation of archaism and from pedantic innovation, with very little that is now obsolete. Both in prose and in poetry, he is, as to language, among the best writers of his time, and wanted but a greater confidence in his own power, or, to speak less indulgently, a greater share of it, to sustain his correct taste, calm sense, and moral feeling.

Drayton's Polyolbion.

44. Next to Daniel in time, and much above him in reach of mind, we place Michael Drayton, whose Barons' Wars have been mentioned under the preceding period, but whose more famous work was published partly in 1613, and partly in 1622. Drayton's Polyolbion is a poem of about 30,000 lines in length, written in Alexandrine couplets, a measure, from its monotony, and perhaps from its frequency in doggerel ballads, not at all pleasing to the ear. It contains a topographical description of England, illus-

trated with a prodigality of historical and legendary erudition. Such a poem is essentially designed to instruct, and speaks to the understanding more than to the fancy. The powers displayed in it are, however, of a high cast. It has generally been a difficulty with poets to deal with a necessary enumeration of proper names. The catalogue of ships is not the most delightful part of the Iliad, and Ariosto never encountered such a roll of persons or places without sinking into the tamest insipidity. Virgil is splendidly beautiful upon similar occasions; but his decorative elegance could not be preserved, nor would continue to please, in a poem that kept up through a great length the effort to furnish instruction. The style of Drayton is sustained, with extraordinary ability, on an equable line, from which he seldom much deviates, neither brilliant nor prosaic; few or no passages could be marked as impressive, but few are languid or mean. The language is clear, strong, various, and sufficiently figurative; the stories and fictions interspersed, as well as the general spirit and liveliness, relieve the heaviness incident to topographical description. There is probably no poem of this kind in any other language, comparable together in extent and excellence to the Polyolbion; nor can any one read a portion of it without admiration for its learned and highly-gifted author. Yet perhaps no English poem, known as well by name, is so little known beyond its name; for while its immense length deters the common reader, it affords, as has just been hinted, no great harvest for selection, and would be judged very unfairly by partial extracts. It must be owned also that geography and antiquities may, in modern times, be taught better in prose than in verse; yet whoever consults the Polyolbion for such objects, will probably be repaid by petty knowledge which he may not have found anywhere else.

Browne's Britannia's Pastorals.

45. Among these historical poets I should incline to class William Browne, author of a poem with the quaint title of Britannia's Pastorals, though his story, one of little interest, seems to have been invented by himself. Browne, indeed, is of no distinct school among the writers of that age; he seems to recognise Spenser as his master, but his own manner is more

to be traced among later than earlier poets. He was a native of Devonshire; and his principal poem, above mentioned, relating partly to the local scenery of that county, was printed in 1613. Browne is truly a poet, full of imagination, grace, and sweetness, though not very nervous or rapid. I know not why Headley, favourable enough for the most part to this generation of the sons of song, has spoken of Browne with unfair contempt. Justice, however, has been done to him by later critics.[f] But I have not observed that they take notice of what is remarkable in the history of our poetical literature, that Browne is an early model of ease and variety in the regular couplet. Many passages in his unequal poem are hardly excelled, in this respect, by the fables of Dryden. It is manifest that Milton was well acquainted with the writings of Browne.

Sir John Beaumont.

46. The commendation of improving the rhythm of the couplet is due also to Sir John Beaumont, author of a short poem on the battle of Bosworth Field. It was not written, however, so early as the Britannia's Pastorals of Browne. In other respects it has no pretensions to a high rank. But it may be added that a poem of Drummond on the visit of James I. to Scotland in 1617 is perfectly harmonious; and what is very remarkable in that age, he concludes the verse at every couplet with the regularity of Pope.

Davenant's Gondibert.

47. Far unlike the poem of Browne was Gondibert, published by Sir William Davenant in 1650. It may probably have been reckoned by himself an epic; but in that age the practice of Spain and Italy had effaced the distinction between the regular epic and the heroic romance. Gondibert belongs rather to the latter class by the entire want of truth in the story, though the scene is laid at the court of the Lombard kings, by the deficiency of unity in the action, by

[f] "Browne," Mr. Southey says, "is a poet who produced no slight effect upon his contemporaries. George Wither in his happiest pieces has learned the manner of his friend, and Milton may be traced to him. And in our days his peculiarities have been caught, and his beauties imitated, by men who will themselves find admirers and imitators hereafter." "His poetry," Mr. Campbell, a far less indulgent judge of the older bards, observes, "is not without beauty; but it is the beauty of mere landscape and allegory, without the manners and passions that constitute human interest." Specimens of English Poetry, iv. 323.

the intricacy of the events, and by the resources of the fable, which are sometimes too much in the style of comic fiction. It is so imperfect, only two books and part of the third being completed, that we can hardly judge of the termination it was to receive. Each book, however, after the manner of Spenser, is divided into several cantos. It contains about 6000 lines. The metre is the four-lined stanza of alternate rhymes; one capable of great vigour, but not perhaps well adapted to poetry of imagination or of passion. These, however, Davenant exhibits but sparingly in Gondibert; they are replaced by a philosophical spirit, in the tone of Sir John Davies, who had adopted the same metre, and, as some have thought, nourished by the author's friendly intercourse with Hobbes. Gondibert is written in a clear, nervous English style; its condensation produces some obscurity, but pedantry, at least that of language, will rarely be found in it; and Davenant is less infected by the love of conceit and of extravagance than his contemporaries, though I would not assert that he is wholly exempt from the former blemish. But the chief praise of Gondibert is due to masculine verse in a good metrical cadence; for the sake of which we may forgive the absence of interest in the story, and even of those glowing words and breathing thoughts which are the soul of genuine poetry. Gondibert is very little read; yet it is better worth reading than the Purple Island, though it may have less of that which distinguishes a poet from another man.

Sonnets of Shakspeare

48. The sonnets of Shakspeare, for we now come to the minor, that is the shorter and more lyric, poetry of the age, were published in 1609, in a manner as mysterious as their subject and contents. They are dedicated by an editor (Thomas Thorpe, a bookseller) "to Mr. W. H., the only begetter of these sonnets."[g] No one, as far as I remember, has ever doubted their genuineness; no one can doubt that they

[g] The precise words of the dedication are the following:—

To the only Begetter
Of these ensuing Sonnets
Mr. W. H.
All Happiness
And that eternity promised
By our ever living poet
Wisheth the
Well-wishing Adventurer
In setting forth
T. T.

The title-page runs: Shakspeare's Sonnets, never before imprinted, 4to. 1609. G. Eld for T. T.

express not only real but intense emotions of the heart; but when they were written, who was the W. H. quaintly called their begetter, by which we can only understand the cause of their being written, and to what persons or circumstances they allude, has of late years been the subject of much curiosity. These sonnets were long overlooked; Steevens spoke of them with the utmost scorn, as productions which no one could read; but a very different suffrage is generally given by the lovers of poetry, and perhaps there is now a tendency, especially among young men of poetical tempers, to exaggerate the beauties of these remarkable productions. They rise, indeed, in estimation, as we attentively read and reflect upon them; for I do not think that at first they give us much pleasure. No one ever entered more fully than Shakspeare into the character of this species of poetry, which admits of no expletive imagery, no merely ornamental line. But though each sonnet has generally its proper unity, the sense, I do not mean the grammatical construction, will sometimes be found to spread from one to another, independently of that repetition of the leading idea, like variations of an air, which a series of them frequently exhibits, and on account of which they have latterly been reckoned by some rather an integral poem than a collection of sonnets. But this is not uncommon among the Italians, and belongs, in fact, to those of Petrarch himself. They may easily be resolved into several series according to their subjects;[h] but when read attentively, we find them relate to one definite, though obscure, period of the poet's life; in which an attachment to some female, which seems to have touched neither his heart nor his fancy very sensibly, was overpowered, without entirely ceasing, by one to a friend; and this last is of such an enthusiastic character, and so extravagant in the phrases that the author uses, as to have thrown an unaccountable mystery over the whole

[h] This has been done in a late publication, "Shakspeare's Auto-biographical Poems, by George Armitage Brown" (1838). It might have occurred to any attentive reader, but I do not know that the analysis was ever so completely made before, though almost every one has been aware that different persons are addressed in the former and latter part of the sonnets. Mr. Brown's work did not fall into my hands till nearly the time that these sheets passed through the press, which I mention on account of some coincidences of opinion, especially as to Shakspeare's knowledge of Latin.

work. It is true that in the poetry as well as in the fictions of early ages we find a more ardent tone of affection in the language of friendship than has since been usual; and yet no instance has been adduced of such rapturous devotedness, such an idolatry of admiring love, as one of the greatest beings whom nature ever produced in the human form pours forth to some unknown youth in the majority of these sonnets.

The person whom they address.

49. The notion that a woman was their general object is totally untenable, and it is strange that Coleridge should have entertained it.[1] Those that were evidently addressed to a woman, the person above hinted, are by much the smaller part of the whole, but twenty-eight out of one hundred and fifty-four. And this mysterious Mr. W. H. must be presumed to be the idolised friend of Shakspeare. But who could he be? No one recorded as such in literary history or anecdote answers the description. But if we seize a clue which innumerable passages give us, and suppose that they allude to a youth of high rank as well as personal beauty and accomplishment, in whose favour and intimacy, according to the base prejudices of the world, a player and a poet, though he were the author of Macbeth, might be thought honoured, something of the strangeness, as it appears to us, of Shakspeare's humiliation in addressing him as a being before whose feet he crouched, whose frown he feared, whose injuries, and those of the most insulting kind, the seduction of the mistress to whom we have alluded, he felt and bewailed without resenting; something, I say, of the strangeness of this humiliation, and at best it is but little, may be lightened and in a certain sense rendered intelligible. And it has been ingeniously conjectured within a few years by inquirers independent of each other, that William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, born in 1580, and afterwards a man of noble and gallant character, though always of a licentious life,

[1] "It seems to me that the sonnets could only have come from a man deeply in love, and in love with a woman; and there is one sonnet which from its incongruity I take to be a purposed blind." Table Talk, vol. ii. p. 180. This sonnet the editor supposes to be the twentieth, which certainly could not have been addressed to a woman; but the proof is equally strong as to most of the rest. Coleridge's opinion is absolutely untenable; nor do I conceive that any one else is likely to maintain it after reading the sonnets of Shakspeare; but to those who have not done this, the authority may justly seem imposing.

was shadowed under the initials of Mr. W. H. This hypothesis is not strictly proved, but sufficiently so, in my opinion, to demand our assent.[k]

50. Notwithstanding the frequent beauties of these sonnets, the pleasure of their perusal is greatly diminished by these circumstances; and it is impossible not to wish that Shakspeare had never written them. There is a weakness and folly in all excessive and misplaced affection, which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments that abound in this long series of sonnets. But there are also faults of a merely critical nature. The obscurity is often such as only conjecture can penetrate; the strain of tenderness and adoration would be too monotonous, were it less unpleasing; and so many frigid conceits are scattered around, that we might almost fancy the poet to have written without genuine emotion, did not such a host of other passages attest the contrary.

Sonnets of Drummond and others.

51. The sonnets of Drummond of Hawthornden, the most celebrated in that class of poets, have obtained, probably, as much praise as they deserve.[m] But they are polished and elegant, free from conceit and bad taste, in pure unblemished English; some are pathetic or tender in sentiment, and

[k] In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1832, p. 217 et post, it will be seen that this occurred both to Mr. Boaden and Mr. Heywood Bright. And it does not appear that Mr. Brown, author of the work above quoted, had any knowledge of their priority.

Drake has fixed on Lord Southampton as the object of these sonnets, induced probably by the tradition of his friendship with Shakspeare, and by the latter's having dedicated to him his Venus and Adonis, as well as by what is remarkable on the face of the series of sonnets, that Shakspeare looked up to his friend "with reverence and homage." But, unfortunately, this was only the reverence and homage of an inferior to one of high rank, and not such as the virtues of Southampton might have challenged. Proofs of the low moral character of "Mr. W. H." are continual. It was also impossible that Lord Southampton could be called "beauteous and lovely youth," or "sweet boy." Mrs. Jameson, in her "Loves of the Poets," has adopted the same hypothesis, but is forced in consequence to suppose some of the earlier sonnets to be addressed to a woman.

Pembroke succeeded to his father in 1601: I incline to think that the sonnets were written about that time, some probably earlier, some later. That they were the same as Meres, in 1598, has mentioned among the compositions of Shakspeare, "his sugred sonnets among his private friends," I do not believe, both on account of the date, and from the peculiarly personal allusions they contain.

[Much has been written lately on the subject of Shakspeare's sonnets, and a natural reluctance to admit any failings in such a man has led some to fancy that his mistress was no other than his wife, Ann Hathaway, and others to conjecture that he lent his pen to the amours of a friend. But I have seen no ground to alter my own view of the case; except that possibly some other sonnets may have been meant by Meres. —1842.]

[m] I concur in this with Mr. Campbell,

if they do not show much originality, at least would have acquired a fair place among the Italians of the sixteenth century. Those of Daniel, of Drayton, and of Sir William Alexander, afterwards Earl of Stirling, are perhaps hardly inferior. Some may doubt, however, whether the last poet should be placed on such a level.[n] But the difficulty of finding the necessary rhymes in our language has caused most who have attempted the sonnet to swerve from laws which cannot be transgressed, at least to the degree they have often dared, without losing the unity for which that complex mechanism was contrived. Certainly three quatrains of alternate rhymes, succeeded by a couplet, which Drummond, like many other English poets, has sometimes given us, is the very worst form of the sonnet, even if, in deference to a scanty number of Italian precedents, we allow it to pass as a sonnet at all.[o] We possess indeed noble poetry in the form of sonnet; yet with us it seems more fitted for grave than amatory composition; in the latter we miss

iv. 343. Mr. Southey thinks Drummond "has deserved the high reputation he has obtained;" which seems to say the same thing, but is in fact different. He observes that Drummond "frequently borrows and sometimes translates from the Italian and Spanish poets." Southey's British Poets, p. 798. The furious invective of Gifford against Drummond for having written private memoranda of his conversations with Ben Jonson, which he did not publish, and which, for aught we know, were perfectly faithful, is absurd. Any one else would have been thankful for so much literary anecdote.

[n] Lord Stirling is rather monotonous, as sonnetteers usually are, and he addresses his mistress by the appellation "Fair tygress." Campbell observes that there is elegance of expression in a few of Stirling's shorter pieces. Vol. iv. p. 206. The longest poem of Stirling is entitled Domesday, in twelve books, or, as he calls them, hours. It is written in the Italian octave stanza, and has somewhat of the condensed style of the philosophical school, which he seems to have imitated, but his numbers are harsh.

[o] The legitimate sonnet consists of two quatrains and two tercets; as much skill, to say the least, is required for the management of the latter as of the former. The rhymes of the last six lines are capable of many arrangements; but by far the worst, and also the least common in Italy, is that we usually adopt, the fifth and sixth rhyming together, frequently after a full pause, so that the sonnet ends with the point of an epigram. The best form, as the Italians hold, is the rhyming together of the three uneven and the three even lines, but as our language is less rich in consonant terminations, there can be no objection to what has abundant precedents even in theirs, the rhyming of the first and fourth, second and fifth, third and sixth lines. This, with a break in the sense at the third line, will make a real sonnet, which Shakespeare, Milton, Bowles, and Wordsworth have often failed to give us, even where they have given us something good instead.

[The common form of the Italian sonnet is called *rima chiusa;* where the rhymes of the two quatrains are 1, 4, 5, 8—2, 3, 6, 7; but the alternate rhyme sometimes, though less regularly, occurs. The tercets are either in *rima incatenata*, or *rima alternata;* and great variety is found in these, even among the early poets. Quadrio prefers the order a, b, a, b, a, b, where there are only two rhyming terminations; but does not ob-

the facility and grace of our native English measures, the song, the madrigal, or the ballad.

Carew.

52. Carew is the most celebrated among the lighter poets, though no collection has hitherto embraced his entire writings. Headley has said, and Ellis echoes the praise, that "Carew has the ease without the pedantry of Waller, and perhaps less conceit. Waller is too exclusively considered as the first man who brought versification to anything like its present standard. Carew's pretensions to the same merit are seldom sufficiently either considered or allowed." Yet, in point of versification, others of the same age seem to have surpassed Carew, whose lines are often very harmonious, but not so artfully constructed or so uniformly pleasing as those of Waller. He is remarkably unequal; the best of his little poems (none of more than thirty lines are good) excel all of his time; but, after a few lines of great beauty, we often come to some ill-expressed, or obscure, or weak, or inharmonious passage. Few will hesitate to acknowledge that he has more fancy and more tenderness than Waller, but less choice, less judgment and knowledge where to stop, less of the equability which never offends, less attention to the unity and thread of his little pieces. I should hesitate to give him, on the whole, the preference as a poet, taking collectively the attributes of that character; for we must not, in such a comparison, overlook a good deal of very inferior merit which may be found in the short volume of Carew's poems. The best have great beauty, but he has had, in late criticism, his full share of applause. Two of his most pleasing little poems appear also among those of Herrick; and as Carew's were, I believe, published posthumously, I am rather inclined to prefer the claim of the other poet, independently of some internal evidence as to one of them. In all ages these very short compositions circulate for a time in polished society, while mistakes as to the real author are natural.[p]

ject to a, b, c, a, b, c; or even a, b, c, b, a, c. The couplet termination he entirely condemns. Quadrio, Storia d' ogni Poesia, iii. 25.—1842.]

[p] One of these poems begins—

Amongst the myrtles as I walk'd,
Love and my sighs thus intertalk'd.

Herrick wants four good lines which are in Carew; and as they are rather more likely to have been interpolated than left out, this leads to a sort of inference that he was the original; there are also some other petty improvements. The second poem is that beginning—

53. The minor poetry of Ben Jonson is extremely beautiful. This is partly mixed with his masques and interludes, poetical and musical rather than dramatic pieces, and intended to gratify the imagination by the charms of song, as well as by the varied scenes that were brought before the eye; partly in very short effusions of a single sentiment, among which two epitaphs are known by heart. Jonson possessed an admirable taste and feeling in poetry, which his dramas, except the Sad Shepherd, do not entirely lead us to value highly enough; and when we consider how many other intellectual excellences distinguished him, wit, observation, judgment, memory, learning, we must acknowledge that the inscription on his tomb, O rare Ben Jonson! is not more pithy than it is true.

Ben Jonson.

54. George Wither, by siding with the less poetical, though more prosperous party in the civil war, and by a profusion of temporary writings to serve the ends of faction and folly, has left a name which we were accustomed to despise, till Ellis did justice to "that playful fancy, pure taste, and artless delicacy of sentiment which distinguish the poetry of his early youth." His best poems were published in 1622 with the title 'Mistress of Philarete.' Some of them are highly beautiful, and bespeak a mind above the grovelling puritanism into which he afterwards fell. I think there is hardly anything in our lyric poetry of this period equal to Wither's lines on his Muse, published by Ellis.[q]

Wither.

55. The poetry of Habington is that of a pure and amiable mind, turned to versification by the custom of the age, during a real passion for a lady of birth and virtue, the Castara whom he afterwards married; but it displays no great original power, nor is

Habington.

Ask me why I send you here
This firstling of the infant year.

Herrick gives the second line strangely,

This sweet infanta of the year,

which is little else than nonsense; and all the other variations are for the worse. I must leave it in doubt whether he borrowed, and disfigured a little, or was himself improved upon. I must own that he has a trick of spoiling what he takes. Suckling has an incomparable image on a lady dancing—

Her feet beneath the petticoat,
Like little mice, stole in and out,
As if they feared the light—

Herrick has it thus—

Her pretty feet, *like snails*, did creep
A little out;

a most singular parallel for an elegant dancer.

[q] Ellis's Specimens of Early English Poets, iii. 96.

it by any means exempt from the ordinary blemishes of hyperbolical compliment and far-fetched imagery. The poems of William Earl of Pembroke, long known by the character drawn for him by Clarendon, and now as the object of Shakspeare's doting friendship, were ushered into the world after his death, with a letter of extravagant flattery addressed by Donne to Christiana Countess of Devonshire.[r] But there is little reliance to be placed on the freedom from interpolation of these posthumous editions. Among these poems attributed to Lord Pembroke, we find one of the best known of Carew's,[s] and even the famous lines addressed to the Soul, which some have given to Silvester. The poems, in general, are of little merit; some are grossly indecent; nor would they be mentioned here except for the interest recently attached to the author's name. But they throw no light whatever on the sonnets of Shakspeare.

Earl of Pembroke.

56. Sir John Suckling is acknowledged to have left far behind him all former writers of song in gaiety and ease; it is not equally clear that he has ever since been surpassed. His poetry aims at no higher praise; he shows no sentiment or imagination, either because he had them not, or because he did not require either in the style he chose. Perhaps the Italians may have poetry in that style equal to Suckling's; I do not know that they have, nor do I believe that there is any in French; that there is none in Latin I am convinced.[t] Lovelace is chiefly known by a single song; his other poetry is much inferior; and indeed it may be generally remarked that the flowers of our early verse, both in the Elizabethan and the subsequent age, have been well culled by good taste and a friendly spirit of selection. We must not judge of them, or shall judge of them very favourably, by the extracts of Headley or Ellis.

Suckling.

Lovelace.

57. The most amorous, and among the best of our

[r] The only edition that I have seen, or that I find mentioned, of Lord Pembroke's poems, is in 1660. But as Donne died in 1631, I conceive that there must be one of earlier date. The Countess of Devonshire is not called dowager; her husband died in 1643.

[s] Ask me no more whither do stray
The golden atoms of the day.

[t] Suckling's Epithalamium, though not written for those "Qui musas colitis severiores," has been read by almost all the world, and is a matchless piece of liveliness and facility.

amorous poets, was Robert Herrick, a clergyman ejected from his living in Devonshire by the Long Parliament, whose 'Hesperides, or Poems Human and Divine,' were published in 1648. Herrick's divine poems are, of course, such as might be presumed by their title and by his calling; of his human, which are poetically much superior, and probably written in early life, the greater portion is light and voluptuous, while some border on the licentious and indecent. A selection was published in 1815, by which, as commonly happens, the poetical fame of Herrick does not suffer; a number of dull epigrams are omitted, and the editor has a manifest preference for what must be owned to be the most elegant and attractive part of his author's rhymes. He has much of the lively grace that distinguishes Anacreon and Catullus, and approaches also, with a less cloying monotony, to the Basia of Johannes Secundus. Herrick has as much variety as the poetry of kisses can well have; but his love is in a very slight degree that of sentiment, or even any intense passion; his mistresses have little to recommend them, even in his own eyes, save their beauties, and none of these are omitted in his catalogues. Yet he is abundant in the resources of verse; without the exuberant gaiety of Suckling, or perhaps the delicacy of Carew, he is sportive, fanciful, and generally of polished language. The faults of his age are sometimes apparent; though he is not often obscure, he runs, more perhaps for the sake of variety than any other cause, into occasional pedantry; he has his conceits and false thoughts, but these are more than redeemed by the numerous very little poems (for those of Herrick are frequently not longer than epigrams), which may be praised without much more qualification than belongs to such poetry.

Herrick.

58. John Milton was born in 1609. Few are ignorant of his life, in recovering and recording every circumstance of which no diligence has been spared, nor has it often been unsuccessful. Of his Latin poetry some was written at the age of seventeen; in English we have nothing, I believe, the date of which is known to be earlier than the sonnet on entering his twenty-third year. In 1634 he wrote Comus, which was published in 1637. Lycidas was written in the latter

Milton.

year, and most of his shorter pieces soon afterwards, except the sonnets, some of which do not come within the first half of the century.

59. Comus was sufficient to convince any one of taste and feeling that a great poet had arisen in England, and one partly formed in a different school from his contemporaries. Many of them had produced highly beautiful and imaginative passages; but none had evinced so classical a judgment, none had aspired to so regular a perfection. Jonson had learned much from the ancients; but there was a grace in their best models which he did not quite attain. Neither his Sad Shepherd nor the Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher have the elegance or dignity of Comus. A noble virgin and her young brothers, by whom this masque was originally represented, required an elevation, a purity, a sort of severity of sentiment, which no one in that age could have given but Milton. He avoided, and nothing loth, the more festive notes which dramatic poetry was wont to mingle with its serious strain. But for this he compensated by the brightest hues of fancy and the sweetest melody of song. In Comus we find nothing prosaic or feeble, no false taste in the incidents, and not much in the language, nothing over which we should desire to pass on a second perusal. The want of what we may call personality, none of the characters having names, except Comus himself, who is a very indefinite being, and the absence of all positive attributes of time and place, enhance the ideality of the fiction by a certain indistinctness not unpleasing to the imagination.

His Comus.

60. It has been said, I think very fairly, that Lycidas is a good test of a real feeling for what is peculiarly called poetry. Many, or perhaps we might say, most readers, do not taste its excellence; nor does it follow that they may not greatly admire Pope and Dryden, or even Virgil and Homer. It is, however, somewhat remarkable that Johnson, who has committed his critical reputation by the most contemptuous depreciation of this poem, had in an earlier part of his life selected the tenth eclogue of Virgil for peculiar praise;[a] the tenth eclogue, which, beautiful as it is, belongs to the same class of pastoral and personal allegory, and

Lycidas.

[a] Adventurer, No. 92.

requires the same sacrifice of reasoning criticism as the Lycidas itself. In the age of Milton the poetical world had been accustomed by the Italian and Spanish writers to a more abundant use of allegory than has been pleasing to their posterity; but Lycidas is not so much in the nature of an allegory as of a masque: the characters pass before our eyes in imagination, as on the stage; they are chiefly mythological, but not creations of the poet. Our sympathy with the fate of Lycidas may not be much stronger than for the desertion of Gallus by his mistress; but many poems will yield an exquisite pleasure to the imagination that produce no emotion in the heart; or none at least except through associations independent of the subject.

61. The introduction of St. Peter after the fabulous deities of the sea has appeared an incongruity deserving of censure to some admirers of this poem. It would be very reluctantly that we could abandon to this criticism the most splendid passage it presents. But the censure rests, as I think, on too narrow a principle. In narrative or dramatic poetry, where something like illusion or momentary belief is to be produced, the mind requires an objective possibility, a capacity of real existence, not only in all the separate portions of the imagined story, but in their coherency and relation to a common whole. Whatever is obviously incongruous, whatever shocks our previous knowledge of possibility, destroys to a certain extent that acquiescence in the fiction, which it is the true business of the fiction to produce. But the case is not the same in such poems as Lycidas. They pretend to no credibility, they aim at no illusion; they are read with the willing abandonment of the imagination to a waking dream, and require only that general possibility, that combination of images which common experience does not reject as incompatible, without which the fancy of the poet would be only like that of the lunatic. And it had been so usual to blend sacred with mythological personages in allegory, that no one probably in Milton's age would have been struck by the objection.

62. The Allegro and Penseroso are perhaps more familiar to us than any part of the writings of Milton. They satisfy the critics, and they delight

Allegro and Penseroso.

mankind. The choice of images is so judicious, their succession so rapid, the allusions are so various and pleasing, the leading distinction of the poems is so felicitously maintained, the versification is so animated, that we may place them at the head of that long series of descriptive poems which our language has to boast. It may be added, as in the greater part of Milton's writings, that they are sustained at an uniform pitch, with few blemishes of expression and scarce any feebleness; a striking contrast, in this respect, to all the contemporaneous poetry, except perhaps that of Waller. Johnson has thought that, while there is no mirth in his melancholy, he can detect some melancholy in his mirth. This seems to be too strongly put; but it may be said that his Allegro is rather cheerful than gay, and that even his cheerfulness is not always without effort. In these poems he is indebted to Fletcher, to Burton, to Browne, to Wither, and probably to more of our early versifiers; for he was a great collector of sweets from those wild flowers.

Ode on the Nativity.

63. The Ode on the Nativity, far less popular than most of the poetry of Milton, is perhaps the finest in the English language. A grandeur, a simplicity, a breadth of manner, an imagination at once elevated and restrained by the subject, reign throughout it. If Pindar is a model of lyric poetry, it would be hard to name any other ode so truly Pindaric; but more has naturally been derived from the Scriptures. Of the other short poems, that on the death of the Marchioness of Winchester deserves particular mention. It is pity that the first lines are bad, and the last much worse; for rarely can we find more feeling or beauty than in some other passages.

His Sonnets.

64. The sonnets of Milton have obtained of late years the admiration of all real lovers of poetry. Johnson has been as impotent to fix the public taste in this instance as in his other criticisms on the smaller poems of the author of Paradise Lost. These sonnets are indeed unequal; the expression is sometimes harsh, and sometimes obscure; sometimes too much of pedantic allusion interferes with the sentiment, nor am I reconciled to his frequent deviations from the best Italian structure. But such blemishes are lost in the

majestic simplicity, the holy calm, that ennoble many of these short compositions.

65. Many anonymous songs, many popular lays, both of Scottish and English minstrelsy, were poured forth in this period of the seventeenth century. Those of Scotland became, after the union of the crowns, and the consequent cessation of rude border frays, less warlike than before; they are still, however, imaginative, pathetic, and natural. It is probable that the best even of this class are a little older; but their date is seldom determinable with much precision. The same may be said of the English ballads, which, so far as of a merely popular nature, appear, by their style and other circumstances, to belong more frequently to the reign of James I. than any other period.

Anonymous poetry.

SECT. VI.—ON LATIN POETRY.

Latin Poets of France — And other Countries — Of England — May — Milton.

66. FRANCE, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, had been remarkably fruitful of Latin poetry; it was the pride of her scholars, and sometimes of her statesmen. In the age that we have now in review we do not find so many conspicuous names; but the custom of academical institutions, and especially of the seminaries conducted by the Jesuits, kept up a facility of Latin versification, which it was by no means held pedantic or ridiculous to exhibit in riper years. The French enumerate several with praise: Guijon, Bourbon (Borbonius), whom some have compared with the best of the preceding century, and among whose poems that on the death of Henry IV. is reckoned the best; Cerisantes, equal, as some of his admirers think, to Sarbievius, and superior, as others presume, to Horace; and Petavius, who, having solaced his leisure hours with Greek and Hebrew, as well as Latin versification, has obtained in the last the general suffrage of critics.[x] I can speak of

Latin poets of France.

[x] Baillet, Jugemens des Sçavans, has criticised all these and several more. Rapin's opinion on Latin poetry is entitled to much regard from his own excellence in it. He praises three lyrists, Casimir, Magdelenet, and Cerisantes; the two latter being French. Sarbieuski a de l'élévation, mais sans pureté; Magdelenet

none of these from direct knowledge, except of Borbonius, whose Diræ on the death of Henry have not appeared to my judgment deserving of so much eulogy.

In Germany and Italy.

67. The Germans wrote much in Latin, especially in the earlier decads of this period. Melissus Schedius, not undistinguished in his native tongue, might have been mentioned as a Latin poet in the last volume, since most of his compositions were published in the sixteenth century. In Italy we have not many conspicuous names. The bad taste that infested the school of Marini spread also, according to Tiraboschi, over Latin poetry. Martial, Lucan, and Claudian became in their eyes better models than Catullus and Virgil. Baillet, or rather those whom he copies, and among whom Rossi, author of the Pinacotheca Virorum illustrium, under the name of Erythræus, a profuse and indiscriminating panegyrist, for the most part, of his contemporaries, furnishes the chief materials, bestows praise on Cesarini, on Querenghi, whom even Tiraboschi selects from the crowd, and on Maffei Barberini, best known as Pope Urban VIII.

In Holland, Heinsius.

68. Holland stood at the head of Europe in this line of poetry. Grotius has had the reputation of writing with spirit, elegance, and imagination.[y] But he is excelled by Heinsius, whose elegies, still more than his hexameters, may be ranked high in modern Latin. The habit, however, of classical imitation has so much weakened all individual originality in these versifiers, that it is often difficult to distinguish them, or to pronounce of any twenty lines that they might not have been written by some other author. Compare, for example, the elegies of Buchanan with those of Heinsius, wherever there are no proper names to guide us; a more finished and continued elegance

est pur, mais sans élévation. Cerisantes a joint dans ses odes l'un et l'autre; car il écrit noblement, et d'un style assez pur. Après tout, il n'a pas tant de feu que Casimir, lequel avoit bien de l'esprit, et de cet esprit heureux qui fait les poëtes. Bucanan a des odes dignes de l'antiquité, mais il a de grandes inégalités par le mélange de son caractère qui n'est pas assez uni. Réflexions sur la Poëtique, p. 208.

[y] [The Adamus Exul of Grotius, which, after going through several editions in Holland before the middle of the 17th century, has lately been retranslated by Mr. Barham, is not only of considerable poetical merit, but deserving of notice, as having suggested much to Milton. Lauder perceived this, but was strangely led to exaggerate the resemblance by forgery.—1847.]

belongs, on the whole (as at least I should say), to the latter, but in a short passage this may not be perceptible, and I believe few would guess with much confidence between the two. Heinsius, however, like most of the Dutch, is remarkably fond of a polysyllabic close in the pentameter; at least in his Juvenilia, which, notwithstanding their title, are perhaps better than his later productions. As it is not necessary to make a distinct head for the Latin drama, we may here advert to a tragedy by Heinsius, Herodes Infanticida. This has been the subject of a critique by Balzac, for the most part very favourable; and it certainly contains some highly beautiful passages. Perhaps the description of the Virgin's feelings on the nativity, though praised by Balzac, and exquisitely classical in diction, is not quite in the best taste.[a]

69. Sidonius Hoschius, a Flemish Jesuit, is extolled by Baillet and his authorities. But another of the same order, Casimir Sarbievius, a Pole, is far better known, and, in lyric poetry, which he almost exclusively cultivated, obtained a much higher reputation. He had lived some years at Rome, and is full of Roman allusion. He had read Horace, as Sannazarius had Virgil, and Heinsius Ovid, till the style and tone became spontaneous; but he has more of centonism than the other two. Yet while he constantly reminds us of Horace, it is with as constant an inferiority; we feel that his Rome was not the same Rome, that Urban VIII. was not Augustus, nor the Polish victories on the Danube like those of the sons of Livia. Hence his flattery of the great, though not a step beyond that of his master, seems rather more displeasing, because we have it only on his word that they were truly great. Sarbievius seldom rises high or pours out an original feeling; but he is free

Casimir Sarbievius.

[a] Oculosque nunc huc pavida nunc illuc jacit,
Interque matrem virginemque hærent adhuc
Suspensa matris gaudia, ac trepidus pudor.
* * * sæpe, cum blandas puer,
Aut a sopore languidas jactat manus,
Tenerisque labris pectus intactum petit,
Virginea subitus ora perfundit rubor,
Laudemque matris virginis crimen putat.

A critique on the poems of Heinsius will be found in the Retrospective Review, vol. i. p. 49; but notwithstanding the laudatory spirit, which is for the most part too indiscriminating in that publication, the reviewer has not done justice to Heinsius, and hardly seems, perhaps, a very competent judge of Latin verse. The suffrages of those who were so, in favour of this Batavian poet, are collected by Baillet, n. 1482.

from conceits, never becomes prosaic, and knows how to put in good language the commonplaces with which his subject happens to furnish him. He is, to a certain degree, in Latin poetry what Chiabrera is in Italian, but does not deserve so high a place. Sarbievius was perhaps the first who succeeded much in the Alcaic stanza, which the earlier poets seem to avoid, or to use unskilfully. But he has many unwarrantable licenses in his metre, and even false quantities, as is common to the great majority of these Latin versifiers.

Barlæus.

70. Gasper Barlæus had as high a name, perhaps, as any Latin poet of this age. His rhythm is indeed excellent, but if he ever rises to other excellence, I have not lighted on the passages. A greater equality I have never found than in Barlæus; nothing is bad, nothing is striking. It was the practice with Dutchmen on their marriage to purchase epithalamiums in hexameter verse; and the muse of Barlæus was in request. These nuptial songs are of course about Peleus and Thetis, or similar personages, interspersed with fitting praises of the bride and bridegroom. Such poetry is not likely to rise high. The epicedia, or funeral lamentations, paid for by the heir, are little, if at all, better than the epithalamia; and the panegyrical effusions on public or private events rather worse. The elegies of Barlæus, as we generally find, are superior to the hexameters: he has here the same smoothness of versification, and a graceful gaiety which gives us pleasure. In some of his elegies and epistles he counterfeits the Ovidian style extremely well, so that they might pass for those of his model. Still there is an equability, a recurrence of trivial thoughts and forms, which in truth is too much characteristic of modern Latin to be a reproach to Barlæus. He uses the polysyllabic termination less than earlier Dutch poets. One of the epithalamia of Barlæus, it may be observed before we leave him, is entitled Paradisus, and recounts the nuptials of Adam and Eve. It is possible that Milton may have seen this; the fourth book of the Paradise Lost compresses the excessive diffuseness of Barlæus, but the ideas are in great measure the same. Yet since this must naturally be the case, we cannot presume imitation. Few of the poems of Barlæus are so redundant as this;

he has the gift of stringing together mythological parallels and descriptive poetry without stint, and his discretion does not inform him where to stop.

Balde. Greek poem of Heinsius.

71. The eight books of Sylvæ by Balde, a German ecclesiastic, are extolled by Baillet and Bouterwek far above their value; the odes are tumid and unclassical; yet some have called him equal to Horace. Heinsius tried his skill in Greek verse. His Peplus Græcorum Epigrammatum was published in 1613. These are what our schoolboys would call very indifferent in point of elegance, and, as I should conceive, of accuracy: articles and expletives (as they used to be happily called) are perpetually employed for the sake of the metre, not of the sense.

Latin poets of Scotland. Jonston's Psalms.

72. Scotland might perhaps contend with Holland in this as well as in the preceding age. In the Deliciæ Poetarum Scotorum, published in 1637 by Arthur Jonston, we find about an equal produce of each century, the whole number being thirty-seven. Those of Jonston himself, and some elegies by Scot of Scotstarvet, are among the best. The Scots certainly wrote Latin with a good ear and considerable elegance of phrase. A sort of critical controversy was carried on in the last century as to the versions of the Psalms by Buchanan and Jonston. Though the national honour may seem equally secure by the superiority of either, it has, I believe, been usual in Scotland to maintain the older poet against all the world. I am neverthe less inclined to think that Jonston's Psalms, all of which are in elegiac metre, do not fall short of those of Buchanan, either in elegance of style or in correctness of Latinity. In the 137th, with which Buchanan has taken much pains, he may be allowed the preference, but not at a great interval, and he has attained this superiority by too much diffuseness.

Owen's epigrams.

73. Nothing good, and hardly tolerable, in a poetical sense, had appeared in Latin verse among ourselves till this period. Owen's epigrams (Audoeni Epigrammata), a well-known collection, were published in 1607; unequal enough, they are sometimes neat and more often witty: but they scarcely aspire to the name of poetry. Alabaster, a man of recondite Hebrew learning, published in 1632 his

Alabaster's Roxana.

tragedy of Roxana, which, as he tells us, was written about forty years before for one night's representation, probably at college, but had been lately printed by some plagiary as his own. He forgets, however, to inform the reader, and thus lays himself open to some recrimination, that his tragedy is very largely borrowed from the Dalida of Groto, an Italian dramatist of the sixteenth century.[a] The story, the characters, the incidents, almost every successive scene, many thoughts, descriptions, and images, are taken from this original; but it is a very free translation, or rather differs from what can be called a translation. The tragedy of Groto is shortened, and Alabaster has thrown much into another form, besides introducing much of his own. The plot is full of all the accumulated horror and slaughter in which the Italians delighted on their stage. I rather prefer the original tragedy. Alabaster has spirit and fire with some degree of skill; but his notion of tragic style is of the "King Cambyses' vein;" he is inflated and hyperbolical to excess, which is not the case with Groto.

May's Supplement to Lucan.

74. But the first Latin poetry which England can vaunt is May's Supplement to Lucan, in seven books, which carry down the history of the Pharsalia to the death of Cæsar. This is not only a very spirited poem, but, in many places at least, an excellent imitation. The versification, though it frequently reminds us of his model, is somewhat more negligent. May seems rarely to fall into Lucan's tumid extravagances, or to emulate his philosophical grandeur; but the narration is almost as impetuous and rapid, the images as thronged; and sometimes we have rather a happy imitation of the ingenious sophisms Lucan is apt to employ. The death of Cato and that of Cæsar are among the passages well worthy of praise. In some lines on Cleopatra's intrigue with Cæsar, while married to her brother, he has seized, with felicitous effect, not

[a] I am indebted for the knowledge of this to a manuscript note I found in the copy of Alabaster's Roxana in the British Museum: Haud multum abest hæc tragedia a pura versione tragediæ Italicæ Ludovici Groti Cæci Hadriensis cui titulus Dalida. This induced me to read the tragedy of Groto, which I had not previously done.

The title of Roxana runs thus:—Roxana tragedia a plagiarii unguibus vindicata aucta et agnita ab autore Gul. Alabastro. Lond. 1632.

only the broken cadences, but the love of moral paradox we find in Lucan.[b]

Milton's Latin poems.

75. Many of the Latin poems of Milton were written in early life, some even at the age of seventeen. His name, and the just curiosity of mankind to trace the development of a mighty genius, would naturally attract our regard. They are in themselves full of classical elegance, of thoughts natural and pleasing, of a diction culled with taste from the gardens of ancient poetry, of a versification remarkably well cadenced and grateful to the ear. There is in them, without a marked originality, which Latin verse can rarely admit but at the price of some incorrectness or impropriety, a more individual display of the poet's mind than we usually find. "In the elegies," it is said by Warton, a very competent judge of Latin poetry, "Ovid was professedly Milton's model for language and versification. They are not, however, a perpetual and uniform tissue of Ovidian phraseology. With Ovid in view he has an original manner and character of his own, which exhibit a remarkable perspicuity of contexture, a native facility and fluency. Nor does his observation of Roman models oppress or destroy our great poet's inherent powers of invention and sentiment. I value these pieces as much for their fancy and genius as for their style and expression. That Ovid, among the Latin poets, was Milton's favourite, appears not only from his elegiac but his hexametric poetry. The versification of our author's hexameters has yet a different structure from that of the Metamorphoses: Milton's is more clear, intelligible, and flowing; less desultory, less familiar, and less embarrassed, with a frequent recurrence of periods. Ovid is at once rapid and abrupt."[c] Why Warton should have at once supposed Ovid to be Milton's favourite model in hexameters, and yet so totally different as he represents

[b] . . . Nec crimen inesse
Concubitu nimium tali, Cleopatra, putabunt
Qui Ptolemæorum thalamos, consuetaque jura
Incestæ novere domûs, fratremque sorori
Conjugio junctam, sacræ sub nomine tædæ
Majus adulterio delictum; turpius isset,
Quis credat? justi ad thalamos Cleopatra mariti,
Utque minus lecto peccaret, adultera facta est.

[c] Warton's essay on the Latin poetry of Milton, inserted at length in Todd's edition.

him to be, seems hard to say. The structure of our poet's hexameters is much more Virgilian, nor do I see the least resemblance in them to the manner of Ovid. These Latin poems of Milton bear some traces of juvenility, but, for the most part, such as please us for that very reason; it is the spring-time of an ardent and brilliant fancy, before the stern and sour spirit of polemical puritanism had gained entrance into his mind, the voice of the Allegro and of Comus.

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORY OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE FROM 1600 TO 1650.

SECTION I.

ON THE ITALIAN AND SPANISH DRAMA.

Character of the Italian Theatre in this Age — Bonarelli — The Spanish Theatre — Calderon — Appreciation of his Merits as a Dramatic Poet.

Decline of the Italian theatre

1. THE Italian theatre, if we should believe one of its historians, fell into total decay during the whole course of the seventeenth century, though the number of dramatic pieces of various kinds was by no means small. He makes a sort of apology for inserting in a copious list of dramatic performances any that appeared after 1600, and stops entirely with 1650.[d] But in this he seems hardly to have done justice to a few, which, if not of remarkable excellence, might be selected from the rest. Andreini is perhaps best known by name in England, and that for one only of his eighteen dramas, the Adamo, which has been supposed, on too precarious grounds, to have furnished the idea of Paradise Lost in the original form, as it was planned by its great author. The Adamo was first published in 1613, and afterwards with amplification in 1641. It is denominated "A Sacred Representation;" and as Andreini was a player by profession, must be presumed to have been brought upon the stage. It is, however, asserted by Riccoboni, that those who wrote regular tragedies did not cause them to be represented; probably he might have scrupled to give that epithet to the Adamo. Hayler and Walker have reckoned it a composition of considerable beauty.

2. The majority of Italian tragedies in the seventeenth

[d] Riccoboni, Hist. du Théâtre Italien, vol 1.

century were taken, like the Adamo, from sacred subjects, including such as ecclesiastical legends abundantly supplied. Few of these gave sufficient scope, either by action or character, for the diversity of excitement which the stage demands. Tragedies more truly deserving that name were the Solimano of Bonarelli, the Tancredi of Campeggio, the Demetrio of Rocco, which Salfi prefers to the rest, and the Aristodemo of Carlo de' Dottori. A drama by Testi, L'Isola di Alcina, had some reputation; but in this, which the title betrays not to be a legitimate tragedy, he introduced musical airs, and thus trod on the boundaries of a rival art.[e] It has been suggested with no inconsiderable probability, that in her passion for the melodrame Italy lost all relish for the graver tone of tragedy. Music, at least the music of the opera, conspired with many more important circumstances to spread an effeminacy over the public character.

Filli di Sciro.

3. The pastoral drama had always been allied to musical sentiment, even though it might be without accompaniment. The feeling it inspired was nearly that of the opera. In this style we find one imitation of Tasso and Guarini, inferior in most qualities, yet deserving some regard, and once popular even with the critics of Italy. This was the Filli di Sciro of Bonarelli, published at Ferrara, a city already fallen into the hands of priests, but round whose deserted palaces the traditions of poetical glory still lingered, in 1607, and represented by an academy in the same place soon afterwards. It passed through numerous editions, and was admired, even beyond the Alps, during the whole century, and perhaps still longer. It displays much of the bad taste and affectation of that period. Bonarelli is as strained in the construction of history, and in his characters, as he is in his style. Celia, the heroine of this pastoral, struggles with a double love, the original idea, as he might truly think, of his drama, which he wrote a long dissertation in order to justify. It is, however, far less conformable to the truth of nature than to the sophisticated society for which he wrote. A wanton capricious court lady might perhaps waver, with some

[e] Salfi, continuation de Ginguéné, vol. xii. chap. ix. Besides this larger work, Salfi published in 1829 a short essay on the Italian stage, Saggio Storico-Critico della Commedia Italiana.

warmth of inclination towards both, between two lovers, "Alme dell' alma mia," as Celia calls them, and be very willing to possess either. But what is morbid in moral affection seldom creates sympathy, or is fit either for narrative poetry or the stage. Bonarelli's diction is studied and polished to the highest degree; and though its false refinement and affected graces often displease us, the real elegance of insulated passages makes us pause to admire. In harmony and sweetness of sound he seems fully equal to his predecessors, Tasso and Guarini; but he has neither the pathos of the one, nor the fertility of the other. The language and turn of thought seems, more than in the Pastor Fido, to be that of the opera, wanting, indeed, nothing but the intermixture of air to be perfectly adapted to music. Its great reputation, which even Crescimbeni does his utmost to keep up, proves the decline of good taste in Italy, and the lateness of its revival.[f]

Translations of Spanish dramas.

4. A new fashion, which sprung up about 1620, both marks the extinction of a taste for genuine tragedy, and, by furnishing a substitute, stood in the way of its revival. Translations from Spanish tragedies and tragi-comedies, those of Lope de Vega and his successors, replaced the native muse of Italy. These were in prose and in three acts, irregular of course, and with very different characteristics from those of the Italian school. "The very name of tragedy," says Riccoboni, "became unknown in our country; the *monsters* which usurped the place did not pretend to that glorious title. Tragi-comedies rendered from the Spanish, such as Life is a Dream (of Calderon), the Samson, the Guest of Stone, and others of the same class, were the popular ornaments of the Italian stage."[g]

5. The extemporaneous comedy had always been the amusement of the Italian populace, not to say of all who wished to unbend their minds.[h] An epoch in this art

[f] Istoria della volgar Poesia, iv. 147. He places the Filli di Sciro next to the Aminta.

[g] Hist. du Théâtre Italien, i. 47.

[h] The extemporaneous comedy was called commedia dell' arte. "It consisted," says Salfi, "in a mere sketch or plan of a dramatic composition, the parts in which having been hardly shadowed out were assigned to different actors who were to develop them in extemporaneous dialogue." Such a sketch was called a scenario, containing the subject of each scene, and those of Flaminio Scala were celebrated. Saggio Storico-Critico, p. 38. The pantomime, as it exists among us,

was made in 1611 by Flaminio Scala, who first published the outline or canvas of a series of these pieces, the dialogue being of course reserved for the ingenious performers.[i] This outline was not quite so short as that sometimes given in Italian play-bills: it explained the drift of each actor's part in the scene, but without any distinct hint of what he was to say. The construction of these fables is censured by Riccoboni as weak; but it would not be reasonable to expect that it should be otherwise. The talent of the actors supplied the deficiency of writers. A certain quickness of wit, and tact in catching the shades of manner, comparatively rare among us, are widely diffused in Italy. It would be, we may well suspect, impossible to establish an extemporaneous theatre in England, which should not be stupidly vulgar.[k] But Bergamo sent out many Harlequins, and Venice many Pantaloons. They were respected, as brilliant wit ought to be. The emperor Mathias ennobled Cecchini, a famous Harlequin, who was, however, a man of letters. These actors sometimes took the plot of old comedies as their outline, and disfigured them, so as hardly to be known, by their extemporaneous dialogue.[m]

Extemporaneous comedy.

6. Lope de Vega was at the height of his glory at the beginning of this century. Perhaps the majority of his dramas fall within it; but enough has been said on the subject in the last volume. His contemporaries and immediate successors were exceedingly numerous; the effulgence of dramatic literature in Spain

Spanish stage.

is the descendant of this extemporaneous comedy, but with little of the wit and spirit of its progenitor.

[i] Salfi, p. 40.

[k] This is only meant as to dialogue and as to the public stage. The talent of a single actor, like the late Charles Mathews, is not an exception; but even the power of strictly extemporaneous comedy, with the agreeable poignancy that the minor theatre requires, is not wanting among some whose station and habits of life restrain its exercise to the most private circles.

[m] Riccoboni, Hist. du Théâtre Italien Salfi, xii. 518. An elaborate disquisition on the extemporaneous comedy by Mr Panizzi, in the Foreign Review for 1829 (not the Foreign Quarterly, but one early extinguished), derives it from the mimes and Atellanian comedies of ancient Italy, tracing them through the middle ages. The point seems sufficiently proved. The last company of performers in this old though plebeian family, existed within about thirty years in Lombardy. A friend of mine at that time witnessed the last of the Harlequins. I need hardly say that this character was not a mere skipper over the stage, as we have seen him, but a very honest and lively young Bergamasque. The plays of Carlo Gozzi, if plays they are, are mere hints to guide the wit of extemporaneous actors.

corresponding exactly in time to that of England. Several are named by Bouterwek and Velasquez; but one only, Pedro Calderon de la Barca, must be permitted to arrest us. This celebrated man was born in 1600, and died in 1683. From an early age till after the middle of the century, when he entered the church, he contributed, with a fertility only eclipsed by that of Lope, a long list of tragic, historic, comic, and tragi-comic dramas to the Spanish stage. In the latter period of his life he confined himself to the religious pieces called Autos Sacramentales. Of these, 97 are published in the collective edition of 1726, besides 127 of his regular plays. In one year, 1635, it is said that twelve of his comedies appeared; but the authenticity of so large a number has been questioned. He is said to have given a list of his sacred plays, at the age of eighty, consisting of only 68. No collection was published by himself. Some of his comedies, in the Spanish sense of the word, it may be observed, turn more or less on religious subjects, as their titles show: El Purgatorio de San Patricio—La Devocion de la Cruz—Judas Maccabeus—La Cisma de Inghilterra. He did not dislike contemporary subjects. In El Sitio de Breda, we have Spinola, Nassau, and others then living, on the scene. Calderon's metre is generally trochaic, of eight or seven syllables, not always rhyming; but verses de arte mayor, as they were called, or anapæstic lines of eleven or twelve syllables, and also hendecasyllables, frequently occur.

Calderon. Number of his pieces.

7. The comedies, those properly so called, *de capa y espada*, which represent manners, are full of incident, but not perhaps crowded so as to produce any confusion; the characters have nothing very salient, but express the sentiments of gentlemen with frankness and spirit. We find in every one a picture of Spain; gallantry, jealousy, quick resentment of insult, sometimes deep revenge. The language of Calderon is not unfrequently poetical, even in these lighter dramas, but hyperbolical figures and insipid conceits deform its beauty. The gracioso, or witty servant, is an unfailing personage; but I do not know (my reading, however, being extremely limited) that Calderon displays much brilliancy or liveliness in his sallies.

His comedies.

8. The plays of Calderon required a good deal of theatrical apparatus, unless the good nature of the audience dispensed with it. But this kind of comedy must have led to scenical improvements. They seem to contain no indecency, nor do the intrigues ever become criminal, at least in effect; most of the ladies, indeed, are unmarried. Yet they have been severely censured by later critics on the score of their morality, which is no doubt that of the stage, but considerably purified in comparison with the Italian and French of the sixteenth century. Calderon seems to bear no resemblance to any English writer of his age, except, in a certain degree, to Beaumont and Fletcher. And as he wants their fertility of wit and humour, we cannot, I presume, place the best of his comedies on a level with even the second class of theirs. But I should speak perhaps with more reserve of an author, very few of whose plays I have read, and with whose language I am very imperfectly acquainted; nor should I have ventured so far, if the opinion of many European critics had not seemed to warrant my frigid character of one who has sometimes been so much applauded.

La Vida es Sueño.

9. La Vida es Sueño rises, in its subject as well as style, above the ordinary comedies of Calderon. Basilius, King of Poland, a deep philosopher, has, by consulting the stars, had the misfortune of ascertaining that his unborn son Sigismund would be under some extraordinary influences of evil passion. He resolves in consequence to conceal his birth, and to bring him up in a horrible solitude, where, it hardly appears why, he is laden with chains, and covered with skins of beasts, receiving meantime an excellent education, and becoming able to converse on every subject, though destitute of all society but that of his keeper Clotaldo. The inheritance of the crown of Poland is supposed to have devolved on Astolfo, duke of Moscovy, or on his cousin Estrella, who, as daughter of an elder branch, contests it with him. The play opens by a scene, in which Rosaura, a Moscovite lady, who, having been betrayed by Astolfo, has fled to Poland in man's attire, descends the almost impassable precipices which overhang the small castle wherein Sigismund is confined.

This scene, and that in which he first appears, are impressive and full of beauty, even now that we are become accustomed in excess to these theatrical wonders. Clotaldo discovers the prince in conversation with a stranger, who by the king's general order must be detained, and probably for death. A circumstance leads him to believe that this stranger is his son; but the Castilian loyalty transferred to Poland forbids him to hesitate in obeying his instructions. The king, however, who has fortunately determined to release his son, and try an experiment upon the force of the stars, coming in at this time, sets Rosaura at liberty.

10. In the next act Sigismund, who, by the help of a sleeping potion, has been conveyed to the palace, wakes in a bed of down, and in the midst of royal splendour. He has little difficulty in understanding his new condition, but preserves a not unnatural resentment of his former treatment. The malign stars prevail; he treats Astolfo with the utmost arrogance, reviles and threatens his father, throws one of his servants out of the window, attempts the life of Clotaldo and the honour of Rosaura. The king, more convinced than ever of the truth of astrology, directs another soporific draught to be administered; and in the next scene we find the prince again in his prison. Clotaldo, once more at his side, persuades him that his late royalty has passed in a dream, wisely observing, however, that asleep or awake we should always do what is right.

11. Sigismund, after some philosophical reflections, prepares to submit to the sad reality which has displaced his vision. But in the third act an unforeseen event recalls him to the world. The army, become acquainted with his rights, and indignant that the king should transfer them to Astolfo, break into his prison, and place him at their head. Clotaldo expects nothing but death. A new revolution, however, has taken place. Sigismund, corrected by the dismal consequences of giving way to passion in his former dream, and apprehending a similar waking once more, has suddenly overthrown the sway of the sinister constellations that had enslaved him; he becomes generous, mild, and master of himself; and the only pretext for his disinheritance being removed, it is

easy that he should be reconciled to his father, that Astolfo, abandoning a kingdom he can no longer claim, should espouse the injured Rosaura, and that the reformed prince should become the husband of Estrella. The incidents which chiefly relate to these latter characters have been omitted in this slight analysis.

12. This tragi-comedy presents a moral not so contemptible in the age of Calderon as it may now appear: that the stars may influence our will, but do not oblige it. If we could extract an allegorical meaning from the chimeras of astrology, and deem the stars but names for the circumstances of birth and fortune which affect the character as well as condition of every man, but yield to the persevering energy of self-correction, we might see in this fable the shadow of a permanent and valuable truth. As a play it deserves considerable praise; the events are surprising without excessive improbability, and succeed each other without confusion; the thoughts are natural and poetically expressed; and it requires, on the whole, less allowance for the different standard of national taste than is usual in the Spanish drama.

A secreto Agravio secreta Vengança.

13. A secreto Agravio secreta Vengança is a domestic tragedy which turns on a common story—a husband's revenge on one whom he erroneously believes to be still a favoured, and who had been once an accepted, lover. It is something like Tancred and Sigismunda, except that the lover is killed instead of the husband. The latter puts him to death secretly, which gives name to the play. He afterwards sets fire to his own house, and in the confusion designedly kills his wife. A friend communicates the fact to his sovereign, Sebastian, King of Portugal, who applauds what has been done. It is an atrocious play, and speaks terrible things as to the state of public sentiment in Spain, but abounds with interesting and touching passages.

Style of Calderon.

14. It has been objected to Calderon, and the following defence of Bouterwek seems very insufficient, that his servants converse in a poetical style like their masters. "The spirit, on these particular occasions," says that judicious but lenient critic,

"must not be misunderstood. The servants in Calderon's comedies always imitate the language of their masters. In most cases they express themselves like the latter, in the natural language of real life, and often divested of that colouring of the ideas, without which a dramatic work ceases to be a poem. But whenever romantic gallantry speaks in the language of tenderness, admiration, or flattery, then, according to Spanish custom, every idea becomes a metaphor; and Calderon, who was a thorough Spaniard, seized these opportunities to give the reins to his fancy, and to suffer it to take a bold lyric flight beyond the boundaries of nature. On such occasions the most extravagant metaphoric language, in the style of the Italian Marinists, did not appear unnatural to a Spanish audience; and even Calderon himself had for that style a particular fondness, to the gratification of which he sacrificed a chaster taste. It was his ambition to become a more refined Lope de Vega or a Spanish Marini. Thus in his play, Bien vengas Mal si vengas solo, a waiting maid, addressing her young mistress who has risen in a gay humour, says —'Aurora would not have done wrong had she slumbered that morning in her snowy crystal, for that the sight of her mistress's charms would suffice to draw aside the curtains from the couch of Sol.' She adds that, using a Spanish idea, 'it might then, indeed, be said that the sun had risen in her lady's eyes.' Valets, on the like occasion, speak in the same style; and when lovers address compliments to their mistresses, and these reply in the same strain, the play of far-fetched metaphors is aggravated by antitheses to a degree which is intolerable to any but a Spanish-formed taste. But it must not be forgotten that this language of gallantry was in Calderon's time spoken by the fashionable world, and that it was a vernacular property of the ancient national poetry."[n] What is this but to confess that Calderon had not genius to raise himself above his age, and that he can be read only as a "Triton of the minnows;" one who is great but in comparison with his neighbours?

[n] P. 507. It has been ingeniously hinted in the Quarterly Review, vol. xxv., that the high-flown language of servants in Spanish dramas is a parody on that of their masters, and designed to make it ridiculous. But this is probably too refined an excuse.

It will not convert bad writing into good to tell us, as is perpetually done, that we must place ourselves in the author's position, and make allowances for the taste of his age, or the temper of his nation. All this is true, relatively to the author himself, and may be pleaded against a condemnation of his talents; but the excuse of the man is not that of the work.

15. The fame of Calderon has been latterly revived in Europe through the praise of some German critics, but especially the unbounded panegyric of one of their greatest men, William Schlegel. The passage is well known for its brilliant eloquence. Every one must differ with reluctance and respect from this accomplished writer; and an Englishman, acknowledging with gratitude and admiration what Schlegel has done for the glory of Shakspeare, ought not to grudge the laurels he showers upon another head. It is however rather as a poet than a dramatist that Calderon has received this homage; and in his poetry, it seems to be rather bestowed on the mysticism, which finds a responsive chord in so many German hearts, than on what we should consider a more universal excellence, a sympathy with, and a power over, all that is true and beautiful in nature and in man. Sismondi (but the distance between Weimar and Geneva in matters of taste is incomparably greater than by the public road), dissenting from this eulogy of Schlegel, which he fairly lays before the reader, stigmatises Calderon as eminently the poet of the age wherein he lived, the age of Philip IV. Salfi goes so far as to say we can hardly read Calderon without indignation; since he seems to have had no view but to make his genius subservient to the lowest prejudices and superstitions of his country.[o] In the twenty-fifth volume of the Quarterly Review an elaborate and able critique on the plays of Calderon seems to have estimated him without prejudice on either side. "His boundless and inexhaustible fertility of invention, his quick power of seizing and prosecuting everything with dramatic effect, the unfailing animal spirits of his dramas, if we may venture on the expression, the general loftiness and purity of his sentiments, the rich facility of his verse, the abundance of his language, and the clear-

His merits sometimes overrated.

[o] Hist. Litt. de Ginguéné, vol. xii. p. 499.

ness and precision with which he embodies his thoughts in words and figures, entitle him to a high rank as to the imagination and creative faculty of a poet, but we cannot consent to enrol him among the mighty masters of the human breast."[p] His total want of truth to nature, even the ideal nature which poetry embodies, justifies at least this sentence. "The wildest flights of Biron and Romeo," it is observed, "are tame to the heroes of Calderon; the Asiatic pomp of expression, the exuberance of metaphor, the perpetual recurrence of the same figures, which the poetry of Spain derived from its intercourse with the Arabian conquerors of the peninsula, are lavished by him in all their fulness. Every address of a lover to a mistress is thickly studded with stars and flowers; her looks are always nets of gold, her lips rubies, and her heart a rock, which the rivers of his tears attempt in vain to melt. In short, the language of the heart is entirely abandoned for that of the fancy; the brilliant but false concetti which have infected the poetical literature of every country, and which have been universally exploded by pure taste, glitter in every page and intrude into every speech."[q]

Sect. II.—On the French Drama.

Early French Dramatists of this Period — Corneille — His principal Tragedies — Rotrou.

16. Among the company who performed at the second theatre of Paris, that established in the Marais, was Hardy, who, like Shakspeare, uniting both arts, was himself the author of 600, or, as some say, 800 dramatic pieces. It is said that forty-one of these are extant in the collection of his works, which I have never seen. Several of them were written, learned by heart, and represented within a week. His own inventions are the worst of all; his tragedies and tragi-comedies are borrowed with as close an adherence to the original text as possible from Homer or Plutarch or Cervantes. They have more incident than those of his predecessors, and are somewhat less absurd; but Hardy is a writer of

Plays of Hardy.

[p] P. 24. [q] P. 14.

little talent. The Marianne is the most tolerable of his tragedies. In these he frequently abandoned the chorus, and even where he introduces it, does not regularly close the act with an ode.[r]

17. In the comedies of Hardy, and in the many burlesque farces represented under Henry IV. and Louis XIII., no regard was paid to decency, either in the language or the circumstances. Few persons of rank, especially ladies, attended the theatres.[s] These were first attracted by pastoral representations, of which Racan gave a successful example in his Artenice. It is hardly, however, to be called a drama.[t] But the stage being no longer abandoned to the populace, and a more critical judgment in French literature gaining ground, encouraged by Richelieu, who built a large room in his palace for the representation of Mirame, an indifferent tragedy, part of which was suspected to be his own,[u] the ancient theatre began to be studied, rules were laid down and partially observed, a perfect decorum replaced the licentiousness and gross language of the old writers. Mairet and Rotrou, though without rising in their first plays much above Hardy, just served to prepare the way for the father and founder of the national theatre.[x]

18. The Melite of Corneille, his first production, was represented in 1629, when he was twenty-three years of age. This is only distinguished, as some say, from those of Hardy by a greater vigour of style; but Fontenelle gives a very different opinion. It had at least a success which caused a new troop of actors to be established in the Marais. His next, Clitandre, it is agreed, is not so good. But La Veuve is much better; irregular in ac-

[r] Fontenelle, Hist. du Théâtre François (in Œuvres de Fontenelle, iii. 72). Suard, Mélanges de Littérature, vol. iv.

[s] Suard, p. 134. Rotrou boasts that since he wrote for the theatre, it had become so well regulated that respectable women might go to it with as little scruple as to the Luxembourg garden. Corneille, however, has, in general, the credit of having purified the stage; after his second piece, Clitandre, he admitted nothing licentious in his comedies. The only remain of grossness, Fontenelle observes, was that the lovers *se tutoyoient*; but as he gravely goes on to remark, le tutoyement ne choque pas les bonnes mœurs; il ne choque que la politesse et la vraie galanterie. P. 91. But the last instance of this heinous offence is in Le Menteur.

[t] Suard, ubi suprà.

[u] Fontenelle, p. 84, 96.

[x] Id. p. 78. It is difficult in France, as it is with us, to ascertain the date of plays, because they were often represented for years before they came from the press. It is conjectured by Fontenelle that one or two pieces of Mairet and Rotrou may have preceded any by Corneille.

tion, but with spirit, character, and well-invented situations, it is the first model of the higher comedy.[y] These early comedies must in fact have been relatively of considerable merit, since they raised Corneille to high reputation, and connected him with the literary men of his time. The Medea, though much borrowed from Seneca, gave a tone of grandeur and dignity unknown before to French tragedy. This appeared in 1635, and was followed by the Cid next year.

The Cid.

19. Notwithstanding the defence made by La Harpe, I cannot but agree with the French Academy, in their criticism on this play, that the subject is essentially ill chosen. No circumstances can be imagined, no skill can be employed, that will reconcile the mind to the marriage of a daughter with one that has shed her father's blood. And the law of unity of time, which crowds every event of the drama within a few hours, renders the promised consent of Chimène (for such it is) to this union still more revolting and improbable.[z] The knowledge of this termination re-acts on the reader during a second perusal, so as to give an irresistible impression of her insincerity in her previous solicitations for his death. She seems, indeed, in several passages, little else than a tragic coquette, and one of the most odious kind.[a] The English stage at that time was not exempt from great violations of nature and decorum; yet had the subject of the Cid fallen into the hands of Beaumont and Fletcher, and it is one which they would have willingly selected, for the sake of the effective situations and contrasts of passion it affords, the part of Chimène would have been managed by them with great warmth and spirit, though probably not less incongruity and extravagance; but I can scarcely believe that the

[y] Suard. Fontenelle. La Harpe.

[z] La Harpe has said that Chimène does not promise at last to marry Rodrigue, though the spectator perceives that she will do so. He forgets that she has commissioned her lover's sword in the duel with Don Sancho:—

> Sors vainqueur d'un combat dont Chimène est le prix.—Act v. sc. 1.

[a] In these lines, for example, of the third act, scene 4th:—

> Malgré les feux si beaux qui rompent ma colère,
> Je ferai mon possible à bien venger mon père;
> Mais malgré la rigueur d'un si cruel devoir,
> Mon unique souhait est de ne rien pouvoir.

It is true that he found this in his Spanish original, but that does not render the imitation judicious, or the sentiment either moral, or even theatrically specious.

conclusion would have been so much in the style of comedy. Her death, or retirement into a monastery, would have seemed more consonant to her own dignity and to that of a tragic subject. Corneille was however borne out by the tradition of Spain, and by the authority of Guillen de Castro, whom he imitated.

Style of Corneille.

20. The language of Corneille is elevated, his sentiments, if sometimes hyperbolical, generally noble, when he has not to deal with the passion of love; conscious of the nature of his own powers, he has avoided subjects wherein this must entirely predominate; it was to be, as he thought, an accessory but never a principal source of dramatic interest. In this, however, as a general law of tragedy, he was mistaken; love is by no means unfit for the chief source of tragic distress, but comes in generally with a cold and feeble effect as a subordinate emotion. In those Roman stories which he most affected, its expression could hardly be otherwise than insipid and incongruous. Corneille probably would have dispensed with it, like Shakspeare in Coriolanus and Julius Cæsar; but the taste of his contemporaries, formed in the pedantic school of romance, has imposed fetters on his genius in almost every drama. In the Cid, where the subject left him no choice, he has perhaps succeeded better in the delineation of love than on any other occasion; yet even here we often find the cold exaggerations of complimentary verse, instead of the voice of nature. But other scenes of this play, especially in the first act, which bring forward the proud Castilian characters of the two fathers of Rodrigo and Chimène, are full of the nervous eloquence of Corneille; and the general style, though it may not have borne the fastidious criticism either of the Academy or of Voltaire, is so far above anything which had been heard on the French stage, that it was but a very frigid eulogy in the former to say that it "had acquired a considerable reputation among works of the kind." It had at that time astonished Paris; but the prejudices of Cardinal Richelieu and the envy of inferior authors, joined perhaps to the proverbial unwillingness of critical bodies to commit themselves by warmth of praise, had some degree of influence on the judgment which the Academy pronounced on the Cid, though I do not think it was

altogether so unjust and uncandid as has sometimes been supposed.

21. The next tragedy of Corneille, Les Horaces, is hardly open to less objection than the Cid; not so much because there is, as the French critics have discovered, a want of unity in the subject, which I do not quite perceive, nor because the fifth act is tedious and uninteresting, as from the repulsiveness of the story, and the jarring of the sentiments with our natural sympathies. Corneille has complicated the legend in Livy with the marriage of the younger Horatius to the sister of the Curiatii, and thus placed his two female personages in a nearly similar situation, which he has taken little pains to diversify by any contrast in their characters. They speak, on the contrary, nearly in the same tone, and we see no reason why the hero of the tragedy should not, as he seems half disposed, have followed up the murder of his sister by that of his wife. More skill is displayed in the opposition of character between the combatants themselves; but the mild, though not less courageous or patriotic, Curiatius attaches the spectator, who cares nothing for the triumph of Rome, or the glory of the Horatian name. It must be confessed that the elder Horatius is nobly conceived; the Roman energy, of which we find but a caricature in his brutish son, shines out in him with an admirable dramatic spirit. I shall be accused, nevertheless, of want of taste, when I confess that his celebrated *Qu'il mourût* has always seemed to me less eminently sublime than the general suffrage of France has declared it. There is nothing very novel or striking in the proposition, that a soldier's duty is to die in the field rather than desert his post by flight; and in a tragedy full of the hyperboles of Roman patriotism, it appears strange that we should be astonished at that which is the principle of all military honour. The words are emphatic in their position, and calculated to draw forth the actor's energy; but this is an artifice of no great skill; and one can hardly help thinking, that a spectator in the pit would spontaneously have anticipated the answer of a warlike father to the feminine question,—

Les Horaces.

"Que vouliez-vous qu'il fît contre trois?"

The style of this tragedy is reckoned by the critics supe-

rior to that of the Cid; the nervousness and warmth of Corneille is more displayed; and it is more free from incorrect and trivial expression.

Cinna.

22. Cinna, the next in order of time, is probably that tragedy of Corneille which would be placed at the head by a majority of suffrages. His eloquence reached here its highest point; the speeches are longer, more vivid in narration, more philosophical in argument, more abundant in that strain of Roman energy which he had derived chiefly from Lucan, more emphatic and condensed in their language and versification. But, as a drama, this is deserving of little praise; the characters of Cinna and Maximus are contemptible, that of Emilia is treacherous and ungrateful. She is indeed the type of a numerous class who have followed her in works of fiction, and sometimes, unhappily, in real life; the female patriot, theoretically, at least, an assassin, but commonly compelled, by the iniquity of the times, to console herself in practice with safer transgressions. We have had some specimens; and other nations, to their shame and sorrow, have had more. But even the magnanimity of Augustus, whom we have not seen exposed to instant danger, is uninteresting, nor do we perceive why he should bestow his friendship as well as his forgiveness on the detected traitor that cowers before him. It is one of those subjects which might, by the invention of a more complex plot than history furnishes, have better excited the spectator's attention, but not his sympathy.

Polyeucte.

23. A deeper interest belongs to Polyeucte; and this is the only tragedy of Corneille wherein he affects the heart. There is, indeed, a certain incongruity which we cannot overcome between the sanctity of Christian martyrdom and the language of love, especially when the latter is rather the more prominent of the two in the conduct of the drama.[b] But the beautiful character of Pauline would redeem much greater defects than can be ascribed to this tragedy. It is the noblest, perhaps, on the French stage, and conceived with admirable delicacy and dignity.[c] In the style,

[b] The coterie at the Hôtel Rambouillet thought that Polyeucte would not succeed, on account of its religious character. Corneille, it is said, was about to withdraw his tragedy, but was dissuaded by an actor of so little reputation that he did not even bear a part in the performance. Fontenelle, p. 101.

[c] Fontenelle thinks that it shows "un grand attachement à son devoir, et un

however, of Polyeucte, there seems to be some return towards the languid tone of commonplace which had been wholly thrown off in Cinna.[d]

24. Rodogune is said to have been a favourite with the author. It can hardly be so with the generality of his readers. The story has all the atrocity of the older school, from which Corneille, in his earlier plays, had emancipated the stage. It borders even on ridicule. Two princes, kept by their mother, one of those furies whom our own Webster or Marston would have delighted to draw, in ignorance which is the elder, and consequently entitled to the throne, are enamoured of Rodogune. Their mother makes it a condition of declaring the succession, that they should shed the blood of this princess. Struck with horror at such a proposition, they refer their passion to the choice of Rodogune, who, in her turn, demands the death of their mother. The embarrassment of these amiable youths may be conceived. La Harpe extols the fifth act of this tragedy, and it may perhaps be effective in representation.

Rodogune.

25. Pompey, sometimes inaccurately called the Death of Pompey, is more defective in construction than even any other tragedy of Corneille. The hero, if Pompey is such, never appears on the stage, and his death being recounted at the beginning of the second act, the real subject of the piece, so far as it can be said to have one, is the punishment of his assassins; a retribution demanded by the moral sense of the spectator, but hardly important enough for dramatic interest. The character of Cæsar is somewhat weakened by his passion for Cleopatra, which assumes more the tone of devoted gallantry than truth or probability warrants; but Cornelia, though with some Lucanic extravagance, is full of

Pompey.

grand caractère" in Pauline to desire that Severus should save her husband's life, instead of procuring the latter to be executed that she might marry her lover. Réflexions sur la Poëtique, sect. 16. This is rather an odd notion of what is sufficient to constitute an heroic character. It is not the conduct of Pauline, which in every Christian or virtuous woman must naturally be the same, but the fine sentiments and language which accompany it, that render her part so noble.

[d] In the second scene of the second act, between Severus and Pauline, two characters of the most elevated class, the former quits the stage with this line,—

> Adieu, trop vertueux objet, et trop charmant.

The latter replies,—

> Adieu, trop malheureux, et trop parfait amant.

a Roman nobleness of spirit, which renders her, after Pauline, but at a long interval, the finest among the female characters of Corneille. The language is not beneath that of his earlier tragedies.

Heraclius.

26. In Heraclius we begin to find an inferiority of style. Few passages, especially after the first act, are written with much vigour; and the plot, instead of the faults we may ascribe to some of the former dramas, a too great simplicity and want of action, offends by the perplexity of its situations, and still more by their nature; since they are wholly among the proper resources of comedy. The true and the false Heraclius, each uncertain of his paternity, each afraid to espouse one who may or may not be his sister, the embarrassment of Phocas, equally irritated by both, but aware that in putting either to death, he may punish his own son, the art of Leontine, who produces this confusion, not by silence, but by a series of inconsistent falsehoods, all these are in themselves ludicrous, and such as in comedy could produce no other effect than laughter.

Nicomède.

27. Nicomède is generally placed by the critics below Heraclius, an opinion in which I should hardly concur. The plot is feeble and improbable, but more tolerable than the strange entanglements of Heraclius; and the spirit of Corneille shines out more in the characters and sentiments. None of his later tragedies deserve much notice, except that we find one of his celebrated scenes in Sertorius, a drama of little general merit. Nicomède and Sertorius were both first represented after the middle of the century.

Faults and beauties of Corneille.

28. Voltaire has well distinguished "the fine scenes of Corneille, and the fine tragedies of Racine." It can, perhaps, hardly be said that, with the exception of Polyeucte, the former has produced a single play which, taken as a whole, we can commend. The keys of the passions were not given to his custody. But in that which he introduced upon the French stage, and which long continued to be its boast, impressive, energetic declamation, thoughts masculine, bold, and sometimes sublime, conveyed in a style for the most part clear, condensed, and noble, and in a rhythm sonorous and satisfactory to the ear, he has not since been equalled. Lucan, it has always been said, was the

favourite study of Corneille. No one, perhaps, can admire one who has not a strong relish for the other. That the tragedian has ever surpassed the highest flights of his Roman prototype, it might be difficult to prove; but if his fire is not more intense, it is accompanied by less smoke; his hyperboles, for such he has, are less frequent and less turgid; his taste is more judicious; he knows better, especially in description, what to choose and where to stop. Lucan, however, would have disdained the politeness of the amorous heroes of Corneille, and though often tedious, often offensive to good taste, is never languid or ignoble.

Le Menteur.

29. The first French comedy written in polite language, without low wit or indecency, is due to Corneille, or rather, in some degree, to the Spanish author whom he copied in Le Menteur. This has been improved a little by Goldoni, and our own well-known farce, The Liar, is borrowed from both. The incidents are diverting, but it belongs to the subordinate class of comedy, and a better moral would have been shown in the disgrace of the principal character. Another comedy about the same time, Le Pédant Joué, by Cyrano de Bergerac, had much success. It has been called the first comedy in prose, and the first wherein a provincial dialect is introduced: the remark, as to the former circumstance, shows a forgetfulness of Larivey. Molière has borrowed freely from this play.

Other French tragedies.

30. The only tragedies, after those of Corneille, anterior to 1650, which the French themselves hold worthy of remembrance, are the Sophonisbe of Mairet, in which some characters and some passages are vigorously conceived, but the style is debased by low and ludicrous thoughts, which later critics never fail to point out with severity;[e] the Scevole of Duryer, the best of several good tragedies, full of lines of great simplicity in expression, but which seem to gain force through their simplicity, by one who, though never sublime, adopted with success the severe and reasoning style of Corneille;[f] the Marianne of Tristan, which, at its appearance in 1637, passed for a rival of the Cid, and remained for a century on the stage, but is now ridiculed for a style alternately turgid and ludicrous; and the Wen-

[e] Suard, ubi suprà.

[f] Suard, p. 196.

ceslas of Rotrou, which had not ceased perhaps thirty years since to be represented.

Wenceslas of Rotrou.

31. This tragedy, the best work of a fertile dramatist, who did himself honour by a ready acknowledgment of the superiority of Corneille, instead of canvassing the suffrages of those who always envy genius, is by no means so much below that great master, as, in the unfortunate efforts of his later years, he was below himself. Wenceslas was represented in 1647. It may be admitted that Rotrou had conceived his plot, which is wholly original, in the spirit of Corneille; the masculine energy of the sentiments, the delineation of bold and fierce passions, of noble and heroic love, the attempt even at political philosophy, are copies of that model. It seems, indeed, that in several scenes Rotrou must, out of mere generosity to Corneille, have determined to outdo one of his most exceptionable passages, the consent of Chimène to espouse the Cid. His own curtain drops on the vanishing reluctance of his heroine to accept the hand of a monster whom she hated, and who had just murdered her lover in his own brother. It is the Lady Anne of Shakspeare; but Lady Anne is not a heroine. Wenceslas is not unworthy of comparison with the second class of Corneille's tragedies. But the ridiculous tone of language and sentiment which the heroic romance had rendered popular, and from which Corneille did not wholly emancipate himself, often appears in this piece of Rotrou; the intrigue is rather too complex, in the Spanish style, for tragedy; the diction seems frequently obnoxious to the most indulgent criticism; but, above all, the story is essentially ill contrived, ending in the grossest violation of poetical justice ever witnessed on the stage, the impunity and even the triumph of one of the worst characters that was ever drawn.

SECT. III.—ON THE ENGLISH DRAMA.

London Theatres — Shakspeare — Jonson — Beaumont and Fletcher — Massinger — Other English Dramatists.

32. THE English drama had been encouraged through the reign of Elizabeth by increasing popularity, notwithstand-

ing the strenuous opposition of a party sufficiently powerful to enlist the magistracy, and, in a certain measure the government, on its side. A progressive improvement in dramatic writing, possibly also, though we know less of this, in the skill of the actors, ennobled, while it kept alive, the public taste; the crude and insipid compositions of an Edwards or a Whetstone, among numbers more whose very names are lost, gave way to the real genius of Green and Marlowe, and after them to Shakspeare.

Popularity of the stage under Elizabeth.

33. At the beginning of this century not less than eleven regular play-houses had been erected in London and its suburbs; several of which, it appears, were still in use, an order of the privy council in 1600, restraining the number to two, being little regarded. Of these the most important was that of the Black Friars, with which another, called the Globe, on the opposite side of the river, was connected; the same company performing at the former in winter, at the latter in summer. This was the company of which Burbage, the best actor of the day, was chief, and to which Shakspeare, who was also a proprietor, belonged. Their names appear in letters patent, and other legal instruments.[g]

Number of theatres.

34. James was fond of these amusements, and had encouraged them in Scotland. The puritan influence, which had been sometimes felt in the council of Elizabeth, came speedily to an end; though the representation of plays on Sundays, a constant theme of complaint, but never wholly put down, was now abandoned, and is not even tolerated by the Declaration of Sports. The several companies of players, who, in her reign, had been under the nominal protection of some men of rank, were now denominated the servants of the king, the queen, or other royal personages.[h]

Encouraged by James.

[g] Shakspeare probably retired from the stage, as a performer, soon after 1603; his name appears among the actors of Sejanus in 1603, but not among those of Volpone in 1605. There is a tradition that James I. wrote a letter thanking Shakspeare for the compliment paid to him in Macbeth. Malone, it seems, believed this: Mr. Collier does not, and probably most people will be equally sceptical. Collier, i. 370.

[h] Collier, i. 347. But the privilege of peers to grant licences to itinerant players, given by statute 14 Eliz. c. 5, and 39 Eliz. c. 4, was taken away by 1 Jac. I. c. 7, so that they became liable to be treated as vagrants. Accordingly there were no established theatres in any

They were relieved from some of the vexatious control they had experienced, and subjected only to the gentle sway of the Master of the Revels. It was his duty to revise all dramatic works before they were represented, to exclude profane and unbecoming language, and specially to take care that there should be no interference with matters of state. The former of these corrective functions must have been rather laxly exercised; but there are instances in which a licence was refused on account of very recent history being touched in a play.

General taste for the stage.

35. The reigns of James and Charles were the glory of our theatre. Public applause, and the favour of princes, were well bestowed on those bright stars of our literature who then appeared. In 1623, when Sir Henry Herbert became Master of the Revels, there were five companies of actors in London. This, indeed, is something less than at the accession of James, and the latest historian of the drama suggests the increase of puritanical sentiments as a likely cause of this apparent decline. But we find little reason to believe that there was any decline in the public taste for the theatre; and it may be as probable an hypothesis, that the excess of competition, at the end of Elizabeth's reign, had rendered some undertakings unprofitable; the greater fishes, as usual in such cases, swallowing up the less. We learn from Howes, the continuator of Stow, that within sixty years before 1631, seventeen playhouses had been built in the metropolis. These were now larger and more convenient than before. They were divided into public and private: not that the former epithet was inapplicable to both; but those styled public were not completely roofed, nor well provided with seats, nor were the performances by candlelight; they resembled more the rude booths we still see at fairs, or the constructions in which interludes are represented by day in Italy: while private theatres, such as that of the Black Friars, were built in nearly the present form. It seems to be the more probable opinion that moveable scenery was unknown on these

provincial city, and strollers, though dear to the lovers of the buskin, were always obnoxious to grave magistrates. The licence, however, granted to Burbage, Shakspeare, Hemmings, and others, in 1603, authorises them to act plays not only at the usual house, but in any other part of the kingdom. Burbage was reckoned the best actor of his time, and excelled as Richard III.

theatres. "It is a fortunate circumstance," Mr. Collier has observed, "for the poetry of our old plays that it was so; the imagination of the auditor only was appealed to; and we owe to the absence of painted canvas many of the finest descriptive passages in Shakspeare, his contemporaries, and immediate followers. The introduction of scenery gives the date to the commencement of the decline of our dramatic poetry." In this remark, which seems as original as just, I entirely concur. Even in this age the prodigality of our theatre in its peculiar boast, scene-painting, can hardly keep pace with the creative powers of Shakspeare; it is well that he did not live when a manager was to estimate his descriptions by the cost of realising them on canvas, or we might never have stood with Lear on the cliffs of Dover, or amidst the palaces of Venice with Shylock and Antonio. The scene is perpetually changed in our old drama, precisely because it was not changed at all. A powerful argument might otherwise have been discovered in favour of the unity of place, that it is very cheap.

Theatres closed by the parliament.

36. Charles, as we might expect, was not less inclined to this liberal pleasure than his predecessors. It was to his own cost that Prynne assaulted the stage in his immense volume, the Histriomastix. Even Milton, before the foul spirit had wholly entered into him, extolled the learned sock of Jonson, and the wild wood-notes of Shakspeare. But these days were soon to pass away; the ears of Prynne were avenged; by an order of the two houses of parliament, Sept. 2, 1642, the theatres were closed as a becoming measure during the season of public calamity and impending civil war; but, after some unsuccessful attempts to evade this prohibition, it was thought expedient, in the complete success of the party who had always abhorred the drama, to put a stop to it altogether; and another ordinance of Jan. 22, 1648, reciting the usual objections to all such entertainments, directed the theatres to be rendered unserviceable. We must refer the reader to the valuable work which has supplied the sketch of these pages for further knowledge;[1] it is

[1] I have made no particular references to Mr. Collier's *double* work, The History of English Dramatic Poetry, and Annals of the Stage; it will be necessary for the reader to make use of his index; but few books lately published contain so much

more our province to follow the track of those who most distinguished a period so fertile in dramatic genius; and first that of the greatest of them all.

Shakspeare's Twelfth Night.

37. Those who originally undertook to marshal the plays of Shakspeare according to chronological order, always attending less to internal evidence than to the very fallible proofs of publication they could obtain, placed Twelfth Night last of all, in 1612 or 1613. It afterwards rose a little higher in the list; but Mr. Collier has finally proved that it was on the stage early in 1602, and was at that time chosen, probably as rather a new piece, for representation at one of the Inns of Court.[k] The general style resembles, in my judgment, that of Much Ado about Nothing, which is referred with probability to the year 1600. Twelfth Night, notwithstanding some very beautiful passages, and the humorous absurdity of Malvolio, has not the coruscations of wit and spirit of character that distinguish the excellent comedy it seems to have immediately followed, nor is the plot nearly so well constructed. Viola would be more interesting, if she had not indelicately, as well as unfairly towards Olivia, determined to win the Duke's heart before she had seen him. The part of Sebastian has all that improbability which belongs to mistaken identity, without the comic effect for the sake of which that is forgiven in Plautus and in the Comedy of Errors.

Merry Wives of Windsor.

38. The Merry Wives of Windsor is that work of Shakspeare in which he has best displayed English manners; for though there is something of this in the historical plays, yet we rarely see in them such a picture of actual life as comedy ought to represent. It may be difficult to say for what cause he has abstained from a source of gaiety whence his prolific invention and keen eye for the diversities of character might have drawn so much. The Masters Knowell and Wellborn, the young gentlemen who spend their money freely and make love to rich widows (an insipid race of personages, it must be owned), recur for

valuable and original information, though not entirely arranged in the most convenient manner. He seems nevertheless to have obligations to Dodsley's preface to his Collection of Old Plays, or rather perhaps to Reed's edition of it.

[k] Vol. i. p. 327.

ever in the old plays of James's reign; but Shakspeare threw an ideality over this class of characters, the Bassanios, the Valentines, the Gratianos, and placed them in scenes which neither by dress nor manners recalled the prose of ordinary life.[m] In this play, however, the English gentleman, in age and youth, is brought upon the stage, slightly caricatured in Shallow, and far more so in Slender. The latter, indeed, is a perfect satire, and I think was so intended, on the brilliant youth of the provinces, such as we may believe it to have been before the introduction of newspapers and turnpike roads, awkward and boobyish among civil people, but at home in rude sports, and proud of exploits at which the town would laugh, yet perhaps with more courage and good-nature than the laughers. No doubt can be raised that the family of Lucy is ridiculed in Shallow; but those who have had recourse to the old fable of the deer-stealing, forget that Shakspeare never lost sight of his native county, and went, perhaps every summer, to Stratford. It is not impossible that some arrogance of the provincial squires towards a player, whom, though a gentleman by birth and the recent grant of arms, they might not reckon such, excited his malicious wit to those admirable delineations.

39. The Merry Wives of Windsor was first printed in 1602, but very materially altered in a subsequent edition. It is wholly comic; so that Dodd, who published the Beauties of Shakspeare, confining himself to poetry, says it is the only play which afforded him nothing to extract. This play does not excite a great deal of interest; for Anne Page is but a sample of a character not very uncommon, which under a garb of placid and decorous mediocrity is still capable of pursuing its own will. But in wit and humorous delineation no other goes beyond it. If Falstaff seems, as Johnson has intimated, to have lost some of his powers of merriment, it is because he is humiliated to a point where even his invention and impudence cannot bear him off

[m] "No doubt," says Coleridge, "they (Beaumont and Fletcher) imitated the ease of gentlemanly conversation better than Shakspeare, who was unable not to be too much *associated* to succeed in this." Table Talk, ii. 396. I am not quite sure that I understand this expression; but probably the meaning is not very different from what I have said.

victorious. In the first acts he is still the same Jack Falstaff of the Boar's Head. Jonson's earliest comedy, Every Man in his Humour, had appeared a few years before the Merry Wives of Windsor; they both turn on English life in the middle classes, and on the same passion of jealousy. If then we compare these two productions of our greatest comic dramatists, the vast superiority of Shakspeare will appear undeniable. Kitely, indeed, has more energy, more relief, more excuse, perhaps, in what might appear to his temper matter for jealousy, than the wretched, narrow-minded Ford; he is more of a gentleman, and commands a certain degree of respect; but dramatic justice is better dealt upon Ford by rendering him ridiculous, and he suits better the festive style of Shakspeare's most amusing play. His light-hearted wife, on the other hand, is drawn with more spirit than Dame Kitely; and the most ardent admirer of Jonson would not oppose Master Stephen to Slender, or Bobadil to Falstaff. The other characters are not parallel enough to admit of comparison; but in their diversity (nor is Shakspeare perhaps in any one play more fertile), and their amusing peculiarity, as well as in the construction and arrangement of the story, the brilliancy of the wit, the perpetual gaiety of the dialogue, we perceive at once to whom the laurel must be given. Nor is this comparison instituted to disparage Jonson, whom we have praised, and shall have again to praise so highly, but to show how much easier it was to vanquish the rest of Europe than to contend with Shakspeare.

Measure for Measure.

40. Measure for Measure, commonly referred to the end of 1603, is perhaps after Hamlet, Lear, and Macbeth, the play in which Shakspeare struggles, as it were, most with the over-mastering power of his own mind; the depths and intricacies of being which he has searched and sounded with intense reflection, perplex and harass him; his personages arrest their course of action to pour forth, in language the most remote from common use, thoughts which few could grasp in the clearest expression; and thus he loses something of dramatic excellence in that of his contemplative philosophy. The Duke is designed as the representative of this philosophical character. He is stern and melan-

choly by temperament, averse to the exterior shows of power, and secretly conscious of some unfitness for its practical duties. The subject is not very happily chosen, but artfully improved by Shakspeare. In most of the numerous stories of a similar nature, which before or since his time have been related, the sacrifice of chastity is really made, and made in vain. There is, however, something too coarse and disgusting in such a story; and it would have deprived him of a splendid exhibition of character. The virtue of Isabella, inflexible and independent of circumstance, has something very grand and elevated; yet one is disposed to ask, whether, if Claudio had been really executed, the spectator would not have gone away with no great affection for her; and at least we now feel that her reproaches against her miserable brother when he clings to life like a frail and guilty being are too harsh. There is great skill in the invention of Mariana, and without this the story could not have had anything like a satisfactory termination; yet it is never explained how the Duke had become acquainted with this secret, and being acquainted with it how he had preserved his esteem and confidence in Angelo. His intention, as hinted towards the end, to marry Isabella, is a little too commonplace; it is one of Shakspeare's hasty half-thoughts. The language of this comedy is very obscure, and the text seems to have been printed with great inaccuracy. I do not value the comic parts highly; Lucio's impudent profligacy, the result rather of sensual debasement than of natural ill disposition, is well represented; but Elbow is a very inferior repetition of Dogberry. In dramatic effect Measure for Measure ranks high; the two scenes between Isabella and Angelo, that between her and Claudio, those where the Duke appears in disguise, and the catastrophe in the fifth act, are admirably written and very interesting; except so far as the spectator's knowledge of the two stratagems which have deceived Angelo may prevent him from participating in the indignation at Isabella's imaginary wrong which her lamentations would excite. Several of the circumstances and characters are borrowed from the old play of Whetstone, Promos and Cassandra; but very little of the sentiments or language. What is good in Measure for Measure is Shakspeare's own.

41. If originality of invention did not so much stamp almost every play of Shakspeare that to name one as the most original seems a disparagement to others, we might say, that this great prerogative of genius was exercised above all in Lear. It diverges more from the model of regular tragedy than Macbeth or Othello, and even more than Hamlet; but the fable is better constructed than in the last of these, and it displays full as much of the almost superhuman inspiration of the poet as the other two. Lear himself is, perhaps, the most wonderful of dramatic conceptions, ideal to satisfy the most romantic imagination, yet idealised from the reality of nature. Shakspeare, in preparing us for the most intense sympathy with this old man, first abases him to the ground; it is not Œdipus, against whose respected age the gods themselves have conspired; it is not Orestes, noble minded and affectionate, whose crime has been virtue; it is a headstrong, feeble, and selfish being, whom, in the first act of the tragedy, nothing seems capable of redeeming in our eyes; nothing but what follows, intense woe, unnatural wrong. Then comes on that splendid madness, not absurdly sudden, as in some tragedies, but in which the strings that keep his reasoning power together give way one after the other in the frenzy of rage and grief. Then it is that we find what in life may sometimes be seen, the intellectual energies grow stronger in calamity, and especially under wrong. An awful eloquence belongs to unmerited suffering. Thoughts burst out, more profound than Lear in his prosperous hour could ever have conceived; inconsequent, for such is the condition of madness, but in themselves fragments of coherent truth, the reason of an unreasonable mind.

Lear.

42. Timon of Athens is cast as it were in the same mould as Lear; it is the same essential character, the same generosity more from wanton ostentation than love of others, the same fierce rage under the smart of ingratitude, the same rousing up in that tempest of powers that had slumbered unsuspected in some deep recess of the soul; for had Timon or Lear known that philosophy of human nature in their calmer moments which fury brought forth, they would never have had such terrible occasion to display it. The

Timon of Athens.

thoughtless confidence of Lear in his children has something in it far more touching than the self-beggary of Timon; though both one and the other have prototypes enough in real life. And as we give the old king more of our pity, so a more intense abhorrence accompanies his daughters and the evil characters of that drama, than we spare for the miserable sycophants of the Athenian. Their thanklessness is anticipated, and springs from the very nature of their calling; it verges on the beaten road of comedy. In this play there is neither a female personage, except two courtezans, who hardly speak; nor is there any prominent character (the honest steward is not such) redeemed by virtue enough to be estimable; for the cynic Apemantus is but a cynic, and ill replaces the noble Kent of the other drama. The fable, if fable it can be called, is so extraordinarily deficient in action, a fault of which Shakspeare is not guilty in any other instance, that we may wonder a little how he should have seen in the single delineation of Timon a counterbalance for the manifold objections to this subject. But there seems to have been a period of Shakspeare's life when his heart was ill at ease, and ill content with the world or his own conscience; the memory of hours misspent, the pang of affection misplaced or unrequited, the experience of man's worser nature which intercourse with unworthy associates, by choice or circumstance, peculiarly teaches;—these, as they sank down into the depths of his great mind, seem not only to have inspired into it the conception of Lear and Timon, but that of one primary character, the censurer of mankind. This type is first seen in the philosophic melancholy of Jaques, gazing with an undiminished serenity, and with a gaiety of fancy, though not of manners, on the follies of the world. It assumes a graver cast in the exiled Duke of the same play, and next one rather more severe in the Duke of Measure for Measure. In all these, however, it is merely contemplative philosophy. In Hamlet this is mingled with the impulses of a perturbed heart under the pressure of extraordinary circumstances; it shines no longer as in the former characters, with a steady light, but plays in fitful coruscations amidst feigned gaiety and extravagance. In Lear it is the flash of sudden inspiration across the incongruous imagery of madness; in Timon it is obscured

by the exaggerations of misanthropy. These plays all belong to nearly the same period: As You Like It being usually referred to 1600, Hamlet, in its altered form, to about 1602, Timon to the same year, Measure for Measure to 1603, and Lear to 1604. In the later plays of Shakspeare, especially in Macbeth and the Tempest, much of moral speculation will be found, but he has never returned to this type of character in the personages. Timon is less read and less pleasing than the great majority of Shakspeare's plays; but it abounds with signs of his genius. Schlegel observes that of all his works it is that which has most satire; comic in representation of the parasites, indignant and Juvenalian in the bursts of Timon himself.

Pericles.

43. Pericles is generally reckoned to be in part, and only in part, the work of Shakspeare. From the poverty and bad management of the fable, the want of any effective or distinguishable character, for Marina is no more than the common form of female virtue, such as all the dramatists of that age could draw, and a general feebleness of the tragedy as a whole, I should not believe the structure to have been Shakspeare's. But many passages are far more in his manner than in that of any contemporary writer with whom I am acquainted; and the extrinsic testimony, though not conclusive, being of some value, I should not dissent from the judgment of Steevens and Malone, that it was, in no inconsiderable degree, repaired and improved by his touch. Drake has placed it under the year 1590, as the earliest of Shakspeare's plays, for no better reason apparently, than that he thought it inferior to all the rest. But if, as most will agree, it were not quite his own, this reason will have less weight; and the language seems to me rather that of his second or third manner than of his first. Pericles is not known to have existed before 1609.

44. The majority of readers, I believe, assign to Macbeth, which seems to have been written about 1606, the pre-eminence among the works of Shakspeare; many, however, would rather name Othello, one of his latest, which is referred to 1611; and a few might prefer Lear to either. The great epic drama, as the first may be called, deserves, in my own judgment, the post it has

attained, as being, in the language of Drake, "the greatest effort of our author's genius, the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld." It will be observed that Shakspeare had now turned his mind towards the tragic drama. No tragedy but Romeo and Juliet belongs to the sixteenth century; ten, without counting Pericles, appeared in the first eleven years of the present. It is not my design to distinguish each of his plays separately; and it will be evident that I pass over some of the greatest. No writer, in fact, is so well known as Shakspeare, or has been so abundantly, and, on the whole, so ably criticised; I might have been warranted in saying even less than I have done.

His Roman tragedies. Julius Cæsar.

45. Shakspeare was, as I believe, conversant with the better class of English literature which the reign of Elizabeth afforded. Among other books, the translation by North of Amyot's Plutarch seems to have fallen into his hands about 1607. It was the source of three tragedies founded on the lives of Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus, the first bearing the name of Julius Cæsar. In this the plot wants even that historical unity which the romantic drama requires; the third and fourth acts are ill connected; it is deficient in female characters, and in that combination which is generally apparent amidst all the intricacies of his fable. But it abounds in fine scenes and fine passages; the spirit of Plutarch's Brutus is well seized, the predominance of Cæsar himself is judiciously restrained, the characters have that individuality which Shakspeare seldom misses; nor is there, perhaps, in the whole range of ancient and modern eloquence a speech more fully realising the perfection that orators have striven to attain than that of Antony.

Antony and Cleopatra.

46. Antony and Cleopatra is of rather a different order; it does not furnish, perhaps, so many striking beauties as the last, but is at least equally redolent of the genius of Shakspeare. Antony indeed was given him by history, and he has but embodied in his own vivid colours the irregular mind of the triumvir, ambitious and daring against all enemies but himself. In Cleopatra he had less to guide him; she is another incarnation of the same passions, more lawless and insensible to reason and honour as they are found in women.

This character being not one that can please, its strong and spirited delineation has not been sufficiently observed. It has indeed only a poetical originality; the type was in the courtezan of common life, but the resemblance is that of Michael Angelo's Sibyls to a muscular woman. In this tragedy, like Julius Cæsar, as has been justly observed by Schlegel, the events that do not pass on the stage are scarcely made clear enough to one who is not previously acquainted with history, and some of the persons appear and vanish again without sufficient reason. He has, in fact, copied Plutarch too exactly.

Coriolanus.

47. This fault is by no means discerned in the third Roman tragedy of Shakspeare, Coriolanus. He luckily found an intrinsic historical unity which he could not have destroyed, and which his magnificent delineation of the chief personage has thoroughly maintained. Coriolanus himself has the grandeur of sculpture; his proportions are colossal, nor would less than this transcendent superiority, by which he towers over his fellow-citizens, warrant, or seem for the moment to warrant, his haughtiness and their pusillanimity. The surprising judgment of Shakspeare is visible in this. A dramatist of the second class (for he alone is in the first), a Corneille, a Schiller, or an Alfieri, would not have lost the occasion of representing the plebeian form of courage and patriotism. A tribune would have been made to utter noble speeches, and some critics would have extolled the balance and contrast of the antagonist principles. And this might have degenerated into the general saws of ethics and politics which philosophical tragedians love to pour forth. But Shakspeare instinctively perceived that to render the arrogance of Coriolanus endurable to the spectator, or dramatically probable, he must abase the plebeians to a contemptible populace. The sacrifice of historic truth is often necessary for the truth of poetry. The citizens of early Rome, "*rusticorum mascula militum proles*," are indeed calumniated in his scenes, and might almost pass for burgesses of Stratford; but the unity of emotion is not dissipated by contradictory energies. Coriolanus is less rich in poetical style than the other two, but the comic parts are full of humour. In these three tragedies it is manifest that Roman character, and still more Roman manners,

are not exhibited with the precision of a scholar; yet there is something that distinguishes them from the rest, something of a *grandiosity* in the sentiments and language, which shows us that Shakspeare had not read that history without entering into its spirit.

48. Othello, or perhaps the Tempest, is reckoned by many the latest of Shakspeare's works. In the zenith of his faculties, in possession of fame disproportionate indeed to what has since accrued to his memory, but beyond that of any contemporary, at the age of about forty-seven, he ceased to write, and settled himself at a distance from all dramatic associations in his own native town; a home of which he had never lost sight, nor even permanently quitted, the birthplace of his children, and to which he brought what might then seem affluence in a middle station, with the hope, doubtless, of a secure decline into the yellow leaf of years. But he was cut off in 1616, not probably in the midst of any schemes for his own glory, but to the loss of those enjoyments which he had accustomed himself to value beyond it. His descendants, it is well known, became extinct in little more than half a century.

His retirement and death.

49. The name of Shakspeare is the greatest in our literature—it is the greatest in all literature. No man ever came near to him in the creative powers of the mind; no man had ever such strength at once, and such variety of imagination. Coleridge has most felicitously applied to him a Greek epithet, given before to I know not whom, certainly none so deserving of it, *μυριόνους*, the thousand-souled Shakspeare.[n] The number of characters in his plays is astonishingly great, without reckoning those who, although transient, have often their individuality, all distinct, all types of human life in well-defined differences. Yet he never takes an abstract quality to embody it, scarcely perhaps a definite condition of manners, as Jonson does; nor did he draw much, as I conceive, from living models; there is no manifest appearance of personal caricature in his comedies, though in some slight

Greatness of his genius.

[n] Table Talk, vol. ii. p. 301. Coleridge had previously spoken of Shakspeare's *oceanic* mind, which, if we take it in the sense of multitudinous unity, *ποντίων κυμάτων ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα*, will present the same idea as *μυριόνους* in a beautiful image.

traits of character this may not improbably have been the case. Above all, neither he nor his contemporaries wrote for the stage in the worst, though most literal, and of late years the most usual, sense; making the servants and handmaids of dramatic invention to lord over it, and limiting the capacities of the poet's mind to those of the performers. If this poverty of the representative department of the drama had hung like an incumbent fiend on the creative power of Shakspeare, how would he have poured forth with such inexhaustible prodigality the vast diversity of characters that we find in some of his plays? This it is in which he leaves far behind not the dramatists alone, but all writers of fiction. Compare with him Homer, the tragedians of Greece, the poets of Italy, Plautus, Cervantes, Molière, Addison, Le Sage, Fielding, Richardson, Scott, the romancers of the elder or later schools—one man has far more than surpassed them all. Others may have been as sublime, others may have been more pathetic, others may have equalled him in grace and purity of language, and have shunned some of its faults; but the philosophy of Shakspeare, his intimate searching out of the human heart, whether in the gnomic form of sentence, or in the dramatic exhibition of character, is a gift peculiarly his own. It is, if not entirely wanting, very little manifested in comparison with him, by the English dramatists of his own and the subsequent period, whom we are about to approach.

His judgment.

50. These dramatists, as we shall speedily perceive, are hardly less inferior to Shakspeare in judgment. To this quality I particularly advert, because foreign writers, and sometimes our own, have imputed an extraordinary barbarism and rudeness to his works. They belong indeed to an age sufficiently rude and barbarous in its entertainments, and are of course to be classed with what is called the romantic school, which has hardly yet shaken off that reproach. But no one who has perused the plays anterior to those of Shakspeare, or contemporary with them, or subsequent to them, down to the closing of the theatres in the civil war, will pretend to deny that there is far less regularity, in regard to everything where regularity can be desired, in a large proportion of these (perhaps in all the tragedies) than in his own. We need only repeat the names of

the Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Othello, the Merry Wives of Windsor, Measure for Measure. The plots in these are excellently constructed, and in some with uncommon artifice. But even where an analysis of the story might excite criticism, there is generally an unity of interest which tones the whole. The Winter's Tale is not a model to follow, but we feel that the Winter's Tale is a single story; it is even managed as such with consummate skill. It is another proof of Shakspeare's judgment, that he has given action enough to his comedies without the bustling intricacy of the Spanish stage. If his plots have any little obscurity in some parts, it is from copying his novel or history too minutely.

51. The idolatry of Shakspeare has been carried so far of late years that Drake and perhaps greater authorities have been unwilling to acknowledge any faults in his plays. This however is an extravagance rather derogatory to the critic than honourable to the poet. Besides the blemishes of construction in some of his plots, which are pardonable but still blemishes, there are too many in his style. His conceits and quibbles often spoil the effect of his scenes, and take off from the passion he would excite. In the last act of Richard II., the Duke of York is introduced demanding the punishment of his son Aumale for a conspiracy against the king, while the Duchess implores mercy. The scene is ill conceived and worse executed throughout; but one line is both atrocious and contemptible. The Duchess having dwelt on the word *pardon*, and urged the king to let her hear it from his lips, York takes her up with this stupid quibble:—

"Speak it in French, King; say, Pardonnez-moi."

It would not be difficult to find several other instances, though none, perhaps, quite so bad, of verbal equivocations, misplaced and inconsistent with the person's, the author's, the reader's sentiment.

52. Few will defend these notorious faults. But is there not one, less frequently mentioned, yet of more continual recurrence; the extreme obscurity of Shakspeare's diction? His style is full of new words and new senses. It is easy to pass this over as

His obscurity.

obsoleteness; but though many expressions are obsolete, and many provincial, though the labour of his commentators has never been so profitably, as well as so diligently, employed as in tracing this by the help of the meanest and most forgotten books of the age, it is impossible to deny that innumerable lines in Shakspeare were not more intelligible in his time than they are at present. Much of this may be forgiven, or rather is so incorporated with the strength of his reason and fancy, that we love it as the proper body of Shakspeare's soul. Still, can we justify the very numerous passages which yield to no interpretation, knots which are never unloosed, which conjecture does but cut, or even those which, if they may at last be understood, keep the attention in perplexity till the first emotion has passed away? And these occur not merely in places where the struggles of the speaker's mind may be well denoted by some obscurities of language, as in the soliloquies of Hamlet and Macbeth, but in dialogues between ordinary personages, and in the business of the play. We learn Shakspeare, in fact, as we learn a language, or as we read a difficult passage in Greek, with the eye glancing on the commentary; and it is only after much study that we come to forget a part, it can be but a part, of the perplexities he has caused us. This was no doubt one reason that he was less read formerly, his style passing for obsolete, though in many parts, as we have just said, it was never much more intelligible than it is.[o]

53. It does not appear probable that Shakspeare was ever placed below, or merely on a level with the other dramatic writers of this period.[p] That his plays were not so frequently represented as those of Fletcher,

[o] "Shakspeare's style is so pestered with figurative expressions that it is as affected as it is obscure. It is true that in his latter plays he had worn off somewhat of this rust."—Dryden's Works (Malone), vol. ii. part ii. p. 252. This is by no means the truth, but rather the reverse of it; Dryden knew not at all which were earlier, or which later, of Shakspeare's plays.

[p] A certain William Cartwright, in commendatory verses addressed to Fletcher, has the assurance to say,—

> Shakspeare to thee was dull, whose best wit lies
> I' th' ladies' questions and the fools' replies.

But the suffrage of Jonson himself, of Milton, and of many more that might be quoted, tends to prove that his genius was esteemed beyond that of any other, though some might compare inferior writers to him in certain qualifications of the dramatist. Even Dryden, who came in a worse period, and had no undue reverence for Shakspeare, admits that "he

is little to the purpose; they required a more expensive decoration, a larger company of good performers, and, above all, they were less intelligible to a promiscuous audience. Yet it is certain that throughout the seventeenth century, and even in the writings of Addison and his contemporaries, we seldom or never meet with that complete recognition of his supremacy, that unhesitating preference of him to all the world, which has become the faith of the last and the present century. And it is remarkable that this apotheosis, so to speak, of Shakspeare, was originally the work of what has been styled a frigid and tasteless generation, the age of George II. Much is certainly due to the stage itself, when those appeared who could guide and control the public taste, and discover that in the poet himself which sluggish imaginations could not have reached. The enthusiasm for Shakspeare is nearly coincident with that for Garrick; it was kept up by his followers, and especially by that highly-gifted family which has but recently been withdrawn from our stage.

His popularity.

54. Among the commentators on Shakspeare,* Warburton, always striving to display his own acuteness and scorn of others, deviates more than any one else from the meaning. Theobald was the first who did a little. Johnson explained much well, but there is something magisterial in the manner wherein he dismisses each play like a boy's exercise, that irritates the reader. His criticism is frequently judicious, but betrays no ardent admiration for Shakspeare. Malone and Steevens were two laborious commentators on the meaning of words and phrases; one dull, the other clever; but the dulness was accompanied by candour and a love of truth, the cleverness by a total absence of both. Neither seems to have had a full discernment of Shakspeare's genius. The numerous critics of the last age who were not editors have poured out much that is trite and insipid, much that is hypercritical and erroneous;

Critics on Shakspeare.

was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient, poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards, and found her there."—Dryden's Prose Works (Malone's edition), vol. i. part ii. p. 99.

yet collectively they not only bear witness to the public taste for the poet, but taught men to judge and feel more accurately than they would have done for themselves. Hurd and Lord Kaimes, especially the former, may be reckoned among the best of this class;[q] Mrs. Montagu, perhaps, in her celebrated Essay, not very far from the bottom of the list. In the present century Coleridge and Schlegel, so nearly at the same time that the question of priority and even plagiarism has been mooted, gave a more philosophical, and at the same time a more intrinsically exact view of Shakspeare, than their predecessors. What has since been written has often been highly acute and æsthetic, but occasionally with an excess of refinement which substitutes the critic for the work. Mrs. Jameson's Essays on the Female Characters of Shakspeare are among the best. It was right that this province of illustration should be reserved for a woman's hand.

Ben Jonson.

55. Ben Jonson, so generally known by that familiar description that some might hardly recognize him without it, was placed next to Shakspeare by his own age. They were much acquainted, and belonged to the oldest, perhaps, and not the worst of clubs, formed by Sir Walter Raleigh about the beginning of the century, which met at the Mermaid in Friday Street. We may easily believe the testimony of one of its members, that it was a feast of the most subtle and brilliant wit.[r] Jonson had abundant powers of poignant and sarcastic humour, besides extensive reading, and Shakspeare must have brought to the Mermaid the brightness of his fancy. Selden and Camden, the former in early youth, are reported to have given the ballast of their strong sense and learning to this cluster of poets. There has been, however, a prevalent tradition that Jonson was not without some malignant and envious feelings towards Shakspeare. Gifford has repelled this

[q] Hurd, in his notes on Horace's Art of Poetry, vol. i. p. 52, has some very good remarks on the diction of Shakspeare, suggested by the "callida junctura" of the Roman poet, illustrated by many instances. These remarks both serve to bring out the skill of Shakspeare, and to explain the disputed passage in Horace. Hurd justly maintains the obvious construction of that passage; "notum si callida verbum Reddiderit junctura novum." That proposed by Lambinus and Beattie, which begins with *novum*, is inadmissible, and gives a worse sense.

[r] Gifford's Life of Jonson, p. 65. Collier, iii. 275.

imputation with considerable success, though we may still suspect that there was something caustic and saturnine in the temper of Jonson.

56. The Alchemist is a play which long remained on the stage, though I am not sure that it has been represented since the days of Garrick, who was famous in Abel Drugger. Notwithstanding the indiscriminate and injudicious panegyric of Gifford, I believe there is no reader of taste but will condemn the outrageous excess of pedantry with which the first acts of this play abound; pedantry the more intolerable, that it is not even what, however unfit for the English stage, scholars might comprehend, but the gibberish of obscure treatises on alchemy, which, whatever the commentators may choose to say, was as unintelligible to all but a few half-witted dupes of that imposture as it is at present. Much of this, it seems impossible to doubt, was omitted in representation. Nor is his pedantic display of learning confined to the part of the Alchemist, who had certainly a right to talk in the style of his science, if he had done it with some moderation: Sir Epicure Mammon, a worldly sensualist, placed in the author's own age, pours out a torrent of gluttonous cookery from the kitchens of Heliogabalus and Apicius; his dishes are to be camels' heels, the beards of barbels and dissolved pearl, crowning all with the paps of a sow. But while this habitual error of Jonson's vanity is not to be overlooked, we may truly say that it is much more than compensated by the excellences of this comedy. The plot, with great simplicity, is continually animated and interesting; the characters are conceived and delineated with admirable boldness, truth, spirit, and variety; the humour, especially in the two Puritans, a sect who now began to do penance on the stage, is amusing; the language, when it does not smell too much of book-learning, is forcible and clear. The Alchemist is one of the three plays which usually contest the superiority among those of Jonson.

The Alchemist.

57. The second of these is The Fox, which, according to general opinion, has been placed above the Alchemist. Notwithstanding the dissent of Gifford, I should concur in this suffrage. The fable belongs to a higher class of comedy. Without minutely

Volpone or The Fox.

inquiring whether the Roman hunters after the inheritance of the rich, so well described by Horace, and especially the costly presents by which they endeavoured to secure a better return, are altogether according to the manners of Venice, where Jonson has laid his scene, we must acknowledge that he has displayed the base cupidity, of which there will never be wanting examples among mankind, in such colours as all other dramatic poetry can hardly rival. Cumberland has blamed the manner in which Volpone brings ruin on his head by insulting, in disguise, those whom he had duped. In this, I agree with Gifford, there is no violation of nature. Besides their ignorance of his person, so that he could not necessarily foresee the effects of Voltore's rage, it has been well and finely said by Cumberland, that there is a moral in a villain's outwitting himself. And this is one that many dramatists have displayed.

58. In the choice of subject, The Fox is much inferior to Tartuffe, to which it bears some very general analogy. Though the Tartuffe is not a remarkably agreeable play, The Fox is much less so; five of the principal characters are wicked almost beyond any retribution that comedy can dispense; the smiles it calls forth are not those of gaiety, but scorn; and the parts of an absurd English knight and his wife, though very humorous, are hardly prominent enough to enliven the scenes of guilt and fraud which pass before our eyes. But, though too much pedantry obtrudes itself, it does not overspread the pages with nonsense as in the Alchemist; the characters of Celia and Bonario excite some interest; the differences, one can hardly say the gradations, of villany are marked with the strong touches of Jonson's pen; the incidents succeed rapidly and naturally; the dramatic effect, above all, is perceptible to every reader, and rises in a climax through the last two acts to the conclusion.

The Silent Woman.

59. The Silent Woman, which has been named by some with the Alchemist and the Fox, falls much below them in vigorous delineation and dramatic effect. It has more diversity of manner than of character; the amusing scenes border sometimes on farce, as where two cowardly knights are made to receive blows in the dark, each supposing them to come

from his adversary, and the catastrophe is neither pleasing nor probable. It is written with a great deal of spirit, and has a value as the representation of London life in the higher ranks at that time. But upon the whole I should be inclined to give to Every Man in his Humour a much superior place. It is a proof of Jonson's extensive learning, that the story of this play, and several particular passages, have been detected in a writer so much out of the beaten track as Libanius.[a]

Sad Shepherd.

60. The pastoral drama of the Sad Shepherd is the best testimony to the poetical imagination of Jonson. Superior in originality, liveliness, and beauty to the Faithful Shepherdess of Fletcher, it reminds us rather, in language and imagery, of the Midsummer Night's Dream, and perhaps no other poetry has come so near to that of Shakspeare. Jonson, like him, had an extraordinary command of English, in its popular and provincial idioms, as well as what might be gained from books; and though his invincible pedantry now and then obtrudes itself into the mouths of shepherds, it is compensated by numerous passages of the most natural and graceful expression. This beautiful drama is imperfect, hardly more than half remaining, or, more probably, having ever been written. It was also Jonson's last song; age and poverty had stolen upon him; but as one has said, who experienced the same destiny, "the life was in the leaf," and his laurel remained verdant amidst the snow of his honoured head. The beauties of the Sad Shepherd might be reckoned rather poetical than dramatic: yet the action is both diversified and interesting to a degree we seldom find in the pastoral drama; there is little that is low in the comic speeches, nothing that is inflated in the serious.

61. Two men once united by friendship, and for ever by fame, the Dioscuri of our zodiac, Beaumont and

[a] Gifford discovered this. Dryden, who has given an examination of the Silent Woman, in his Essay on Dramatic Poetry, takes Morose for a real character, and says that he had so been informed. It is possible that there might be some foundation of truth in this: the skeleton is in Libanius, but Jonson may have filled it up from the life. Dryden gives it as his opinion that there is more wit and acuteness of fancy in this play than in any of Ben Jonson's, and that he has described the conversation of gentlemen with more gaiety and freedom than in the rest of his comedies, p. 107.

Fletcher, rose upon the horizon as the star of Shakspeare, though still in its fullest brightness, was declining in the sky. The first in order of time among more than fifty plays published with their joint names, is the Woman-Hater, represented, according to Langbaine, in 1607, and ascribed to Beaumont alone by Seward, though, I believe, merely on conjecture.[1] Beaumont died, at the age of thirty, in 1615; Fletcher in 1625. No difference of manner is perceptible, or, at least, no critic has perceived any, in the plays that appeared between these two epochs; in fact, the greater part were not printed till 1647, and it is only through the records of the play-house that we distinguish their dates. The tradition, however, of their own times, as well as the earlier death of Beaumont, give us reason to name Fletcher, when we mention one singly, as the principal author of all these plays; and of late years this has perhaps become more customary than it used to be. A contemporary copy of verses, indeed, seems to attribute the greater share in the Maid's Tragedy, Philaster, and King and No King, to Beaumont. But testimony of this kind is very precarious. It is sufficient that he bore a part in these three.

Beaumont and Fletcher.

62. Of all our early dramatic poets, none have suffered such mangling by the printer as Beaumont and Fletcher. Their style is generally elliptical and not very perspicuous; they use words in peculiar senses, and there seems often an attempt at pointed expression, in which its meaning has deserted them. But after every effort to comprehend their language, it is continually so remote from all possibility of bearing a rational sense, that we can only have recourse to one hypothesis, that of an extensive and irreparable corruption of the text. Seward and Simpson, who, in 1750, published the first edition in which any

Corrupt state of their text.

[1] Vol. i. p. 3. He also thinks The Nice Valour exclusively Beaumont's. These two appear to me about the worst in the collection.

[The latest editor of Beaumont and Fletcher is inclined to modify this opinion, latterly prevalent, as to the respective shares of the two poets. The Woman-Hater, he thinks, was "in all probability the unassisted composition of Fletcher." On the other hand, he says, "not the slightest doubt can be entertained that of the earlier plays in the present collection (and among those plays are the best), Beaumont contributed a large (perhaps the weightier) portion." "Some Account of the Lives and Writings of Beaumont and Fletcher," prefixed to Mr. Dyce's edition.—1847.]

endeavour was made at illustration or amendment, though not men of much taste, and too fond of extolling their authors, showed some acuteness, and have restored many passages in a probable manner, though often driven out at sea to conjecture something, where the received reading furnished not a vestige which they could trace. No one since has made any great progress in this criticism, though some have carped at these editors for not performing more. The problem of actual restoration in most places, where the printers or transcribers have made such strange havoc, must evidently be insoluble.[u]

63. The first play in the collected works of Beaumont and Fletcher, though not the earliest, is the Maid's Tragedy, and it is among the best. None of their female characters, though they are often very successful in beautiful delineations of virtuous love, attaches our sympathy like Aspasia. Her sorrows are so deep, so pure, so unmerited, she sustains the breach of plighted faith in Amyntor, and the taunts of vicious women, with so much resignation, so little of that termagant resentment which these poets are apt to infuse into their heroines, the poetry of her speeches is so exquisitely imaginative, that, of those dramatic persons who are not prominent in the development of a story, scarce any, even in Shakspeare, are more interesting. Nor is the praise due to the Maid's Tragedy confined to the part of Aspasia. In Melantius we have Fletcher's favourite character, the brave, honest soldier, incapable of suspecting evil till it becomes impossible to be ignorant of it, but unshrinking in its punishment. That of Evadne well displays the audacious security of guilt under the safeguard of power; it is highly theatrical, and renders the success of this tragedy not surprising in times when its language and situations could be endured by the audience. We may remark in this tragedy, as in many others of these dramatists, that, while pouring out the unlimited loyalty fashionable at the court of James, they are full of implied satire, which could hardly escape observation. The warm eulogies on military glory, the scorn of slothful peace, the pictures of dissolute baseness

The Maid's Tragedy.

[u] [The recent edition of Mr. Dyce has gone far towards a restoration of the genuine text.—1847.]

in courtiers, seem to spring from a sentiment very usual among the English gentry, a rank to which they both belonged, of dislike to that ignominious government; and though James was far enough removed from such voluptuous tyrants as Fletcher has portrayed in this and some other plays, they did not serve to exemplify the advantages of monarchy in the most attractive manner.

64. The Maid's Tragedy, unfortunately, beautiful and essentially moral as it is, cannot be called a tragedy for maids, and indeed should hardly be read by any respectable woman. It abounds with that studiously protracted indecency which distinguished Fletcher beyond all our early dramatists, and is so much incorporated with his plays, that very few of them can be so altered as to become tolerable at present on the stage. In this he is strikingly contrasted with Shakspeare, whose levities of this kind are so transitory, and so much confined to language, that he has borne the process of purification with little detriment to his genius, or even to his wit.

Philaster.

65. Philaster has been, in its day, one of the best known and most popular of Fletcher's plays.[x] This was owing to the pleasing characters of Philaster and Bellario, and to the frequent sweetness of the poetry. It is, nevertheless, not a first-rate play. The plot is most absurdly managed. It turns on the suspicion of Arethusa's infidelity. And the sole ground of this is that an abandoned woman, being detected herself, accuses the princess of unchastity. Not a shadow of presumptive evidence is brought to confirm this impudent assertion, which, however, the lady's father, her lover, and a grave, sensible courtier, do not fail implicitly to believe. How unlike the chain of circumstance, and the devilish cunning, by which the Moor is wrought up to think his Desdemona false! Bellario is suggested by Viola; there is more picturesqueness, more dramatic importance, not perhaps more beauty and sweetness of affection, but a more eloquent development of it in

[x] Dryden says, but I know not how truly, that Philaster was "the first play that brought Beaumont and Fletcher in esteem; for before that they had written two or three very unsuccessfully." p. 100. Philaster was not printed, according to Langbaine, till 1620: I do not know that we have any evidence of the date of its representation.

Fletcher; on the other hand, there is still more of that improbability which attends a successful concealment of sex by mere disguise of clothes, though no artifice has been more common on the stage. Many other circumstances in the conduct of Fletcher's story are ill contrived. It has less wit than the greater part of his comedies; for among such, according to the old distinction, it is to be ranked, though the subject is elevated and serious.

King and No King.

66. King and No King is, in my judgment, inferior to Philaster. The language has not so much of poetical beauty. The character of Arbaces excites no sympathy; it is a compound of vain-glory and violence, which rather demands disgrace from poetical justice than reward. Panthea is innocent, but insipid; Mardonius a good specimen of what Fletcher loves to exhibit, the plain, honest courtier. As for Bessus, he certainly gives occasion to several amusing scenes; but his cowardice is a little too glaring; he is neither so laughable as Bobadil, nor so sprightly as Parolles. The principal merit of this play, which rendered it popular on the stage for many years, consists in the effective scenes where Arbaces reveals his illicit desire. That especially with Mardonius is artfully and elaborately written. Shakspeare had less of this skill; and his tragedies suffer for it in their dramatic effect. The scene between John and Hubert is an exception, and there is a great deal of it in Othello; but in general he may be said not to have exerted the power of detaining the spectator in that anxious suspense, which creates almost an actual illusion, and makes him tremble at every word, lest the secret which he has learned should be imparted to the imaginary person on the stage. Of this there are several fine instances in the Greek tragedians, the famous scene in the Œdipus Tyrannus being the best; and it is possible that the superior education of Fletcher may have rendered him familiar with the resources of ancient tragedy. These scenes in the present play would have been more highly powerful if the interest could have been thrown on any character superior to the selfish braggart Arbaces. It may be said, perhaps, that his humiliation through his own lawless passions, after so much insolence of success, affords a moral; he seems, however, but imperfectly

cured at the conclusion, which is also hurried on with unsatisfactory rapidity.

67. The Elder Brother has been generally reckoned among the best of Fletcher's comedies. It displays in a new form an idea not very new in fiction, the power of love, on the first sight of a woman, to vivify a soul utterly ignorant of the passion. Charles, the Elder Brother, much unlike the Cymon of Dryden, is absorbed in study; a mere scholar without a thought beyond his books. His indifference, perhaps, and ignorance about the world are rather exaggerated, and border on stupidity; but it was the custom of the dramatists in that age to produce effect in representation by very sudden developments, if not changes, of character. The other persons are not ill conceived: the honest, testy Miramont, who admires learning without much more of it than enables him to sign his name, the two selfish, worldly fathers of Charles and Angelina, believing themselves shrewd, yet the easy dupes of coxcomb manners from the court, the spirited Angelina, the spoiled but not worthless Eustace, show Fletcher's great talent in dramatic invention. In none of his mere comedies has he sustained so uniformly elegant and pleasing a style of poetry; the language of Charles is naturally that of a refined scholar, but now and then, perhaps, we find old Miramont talk above himself. The underplot hits to the life the licentious endeavours of an old man to seduce his inferior; but, as usual, it reveals vice too broadly. This comedy is of very simple construction, so that Cibber was obliged to blend it with another, The Custom of the Country, in order to compose from the two his Love Makes a Man, by no means the worst play of that age. The two plots, however, do not harmonise very well.

The Elder Brother.

68. The Spanish Curate is in all probability taken from one of those comedies of intrigue which the fame of Lope de Vega had made popular in Europe.[y] It is one of the best specimens of that manner; the plot is full of incident and interest, without being difficult of comprehension, nor, with fair allowance for the conventions of the stage and manners of the country,

The Spanish Curate.

[y] [The Spanish Curate, Mr. Dyce informs us, is founded on "Gerardo, the Unfortunate Spaniard," a novel by Gonçalo de Cespides, of which an English translation, by Leonard Digges, appeared in 1622.—1847.]

improbable. The characters are in full relief without caricature. Fletcher, with an artifice of which he is very fond, has made the fierce resentment of Violante break out unexpectedly from the calmness she had shown in the first scenes; but it is so well accounted for, that we see nothing unnatural in the development of passions for which there had been no previous call. Ascanio is again one of Fletcher's favourite delineations; a kind of Bellario in his modest, affectionate disposition; one in whose prosperity the reader takes so much pleasure that he forgets it is, in a worldly sense, inconsistent with that of the honest-hearted Don Jamie. The doting husband, Don Henrique, contrasts well with the jealous Bartolus; and both afford by their fate the sort of moral which is looked for in comedy. The underplot of the lawyer and his wife, while it shows how licentious in principle as well as indecent in language the stage had become, is conducted with incomparable humour and amusement. Congreve borrowed part of this in the Old Bachelor without by any means equalling it. Upon the whole, as a comedy of this class, it deserves to be placed in the highest rank.

The Custom of the Country.

69. The Custom of the Country is much deformed by obscenity, especially the first act. But it is full of nobleness in character and sentiment, of interesting situations, of unceasing variety of action. Fletcher has never shown what he so much delights in drawing, the contrast of virtuous dignity with ungoverned passion in woman, with more success than in Zenocia and Hippolyta. Of these three plays we may say, perhaps, that there is more poetry in the Elder Brother, more interest in the Custom of the Country, more wit and spirit in the Spanish Curate.

The Loyal Subject.

70. The Loyal Subject ought also to be placed in a high rank among the works of Beaumont and Fletcher. There is a play by Heywood, The Royal King and Loyal Subject, from which the general idea of several circumstances of this has been taken. That Heywood's was the original, though the only edition of it is in 1637, while the Loyal Subject was represented in 1618, cannot bear a doubt. The former is expressly mentioned in the epilogue as an old play, belonging to a style gone out of date, and not to be

judged with rigour. Heywood has therefore the praise of having conceived the character of Earl Marshal, upon which Fletcher somewhat improved in Archas; a brave soldier, of that disinterested and devoted loyalty which bears all ingratitude and outrage at the hands of an unworthy and misguided sovereign. In the days of James there could be no more courtly moral. In each play the prince, after depriving his most deserving subject of honours and fortune, tries his fidelity by commanding him to send two daughters, whom he had educated in seclusion, to the court, with designs that the father may easily suspect. The loyalty, however, of these honest soldiers submits to encounter this danger; and the conduct of the young ladies soon proves that they might be trusted in the fiery trial. In the Loyal Subject, Fletcher has beautifully, and with his light touch of pencil, sketched the two virtuous sisters; one high-spirited, intrepid, undisguised, the other shrinking with maiden modesty, a tremulous dew-drop in the cup of a violet. But unfortunately his original taint betrays itself, and the elder sister cannot display her scorn of licentiousness without borrowing some of its language. If Shakspeare had put these loose images into the mouth of Isabella, how differently we should have esteemed her character!

71. We find in the Loyal Subject what is neither pleasing nor probable, the disguise of a youth as a girl. This was of course not offensive to those who saw nothing else on the stage. Fletcher did not take this from Heywood. In the whole management of the story he is much superior; the nobleness of Archas and his injuries are still more displayed than those of the Earl Marshal; and he has several new characters, especially Theodore, the impetuous son of the Loyal Subject, who does not brook the insults of a prince as submissively as his father, which fill the play with variety and spirit. The language is in some places obscure and probably corrupt, but abounding with that kind of poetry which belongs to Fletcher.

Beggar's Bush.

72. Beggar's Bush is an excellent comedy; the serious parts interesting, the comic diverting. Every character supports itself well: if some parts of the plot have been suggested by As You Like It, they

are managed so as to be original in spirit. Few of Fletcher's plays furnish more proofs of his characteristic qualities. It might be represented with no great curtailment.

73. The Scornful Lady is one of those comedies which exhibit English domestic life, and have therefore a value independent of their dramatic merit. It does not equal Beggar's Bush, but is full of effective scenes, which, when less regard was paid to decency, must have rendered it a popular play. Fletcher, in fact, is as much superior to Shakspeare in his knowledge of the stage, as he falls below him in that of human nature.[1] His fertile invention was turned to the management of his plot (always with a view to representation), the rapid succession of incidents, the surprises and embarrassments which keep the spectator's attention alive. His characters are but vehicles to the story: they are distinguished, for the most part, by little more than the slight peculiarities of manner, which are easily caught by the audience; and we do not often meet, especially in his comedies, with the elaborate delineations of Jonson, or the marked idiosyncracies of Shakspeare. Of these his great predecessors, one formed a deliberate conception of a character, whether taken from general nature or from manners, and drew his figure, as it were, in his mind before he transferred it to the canvas; with the other the idea sprang out of the

The Scornful Lady.

[1] [Mr. Dyce, as well as an earlier editor of Beaumont and Fletcher, think the greater part of this comedy written by Beaumont. Mr. Dyce adds: "In the edition of 1750, Theobald has a note concerning the steward Savil, where he says, 'The ingenious Mr. Addison, I remember, told me that he sketched out his character of Vellum, in the comedy called the Drummer, purely from this model.'" It is said of some plagiaries, that they are like gypsies, who steal children, and disfigure them that they may not be known. "The ingenious Mr. Addison" went another way to work; when he took any one's silver, he turned it into gold. I doubt whether Theobald reported his ingenious friend's words rightly; for the inimitable formality of Vellum has no prototype in Savil. But, while making this avowal, why did not he add, that the Waiting-Woman in the Scornful Lady is called Abigail? Here was a heinous theft; and after its concealment, I fear that we must refuse absolution. After all, however, there is a certain resemblance in these comedies, which may lead us to believe that Addison had his predecessors in his head. Since this was written, I have observed that Mr. Dyce, in "Some Account of the Lives and Writings of Beaumont and Fletcher," prefixed to his edition, p. 41, has remarks to the same purport. Mr. Dyce adds, that when "the Spectator and Tatler are hastening to oblivion," (Pudet hæc opprobria,) "it cannot be expected that the reader will know much of The Drummer."—1847.]

depths of his soul, and though suggested by the story he had chosen, became so much the favourite of his genius as he wrote, that in its development he sometimes grew negligent of his plot.

Valentinian.

74. No tragedy of Fletcher would deserve higher praise than Valentinian, if he had not, by an inconceivable want of taste and judgment, descended from beauty and dignity to the most preposterous absurdities. The matron purity of the injured Lucina, the ravages of unrestrained self-indulgence on a mind not wholly without glimpses of virtue in Valentinian, the vileness of his courtiers, the spirited contrast of unconquerable loyalty in Ætius with the natural indignation at wrong in Maximus, are brought before our eyes in some of Fletcher's best poetry, though in a text that seems even more corrupt than usual. But after the admirable scene in the third act, where Lucina (the Lucretia of this story) reveals her injury, perhaps almost the only scene in this dramatist, if we except the Maid's Tragedy, that can move us to tears, her husband Maximus, who even here begins to forfeit our sympathy by his ready consent, in the Spanish style of perverted honour, to her suicide, becomes a treacherous and ambitious villain, the loyalty of Ætius turns to downright folly, and the rest of the play is but such a series of murders as Marston or the author of Andronicus might have devised. If Fletcher meant, which he very probably did, to inculcate as a moral, that the worst of tyrants are to be obeyed with unflinching submission, he may have gained applause at court, at the expense of his reputation with posterity.

The Two Noble Kinsmen.

75. The Two Noble Kinsmen is a play that has been honoured by a tradition of Shakspeare's concern in it. The evidence as to this is the title-page of the first edition; which, though it may seem much at first sight, is next to nothing in our old drama, full of misnomers of this kind. The editors of Beaumont and Fletcher have insisted upon what they take for marks of Shakspeare's style; and Schlegel, after "seeing no reason for doubting so probable an opinion," detects the spirit of Shakspeare in a certain ideal purity which distinguishes this from other plays of Fletcher, and in the conscientious fidelity with which it follows the Knight's Tale in Chaucer. The Two Noble Kinsmen has

much of that elevated sense of honour, friendship, fidelity, and love, which belongs, I think, more characteristically to Fletcher, who had drunk at the fountain of Castilian romance, than to one in whose vast mind this conventional morality of particular classes was subordinated to the universal nature of man. In this sense Fletcher is always, in his tragic compositions, a very ideal poet. The subject itself is fitter for him than for Shakspeare. In the language and conduct of this play, with great deference to better and more attentive critics, I see imitations of Shakspeare rather than such resemblances as denote his powerful stamp. The madness of the gaoler's daughter, where some have imagined they saw the master-hand, is doubtless suggested by that of Ophelia, but with an inferiority of taste and feeling which it seems impossible not to recognise. The painful and degrading symptom of female insanity, which Shakspeare has touched with his gentle hand, is dwelt upon by Fletcher with all his innate impurity. Can any one believe that the former would have written the last scene in which the gaoler's daughter appears on the stage? Schlegel has too fine taste to believe that this character came from Shakspeare, and it is given up by the latest assertor of his claim to a participation in the play.[a]

76. The Faithful Shepherdess, deservedly among the most celebrated productions of Fletcher, stands alone in

[a] The author of a "Letter on Shakspeare's Authorship of the Drama entitled the Two Noble Kinsmen," Edinburgh, 1833, notwithstanding this title, does not deny a considerable participation to Fletcher. He lays no great stress on the external evidence. But in arguing from the similarity of style in many passages to that of Shakspeare, the author, Mr. Spalding of Edinburgh, shows so much taste and so competent a knowledge of the two dramatists, that I should perhaps scruple to set up my own doubts in opposition. His chief proofs are drawn from the force and condensation of language in particular passages, which doubtless is one of the great distinctions between the two. But we might wish to have seen this displayed in longer extracts than such as the author of this Letter has generally given us. It is difficult to say of a man like Fletcher that he could not have written single lines in the spirit of his predecessor. A few instances, however, of longer passages will be found; and I believe that it is a subject upon which there will long be a difference of opinion.

[Coleridge has said, "I have no doubt whatever that the first act, and the first scene of the second act, of the Two Noble Kinsmen, are Shakspeare's." Table-Talk, vol. ii. p. 119.—1842.]

[Mr. Dyce concurs with Mr. Spalding as to the share of Shakspeare, which they both think to have been the first, and a part, if not all, of the fifth, but not much of the intermediate parts. The hypothesis of a joint production is open to much difficulty, which Mr. Dyce hardly removes.—1847.]

its class, and admits of no comparison with any other play. It is a pastoral drama, in imitation of the Pastor Fido, at that time very popular in England. The Faithful Shepherdess, however, to the great indignation of all the poets, did not succeed on its first representation. There is nothing in this surprising; the tone of pastoral is too far removed from the possibilities of life for a stage which appealed, like ours, to the boisterous sympathies of a general audience. It is a play very characteristic of Fletcher, being a mixture of tenderness, purity, indecency, and absurdity. There is some justice in Schlegel's remark, that it is an immodest eulogy on modesty. But this critic, who does not seem to appreciate the beauty of Fletcher's poetry, should hardly have mentioned Guarini as a model whom he might have followed. It was by copying the Corisca of the Pastor Fido that Fletcher introduced the character of the vicious shepherdess Cloe; though, according to his times, and we must own, to his disposition, he has greatly aggravated the faults to which just exception has been taken in his original.

The Faithful Shepherdess.

77. It is impossible to withhold our praise from the poetical beauties of this pastoral drama. Every one knows that it contains the germ of Comus; the benevolent Satyr, whose last proposition to "stray in the middle air, and stay the sailing rack, or nimbly take hold of the moon," is not much in the character of those sylvans, has been judiciously metamorphosed by Milton to an attendant spirit; and a more austere as well as more uniform language has been given to the speakers. But Milton has borrowed largely from the imagination of his predecessor; and by quoting the lyric parts of the Faithful Shepherdess, it would be easy to deceive any one not accurately familiar with the songs of Comus. They abound with that rapid succession of ideal scenery, that darting of the poet's fancy from earth to heaven, those picturesque and novel metaphors, which distinguish much of the poetry of this age, and which are ultimately, perhaps, in great measure referable to Shakspeare.

78. Rule a Wife and Have a Wife is among the superior comedies of its class. That it has a prototype on the Spanish theatre must appear likely; but I should

be surprised if the variety and spirit of character, the vivacity of humour, be not chiefly due to our own authors.[b] Every personage in this comedy is drawn with a vigorous pencil; so that it requires a good company to be well represented. It is indeed a mere picture of roguery; for even Leon, the only character for whom we can feel any sort of interest, has gained his ends by stratagem; but his gallant spirit redeems this in our indulgent views of dramatic morality, and we are justly pleased with the discomfiture of fraud and effrontery in Estifania and Margarita.

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife.

79. The Knight of the Burning Pestle is very diverting, and more successful, perhaps, than any previous attempt to introduce a drama within a drama. I should hardly except the Introduction to the Taming of a Shrew. The burlesque, though very ludicrous, does not transgress all bounds of probability. The Wild-goose Chase, The Chances, The Humorous Lieutenant, Women Pleased, Wit without Money, Monsieur Thomas, and several other comedies deserve to be praised for the usual excellences of Fletcher, his gaiety, his invention, his ever varying rapidity of dialogue and incident. None are without his defects; and we may add, what is not in fairness to be called a defect of his, since it applies perhaps to every dramatic writer except Shakspeare and Molière, that, being cast as it were in a common mould, we find both a monotony in reading several of these plays, and a difficulty of distinguishing them in remembrance.

Some other plays.

80. The later writers, those especially after the Restoration, did not fail to appropriate many of the inventions of Fletcher. He and his colleague are the proper founders of our comedy of intrigue, which prevailed through the seventeenth century, the comedy of Wycherley, Dryden, Behn, and Shadwell. Their manner, if not their actual plots, may still be observed in many pieces that are produced on our stage. But few of those imitators came up to the sprightliness of their model. It is to be regretted that it is rarely practicable to adapt any one of his comedies to representation without such

[b] [It is taken, in part, from one of the novels of Cervantes. See Mr. Dyce's Introduction, p. 7.—1847.]

changes as destroy their original raciness, and dilute the geniality of their wit.

Origin of Fletcher's plays.

81. There has not been much curiosity to investigate the sources of his humorous plays. A few are historical; but it seems highly probable that the Spanish stage of Lope de Vega and his contemporaries often furnished the subject, and perhaps many of the scenes, to his comedies. These possess all the characteristics ascribed to the comedies of intrigue so popular in that country. The scene too is more commonly laid in Spain, and the costume of Spanish manners and sentiments more closely observed, than we should expect from the invention of Englishmen. It would be worth the leisure of some lover of theatrical literature to search the collection of Lope de Vega's works, and, if possible, the other Spanish writers at the beginning of the century, in order to trace the footsteps of our two dramatists. Sometimes they may have had recourse to novels. The Little French Lawyer seems to indicate such an origin. Nothing had as yet been produced, I believe, on the French stage from which it could have been derived, but the story and most of the characters are manifestly of French derivation. The comic humour of La Writ in this play we may ascribe to the invention of Fletcher himself.[c]

Defects of their plots.

82. It is, however, not improbable that the entire plot was sometimes original. Fertile as their invention was, to an extraordinary degree, in furnishing the incidents of their rapid and animated comedies, we may believe the fable itself to have sometimes sprung from no other source. It seems, indeed, now and then, as if the authors had gone forward with no very clear determination of their catastrophe; there

[c] Dryden reckons this play with the Spanish Curate, the Chances, and Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, among those which he supposes to be drawn from Spanish novels. Essay on Dramatic Poetry, p. 204. By novels we should probably understand plays; for those which he mentions are little in the style of novels. But the Little French Lawyer has all the appearance of coming from a French novel; the scene lies in France, and I see nothing Spanish about it. Dryden was seldom well informed about the early stage.

[In this conjecture I have been mistaken: the plot, Langbaine says, is borrowed from the Spanish Rogue of Guzman d'Alfarache; and Mr. Dyce adds that this writer took it from an older novel, by Masuccio Salernitano. Beaumont and Fletcher have, however, greatly improved the story. Dyce's Beaumont and Fletcher, vol. iii. p. 459. See, too, what is said above, on the same authority, as to the Spanish Curate.—1847.]

is a want of unity in the conception, a want of consistency in the characters, which appear sometimes rather intended to surprise by incongruity, than framed upon a definite model. That of Ruy Diaz in the Island Princess, of whom it is hard to say whether he is a brave man or a coward, or alternately one and the other, is an instance to which many more might easily be added. In the Bloody Brother, Rollo sends to execution one of his counsellors, whose daughter Edith vainly interferes in a scene of great pathos and effect. In the progress of the drama she arms herself to take away the tyrant's life; the whole of her character has been consistent and energetic; when Fletcher, to the reader's astonishment, thinks fit to imitate the scene between Richard and Lady Anne; and the ignominious fickleness of that lady, whom Shakspeare with wonderful skill, but in a manner not quite pleasing, sacrifices to the better display of the cunning crook-back, is here transferred to the heroine of the play, and the very character upon whom its interest ought to depend. Edith is on the point of giving up her purpose, when some others in the conspiracy coming in, she recovers herself enough to exhort them to strike the blow.[d]

Their sentiments and style dramatic.

83. The sentiments and style of Fletcher, where not concealed by obscurity, or corruption of the text, are very dramatic. We cannot deny that the depths of Shakspeare's mind were often unfathomable by an audience; the bow was drawn by a matchless hand, but the shaft went out of sight. All might listen to Fletcher's pleasing, though not profound or vigorous, language; his thoughts are noble, and tinged with the ideality of romance, his metaphors vivid, though sometimes too forced; he possesses the idiom of English without much pedantry, though in many passages he strains it beyond common use; his versification, though studiously irregular, is often rhythmical and sweet. Yet we are seldom arrested by striking beauties; good lines

[d] Rotrou, in his Wenceslas, as we have already observed, has done something of the same kind; it may have been meant as an ungenerous and calumnious attack on the constancy of the female sex. If lions were painters, the old fable says, they would exhibit a very different view of their contentions with men. But lionesses are become very good painters; and it is but through their clemency that we are not delineated in such a style as would avenge them for the injuries of these tragedians.

occur in every page, fine ones but rarely; we lay down the volume with a sense of admiration of what we have read, but little of it remains distinctly in the memory. Fletcher is not much quoted, and has not even afforded copious materials to those who cull the beauties of ancient lore.

Their characters.

84. In variety of character there can be no comparison between Fletcher and Shakspeare. A few types return upon us in the former; an old general, proud of his wars, faithful and passionate, a voluptuous and arbitrary king (for his principles of obedience do not seem to have inspired him with much confidence in royal virtues), a supple courtier, a high-spirited youth, or one more gentle in manners but not less stout in action, a lady, fierce and not always very modest in her chastity, repelling the solicitations of licentiousness, another impudently vicious, form the usual pictures for his canvas. Add to these, for the lighter comedy, an amorous old man, a gay spendthrift, and a few more of the staple characters of the stage, and we have the materials of Fletcher's dramatic world. It must be remembered that we compare him only with Shakspeare, and that as few dramatists have been more copious than Fletcher, few have been so much called upon for inventions, in which the custom of the theatre has not exacted much originality. The great fertility of his mind in new combinations of circumstance gives as much appearance of novelty to the personages themselves as an unreflecting audience requires. In works of fiction, even those which are read in the closet, this variation of the mere dress of a character is generally found sufficient for the public.

Their tragedies;

85. The tragedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, by which our ancestors seem to have meant only plays wherein any one of the personages, or at least one whom the spectator would wish to keep alive, dies on the stage, are not very numerous, but in them we have as copious an effusion of blood as any contemporary dramas supply. The conclusion, indeed, of these, and of the tragi-comedies, which form a larger class, is generally mismanaged. A propensity to take the audience by surprise leads often to an unnatural and unsatisfactory catastrophe; it seems their aim to disap-

point common expectation, to baffle reasonable conjecture, to mock natural sympathy. This is frequently the practice of our modern novelists, who find no better resource in the poverty of their invention to gratify the jaded palate of the world.

Inferior to their comedies.

86. The comic talents of these authors far exceeded their skill in tragedy. In comedy they founded a new school, at least in England, the vestiges of which are still to be traced in our theatre. Their plays are at once distinguishable from those of their contemporaries by the regard to dramatic effect which influenced the writers' imagination. Though not personally connected with the stage, they had its picture ever before their eyes. Hence their incidents are numerous and striking, their characters sometimes slightly sketched, not drawn, like those of Jonson, from a preconceived design, but preserving that degree of individual distinctness which a common audience requires, and often highly humorous without extravagance; their language brilliant with wit, their measure, though they do not make great use of prose, very lax and rapid, running frequently to lines of thirteen and fourteen syllables. Few of their comedies are without a mixture of grave sentiments or elevated characters; and though there is much to condemn in their indecency and even licentiousness of principle, they never descend to the coarse buffoonery not unfrequent in their age. Never were dramatic poets more thoroughly gentlemen, according to the standard of their times; and, when we consider the court of James I., we may say that they were above that standard.[e]

87. The best of Fletcher's characters are female; he

[e] "Their plots were generally more regular than Shakspeare's, especially those which were made before Beaumont's death; and they understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better; whose wild debaucheries, and quickness of wit in repartees, no poet before them could paint as they have done. Humour, which Ben Jonson derived from particular persons, they made it not their business to describe; they represented all the passions very lively, but above all, love. I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to its highest perfection; what words have since been taken in, are rather superfluous than ornamental. Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakspeare's or Jonson's: the reason is, because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suits generally with all men's humours. Shakspeare's language is likewise a little obsolete, and Jonson's wit falls short of theirs." Dryden, p. 101.

wanted that large sweep of reflection and experience which is required for the greater diversity of the other sex. None of his women delight us like Imogen and Desdemona; but he has many Imogens and Desdemonas of a fainter type. Spacelia, Zenocia, Celia, Aspasia, Evanthe, Lucina, Ordella, Oriana, present the picture that cannot be greatly varied without departing from its essence, but which never can be repeated too often to please us, of faithful, tender, self-denying female love, superior to everything but virtue. Nor is he less successful, generally, in the contrast of minds stained by guilty passion, though in this he sometimes exaggerates the outline till it borders on caricature. But it is in vain to seek in Fletcher the strong conceptions of Shakspeare, the Shylocks, the Lears, the Othellos. Schlegel has well said that "scarce anything has been wanting to give a place to Beaumont and Fletcher among the great dramatists of Europe but more of seriousness and depth, and the regulating judgment which prescribes the due limits in every part of composition." It was for want of the former qualities that they conceive nothing in tragedy very forcibly; for want of the latter that they spoil their first conception by extravagance and incongruity.[f]

Their female characters.

88. The reputation of Beaumont and Fletcher was at its height, and most of their plays had been given to the stage, when a worthy inheritor of their mantle appeared in Philip Massinger. Of his extant dramas the Virgin Martyr, published in 1622, seems to be the earliest; but we have reason to believe that several are

[f] "Shakspeare," says Dryden, "writ better between man and man, Fletcher betwixt man and woman; consequently the one described friendship better, the other love; yet Shakspeare taught Fletcher to write love, and Juliet and Desdemona are originals. It is true the scholar had the softest soul, but the master had the kinder. . . . Shakspeare had an universal mind, which comprehended all characters and passions; Fletcher a more confined and limited; for though he treated love in perfection, yet honour, ambition, revenge, and generally all the stronger passions, he either touched not, or not masterly. To conclude all, he was a limb of Shakspeare." p. 301. This comparison is rather generally than strictly just, as is often the case with the criticisms of Dryden. That Fletcher wrote better than Shakspeare "between man and woman," or in displaying love, will be granted when he shall be shown to have excelled Ferdinand and Miranda, or Posthumus and Imogen. And, on the other hand, it is unjust to deny him credit for having sometimes touched the stronger emotions, especially honour and ambition, with great skill, though much inferior to that of Shakspeare.

lost; and even this tragedy may have been represented some years before. The far greater part of his remaining pieces followed within ten years; the Bashful Lover, which is the latest now known, was written in 1636. Massinger was a gentleman, but in the service, according to the language of those times, of the Pembroke family; his education was at the university, his acquaintance both with books and with the manners of the court is familiar, his style and sentiments are altogether those of a man polished by intercourse of good society.

89. Neither in his own age nor in modern times does Massinger seem to have been put on a level with Fletcher or Jonson. Several of his plays, as has been just observed, are said to have perished in manuscript; few were represented after the Restoration; and it is only in consequence of his having met with more than one editor who has published his collected works in a convenient form, that he is become tolerably familiar to the general reader. He is, however, far more intelligible than Fletcher; his text has not given so much embarrassment from corruption, and his general style is as perspicuous as we ever find it in the dramatic poets of that age. The obscure passages in Massinger, after the care that Gifford has taken, are by no means frequent.

General nature of his drama.

90. Five of his sixteen plays are tragedies, that is, are concluded in death; of the rest, no one belongs to the class of mere comedy, but by the depth of the interest, the danger of the virtuous, or the atrocity of the vicious characters, as well as the elevation of the general style, must be ranked with the serious drama, or, as it was commonly termed, tragi-comedy. A shade of melancholy tinges the writings of Massinger; but he sacrifices less than his contemporaries to the public taste for superfluous bloodshed on the stage. In several of his plays, such as the Picture, or the Renegado, where it would have been easy to determine the catastrophe towards tragedy, he has preferred to break the clouds with the radiance of a setting sun. He consulted in this his own genius, not eminently pathetic, nor energetic enough to display the utmost intensity of emotion, but abounding in sweetness and dignity, apt to delineate the loveliness of virtue,

and to delight in its recompense after trial. It has been surmised that the religion of Massinger was that of the church of Rome; a conjecture not improbable, though, considering the ascetic and imaginative piety which then prevailed in that of England, we need not absolutely go so far for his turn of thought in the Virgin Martyr or the Renegado.

His delineations of character

91. The most striking excellence of this poet is his conception of character; and in this I must incline to place him above Fletcher, and, if I may venture to say it, even above Jonson. He is free from the hard outline of the one and the negligent looseness of the other. He has indeed no great variety, and sometimes repeats, with such bare modifications as the story demands, the type of his first design. Thus the extravagance of conjugal affection is portrayed, feeble in Theodosius, frantic in Domitian, selfish in Sforza, suspicious in Mathias; and the same impulses of doting love return upon us in the guilty eulogies of Mallefort on his daughter. The vindictive hypocrisy of Montreville in the Unnatural Combat has nearly its counterpart in that of Francesco in the Duke of Milan, and is again displayed with more striking success in Luke. This last villain, indeed, and that original, masterly, inimitable conception, Sir Giles Overreach, are sufficient to establish the rank of Massinger in this great province of dramatic art. But his own disposition led him more willingly to pictures of moral beauty. A peculiar refinement, a mixture of gentleness and benignity with noble daring, belong to some of his favourite characters, to Pisander in the Bondman, to Antonio in A Very Woman, to Charolois in the Fatal Dowry. It may be readily supposed that his female characters are not wanting in these graces. It seems to me that he has more variety in his women than in the other sex, and that they are less mannered than the heroines of Fletcher. A slight degree of error or passion in Sophia, Eudocia, Marcelia, without weakening our sympathy, serves both to prevent the monotony of perpetual rectitude, so often insipid in fiction, and to bring forward the development of the story.

92. The subjects chosen by Massinger are sometimes historical, but others seem to have been taken from

French or Italian novels, and those so obscure that his editor Gifford, a man of much reading and industry, has seldom traced them. This indeed was an usual practice of our ancient dramatists. Their works have consequently a romantic character, presenting as little of the regular Plautine comedy as of the Greek forms of tragedy. They are merely novels in action, following probably their models with no great variation, except the lower and lighter episodes which it was always more or less necessary to combine with the story. It is from this choice of subjects, perhaps, as much as from the peculiar temper of the poets, that love is the predominant affection of the mind which they display; not cold and conventional, as we commonly find it on the French stage, but sometimes, as the novelists of the South were prone to delineate its emotions, fiery, irresistible, and almost resembling the fatalism of ancient tragedy; sometimes a subdued captive at the chariot-wheels of honour or religion. The range of human passion is consequently far less extensive than in Shakspeare; but the variety of circumstance, and the modifications of the paramount affection itself, compensated for this deficiency.

His subjects.

93. Next to the grace and dignity of sentiment in Massinger, we must praise those qualities in his style. Every modern critic has been struck by the peculiar beauty of his language. In his harmonious swell of numbers, in his pure and genuine idiom, which a text, by good fortune and the diligence of its last editor, far less corrupt than that of Fletcher, enables us to enjoy, we find an unceasing charm. The poetical talents of Massinger were very considerable, his taste superior to that of his contemporaries; the colouring of his imagery is rarely overcharged; a certain redundancy, as some may account it, gives fulness, or what the painters call *impasto*, to his style, and if it might not always conduce to effect on the stage, is on the whole suitable to the character of his composition.[g]

Beauty of his style.

[g] [I quote the following criticism from Coleridge, without thoroughly assenting to it:—" The styles of Massinger's plays and the Samson Agonistes are the two extremes of the arc within which the diction of dramatic poetry may oscillate. Shakspeare in his great plays is the mid-point. In the Samson Agonistes, colloquial language is left at the greatest distance; yet something of it is preserved, to render the dialogue probable: in Massinger the style is differenced, but

94. The comic powers of this writer are not on a level with the serious; with some degree of humorous conception he is too apt to aim at exciting ridicule by caricature, and his dialogue wants altogether the sparkling wit of Shakspeare and Fletcher. Whether from a consciousness of this defect, or from an unhappy compliance with the viciousness of the age, no writer is more contaminated by gross indecency. It belongs indeed chiefly, not perhaps exclusively, to the characters he would render odious; but upon them he has bestowed this flower of our early theatre with no sparing hand. Few, it must be said, of his plays are incapable of representation merely on this account, and the offence is therefore more incurable in Fletcher.

Inferiority of his comic powers.

95. Among the tragedies of Massinger, I should incline to prefer the Duke of Milan. The plot borrows enough from history to give it dignity, and to counterbalance in some measure the predominance of the passion of love which the invented parts of the drama exhibit. The characters of Sforza, Marcelia, and Francesco are in Massinger's best manner; the story is skilfully and not improbably developed; the pathos is deeper than we generally find in his writings; the eloquence of language, especially in the celebrated speech of Sforza before the Emperor, has never been surpassed by him. Many, however, place the Fatal Dowry still higher. This tragedy furnished Rowe with the story of his Fair Penitent. The superiority of the original, except in suitableness for representation, has long been acknowledged. In the Unnatural Combat, probably among the earliest of Massinger's works, we find a greater energy, a bolder strain of figurative poetry, more command of terror, and perhaps of pity, than in any other of his dramas. But the dark shadows of crime and misery which overspread this tragedy belong to rather an earlier period of the English stage than that of Massinger, and were not congenial to his temper. In the Virgin Martyr, he has followed the Spanish model of religious Autos, with many graces of language and a beautiful display of Christian heroism in

Some of his tragedies particularised.

differenced in the smallest degree possible, from animated conversation, by the vein of poetry." Table Talk, vol. ii. p. 121.—1842.]

Dorothea; but the tragedy is in many respects unpleasing.

96. The Picture, The Bondman, and A Very Woman may be reckoned among the best of the tragi-comedies of Massinger. But the general merits as well as defects of this writer are perceptible in all; and the difference between these and the rest is not such as to be apparent to every reader. Two others are distinguishable as more English than the rest: the scene lies at home, and in the age; and to these the common voice has assigned a superiority. They are A New Way to Pay Old Debts and The City Madam. A character drawn, as it appears, from reality, and though darkly wicked, not beyond the province of the higher comedy, Sir Giles Overreach, gives the former drama a striking originality and an impressive vigour. It retains, alone among the productions of Massinger, a place on the stage. Gifford inclines to prefer the City Madam; which, no doubt, by the masterly delineation of Luke, a villain of a different order from Overreach, and a larger portion of comic humour and satire than is usual with this writer, may dispute the palm. But there seems to be more violent improbability in the conduct of the plot, than in A New Way to Pay Old Debts.

And of his other plays.

97. Massinger, as a tragic writer, appears to me second only to Shakspeare; in the higher comedy I can hardly think him inferior to Jonson. In wit and sprightly dialogue, as well as in knowledge of theatrical effect, he falls very much below Fletcher. These, however, are the great names of the English stage. At a considerable distance below Massinger we may place his contemporary John Ford. In the choice of tragic subjects from obscure fictions which have to us the charm of entire novelty, they resemble each other; but in the conduct of their fable, in the delineation of their characters, each of these poets has his distinguishing excellences. "I know," says Gifford, "few things more difficult to account for than the deep and lasting impression made by the more tragic portions of Ford's poetry." He succeeds, however, pretty well in accounting for it; the situations are awfully interesting, the distress intense, the thoughts and language becoming

Ford.

the expression of deep sorrow. Ford, with none of the moral beauty and elevation of Massinger, has, in a much higher degree, the power over tears; we sympathise even with his vicious characters, with Giovanni and Annabella and Bianca. Love, and love in guilt or sorrow, is almost exclusively the emotion he portrays; no heroic passion, no sober dignity, will be found in his tragedies. But he conducts his stories well and without confusion; his scenes are often highly wrought and effective; his characters, with no striking novelty, are well supported; he is seldom extravagant or regardless of probability. The Broken Heart has generally been reckoned his finest tragedy; and if the last act had been better prepared, by bringing the love of Calantha for Ithocles more fully before the reader in the earlier part of the play, there would be very few passages of deeper pathos in our dramatic literature. "The style of Ford," it is said by Gifford, "is altogether original and his own. Without the majestic march which distinguishes the poetry of Massinger, and with little or none of that light and playful humour which characterises the dialogue of Fletcher, or even of Shirley, he is yet elegant, and easy, and harmonious; and though rarely sublime, yet sufficiently elevated for the most pathetic tones of that passion on whose romantic energies he chiefly delighted to dwell." Yet he censures afterwards Ford's affectation of uncouth phrases, and perplexity of language. Of comic ability this writer does not display one particle. Nothing can be meaner than those portions of his dramas which, in compliance with the prescribed rules of that age, he devotes to the dialogue of servants or buffoons.

Shirley.

98. Shirley is a dramatic writer much inferior to those who have been mentioned, but has acquired some degree of reputation, or at least notoriety of name, in consequence of the new edition of his plays. These are between twenty and thirty in number; some of them, however, written in conjunction with his fellow-dramatists. A few of these are tragedies, a few are comedies drawn from English manners; but in the greater part we find the favourite style of that age, the characters foreign and of elevated rank, the interest serious, but not always of buskined dignity, the catastrophe fortunate; all, in short, that has gone under the vague

appellation of tragi-comedy. Shirley has no originality, no force in conceiving or delineating character, little of pathos, and less perhaps of wit; his dramas produce no deep impression in reading, and of course can leave none in the memory. But his mind was poetical; his better characters, especially females, express pure thoughts in pure language; he is never tumid or affected, and seldom obscure; the incidents succeed rapidly, the personages are numerous, and there is a general animation in the scenes which causes us to read him with some pleasure. No very good play, nor, possibly, any very good scene, could be found in Shirley; but he has many lines of considerable beauty. Among his comedies the Gamesters may be reckoned the best. Charles I. is said to have declared that it was "the best play he had seen these seven years;" and it has even been added that the story was of his royal suggestion. It certainly deserves praise both for language and construction of the plot, and it has the advantage of exposing vice to ridicule; but the ladies of that court, the fair forms whom Vandyke has immortalised, must have been very different indeed from their posterity if they could sit it through. The Ball, and also some more among the comedies of Shirley, are so far remarkable and worthy of being read, that they bear witness to a more polished elegance of manners, and a more free intercourse in the higher class, than we find in the comedies of the preceding reign. A queen from France, and that queen Henrietta Maria, was better fitted to give this tone than Anne of Denmark. But it is not from Shirley's pictures that we can draw the most favourable notions of the morals of that age.

Heywood.

99. Heywood is a writer still more fertile than Shirley; between forty and fifty plays are ascribed to him. We have mentioned one of the best in the second volume, ante-dating, perhaps, its appearance by a few years. In the English Traveller he has returned to something like the subject of A Woman killed with Kindness, but with less success. This play is written in verse, and with that ease and perspicuity, seldom rising to passion or figurative poetry, which distinguishes this dramatist. Young Geraldine is a beautiful specimen of the Platonic, or rather inflexibly

virtuous lover, whom the writers of this age delighted to portray. On the other hand, it is difficult to pronounce whether the lady is a thorough-paced hypocrite in the first acts, or falls from virtue, like Mrs. Frankfort, on the first solicitation of a stranger. In either case the character is unpleasing, and we may hope, improbable. The underplot of this play is largely borrowed from the Mostellaria of Plautus, and is diverting, though somewhat absurd. Heywood seldom rises to much vigour of poetry; but his dramatic invention is ready, his style is easy, his characters do not transgress the boundaries of nature, and it is not surprising that he was popular in his own age.

Webster.

100. Webster belongs to the first part of the reign of James. He possessed very considerable powers, and ought to be ranked, I think, the next below Ford. With less of poetic grace than Shirley, he had incomparably more vigour; with less of nature and simplicity than Heywood, he had a more elevated genius, and a bolder pencil. But the deep sorrows and terrors of tragedy were peculiarly his province. "His imagination," says his last editor, "had a fond familiarity with objects of awe and fear. The silence of the sepulchre, the sculptures of marble monuments, the knolling of church bells, the cerements of the corpse, the yew that roots itself in dead men's graves, are the illustrations that most readily present themselves to his imagination." I think this well-written sentence a little one-sided, and hardly doing justice to the variety of Webster's power; but in fact he was as deeply tainted as any of his contemporaries with the savage taste of the Italian school, and in the Duchess of Malfy scarcely leaves enough on the stage to bury the dead.

His Duchess of Malfy.

101. This is the most celebrated of Webster's dramas. The story is taken from Bandello, and has all that accumulation of wickedness and horror which the Italian novelists perversely described and our tragedians as perversely imitated. But the scenes are wrought up with skill, and produce a strong impression. Webster has a superiority in delineating character above many of the old dramatists; he is seldom extravagant beyond the limits of conceivable nature; we find the guilt, or even the atrocity, of human passions, but

not that incarnation of evil spirits which some more ordinary dramatists loved to exhibit. In the character of the Duchess of Malfy herself there wants neither originality nor skill of management, and I do not know that any dramatist after Shakspeare would have succeeded better in the difficult scene where she discloses her love to an inferior. There is perhaps a little failure in dignity and delicacy, especially towards the close; but the Duchess of Malfy is not drawn as an Isabella or a Portia; she is a love-sick widow, virtuous and true-hearted, but more intended for our sympathy than our reverence.

Vittoria Corombona.

102. The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona, is not much inferior in language and spirit to the Duchess of Malfy; but the plot is more confused, less interesting, and worse conducted. Mr. Dyce, the late editor of Webster, praises the dramatic vigour of the part of Vittoria, but justly differs from Lamb, who speaks of "the innocence-resembling boldness" she displays in the trial scene. It is rather a delineation of desperate guilt, losing in a counterfeited audacity all that could seduce or conciliate the tribunal. Webster's other plays are less striking; in Appius and Virginia he has done perhaps better than any one who has attempted a subject not on the whole very promising for tragedy; several of the scenes are dramatic and effective; the language, as is usually the case with Webster, is written so as to display an actor's talents, and he has followed the received history sufficiently to abstain from any excess of slaughter at the close. Webster is not without comic wit, as well as a power of imagination; his plays have lately met with an editor of taste enough to admire his beauties, and not very over-partial in estimating them.

103. Below Webster we might enumerate a long list of dramatists under the first Stuarts. Marston is a tumid and ranting tragedian, a wholesale dealer in murders and ghosts. Chapman, who assisted Ben Jonson and some others in comedy, deserves but limited praise for his Bussy d'Amboise. The style in this, and in all his tragedies, is extravagantly hyperbolical; he is not very dramatic, nor has any power of exciting emotion except in those who sympathise with a tumid pride and

self-confidence. Yet he has more thinking than many of the old dramatists; and the praise of one of his critics, though strongly worded, is not without some foundation, that we "seldom find richer contemplations on the nature of man and the world." There is also a poetic impetuosity in Chapman, such as has redeemed his translation of Homer, by which we are hurried along. His tragi-comedies, All Fools and The Gentleman Usher, are perhaps superior to his tragedies.[h] Rowley and Le Tourneur, especially the former, have occasionally good lines, but we cannot say that they were very superior dramatists. Rowley, however, was often in comic partnership with Massinger. Dekker merits a higher rank; he co-operated with Massinger in some of his plays, and manifests in his own some energy of passion and some comic humour. Middleton belongs to this lower class of dramatic writers; his tragedy entitled "Women beware Women" is founded on the story of Bianca Cappello; it is full of action, but the characters are all too vicious to be interesting, and the language does not rise much above mediocrity. In comedy, Middleton deserves more praise. "A Trick to catch the Old One" and several others that bear his name are amusing and spirited. But Middleton wrote chiefly in conjunction with others, and sometimes with Jonson and Massinger.

[h] Chapman is well reviewed, and at length, in an article of the Retrospective Review, vol. iv. p. 333, and again in vol. v.

CHAPTER VII.

HISTORY OF POLITE LITERATURE IN PROSE, FROM 1600 TO 1650.

SECT. I.

Italian Writers — Boccalini — Grammatical and Critical Works — Gracian — French Writers — Balzac — Voiture — French Academy — Vaugelas — Patru and Le Maistre — Style of English Prose — Earl of Essex — Knolles — Several other English Writers.

Decline of taste in Italy.

1. IT would be vain probably to inquire from what general causes we should deduce the decline of taste in Italy. None at least have occurred to my mind, relating to political or social circumstances, upon which we could build more than one of those sophistical theories which assume a casual relation between any concomitant events. Bad taste, in fact, whether in literature or the arts, is always ready to seize upon the public, being in many cases no more than a pleasure in faults which are really fitted to please us, and of which it can only be said that they hinder or impair the greater pleasure we should derive from beauties. Among these critical sins, none are so dangerous as the display of ingenious and novel thoughts or turns of phrase: for as such enter into the definition of good writing, it seems very difficult to persuade the world that they can ever be the characteristics of bad writing. The metes and bounds of ornament, the fine shades of distinction which regulate a judicious choice, are only learned by an attentive as well as a naturally susceptible mind; and it is no rare case for an unprepared multitude to prefer the worse picture, the worse building, the worse poem, the worse speech, to the better. Education, an acquaintance with just criticism, and still more the habitual observation of what is truly beautiful in nature or art, or in the literature of taste, will sometimes generate almost a national tact that rejects the temp-

tations of a meretricious and false style; but experience has shown that this happy state of public feeling will not be very durable. Whatever might be the cause of it, this age of the Italian seicentisti has been reckoned almost as inauspicious to good writing in prose as in verse. "If we except," says Tiraboschi, "the Tuscans and a very few more, never was our language so neglected as in this period. We can scarce bear to read most of the books that were published, so rude and full of barbarisms is their style. Few had any other aim than to exercise their wit in conceits and metaphors; and so long as they could scatter them profusely over their pages, cared nothing for the choice of phrases or the purity of grammar. Their eloquence on public occasions was intended only for admiration and applause, not to persuade or move."[i] And this, he says, is applicable alike to their Latin and Italian, their sacred and profane harangues. The academical discourses, of which Dati has collected many in his Prose Fiorentine, are poor in comparison with those of the sixteenth.[k]

2. A later writer than Tiraboschi has thought this sentence against the seicentisti a little too severe, and, condemning equally with him the bad taste characteristic of that age, endeavours to rescue a few from the general censure.[m] It is at least certain that the insipidity of the cinque cento writers, their long periods void of any but the most trivial meaning, their affectation of the faults of Cicero's manner in their own language, ought not to be overlooked or wholly pardoned, while we dwell on an opposite defect of their successors, the perpetual desire to be novel, brilliant, or profound. This may doubtless be the more offensive of the two; but it is, perhaps, not less likely to be mingled with something really worth reading.

3. It will not be expected that we can mention many Italian books, after what has been said, which come very precisely within the class of polite literature, or claim any praise on the ground of style. Their greatest luminary, Galileo, wrote with clearness, elegance, and spirit; no one among the moderns had so entirely rejected a dry and technical manner of teaching, and thrown such attractions round the form

Style of Galileo.

[i] Vol. xi. p. 415. [k] Id. [m] Salfi, xiv. 11.

of truth. Himself a poet, and a critic, he did not hesitate to ascribe his own philosophical perspicuity to the constant perusal of Ariosto. This I have mentioned in another place; but we cannot too much remember that all objects of intellectual pursuit are as bodies acting with reciprocal forces in one system, being all in relation to the faculties of the mind, which is itself but one; and that the most extensive acquaintance with the various provinces of literature will not fail to strengthen our dominion over those we more peculiarly deem our own. The school of Galileo, especially Torricelli and Redi, were not less distinguished than himself for their union of elegance with philosophy.[n]

Bentivoglio.

4. The letters of Bentivoglio are commonly known. This epistolary art was always cultivated by the Italians, first in the Latin tongue, and afterwards in their own. Bentivoglio has written with equal dignity and ease. Galileo's letters are also esteemed on account of their style as well as of what they contain. In what is more peculiarly called eloquence, the Italians of this age are rather emulous of success than successful; the common defects of taste in themselves, and in those who heard or read them, as well as, in most instances, the uninteresting nature of their subjects, exclude them from our notice.

Boccalini's News from Parnassus.

5. Trajan Boccalini was by his disposition inclined to political satire, and possibly to political intrigue; but we have here only to mention the work by which he is best known, Advices from Parnassus (Ragguagli di Parnaso). If the idea of this once popular and celebrated book is not original, which I should rather doubt, though without immediately recognising a similarity to anything earlier (Lucian, the common prototype, excepted), it has at least been an original source. In the general turn of Boccalini's fictions, and perhaps in a few particular instances, we may sometimes perceive what a much greater man has imitated; they bear a certain resemblance to those of Addison, though the vast superiority of the latter in felicity of execution and variety of invention may almost conceal it. The Ragguagli are a series of despatches from the court of Apollo on Parnassus, where he is sur-

[n] Salfi, xiv. 12.

rounded by eminent men of all ages. This fiction becomes in itself very cold and monotonous; yet there is much variety in the subjects of the decisions made by the god with the advice of his counsellors, and some strokes of satire are well hit, though more perhaps fail of effect. But we cannot now catch the force of every passage. Boccalini is full of allusions to his own time, even where the immediate subject seems ancient. This book was published at Venice in 1612; at a time when the ambition of Spain was regarded with jealousy by patriotic Italians, who thought that pacific republic their bulwark and their glory. He inveighs therefore against the military spirit and the profession of war, "necessary sometimes, but so fierce and inhuman that no fine expressions can make it honourable."[o] Nor is he less severe on the vices of kings, nor less ardent in his eulogies of liberty; the government of Venice being reckoned, and not altogether untruly, an asylum of free thought and action in comparison with that of Spain. Aristotle, he reports in one of his despatches, was besieged in his villa on Parnassus by a number of armed men belonging to different princes, who insisted on his retracting the definition he had given of a tyrant, that he was one who governed for his own good and not that of the people, because it would apply to every prince, all reigning for their own good. The philosopher, alarmed by this demand, altered his definition; which was to run thus, that tyrants were certain persons of old time, whose race was now quite extinct.[p] Boccalini, however, takes care, in general, to mix something of playfulness with his satire, so that it could not be resented without apparent ill-nature. It seems, indeed, to us, free from invective, and rather meant to sting than to wound. But this, if a common rumour be true, did not secure him against a beating of which he died. The style of Boccalini is said by the critics to be clear and fluent, rather than correct or elegant; and he displays the taste of his times by extravagant metaphors. But to foreigners, who regard this less, his Advices from Parnassus, unequal of course, and occasionally tedious, must appear to contain many ingenious allusions, judicious criticisms, and acute remarks.

[o] Ragg. 75. [p] Id. 76.

6. The Pietra del Paragone by the same author is an odd, and rather awkward, mixture of reality and fiction, all levelled at the court of Spain, and designed to keep alive a jealousy of its ambition. It is a kind of episode or supplement to the Ragguagli di Parnaso, the leading invention being preserved. Boccalini is an interesting writer, on account of the light he throws on the history and sentiments of Italy. He is in this work a still bolder writer than in the former; not only censuring Spain without mercy, but even the Venetian aristocracy, observing upon the insolence of the young nobles towards the citizens, though he justifies the senate for not punishing the former more frequently with death by public execution, which would lower the nobility in the eyes of the people. They were, however, he says, as severely punished, when their conduct was bad, by exclusion from offices of trust. The Pietra del Paragone is a kind of political, as the Ragguagli is a critical miscellany.

His Pietra del Paragone.

7. About twenty years after Boccalini, a young man appeared, by name Ferrante Pallavicino, who, with a fame more local and transitory, with less respectability of character, and probably with inferior talents, trod to a certain degree in his steps. As Spain had been the object of satire to the one, so was Rome to the other. Urban VIII., an ambitious pontiff, and vulnerable in several respects, was attacked by an imprudent and self-confident enemy, safe, as he imagined, under the shield of Venice. But Pallavicino having been trepanned into the power of the Pope, lost his head at Avignon. None of his writings have fallen in my way; that most celebrated at the time, and not wholly dissimilar in the conception to the Advices from Parnassus, was entitled The Courier Robbed; a series of imaginary letters which such a fiction gave him a pretext for bringing together. Perhaps we may consider Pallavicino as rather a counterpart to Jordano Bruno, in the satirical character of the latter, than to Boccalini.[q]

Ferrante Pallavicino.

8. The Italian language itself, grammatically considered, was still assiduously cultivated. The Academicians of Florence published the first edition of their celebrated Vocabolario della Crusca

Dictionary Della Crusca.

[q] Corniani, viii. 205. Salfi, xiv. 46.

in 1613. It was avowedly founded on Tuscan principles, setting up the fourteenth century as the Augustan period of the language, which they disdained to call Italian; and though not absolutely excluding the great writers of the sixteenth age, whom Tuscany had not produced, giving in general a manifest preference to their own. Italy has rebelled against this tyranny of Florence, as she did, in the Social War, against that of Rome. Her Lombard and Romagnol and Neapolitan writers have claimed the rights of equal citizenship, and fairly won them in the field of literature. The Vocabulary itself was not received as a legislative code. Beni assailed it by his Anti-Crusca the same year; many invidiously published marginal notes to point out the inaccuracies; and in the frequent revisions and enlargements of this dictionary the exclusive character which it affected has, I believe, been nearly lost.

Grammatical works. Buonmattei. Bartoli.

9. Buonmattei, himself a Florentine, was the first who completed an extensive and methodical grammar, "developing," says Tiraboschi, "the whole economy and system of our language." It was published entire, after some previous impressions of parts, with the title, Della Lingua Toscana, in 1643. This has been reckoned a standard work, both for its authority and for the clearness, precision, and elegance with which it is written; but it betrays something of an academical and Florentine spirit in the rigour of its grammatical criticism.[r] Bartoli, a Ferrarese Jesuit, and a man of extensive learning, attacked that dogmatic school, who were accustomed to proscribe common phrases with a *Non si può* (It cannot be used), in a treatise entitled Il torto ed il diritto del Non si può. His object was to justify many expressions thus authoritatively condemned, by the examples of the best writers. This book was a little later than the middle of the century.[s]

Tassoni's remarks on Petrarch.

10. Petrarch had been the idol, in general, of the preceding age; and, above all, he was the peculiar divinity of the Florentines. But this seventeenth century was in the productions of the mind a period of revolutionary innovation; men

[r] Tiraboschi, xi. 409. Salfi, xiii. 398.

[s] Corniani, vii. 259. Salfi, xiii. 417

dared to ask why, as well as what, they ought to worship; and sometimes the same who rebelled against Aristotle, as an infallible guide, were equally contumacious in dealing with the great names of literature. Tassoni published in 1609 his Observations on the Poems of Petrarch. They are not written, as we should now think, adversely to one whom he professes to honour above all lyric poets in the world, and though his critical remarks are somewhat minute, they seem hardly unfair. A writer like Petrarch, whose fame has been raised so high by his style, is surely amenable to this severity of examination. The finest sonnets Tassoni generally extols, but gives a preference, on the whole, to the odes; which, even if an erroneous judgment, cannot be called unfair upon the author of both.[1] He produces many parallel passages from the Latin poems of Petrarch himself, as well as from the ancients and from the earlier Italians and Provençals. The manner of Tassoni is often humorous, original, intrepid, satirical on his own times; he was a man of real taste, and no servile worshipper of names.

Galileo's remarks on Tasso.

11. Galileo was less just in his observations upon Tasso. They are written with severity, and sometimes an insulting tone towards the great poet, passing over generally the most beautiful verses, though he sometimes bestows praise. The object is to point out the imitations of Tasso from Ariosto, and his general inferiority. The Observations on the Art of Writing by Sforza Pallavicino, the historian of the Council of Trent, published at Rome, 1646, is a work of general criticism containing many good remarks. What he says of imitation is worthy of being compared with Hurd; though he will be found not to have analysed the subject with anything like so much acuteness, nor was this to be expected in his age. Pallavicino has an ingenious remark, that elegance of style is produced by short metaphors, or *metaforette* as he calls them, which give us a more lively apprehension of an object than its proper name. This seems to mean only single words in a figurative sense, as opposed to

Sforza Pallavicino;

[1] Tutte le rime, tutti i versi in generale del Petrarca lo fecero poeta; ma le canzoni, per quanto a mi ne pare, furono quelle, che poeta grande e famoso lo fecero. P. 46.

phrases of the same kind. He writes in a pleasing manner, and is an accomplished critic without pedantry. Salfi has given rather a long analysis of this treatise.[u] The same writer, treading in the steps of Corniani, has extolled some Italian critics of this period, whose writings I have never seen; Beni, author of a prolix commentary in Latin on the Poetics of Aristotle; Peregrino, not inferior, perhaps, to Pallavicino, though less known, whose theories are just and deep, but not expressed with sufficient perspicuity; and Fioretti, who assumed the fictitious name of Udeno Nisieli, and presided over an academy at Florence denominated the Apatisti. The Progymnasmi Poetici of this writer, if we may believe Salfi, ascend to that higher theory of criticism which deduces its rules, not from precedents or arbitrary laws, but from the nature of the human mind, and has, in modern times, been distinguished by the name of æsthetic.[x]

And other critical writers.

12. In the same class of polite letters as these Italian writings we may place the Prolusiones Academicæ of Famianus Strada. They are agreeably written, and bespeak a cultivated taste. The best is the sixth of the second book, containing the imitations of six Latin poets, which Addison has made well known (as I hope) to every reader in the 115th and 119th numbers of the Guardian. It is here that all may judge of this happy and graceful fiction; but those who have read the Latin imitations themselves, will perceive that Strada has often caught the tone of the ancients with considerable felicity. Lucan and Ovid are, perhaps, best counterfeited, Virgil not quite so well, and Lucretius worst of the six. The other two are Statius and Claudian.[y] In almost every instance the subject chosen is appropriated to the characteristic peculiarities of the poet.

Prolusiones of Strada.

13. The style of Gongora, which deformed the poetry of Spain, extended its influence over prose. A writer named Gracian (it seems to be doubtful which of two brothers, Lorenzo and Balthazar) excelled Gongora himself in the affectation, the refinement, the obscurity of his style. "The most volumi-

Spanish prose. Gracian.

[u] Vol. xiii. p. 440.

[x] Corniani, vii. 156. Salfi, xiii. 426.

[y] A writer, quoted in Blount's Censura Autorum, p. 859, praises the imitation of Claudian above the rest, but thinks all excellent.

nous of his works," says Bouterwek, "bears the affected title of El Criticon. It is an allegorical picture of the whole course of human life, divided into Crises, that is sections, according to fixed points of view, and clothed in the formal garb of a pompous romance. It is scarcely possible to open any page of this book without recognising in the author a man who is in many respects far from common, but who from the ambition of being entirely uncommon in thinking and writing studiously and ingeniously avoids nature and good taste. A profusion of the most ambiguous subtleties expressed in ostentatious language are scattered throughout the work; and these are the more offensive, in consequence of their union with the really grand view of the relationship of man to nature and his Creator, which forms the subject of the treatise. Gracian would have been an excellent writer, had he not so anxiously wished to be an extraordinary one."[1]

14. The writings of Gracian seem in general to be the quintessence of bad taste. The worst of all, probably, is El Eroe, which is admitted to be almost unintelligible by the number of far-fetched expressions, though there is more than one French translation of it. El politico Fernando, a panegyric on Ferdinand the Catholic, seems as empty as it is affected and artificial. The style of Gracian is always pointed, emphatic, full of that which looks like profundity or novelty, though neither deep nor new. He seems to have written on a maxim he recommends to the man of the world: "if he desires that all should look up to him, let him permit himself to be known, but not to be understood."[2] His treatise entitled Agudeza y arte di ingenio is a system of concetti, digested under their different heads, and selected from Latin, Italian, and Spanish writers of that and the preceding age. It is said in the Biographie Universelle that this work, though too metaphysical, is useful in the critical history of literature. Gracian obtained a certain degree of popularity in France and England.

15. The general taste of French writers in the sixteenth century, as we have seen, was simple and lively, full of sallies of natural wit and a

French prose
Du Vair.

[1] Hist. of Spanish Literature, p. 533.

[2] Si quiere que le veneren todos, permitase al conocimiento, no á la comprehension.

certain archness of observation, but deficient in those higher qualities of language which the study of the ancients had taught men to admire. In public harangues, in pleadings, and in sermons, these characteristics of the French manner were either introduced out of place, or gave way to a tiresome pedantry. Du Vair was the first who endeavoured to bring in a more elaborate and elevated diction. Nor was this confined to the example he gave. In 1607 he published a treatise on French eloquence, and on the causes through which it had remained at so low a point. This work relates chiefly to the eloquence of the bar, or at least that of public speakers, and the causes which he traces are chiefly such as would operate on that kind alone. But some of his observations are applicable to style in the proper sense; and his treatise has been reckoned the first which gave France the rules of good writing, and the desire to practise them.[b] A modern critic, who censures the Latinisms of Du Vair's style, admits that his treatise on eloquence makes an epoch in the language.[c]

16. A more distinguished era, however, is dated from 1625, when the letters of Balzac were published.[d] There had indeed been a few intermediate

Balzac.

[b] Gibert, Jugemens des Savans sur les auteurs qui ont traité de la rhétorique. This work is annexed to some editions of Baillet. Goujet has copied or abridged Gibert, without distinct acknowledgment, and not always carefully preserving the sense.

[c] Neufchâteau, préface aux Œuvres de Pascal, p. 181.

[d] The same writer fixes on this as an epoch, and it was generally admitted in the seventeenth century. The editor of Balzac's Works in 1665 says, after speaking of the unformed state of the French language, full of provincial idioms and incorrect phrases: M. de Balzac est venu en ce temps de confusion et de désordre, où toutes les lectures qu'il faisoit et toutes les actions qu'il entendoit lui devoient être suspectes, où il avoit à se défier de tous les maîtres et de tous les exemples; et où il ne pouvoit arriver à son but qu'en s'éloignant de tous les chemins battus, ni marcher dans la bonne route qu'après se l'être ouverte à lui-même. Il l'a ouverte en effet, et pour lui et pour les autres; il y a fait entrer un grand nombre d'heureux génies, dont il étoit le guide et le modèle: et si la France voit aujourd'hui que ses écrivains sont plus polis et plus réguliers que ceux d'Espagne et d'Italie, il faut qu'elle en rende l'honneur à ce grand homme, dont la mémoire lui doit être en vénération. . . . La même obligation que nous avons à M. de Malherbe pour la poésie, nous l'avons à M. de Balzac pour la prose; il lui a prescrit des bornes et des règles; il lui a donné de la douceur et de la force, il a montré que l'éloquence doit avoir des accords, aussi-bien que la musique, et il a sçu mêler si adroitement cette diversité de sons et de cadences, qu'il n'est point de plus délicieux concert que celui de ses paroles. C'est en plaçant tous les mots avec tant d'ordre et de justesse qu'il ne laisse rien de mol ni de foible dans son discours, &c. This regard to the cadence of his periods is characteristic of Balzac. It has not, in general, been much practised in France, notwithstanding some splendid exceptions, especially in Bos-

works, which contributed, though now little known, to the improvement of the language. Among these the translation of Florus by Coeffeteau was reckoned a masterpiece of French style, and Vaugelas refers more frequently to this than to any other book. The French were very strong in translations from the classical writers; and to this they are certainly much indebted for the purity and correctness which they reached in their own language. These translators, however, could only occupy a secondary place. Balzac himself is hardly read. "The polite world," it was said a hundred years since, "knows nothing now of these works, which were once its delight."[e] But his writings are not formed to delight those who wish either to be merry or wise, to laugh or to learn; yet he has real merits, besides those which may be deemed relative to the age in which he came. His language is polished, his sentiments are just, but sometimes common, the cadence of his periods is harmonious, but too artificial and uniform; on the whole he approaches to the tone of a languid sermon, and leaves a tendency to yawn. But in his time superficial truths were not so much proscribed as at present; the same want of depth belongs to almost all the moralists in Italian and in modern Latin. Balzac is a moralist with a pure heart, and a love of truth and virtue (somewhat alloyed by the spirit of flattery towards persons, however he may declaim about courts and courtiers in general), a competent erudition, and a good deal of observation of the world. In his Aristippe, addressed to Christina, and consequently a late work, he deals much in political precepts and remarks, some of which might be read with advan-

Character of his writings.

sust. Olivet observes, that it was the peculiar glory of Balzac to have shown the capacity of the language for this rhythm. Hist. de l'Acad. Française, p. 84. But has not Du Vair some claim also? Neufchâteau gives a much more limited eulogy of Balzac. Il avoit pris à la lettre les réflexions de Du Vair sur la trop grande bassesse de nôtre éloquence. Il s'en forma une haute idée; mais il se trompe d'abord dans l'application, car il porta dans le style épistolaire qui doit être familier et léger, l'enflure hyperbolique, la pompe, et le nombre, qui ne convient qu'aux grandes déclamations et aux harangues oratoires. . . . . . Ce défaut de Balzac contribua peut-être à son succès; car le goût n'étoit pas formé; mais il se corrigea dans la suite, et en parcourant son recueil on s'aperçoit des progrès sensibles qu'il faisoit avec l'âge. Ce recueil si précieux pour l'histoire de notre littérature a eu long temps une vogue extraordinaire. Nos plus grands auteurs l'avoient bien étudié. Molière lui a emprunté quelques idées.

[e] Goujet, i. 426.

tage. But he was accused of borrowing his thoughts from the ancients, which the author of an Apology for Balzac seems not wholly to deny. This apology indeed had been produced by a book on the Conformity of the eloquence of M. Balzac with that of the ancients.

17. The letters of Balzac are in twenty-seven books; they begin in 1620, and end about 1653; the first portion having appeared in 1625. "He passed all his life," says Vigneul-Marville, "in writing letters, without ever catching the right characteristics of that style."[f] This demands a peculiar ease and naturalness of expression, for want of which they seem no genuine exponents of friendship or gallantry, and hardly of polite manners. His wit was not free from pedantry, and did not come from him spontaneously. Hence he was little fitted to address ladies, even the Rambouillets; and indeed he had acquired so laboured and artificial a way of writing letters, that even those to his sister, though affectionate, smell too much of the lamp. His advocates admit that they are to be judged rather by the rules of oratorical than epistolary composition.

His letters.

18. In the moral dissertations, such as that entitled the Prince, this elaborate manner is of course not less discernible, but not so unpleasant or out of place. Balzac has been called the father of the French language, the master and model of the great men who have followed him. But it is confessed by all that he wanted the fine taste to regulate his style according to the subject. Hence he is pompous and inflated upon ordinary topics; and in a country so quick to seize the ridiculous as his own, not all his nobleness and purity of style, not the passages of eloquence which we often find, have been sufficient to redeem him from the sarcasms of those who have had more power to amuse. The stateliness, however, of Balzac is less offensive and extravagant than the affected intensity of language which distinguishes the style of the present age on both sides of the Channel, and which is in fact a much worse modification of the same fault.

[f] Mélanges de Littérature, vol. i. p. 126. He adds, however, that Balzac had "un talent particulier pour embellir nôtre langue." The writer whom I quote under the name of Vigneul-Marville, which he assumed, was D'Argonne, a Benedictine of Rouen.

Voiture. Hôtel Rambouillet.

19. A contemporary and rival of Balzac, though very unlike in most respects, was Voiture. Both one and the other were received with friendship and admiration in a celebrated society of Paris, the first which, on this side of the Alps, united the aristocracy of rank and of genius in one circle, that of the Hôtel Rambouillet. Catherine de Vivonne, widow of the Marquis de Rambouillet, was the owner of this mansion. It was frequented, during the long period of her life, by all that was distinguished in France, by Richelieu and Condé, as much as by Corneille, and a long host of inferior men of letters. The heiress of this family, Julie d'Angennes, beautiful and highly accomplished, became the central star of so bright a galaxy. The love of intellectual attainments, both in mother and daughter, the sympathy and friendship they felt for those who displayed them, as well as their moral worth, must render their names respectable; but these were in some measure sullied by false taste, and what we may consider an habitual affectation even in their conduct. We can scarcely give another name to the caprice of Julia, who, in the fashion of romance, compelled the Duke of Montausier to carry on a twelve years' courtship, and only married him in the decline of her beauty. This patient lover, himself one of the most remarkable men in the court of Louis XIV., had many years before, in 1633, presented her with what has been called the Garland of Julia, a collection to which the poets and wits of Paris had contributed. Every flower, represented in a drawing, had its appropriate little poem, and all conspired to the praise of Julia.[g]

20. Voiture is chiefly known by his letters; his other writings at least are inferior. These begin about 1627, and are addressed to Madame de Rambouillet and to several other persons of both sexes. Though much too laboured and affected, they are evidently the original type of the French epistolary school, including those in England who have formed themselves upon it. Pope very frequently imitated Voiture; Walpole not so much

[g] [Two copies were made of the Guirlande de Julie; but, in the usual style of the Rambouillets, no one was admitted to see either, but as a remarkable favour. Huet, who tells us this, was one. Huetiana, p 104.—1842.]

in his general correspondence, but he knew how to fall into it. The object was to say what meant little, with the utmost novelty in the mode, and with the most ingenious compliment to the person addressed: so that he should admire himself and admire the writer. They are of course very tiresome after a short time; yet their ingenuity is not without merit. Balzac is more solemn and dignified, and it must be owned that he has more meaning. Voiture seems to have fancied that good sense spoils a man of wit. But he has not so much wit as *esprit;* and his letters serve to exemplify the meaning of that word. Pope, in addressing ladies, was nearly the ape of Voiture. It was unfortunately thought necessary, in such a correspondence, either to affect despairing love, which was to express itself with all possible gaiety, or where love was too presumptuous, as with the Rambouillets, to pour out a torrent of nonsensical flattery, which was to be rendered tolerable by far-fetched turns of thought. Voiture has the honour of having rendered this style fashionable.* But if the bad taste of others had not perverted his own, Voiture would have been a good writer. His letters, especially those written from Spain, are sometimes truly witty, and always vivacious. Voltaire, who speaks contemptuously of Voiture, might have been glad to have been the author of some of his jeux d'esprit; that, for example, addressed to the Prince of Condé in the character of a pike, founded on a game where the prince had played that fish. We should remember, also, that Voiture held his place in good society upon the tacit condition that he should always strive to be witty.[h]

Establishment of French Academy.

21. But the Hôtel Rambouillet, with its false theories of taste derived in a great measure from the romances of Scudery and Calprenède, and encouraged by the agreeably artificial manner of Voiture, would have produced, in all probability, but a transient effect. A far more important event

[h] Nothing, says Olivet, could be more opposite than Balzac and Voiture. L'un se portoit toujours au sublime, l'autre toujours au délicat. L'un avoit une imagination élevée qui jetoit de la noblesse dans les moindres choses; l'autre, une imagination enjouée, qui faisoit prendre à toutes ses pensées un air de galanterie. L'un, même lorsqu'il vouloit plaisanter, étoit toujours grave; l'autre, dans les occasions même sérieuses, trouvoit à rire. Hist. de l'Académie, p. 83.

was the establishment of the French Academy. France was ruled by a great minister, who loved her glory and his own. This indeed has been common to many statesmen, but it was a more peculiar honour to Richelieu that he felt the dignity which letters conferred on a nation. He was himself not deficient in literary taste; his epistolary style is manly, and not without elegance; he wrote theology in his own name, and history in that of Mezeray; but what is most to the present purpose, his remarkable fondness for the theatre led him not only to invent subjects for other poets, but, as it has been believed, to compose one forgotten tragi-comedy, Mirame, without assistance.[1] He availed himself, fortunately, of an opportunity which almost every statesman would have disregarded, to found the most illustrious institution in the annals of polite literature.

22. The French Academy sprang from a private society of men of letters at Paris, who, about the year 1629, agreed to meet once a week, as at an ordinary visit, conversing on all subjects, and especially on literature. Such among them as were authors communicated their works, and had the advantage of free and fair criticism. This continued for three or four years with such harmony and mutual satisfaction, that the old men, who remembered this period, says their historian, Pelisson, looked back upon it as a golden age. They were but nine in number, of whom Gombauld and Chapelain are the only names by any means famous, and their meetings were at first very private. More by degrees were added, among others Boisrobert, a favourite of Richelieu, who liked to hear from him the news of the town. The Cardinal, pleased with the account of this society, suggested their public establishment. This, it is said, was unpleasing to every one of them, and some proposed to refuse it; but the consideration that the offers of such a man were not to be slighted overpowered their modesty; and they consented to become a royal institution. They now enlarged their numbers, created officers, and began to keep registers of their proceedings. These records commence on March 13, 1634, and are the basis of Pelisson's history. The name of French Academy was chosen after some deliberation. They

[1] Fontenelle, Hist. du Théâtre, p. 96.

were established by letters patent in January, 1635, which the parliament of Paris enregistered with great reluctance, requiring not only a letter from Richelieu, but an express order from the king; and when this was completed in July, 1637, it was with a singular proviso that the Academy should meddle with nothing but the embellishment and improvement of the French language, and such books as might be written by themselves, or by others who should desire their interference. This learned body of lawyers had some jealousy of the innovations of Richelieu; and one of them said it reminded him of the satire of Juvenal, where the senate, after ceasing to bear its part in public affairs, was consulted about the sauce for a turbot.[k]

Its objects and constitution.

23. The professed object of the Academy was to purify the language from vulgar, technical, or ignorant usages, and to establish a fixed standard. The Academicians undertook to guard scrupulously the correctness of their own works, examining the arguments, the method, the style, the structure of each particular word. It was proposed by one that they should swear not to use any word which had been rejected by a plurality of votes. They soon began to labour in their vocation, always bringing words to the test of good usage, and deciding accordingly. These decisions are recorded in their registers. Their number was fixed by the letters patent at forty, having a director, chancellor, and secretary; the two former changed every two, afterwards every three months, the last chosen for life. They read discourses weekly, which, by the titles of some that Pelisson has given us, seem rather trifling and in the style of the Italian Academies; but this practice was soon disused. Their more important and ambitious occupations were to compile a dictionary and a grammar: Chapelain drew up the scheme of the former, in which it was determined, for the sake of brevity, to give no quotations, but to form it from about twenty-six good authors in prose, and twenty in verse. Vaugelas was entrusted with the chief direction of this work.

24. The Academy was subjected, in its very infancy, to a severe trial of that literary integrity without which such an institution can only escape from being pernicious

k Pelisson, Hist. de l'Académie Française.

to the republic of letters by becoming too despicable and odious to produce mischief. On the appearance of the Cid, Richelieu, who had taken up a strong prejudice against it, insisted that the Academy should publish their opinion on this play. The more prudent part of that body were very loth to declare themselves at so early a period of their own existence; but the Cardinal was not apt to take excuses; and a committee of three was appointed to examine the Cid itself, and the observations upon it which Scudery had already published. Five months elapsed before the Sentimens de l'Académie Française sur la Tragédie du Cid were made public in November, 1637.[m] These are expressed with much respect for Corneille, and profess to be drawn up with his assent, as well as at the instance of Scudery. It has been not uncommon to treat this criticism as a servile homage to power. But a perusal of it will not lead us to confirm so severe a reproach. The Sentimens de l'Académie are drawn up with great good sense and dignity. The spirit indeed of critical orthodoxy is apparent; yet this was surely pardonable in an age when the violation of rules had as yet produced nothing but such pieces as those of Hardy. It is easy to sneer at Aristotle when we have a Shakspeare; but Aristotle formed his rules on the practice of Sophocles. The Academy could not have done better than by inculcating the soundest maxims of criticism, but they were a little too narrow in their application. The particular judgments which they pass on each scene of the play, as well as those on the style, seem for the most part very just, and such as later critics have generally adopted; so that we can really see little ground for the allegation of undue compliance with the Cardinal's prejudices, except in the frigid tone of their praise, and in their omission to proclaim that a great dramatic genius had arisen in France.[n] But this is so

It publishes a critique on the Cid.

[m] Pelisson. The printed edition bears the date of 1638.

[n] They conclude by saying that in spite of the faults of this play, la naïveté et la véhémence de ses passions, la force et la délicatesse de plusieurs de ses pensées, et cet agrément inexplicable qui se mêle dans tous ses défauts lui ont acquis un rang considérable entre les poëmes Français de ce genre qui ont le plus donné de satisfaction. Si l'auteur ne doit pas toute sa réputation à son mérite, il ne la doit pas toute à son bonheur, et la nature lui a été assez libérale pour excuser la fortune si elle lui a été prodigue.

The Academy, justly, in my opinion, blame Corneille for making Chimène

much the common vice or blindness of critics, that it may have sprung less from baseness than from a fear to compromise their own superiority by vulgar admiration. The Academy had great pretensions, and Corneille was not yet the Corneille of France and of the world.

Vaugelas's remarks on the French language.

25. Gibert, Goujet, and other writers enumerate several works on the grammar of the French language in this period. But they were superseded, and we may almost say that an era was made in the national literature, by the publication of Vaugelas, Remarques sur la Langue Française, in 1649. Thomas Corneille, who, as well as Patru, published notes on Vaugelas, observes that the language has only been written with politeness since the appearance of these remarks. They were not at first received with general approbation, and some even in later times thought them too scrupulous; but they gradually became of established authority. Vaugelas is always clear, modest, and ingenuous in stating his opinion. His remarks are 547 in number, no gross fault being noticed, nor any one which is not found in good authors. He seldom mentions those whom he censures. His test of correct language is the manner of speaking in use with the best part (la plus saine partie) of the court, conformably with the manner of writing in the best part of contemporary authors. But though we must have recourse to good authors in order to establish an indisputably good usage, yet the court, he thinks, contributes incomparably more than books; the consent of the latter being as it were the seal and confirmation of what is spoken at court, and deciding what is there doubtful. And those who study the best authors get rid of many faults common at court, and acquire a peculiar purity of style. None, however, can dispense with a knowledge of what is reckoned good language at court, since much that is spoken there will hardly be found in books. In writing it is otherwise, and he admits that the study of good authors will enable us to write well, though we shall write still better by knowing how

consent to marry Rodrigue the same day that he had killed her father. Cela surpasse toute sorte de créance, et ne peut vraisemblablement tomber dans l'âme non seulement d'une sage fille, mais d'une qui seroit le plus dépouillé d'honneur et d'humanité, &c. P. 49.

to speak well. Vaugelas tells us that his knowledge was acquired by long practice at court, and by the conversation of Cardinal Perron and of Coeffeteau.

La Mothe le Vayer.

26. La Mothe le Vayer, in his Considérations sur l'Eloquence Française, 1647, has endeavoured to steer a middle course between the old and the new schools of French style, but with a marked desire to withstand the latter. He blames Du Vair for the strange and barbarous words he employs. He laughs also at the nicety of those who were beginning to object to a number of common French words. One would not use the conjunction *Car;* against which folly Le Vayer wrote a separate treatise.[a] He defends the use of quotations in a different language, which some purists in French style had in horror. But this treatise seems not to contain much that is valuable, and it is very diffuse.

Legal speeches of Patru;

27. Two French writers may be reckoned worthy of a place in this chapter, who are, from the nature of their works, not generally known out of their own country, and whom I cannot refer with absolute propriety to this rather than to the ensuing period, except by a certain character and manner of writing, which belongs more to the earlier than the later moiety of the seventeenth century. These were two lawyers, Patru and Le Maistre. The pleadings of Patru appear to me excellent in their particular line of forensic eloquence, addressed to intelligent and experienced judges. They greatly resemble what are called the private orations of Demosthenes, and those of Lysias and Isæus, especially, perhaps, the last. No ambitious ornament, no appeal to the emotions of the heart, no bold figures of rhetoric, are permitted in the Attic severity of this style; or, if they ever occur, it is to surprise us as things rather uncommon in the place where they appear than in themselves. Patru does not even employ the exordium usual in speeches, but rushes instantaneously, though always perspicuously, into his statement of the case. In the eyes of many this is no eloquence at all, and it requires perhaps some taste for

[a] This was Gomberville, in whose immense romance, Polexandre, it is said that this word only occurs three times; a discovery which does vast honour to the person who took the pains to make it.

legal reasoning to enter fully into its merit. But the Greek orators are masters whom a modern lawyer need not blush to follow, and to follow, as Patru did, in their respect for the tribunal they addressed. They spoke to rather a numerous body of judges; but those were Athenians, and, as we have reason to believe, the best and most upright, the salt of that vicious city. Patru again spoke to the parliament of Paris, men too well versed in the ways of law and justice to be the dupes of tinkling sound. He is therefore plain, lucid, well arranged, but not emphatic or impetuous; the subjects of his published speeches would not admit of such qualities; though Patru is said to have employed on some occasions the burning words of the highest oratory. His style has always been reckoned purely and rigidly French; but I have been led rather to praise what has struck me in the substance of his pleadings; which, whether read at this day in France or not, are, I may venture to say, worthy to be studied by lawyers, like those to which I have compared them, the strictly forensic portion of Greek oratory. In some speeches of Patru which are more generally praised, that on his own reception in the Academy, and one complimentary to Christina, it has seemed to me that he falls very short of his judicial style; the ornaments are commonplace, and such as belong to the panegyrical department of oratory, in all ages less important and valuable than the other two. It should be added, that Patru was not only one of the purest writers, but one of the best critics whom France possessed.[p]

28. The forensic speeches of Le Maistre are more eloquent, in a popular sense of the word, more ardent, more imaginative, than those of Patru; the one addresses the judges alone, the other has a view to the audience; the one seeks the success of his cause alone, the other that and his own glory together. The one will be more prized by the lovers of legal reasoning, the other by the majority of mankind. The one more reminds us of the orations of Demosthenes for his pri-

and of Le Maistre.

[p] Perrault says of Patru in his Hommes Illustres de France, vol. ii. p. 66: Ses plaidoyers servent *encore aujourd'hui* de modèle pour écrire correctement en notre langue. Yet they were not much above thirty years old—so much had the language changed, as to rules of writing, within that time.

vate clients, the other of those of Cicero. Le Maistre is fervid and brilliant—he hurries us with him; in all his pleadings, warmth is his first characteristic, and a certain elegance is the second. In the power of statement, I do not perceive that he is inferior to Patru; both are excellent. Wherever great moral or social topics or extensive views of history and human nature can be employed, Le Maistre has the advantage. Both are concise, relatively to the common verbosity of the bar; but Le Maistre has much more that might be retrenched; not that it is redundant in expression, but unnecessary in substance. This is owing to his ambitious display of general erudition; his quotations are too frequent and too ornamental, partly drawn from the ancients, but more from the fathers. Ambrose, in fact, Jerome and Augustin, Chrysostom, Basil and Gregory were the models whom the writers of this age were accustomed to study; and hence they are often, and Le Maistre among the rest, too apt to declaim where they should prove, and to use arguments from analogy, rather striking to the common hearer, than likely to weigh much with a tribunal. He has less simplicity, less purity of taste than Patru; his animated language would, in our courts, be frequently effective with a jury, but would seem too indefinite and commonplace to the judges; we should crowd to hear Le Maistre, we should be compelled to decide with Patru. They are both, however, very superior advocates, and do great honour to the French bar.

Improvement in English style.

29. A sensible improvement in the general style of English writers had come on before the expiration of the sixteenth century; the rude and rough phrases, sometimes almost requiring a glossary, which lie as spots of rust on the pages of Latimer, Grafton, Aylmer, or even Ascham, had been chiefly polished away; if we meet in Sidney, Hooker, or the prose of Spenser, with obsolete expressions or forms, we find none that are in the least unintelligible, none that give us offence. But to this next period belong most of those whom we commonly reckon our old English writers; men often of such sterling worth for their sense, that we might read them with little regard to their language, yet, in some instances at

least, possessing much that demands praise in this respect. They are generally nervous and effective, copious to redundancy in their command of words, apt to employ what seemed to them ornament with much imagination rather than judicious taste, yet seldom degenerating into commonplace and indefinite phraseology. They have, however, many defects; some of them, especially the most learned, are full of pedantry, and deform their pages by an excessive and preposterous mixture of Latinisms unknown before;[q] at other times we are disgusted by colloquial and even vulgar idioms or proverbs; nor is it uncommon to find these opposite blemishes not only in the same author, but in the same passages. Their periods, except in a very few, are ill-constructed and tediously prolonged; their ears (again with some exceptions) seem to have been insensible to the beauty of rhythmical prose; grace is commonly wanting, and their notion of the artifices of style, when they thought at all about them, was not congenial to our own language. This may be deemed a general description of the English writers under James and Charles; we shall now proceed to mention some of the most famous, and who may, in a certain degree, be deemed to modify this censure.

30. I will begin with a passage of very considerable beauty, which is here out of its place, since it was written in the year 1598. It is found in the Apology for the Earl of Essex, published among the works of Lord Bacon, and passing, I suppose, commonly for his. It seems nevertheless, in my judgment, far more probably genuine. We have nowhere in our early writers a flow of words so easy and graceful, a structure so harmonious, a series of antitheses so spirited without affectation, an absence of quaintness, pedantry, and vulgarity so truly gentlemanlike, a paragraph so worthy of the most brilliant man of his age. This could not have come from Bacon, who never divested himself of a certain didactic formality, even if he could have counterfeited that chivalrous generosity which it was not in his nature to feel. It is the language of a sol-

Earl of Essex.

[q] In Pratt's edition of Bishop Hall's works we have a glossary of unusual words employed by him. They amount to more than eleven hundred, the greater part being of Latin or Greek origin; some are Gallicisms.

dier's heart, with the unstudied grace of a noble courtier.[r]

31. Knolles, already known by a spirited translation of Bodin's Commonwealth, published in 1610 a copious History of the Turks, bringing down his narrative to the most recent times. Johnson, in a paper of the Rambler, has given him the superiority over all English historians. "He has displayed all the excellences that narration can admit. His style, though somewhat obscured by time, and vitiated by false wit, is pure, nervous, elevated, and clear. . . . . Nothing could have sunk this author into obscurity but the remoteness and barbarity of the people whose story he relates. It seldom happens that all circumstances concur to happiness or fame. The nation which produced this great historian has the grief of seeing his genius employed upon a foreign and uninteresting subject; and that writer who might have secured perpetuity to his name by a history of his own country, has exposed himself to the danger of oblivion by recounting enterprises and

Knolles's History of the Turks.

[r] "A word for my friendship with the chief men of action, and favour generally to the men of war; and then I come to their main objection, which is my crossing of the treaty in hand. For most of them that are accounted the chief men of action, I do confess, I do entirely love them. They have been my companions both abroad and at home; some of them began the wars with me, most have had place under me, and many have had me a witness of their rising from captains, lieutenants, and private men to those charges which since by their virtue they have obtained. Now that I have tried them, I would choose them for friends, if I had them not; before I had tried them, God by his providence chose them for me. I love them for mine own sake; for I find sweetness in their conversation, strong assistance in their employments with me, and happiness in their friendship. I love them for their virtues' sake, and for their greatness of mind; (for little minds, though never so full of virtue, can be but a little virtuous;) and for their great understanding; for to understand little things, or things not of use, is little better than to understand nothing at all. I love them for their affections; for self-loving men love ease, pleasure, and profit; but they that love pains, danger, and fame, show that they love public profit more than themselves. I love them for my country's sake; for they are England's best armour of defence and weapons of offence. If we may have peace, they have purchased it; if we must have war, they must manage it. Yet while we are doubtful and in treaty we must value ourselves by what may be done, and the enemy will value us by what hath been done by our chief men of action.

"That generally I am affected to the men of war, it should not seem strange to any reasonable man. Every man doth love them of his own profession. The grave judges favour the students of the law; the reverend bishops the labourers in the ministry; and I (since her Majesty hath yearly used my service in her late actions) must reckon myself in the number of her men of war. Before action, Providence makes me cherish them for what they can do; in action, necessity makes me value them for the service they do; and after action, experience and thankfulness make me love them for the service they have done."

revolutions of which none desire to be informed."[s] The subject, however, appeared to Knolles, and I know not how we can say erroneously, one of the most splendid that he could have selected. It was the rise and growth of a mighty nation, second only to Rome in the constancy of success, and in the magnitude of empire; a nation fierce and terrible in that age, the present scourge of half Christendom, and though from our remoteness not very formidable to ourselves, still one of which not the bookish man in his closet or the statesman in council had alone heard, but the smith at his anvil, and the husbandman at his plough. A long decrepitude of the Turkish empire on one hand, and our frequent alliance with it on the other, have since obliterated the apprehensions and interests of every kind which were awakened throughout Europe by its youthful fury and its mature strength. The subject was also new in England, yet rich in materials; various, in comparison with ordinary history, though not perhaps so fertile of philosophical observation as some others, and furnishing many occasions for the peculiar talents of Knolles. These were displayed, not in depth of thought, or copiousness of collateral erudition, but in a style and in a power of narration which Johnson has not too highly extolled. His descriptions are vivid and animated; circumstantial, but not to feebleness; his characters are drawn with a strong pencil. It is indeed difficult to estimate the merits of an historian very accurately without having before our eyes his original sources; he may probably have translated much that we admire, and he had shown that he knew how to translate. In the style of Knolles there is sometimes, as Johnson has hinted, a slight excess of desire to make every phrase effective; but he is exempt from the usual blemishes of his age; and his command of the language is so extensive, that we should not err in placing him among the first of our elder writers. Comparing, as a specimen of Knolles's manner, his description of the execution of Mustapha, son of Solyman, with that given by Robertson, where the latter historian has been as circumstantial as his limits would permit, we shall perceive that the former paints better his story, and deepens better its interest.[t]

[s] Rambler, No. 122.

[t] Knolles, p. 515. Robertson's Charles

32. Raleigh's History of the World is a proof of the respect for laborious learning that had long distinguished Europe. We should expect from the prison-hours of a soldier, a courtier, a busy intriguer in state affairs, a poet and man of genius, something well worth our notice; but hardly a prolix history of the ancient world, hardly disquisitions on the site of Paradise and the travels of Cain. These are probably translated with little alteration from some of the learned writings of the continent; they are by much the least valuable portion of Raleigh's work. The Greek and Roman story is told more fully and exactly than by any earlier English author, and with a plain eloquence which has given this book a classical reputation in our language, though from its length, and the want of that critical sifting of facts which we now justly demand, it is not greatly read. Raleigh has intermingled political reflections, and illustrated his history by episodes from modern times, which perhaps are now the most interesting passages. It descends only to the second Macedonian war; the continuation might have been more generally valuable; but either the death of Prince Henry, as Raleigh himself tells us, or the new schemes of ambition which unfortunately opened upon his eyes, prevented the execution of the large plan he had formed. There is little now obsolete in the words of Raleigh, nor, to any great degree, in his turn of phrase; the periods, when pains have been taken with them, show that artificial structure which we find in Sidney and Hooker; he is less pedantic than most of his contemporaries, seldom low, never affected.

Raleigh's History of the World.

33. Daniel's History of England from the Conquest to the Reign of Edward III., published in 1618, is deserving of some attention on account of its language. It is written with a freedom from all stiffness, and a purity of style which hardly any other work of so early a date exhibits. These qualities are indeed so remarkable that it would require a good deal of critical observation to distinguish it even from

Daniel's History of England.

the Fifth, book xi. [The principal authority for this description appears to be Busbequius, in his excellent Legationis Turcicæ Epistolæ. It has been justly observed that I might have mentioned Busbequius in a former volume among the good Latin writers of the sixteenth century.—1842.]

writings of the reign of Anne; and where it differs from them, (I speak only of the secondary class of works, which have not much individuality of manner,) it is by a more select idiom, and by an absence of the Gallicism or vulgarity which are often found in that age. It is true that the merits of Daniel are chiefly negative; he is never pedantic, or antithetical, or low, as his contemporaries were apt to be; but his periods are ill constructed; he has little vigour or elegance; and it is only by observing how much pains he must have taken to reject phrases which were growing obsolete, that we give him credit for having done more than follow the common stream of easy writing. A slight tinge of archaism, and a certain majesty of expression, relatively to colloquial usage, were thought by Bacon and Raleigh congenial to an elevated style; but Daniel, a gentleman of the king's household, wrote as the court spoke, and his facility would be pleasing if his sentences had a less negligent structure. As an historian, he has recourse only to common authorities; but his narration is fluent and perspicuous, with a regular vein of good sense, more the characteristic of his mind, both in verse and prose, than any commanding vigour.

Bacon.

34. The style of Bacon has an idiosyncracy which we might expect from his genius. It can rarely indeed happen, and only in men of secondary talents, that the language they use is not by its very choice and collocation, as well as its meaning, the representative of an individuality that distinguishes their turn of thought. Bacon is elaborate, sententious, often witty, often metaphorical; nothing could be spared; his analogies are generally striking and novel; his style is clear, precise, forcible; yet there is some degree of stiffness about it, and in mere language he is inferior to Raleigh. The History of Henry VII., admirable as many passages are, seems to be written rather too ambitiously, and with too great an absence of simplicity.

Milton.

35. The polemical writings of Milton, which chiefly fall within this period, contain several bursts of his splendid imagination and grandeur of soul. They are, however, much inferior to the Areopagitica, or Plea for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing. Many passages in this famous tract are admirably elo-

quent; an intense love of liberty and truth glows through it; the majestic soul of Milton breathes such high thoughts as had not been uttered before; yet even here he frequently sinks in a single instant, as is usual with our old writers, from his highest flights to the ground; his intermixture of familiar with learned phraseology is unpleasing, his structure is affectedly elaborate, and he seldom reaches any harmony. If he turns to invective, as sometimes in this treatise, and more in his Apology for Smectymnuus, it is mere ribaldrous vulgarity blended with pedantry; his wit is always poor and without ease. An absence of idiomatic grace, and an use of harsh inversions violating the rules of the language, distinguish in general the writings of Milton, and require in order to compensate them such high beauties as will sometimes occur.

Clarendon.

36. The History of Clarendon may be considered as belonging rather to this than to the second period of the century, both by the probable date of composition and by the nature of its style. He is excellent in everything that he has performed with care; his characters are beautifully delineated; his sentiments have often a noble gravity, which the length of his periods, far too great in itself, seems to befit; but in the general course of his narration he is negligent of grammar and perspicuity, with little choice of words, and therefore sometimes idiomatic without ease or elegance. The official papers on the royal side, which are generally attributed to him, are written in a masculine and majestic tone, far superior to those of the parliament. The latter had, however, a writer who did them honour: May's History of the Parliament is a good model of genuine English; he is plain, terse, and vigorous, never slovenly, though with few remarkable passages, and is, in style as well as substance, a kind of contrast to Clarendon.

The Icon Basilice.

37. The famous Icon Basilice, ascribed to Charles I., may deserve a place in literary history. If we could trust its panegyrists, few books in our language have done it more credit by dignity of sentiment and beauty of style. It can hardly be necessary for me to express my unhesitating conviction that it was solely written by Bishop Gauden, who after the Restora-

tion unequivocally claimed it as his own. The folly and impudence of such a claim, if it could not be substantiated, are not to be presumed as to any man of good understanding, fair character, and high station, without stronger evidence than has been alleged on the other side; especially when we find that those who had the best means of inquiry, at a time when it seems impossible that the falsehood of Gauden's assertion should not have been demonstrated, if it were false, acquiesced in his pretensions. We have very little to place against this, except secondary testimony, vague, for the most part, in itself, and collected by those whose veracity has not been put to the test like that of Gauden.[u] The style also of the Icon Basilice has been identified by Mr. Todd with that of Gauden by the use of several phrases so peculiar that we can hardly conceive them to have suggested themselves to more than one person. It is nevertheless superior to his acknowledged writings. A strain of majestic melancholy is well kept up; but the personated sovereign is rather too theatrical for real nature, the language is too rhetorical and amplified, the periods too artificially elaborated. None but scholars and practised writers employ such a style as this.

Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.

38. Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy belongs, by its systematic divisions and its accumulated quotations, to the class of mere erudition; it seems at first sight like those tedious Latin folios into which scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries threw the materials of their Adversaria, or commonplace books, painfully selected and arranged by the labour of many years. But writing fortunately in English, and in a style not by any means devoid of point and terseness, with much good sense and observation of

[u] There is only one claimant, in a proper sense, for the Icon Basilice, which is Gauden himself; the king neither appears by himself nor representative. And, though we may find several instances of plagiarism in literary history, (one of the grossest being the publication by a Spanish friar, under another title, of a book already in print with the name of Hyperius of Marpurg, its real author,) yet I cannot call to mind any, where a man known to the world has asserted in terms his own authorship of a book not written by himself, but universally ascribed to another, and which had never been in his possession. A story is told, and I believe truly, that a young man assumed the credit of Mackenzie's Man of Feeling while it was still anonymous. But this is widely different from the case of the Icon Basilice. We have had an interminable discussion as to the Letters of Junius; but no one has ever claimed this derelict property to himself, or told the world, I am Junius.

men as well as of books, and having also the skill of choosing his quotations for their rareness, oddity, and amusing character, without losing sight of their pertinence to the subject, he has produced a work of which, as is well known, Johnson said that it was the only one which had ever caused him to leave his bed earlier than he had intended. Johnson, who seems to have had some turn for the singularities of learning which fill the Anatomy of Melancholy, may perhaps have raised the credit of Burton higher than his desert. He is clogged by excess of reading, like others of his age, and we may peruse entire chapters without finding more than a few lines that belong to himself. This becomes a wearisome style, and, for my own part, I have not found much pleasure in glancing over the Anatomy of Melancholy. It may be added that he has been a collector of stories far more strange than true, from those records of figments, the old medical writers of the sixteenth century, and other equally deceitful sources. Burton lived at Oxford, and his volumes are apparently a great sweeping of miscellaneous literature from the Bodleian Library.

Earle's Characters.

39. John Earle, after the Restoration bishop of Worcester, and then of Salisbury, is author of "Microcosmographia, or a Piece of the Worlde discovered in Essays and Characters," published anonymously in 1628. In some of these short characters, Earle is worthy of comparison with La Bruyère; in others, perhaps the greater part, he has contented himself with pictures of ordinary manners, such as the varieties of occupation, rather than of intrinsic character, supply. In all, however, we find an acute observation and a happy humour of expression. The chapter entitled the Sceptic is best known; it is witty, but an insult throughout on the honest searcher after truth, which could have come only from one that was content to take up his own opinions for ease or profit. Earle is always gay and quick to catch the ridiculous, especially that of exterior appearances; his style is short, describing well with a few words, but with much of the affected quaintness of that age. It is one of those books which give us a picturesque idea of the manners of our fathers at a

period now become remote, and for this reason, were there no other, it would deserve to be read.

Overbury's Characters.

40. But the Microcosmography is not an original work in its plan or mode of execution; it is a close imitation of the Characters of Sir Thomas Overbury. They both belong to the favourite style of apophthegm, in which every sentence is a point or a witticism. Yet the entire character so delineated produces a certain effect; it is a Dutch picture, a Gerard Dow, somewhat too elaborate. Earle has more natural humour than Overbury, and hits his mark more neatly; the other is more satirical, but often abusive and vulgar. The "Fair and Happy Milkmaid," often quoted, is the best of his characters. The wit is often trivial and flat; the sentiments have nothing in them general or worthy of much remembrance; praise is only due to the graphic skill in delineating character. Earle is as clearly the better, as Overbury is the more original writer.

Jonson's Discoveries.

41. A book by Ben Jonson, entitled "Timber, or Discoveries made upon Men and Matter,"[x] is altogether miscellaneous, the greater part being general moral remarks, while another portion deserves notice as the only book of English criticism in the first part of the seventeenth century. The observations are unconnected, judicious, sometimes witty, frequently severe. The style is what was called pregnant, leaving much to be filled up by the reader's reflection. Good sense and a vigorous manner of grappling with every subject will generally be found in Jonson, but he does not reach any very profound criticism. His English Grammar is said by Gifford to have been destroyed in the conflagration of his study. What we have therefore under that name is, he thinks, to be considered as properly the materials of a more complete work that is lost. We have, as I apprehend, no earlier grammar upon so elaborate a plan; every rule is illustrated by examples, almost to redundance; but he is too copious on what is common to other languages, and perhaps not full enough as to our peculiar idiom.

[x] ["Timber," I suppose, is meant as a ludicrous translation of Sylva.—1842.]

Sect. II.—On Fiction.

Cervantes — French Romances — Calprenède — Scuderi — Latin and English Works of Fiction.

Publication of Don Quixote.

42. The first part of Don Quixote was published in 1605. We have no reason, I believe, to suppose that it was written long before. It became immediately popular; and the admiration of the world raised up envious competitors, one of whom, Avellenada, published a continuation in a strain of invective against the author. Cervantes, who cannot be imagined to have ever designed the leaving his romance in so unfinished a state, took time about the second part, which did not appear till 1615.

Its reputation.

43. Don Quixote is almost the only book in the Spanish language which can now be said to possess so much of an European reputation as to be popularly read in every country. It has, however, enjoyed enough to compensate for the neglect of the rest. It is to Europe in general what Ariosto is to Italy, and Shakspeare to England; the one book to which the slightest allusions may be made without affectation, but not missed without discredit. Numerous translations and countless editions of them, in every language, bespeak its adaptation to mankind; no critic has been paradoxical enough to withhold his admiration, no reader has ventured to confess a want of relish for that in which the young and old, in every climate, have age after age taken delight. They have doubtless believed that they understood the author's meaning; and, in giving the reins to the gaiety that his fertile invention and comic humour inspired, never thought of any deeper meaning than he announces, or delayed their enjoyment for any metaphysical investigation of his plan.

New views of its design.

44. A new school of criticism, however, has of late years arisen in Germany, acute, ingenious, and sometimes eminently successful in philosophical, or, as they denominate it, æsthetic analysis of works of taste, but gliding too much into refinement and conjectural hypothesis, and with a tendency to mislead men of inferior capacities for this kind of investiga-

tion into mere paradox and absurdity. An instance is supplied, in my opinion, by some remarks of Bouterwek, still more explicitly developed by Sismondi, on the design of Cervantes in Don Quixote, and which have been repeated in other publications. According to these writers, the primary idea is that of a "man of elevated character, excited by heroic and enthusiastic feelings to the extravagant pitch of wishing to restore the age of chivalry; nor is it possible to form a more mistaken notion of this work than by considering it merely as a satire, intended by the author to ridicule the absurd passion for reading old romances."[y] "The fundamental idea of Don Quixote," says Sismondi, "is the eternal contrast between the spirit of poetry and that of prose. Men of an elevated soul propose to themselves as the object of life to be the defenders of the weak, the support of the oppressed, the champions of justice and innocence. Like Don Quixote they find on every side the image of the virtues they worship; they believe that disinterestedness, nobleness, courage, in short, knight-errantry, are still prevalent; and with no calculation of their own powers, they expose themselves for an ungrateful world, they offer themselves as a sacrifice to the laws and rules of an imaginary state of society."[z]

45. If this were a true representation of the scheme of Don Quixote, we cannot wonder that some persons should, as M. Sismondi tells us they do, consider it as the most melancholy book that has ever been written. They consider it also, no doubt, one of the most immoral, as chilling and pernicious in its influence on the social converse of mankind, as the Prince of Machiavel is on their political intercourse. "Cervantes," he proceeds, "has shown us in some measure the vanity of greatness of soul and the delusion of heroism. He has drawn in Don Quixote a perfect man (un homme accompli), who is nevertheless the constant object of ridicule. Brave beyond the fabled knights he imitates, disinterested, honourable, generous, the most faithful and respectful of lovers, the best of masters, the most accomplished and well-educated of gentlemen, all his enterprises end in discomfiture to himself, and in mischief to others." M. Sismondi descants upon the perfections of the Knight of

[y] Bouterwek, p. 334.

[z] Littérature du Midi, vol. iii. p. 339.

La Mancha with a gravity which it is not quite easy for his readers to preserve.

Probably erroneous.

46. It might be answered by a phlegmatic observer, that a mere enthusiasm for doing good, if excited by vanity, and not accompanied by common sense, will seldom be very serviceable to ourselves or to others; that men who in their heroism and care for the oppressed would throw open the cages of lions, and set galley-slaves at liberty, not forgetting to break the limbs of harmless persons whom they mistake for wrong-doers, are a class of whom Don Quixote is the real type; and that the world being much the worse for such heroes, it might not be immoral, notwithstanding their benevolent enthusiasm, to put them out of countenance by a little ridicule. This however is not, as I conceive, the primary aim of Cervantes; nor do I think that the exhibition of one great truth, as the predominant, but concealed, moral, of a long work, is in the spirit of his age. He possessed a very thoughtful mind and a profound knowledge of humanity; yet the generalization which the hypothesis of Bouterwek and Sismondi requires for the leading conception of Don Quixote, besides its being a little inconsistent with the valorous and romantic character of its author, belongs to a more advanced period of philosophy than his own. It will at all events, I presume, be admitted, that we cannot reason about Don Quixote except from the book; and I think it may be shown in a few words that these ingenious writers have been chiefly misled by some want of consistency which circumstances produced in the author's delineation of his hero.

Difference between the two parts.

47. In the first chapter of this romance, Cervantes, with a few strokes of a great master, sets before us the pauper gentleman, an early riser and keen sportsman, who "when he was idle, which was most part of the year," gave himself up to reading books of chivalry till he lost his wits. The events that follow are in every one's recollection; his lunacy consists no doubt only in one idea; but this is so absorbing that it perverts the evidence of his senses and predominates in all his language. It is to be observed, therefore, in relation to the nobleness of soul ascribed to Don Quixote, that every sentiment he utters

is borrowed with a punctilious rigour from the romances of his library; he resorts to them on every occasion for precedents; if he is intrepidly brave, it is because his madness and vanity have made him believe himself unconquerable; if he bestows kingdoms, it is because Amadis would have done the same; if he is honourable, courteous, a redresser of wrongs, it is in pursuance of these prototypes, from whom, except that he seems rather more scrupulous in chastity, it is his only boast not to diverge. Those who talk of the exalted character of Don Quixote seem really to forget that, on these subjects, he has no character at all; he is the echo of romance; and to praise him is merely to say that the tone of chivalry, which these productions studied to keep up, and, in the hands of inferior artists, foolishly exaggerated, was full of moral dignity, and has, in a subdued degree of force, modelled the character of a man of honour in the present day. But throughout the first two volumes of Don Quixote, though in a few unimportant passages he talks rationally, I cannot find more than two in which he displays any other knowledge or strength of mind than the original delineation of the character would lead us to expect.

48. The case is much altered in the last two volumes. Cervantes had acquired an immense popularity, and perceived the opportunity, of which he had already availed himself, that this romance gave for displaying his own mind. He had become attached to a hero who had made him illustrious, and suffered himself to lose sight of the clear outline he had once traced for Quixote's personality. Hence we find in all this second part that, although the lunacy as to knights errant remains unabated, he is, on all other subjects, not only rational in the low sense of the word, but clear, acute, profound, sarcastic, cool-headed. His philosophy is elevated but not enthusiastic, his imagination is poetical, but it is restrained by strong sense. There are, in fact, two Don Quixotes: one, whom Cervantes first designed to draw, the foolish gentleman of La Mancha, whose foolishness had made him frantic; the other, a highly gifted, accomplished model of the best chivalry, trained in all the court, the camp, or the college could impart, but scathed in one portion of his mind by an inexplicable

visitation of monomania. One is inclined to ask why this Don Quixote, who is Cervantes, should have been more likely to lose his intellects by reading romances than Cervantes himself. As a matter of bodily disease, such an event is doubtless possible: but nothing can be conceived more improper for fiction, nothing more incapable of affording a moral lesson, than the insanity which arises wholly from disease. Insanity is, in no point of view, a theme for ridicule; and this is an inherent fault of the romance (for those who have imagined that Cervantes has not rendered Quixote ridiculous have a strange notion of the word); but the thoughtlessness of mankind, rather than their insensibility, (for they do not connect madness with misery,) furnishes some apology for the first two volumes. In proportion as we perceive below the veil of mental delusion a noble intellect, we feel a painful sympathy with its humiliation: the character becomes more complicated and interesting, but has less truth and naturalness; an objection which might also be made, comparatively speaking, to the incidents in the latter volumes, wherein I do not find the admirable probability that reigns through the former. But this contrast of wisdom and virtue with insanity in the same subject would have been repulsive in the primary delineation; as I think any one may judge, by supposing that Cervantes had, in the first chapter, drawn such a picture of Quixote as Bouterwek and Sismondi have drawn for him.

49. I must therefore venture to think, as, I believe, the world has generally thought for two centuries, that Cervantes had no more profound aim than he proposes to the reader. If the fashion of reading bad romances of chivalry perverted the taste of his contemporaries, and rendered their language ridiculous, it was natural that a zealous lover of good literature should expose this folly to the world by exaggerating its effects on a fictitious personage. It has been said by some modern writer, though I cannot remember by whom, that there was a *prose side* in the mind of Cervantes. There was indeed a side of calm strong sense, which some take for unpoetical. He thought the tone of those romances extravagant. It might naturally occur how absurd any one must appear, who should attempt to realise in actual life the adven-

tures of Amadis. Already a novelist, he perceived the opportunities this idea suggested. It was a necessary consequence that the hero must be represented as literally insane, since his conduct would have been extravagant beyond the probability of fiction on any other hypothesis; and from this happy conception germinated in a very prolific mind the whole history of Don Quixote. Its simplicity is perfect: no limit could be found save the author's discretion, or sense that he had drawn sufficiently on his imagination; but the death of Quixote, which Cervantes has been said to have determined upon, lest some one else should a second time presume to continue the story, is in fact the only possible termination that could be given, after he had elevated the character to that pitch of mental dignity which we find in the last two volumes.

Excellence of this romance.

50. Few books of moral philosophy display as deep an insight into the mechanism of the mind as Don Quixote. And when we look also at the fertility of invention, the general probability of the events, and the great simplicity of the story, wherein no artifices are practised to create suspense, or complicate the action, we shall think Cervantes fully deserving of the glory that attends this monument of his genius. It is not merely that he is superior to all his predecessors and contemporaries. This, though it might account for the European fame of his romance, would be an inadequate testimony to its desert. Cervantes stands on an eminence, below which we must place the best of his successors. We have only to compare him with Le Sage or Fielding, to judge of his vast superiority. To Scott, indeed, he must yield in the variety of his power; but in the line of comic romance, we should hardly think Scott his equal.

Minor novels of Cervantes.

51. The moral novels of Cervantes, as he calls them (Novellas Exemplares), are written, I believe, in a good style, but too short, and constructed with too little artifice to rivet our interest. Their simplicity and truth, as in many of the old novels, have a certain charm; but in the present age our sense of satiety in works of fiction cannot be overcome but by excellence. Of the Spanish comic romances, in the *picaresque* style, several re-

Other novels—Spanish.

main: Justina was the most famous. One that does not strictly belong to this lower class is the Marcos de Obregon of Espinel. This is supposed to have suggested much to Le Sage in Gil Blas; in fact, the first story we meet with is that of Mergellina the physician's wife. The style, though not dull, wants the grace and neatness of Le Sage. This is esteemed one of the best novels that Spain has produced. Italy was no longer the seat of this literature. A romance of chivalry by Marini (not the poet of that name), entitled Il Caloandro (1640), was translated but indifferently into French by Scuderi, and has been praised by Salfi as full of imagination, with characters skilfully diversified, and an interesting, well-conducted story.[a]

And Italian.

52. France in the sixteenth century, content with Amadis de Gaul and the numerous romances of the Spanish school, had contributed very little to that literature. But now she had native writers of both kinds, the pastoral and heroic, who completely superseded the models they had before them. Their earliest essay was the Astrée of D'Urfé. Of this pastoral romance the first volume was published in 1610; the second in 1620; three more came slowly forth, that the world might have due leisure to admire. It contains about 5500 pages. It would be almost as discreditable to have read such a book through at present, as it was to be ignorant of it in the ages of Louis XIII. Allusions, however, to real circumstances served in some measure to lessen the insipidity of a love-story which seems to equal any in absurdity and want of interest. The style, and I can judge no farther, having read but a few pages, seems easy and not unpleasing; but the pastoral tone is insufferably puerile, and a monotonous solemnity makes us almost suspect that one source of its popularity was its gentle effect when read in small portions before retiring to rest. It was nevertheless admired by men of erudition, like Camus and Huet, or even by men of the world like Rochefoucault.[b]

French romances—Astrée.

53. From the union of the old chivalrous romance with this newer style, the courtly pastoral, sprang another kind of fiction, the French heroic romance. Three

[a] Salfi, vol. xiv. p. 88.

[b] Dunlop's History of Fiction, vol. iii. p. 184; Biographie Universelle; Bouterwek, vol. v. p. 295.

nearly contemporary writers, Gomberville, Calprenède, Scuderi, supplied a number of voluminous stories, frequently historical in some of their names, but utterly destitute of truth in circumstances, characters, and manners. Gomberville led the way in his Polexandre, first published in 1632, and reaching in later editions to about 6000 pages. "This," says a modern writer, "seems to have been the model of the works of Calprenède and Scuderi. This ponderous work may be regarded as a sort of intermediate production between the later compositions and the ancient fables of chivalry. It has, indeed, a close affinity to the heroic romance; but many of the exploits of the hero are as extravagant as those of a paladin or knight of the round table."[c] No romance in the language has so complex an intrigue, insomuch that it is followed with difficulty; and the author has in successive editions capriciously remodelled parts of his story, which is wholly of his own invention.[d]

Heroic romances. Gomberville.

54. Calprenède, a poet of no contemptible powers of imagination, poured forth his stores of rapid invention in several romances more celebrated than that of Gomberville. The first, which is contained in ten octavo volumes, is the Cassandra. This appeared in 1642, and was followed by the Cleopatra, published, according to the custom of romancers, in successive parts, the earliest in 1646. La Harpe thinks this unquestionably the best work of Calprenède; Bouterwek seems to prefer the Cassandra, Pharamond is not wholly his own; five out of twelve volumes belong to one De Vaumorière, a continuator.[e] Calprenède, like many others, had but a life estate in the temple of fame, and more happy, perhaps, than greater men, lived out the whole favour of the world, which, having been largely showered on his head, strewed no memorials on his grave. It became, soon after his death, through the satire of Boileau and the influence of a new style in fiction, a matter of course to turn him into ridicule. It is impossible that his romances should be read again; but those who, for the purposes of general criticism have gone back to these volumes, find not a little to praise

Calprenède.

[c] Dunlop, iii. 230. [d] Biog. Univ. [e] Dunlop, iii. 259.

in his genius, and in some measure to explain his popularity. "Calprenède," says Bouterwek, "belonged to the extravagant party, which endeavoured to give a triumph to genius at the expense of taste, and by that very means played into the hands of the opposite party, which saw nothing so laudable as the observation of the rules which taste prescribed. We have only to become acquainted with any one of the prolix romances of Calprenède, such, for instance, as the Cassandra, to see clearly the spirit which animates the whole invention. We find there again the heroism of chivalry, the enthusiastic raptures of love, the struggle of duty with passion, the victory of magnanimity, sincerity, and humanity, over force, fraud, and barbarism, in the genuine characters and circumstances of romance. The events are skilfully interwoven, and a truly poetical keeping belongs to the whole, however extended it may be. The diction of Calprenède is a little monotonous, but not at all trivial, and seldom affected. It is like that of old romance, grave, circumstantial, somewhat in the chronicle style, but picturesque, agreeable, full of sensibility and simplicity. Many passages might, if versified, find a place in the most beautiful poem of this class." [f]

Scuderi.

55. The honours of this romantic literature have long been shared by the female sex. In the age of Richelieu and Mazarin, this was represented by Mademoiselle de Scuderi, a name very glorious for a season, but which unfortunately did not, like that of Calprenède, continue to be such during the whole lifetime of her who bore it. The old age of Mademoiselle de Scuderi was ignominiously treated by the pitiless Boileau; and, reaching more than her ninetieth year, she almost survived her only offspring, those of her pen. In her youth she had been the associate of the Rambouillet circle, and caught perhaps in some measure from them what she gave back with interest, a tone of perpetual affectation, and a pedantic gallantry, which could not withstand the first approach of ridicule. Her first romance was Ibrahim, published in 1635; but the more celebrated were the Grand Cyrus and the Clelie. Each of these two romances is in ten volumes.[g] The persons

[f] Bouterwek, vi. 230.

[g] Biogr. Univ.; Dunlop; Bouterwek.

chiefly connected with the Hôtel Rambouillet sat for their pictures, as Persians or Babylonians, in Cyrus. Julie d'Angennes herself bore the name of Artenice, by which she was afterwards distinguished among her friends; and it is a remarkable instance not only of the popularity of these romances, but of the respectful sentiment, which, from the elevation and purity no one can deny them to exhibit, was always associated in the gravest persons with their fictions, that a prelate of eminent fame for eloquence, Fléchier, in his funeral sermon on this lady, calls her "the incomparable Artenice."[h] Such an allusion would appear to us misplaced; but we may presume that it was not so thought. Scuderi's romances seem to have been remarkably the favourites of the clergy; Huet, Mascaron, Godeau, as much as Fléchier, were her ardent admirers. "I find," says the second of these, one of the chief ornaments of the French pulpit, in writing to Mademoiselle de Scuderi, "so much in your works calculated to reform the world, that in the sermons I am now preparing for the court, you will often be on my table by the side of St. Augustin and St. Bernard."[i] In the writings of this lady we see the last footstep of the old chivalrous romance. She, like Calprenède, had derived from this source the predominant characteristics of her personages, an exalted generosity, a disdain of all selfish considerations, a courage which attempts impossibilities and is rewarded by achieving them, a love outrageously hyperbolical in pretence, yet intrinsically without passion, all, in short, that Cervantes has bestowed on Don Quixote. Love, however, or its counterfeit, gallantry, plays a still more leading part in the French romance than in its Castilian prototype; the feats of heroes, though not less wonderful, are less prominent on the canvas, and a metaphysical pedantry replaces the pompous metaphors in which the knight of sorrowful countenance had taken so much delight. The approbation

[h] Sermons de Fléchier, ii. 325 (edit. 1690). But probably Bossuet would not have stooped to this allusion.

[i] Biogr. Univ. Mademoiselle de Scuderi was not gifted by nature with beauty, or, as this biographer more bluntly says, était d'une extrême laideur. She would probably have wished this to have been otherwise, but carried off the matter very well, as appears by her epigram on her own picture by Nanteuil:

> Nanteuil, en faisant mon image,
> A de son art divin signalé le pouvoir;
> Je haïs mes yeux dans mon miroir,
> Je les aime dans son ouvrage.

of many persons, far superior judges to Don Quixote, makes it impossible to doubt that the romances of Calprenède and Scuderi were better than his library. But as this is the least possible praise, it will certainly not tempt any one away from the rich and varied repast of fiction which the last and present century have spread before him. Mademoiselle de Scuderi has perverted history still more than Calprenède, and changed her Romans into languishing Parisians. It is not to be forgotten that the taste of her party, though it did not, properly speaking, infect Corneille, compelled him to weaken some of his tragedies. And this must be the justification of Boileau's cutting ridicule upon this truly estimable woman. She had certainly kept up a tone of severe and high morality, with which the aristocracy of Paris could ill dispense; but it was one not difficult to feign, and there might be Tartuffes of sentiment as well as of religion. Whatever is false in taste is apt to be allied to what is insincere in character.

Argenis of Barclay.

56. The Argenis of Barclay, a son of the defender of royal authority against republican theories, is a Latin romance, superior perhaps to those after Cervantes, which the Spanish or French language could boast. It has indeed always been reckoned among political allegories. That the state of France in the last years of Henry III. is partially shadowed in it, can admit of no doubt; several characters are faintly veiled either by anagram or Greek translation of their names; but whether to avoid the insipidity of servile allegory, or to excite the reader by perplexity, Barclay has mingled so much of mere fiction with his story, that no attempts at a regular key to the whole work can be successful, nor in fact does the fable of this romance run in any parallel stream with real events. His object seems in great measure to have been the discussion of political questions in feigned dialogue. But though in these we find no want of acuteness or good sense, they have not at present much novelty in our eyes; and though the style is really pleasing, or, as some have judged, excellent,[k] and the incidents not ill contrived, it might be

[k] Coleridge has pronounced an ardent, and rather excessive eulogy on the language of the Argenis, preferring it to that of Livy or Tacitus. Coleridge's Remains vol. i. p. 257. I cannot by any means go this length; it has struck me that the

hard to go entirely through a Latin romance of 700 pages, unless indeed we had no alternative given but the perusal of the similar works in Spanish or French. The Argenis was published at Rome in 1622; some of the personages introduced by Barclay are his own contemporaries; a proof that he did not intend a strictly historical allegory of the events of the last age. The Euphormio of the same author resembles in some degree the Argenis, but, with less of story and character, has a more direct reference to European politics. It contains much political disquisition, and one whole book is employed in a description of the manners and laws of different countries with no disguise of names.

His Euphormio.

57. Campanella gave a loose to his fanciful humour in a fiction, entitled The City of the Sun, published at Frankfort in 1623, in imitation, perhaps, of the Utopia. The City of the Sun is supposed to stand upon a mountain situated in Ceylon, under the equator. A community of goods and women is established in this republic; the principal magistrate of which is styled Sun, and is elected after a strict examination in all kinds of science. Campanella has brought in so much of his own philosophical system, that we may presume that to have been the object of this romance. The Solars, he tells us, abstained at first from flesh, because they thought it cruel to kill animals. "But afterwards considering that it would be equally cruel to kill plants, which are not less endowed with sensation, so that they must perish by famine, they understood that ignoble things were created for the use of nobler things, and now eat all things without scruple." Another Latin romance had some celebrity in its day, the Monarchia Solipsorum, a satire on the Jesuits in the fictitious name of Lucius Cornelius Europeus. It has been ascribed to more than one person; the probable author is one Scotti, who had himself belonged to the order.[m] This book did not seem to me in the least interesting; if it is so in any degree, it must be not as mere fiction, but as a revelation of secrets.

Campanella's City of the Sun.

Latinity is more that of Petronius Arbiter, but I am not well enough acquainted with that writer to speak confidently. The same observation seems applicable to the Eupnormio.

[m] Biogr. Univ.: arts. Scotti and Inchoffer; Niceron, vols. xxxv. and xxxix.

58. It is not so much an extraordinary as an unfortunate deficiency in our own literary annals, that England should have been destitute of the comic romance, or that derived from real life, in this period; since in fact we may say the same, as has been seen, of France. The *picaresque* novels of Spain were thought well worthy of translation; but it occurred to no one, or no one had the gift of genius, to shift the scene, and imitate their delineation of native manners. Of how much value would have been a genuine English novel, the mirror of actual life in the various ranks of society, written under Elizabeth or under the Stuarts! We should have seen, if the execution had not been very coarse, and the delineation absolutely confined to low characters, the social habits of our forefathers better than by all our other sources of that knowledge, the plays, the letters, the traditions and anecdotes, the pictures or buildings of the time. Notwithstanding the interest which all profess to take in the history of manners, our notions of them are generally meagre and imperfect; and hence modern works of fiction are but crude and inaccurate designs when they endeavour to represent the living England of two centuries since. Even Scott, who had a fine instinctive perception of truth and nature, and who had read much, does not appear to have seized the genuine tone of conversation, and to have been a little misled by the style of Shakspeare. This is rather elaborate and removed from vulgar use by a sort of archaism in phrase, and by a pointed turn in the dialogue, adapted to theatrical utterance, but wanting the ease of ordinary speech.

Few books of fiction in England.

59. I can only produce two books by English authors in this first part of the seventeenth century which fall properly under the class of novels or romances; and of these one is written in Latin. This is the Mundus Alter et Idem of Bishop Hall, an imitation of the latter and weaker volumes of Rabelais. A country in Terra Australis is divided into four regions, Crapulia, Viraginia, Moronea, and Lavernia. Maps of the whole land and of particular regions are given; and the nature of the satire, not much of which has any especial reference to England, may easily be collected. It is not a very successful effort.

Mundus Alter et Idem of Hall.

Godwin's Journey to the Moon.

60. Another prelate, or one who became such, Francis Godwin, was the author of a much more curious story. It is called the Man in the Moon, and relates the journey of one Domingo Gonzalez to that planet. This was written by Godwin, according to Antony Wood, while he was a student at Oxford.[n] By some internal proofs, it must have been later than 1599, and before the death of Elizabeth in 1603. But it was not published till 1638. It was translated into French, and became the model of Cyrano de Bergerac, as he was of Swift. Godwin himself had no prototype, as far as I know, but Lucian. He resembles those writers in the natural and veracious tone of his lies. The fiction is rather ingenious and amusing throughout; but the most remarkable part is the happy conjectures, if we must say no more, of his philosophy. Not only does the writer declare positively for the Copernican system, which was uncommon at that time, but he has surprisingly understood the principle of gravitation, it being distinctly supposed that the earth's attraction diminishes with the distance. Nor is the following passage less curious:—"I must let you understand that the globe of the moon is not altogether destitute of an attractive power; but it is far weaker than that of the earth; as if a man do but spring upwards with all his force, as dancers do when they show their activity by capering, he shall be able to mount fifty or sixty feet high, and then he is quite beyond all attraction of the moon." By this device Gonzalez returns from his sojourn in the latter, though it required a more complex one to bring him thither. "The moon," he observes, "is covered with a sea, except the parts which seem somewhat darker to us, and are dry land." A contrary hypothesis came afterwards to prevail; but we must not expect everything from our ingenious young student.

Howell's Dodona's Grove.

61. Though I can mention nothing else in English which comes exactly within our notions of a romance, we may advert to the Dodona's Grove of James Howell. This is a strange allegory, without any ingenuity in maintaining the analogy be-

[n] Athenæ Oxonienses, vol. ii. col. 558. It is remarkable that Mr. Dunlop has been ignorant of Godwin's claim to this work, and takes Dominic Gonzalez for the real author. Hist. of Fiction, iii. 394.

tween the outer and inner story, which alone can give a reader any pleasure in allegorical writing. The subject is the state of Europe, especially of England, about 1640, under the guise of animated trees in a forest. The style is like the following:—"The next morning the royal olives sent some prime elms to attend Prince Rocolino in quality of officers of state; and a little after he was brought to the royal palace in the same state Elaiana's kings use to be attended the day of their coronation." The contrivance is all along so clumsy and unintelligible, the invention so poor and absurd, the story, if story there be, so dull an echo of well-known events, that it is impossible to reckon Dodona's Grove anything but an entire failure. Howell has no wit, but he has abundance of conceits, flat and commonplace enough. With all this he was a man of some sense and observation. His letters are entertaining, but they scarcely deserve consideration in this volume.

Adventures of Baron de Fæneste.

62. It is very possible that some small works belonging to this extensive class have been omitted, which my readers, or myself on second consideration, might think not unworthy of notice. It is also one so miscellaneous that we might fairly doubt as to some which have a certain claim to be admitted into it. Such are the Adventures of the Baron de Fæneste, by the famous Agrippa d'Aubigné (whose autobiography, by the way, has at least the liveliness of fiction); a singular book, written in dialogue, where an imaginary Gascon baron recounts his tales of the camp and the court. He is made to speak a patois not quite easy for us to under stand, and not perhaps worth the while; but it seems to contain much that illustrates the state of France about the beginning of the seventeenth century. Much in this book is satirical; and the satire falls on the Catholics, whom Fæneste, a mere foolish gentleman of Gascony, is made to defend against an acute Huguenot.

CHAPTER VIII.

HISTORY OF MATHEMATICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE FROM 1600 TO 1650.

SECT. I.

Invention of Logarithms by Napier — New Geometry of Kepler and Cavalieri — Algebra — Harriott — Descartes — Astronomy — Kepler — Galileo — Copernican System begins to prevail — Cartesian Theory of the World — Mechanical Discoveries of Galileo — Descartes — Hydrostatics — Optics.

State of science in sixteenth century.

1. IN the last part of this work we have followed the progress of mathematical and physical knowledge down to the close of the sixteenth century. The ancient geometers had done so much in their own province of lines and figures that little more of importance could be effected, except by new methods extending the limits of the science, or derived from some other source of invention. Algebra had yielded a more abundant harvest to the genius of the sixteenth century; yet something here seemed to be wanting to give that science a character of utility and reference to general truth; nor had the formulæ of letters and radical signs that perceptible beauty which often wins us to delight in geometrical theorems of as little apparent usefulness in their results. Meanwhile the primary laws, to which all mathematical reasonings in their relation to physical truths must be accommodated, lay hidden, or were erroneously conceived; and none of these latter sciences, with the exception of astronomy, were beyond their mere infancy, either as to observation or theory.[a]

[a] In this chapter my obligations to Montucla are so numerous that I shall seldom make particular references to his Histoire des Mathématiques, which must be understood to be my principal authority as to *facts*.

2. Astronomy, cultivated in the latter part of the sixteenth century with much industry and success, was repressed, among other more insuperable obstacles, by the laborious calculations that it required. The trigonometrical tables of sines, tangents, and secants, if they were to produce any tolerable accuracy in astronomical observation, must be computed to six or seven places of decimals, upon which the regular processes of multiplication and division were perpetually to be employed. The consumption of time as well as risk of error which this occasioned was a serious evil to the practical astronomer.

Tediousness of calculations.

3. John Napier, laird of Merchiston, after several attempts to diminish this labour by devices of his invention, was happy enough to discover his famous method of logarithms. This he first published at Edinburgh in 1614, with the title, Mirifici Logarithmorum Canonis Descriptio, seu Arithmeticarum Supputationum Mirabilis Abbreviatio. He died in 1618; and in a posthumous edition, entitled Mirifici Logarithmorum Canonis Constructio, 1619, the method of construction, which had been at first withheld, is given; and the system itself, in consequence, perhaps, of the suggestion of his friend Briggs, underwent some change.

Napier's invention of logarithms.

4. The invention of logarithms is one of the rarest instances of sagacity in the history of mankind; and it has been justly noticed as remarkable, that it issued complete from the mind of its author, and has not received any improvement since his time. It is hardly necessary to say that logarithms are a series of numbers, arranged in tables parallel to the series of natural numbers, and of such a construction that, by adding the logarithms of two of the latter, we obtain the logarithm of their product; by subtracting the logarithm of one number from that of another we obtain that of their quotient. The longest processes, therefore, of multiplication and division are spared, and reduced to one of mere addition or subtraction.

Their nature.

5. It has been supposed that an arithmetical fact, said to be mentioned by Archimedes, and which is certainly pointed out in the work of an early German writer, Michael Stifelius, put Napier in the right course for this invention. It will at

Property of numbers discovered by Stifelius.

least serve to illustrate the principle of logarithms. Stifelius shows that if in a geometrical progression we add the indices of any terms in the series, we shall obtain the index of the products of those terms. Thus, if we compare the geometrical progression, 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, with the arithmetical one which numbers the powers of the common ratio, namely, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, we see that by adding two terms of the latter progression, as 2 and 3, to which 4 and 8 correspond in the geometrical series, we obtain 5, to which 32, the product of 4 by 8, corresponds; and the quotient would be obtained in a similar manner. But though this, which becomes self-evident when algebraical expressions are employed for the terms of a series, seemed at the time rather a curious property of numbers in geometrical progression, it was of little value in facilitating calculation.

Extended to magnitudes.

6. If Napier had simply considered numbers in themselves as repetitions of unity, which is their only intelligible definition, it does not seem that he could ever have carried this observation upon progressive series any farther. Numerically understood, the terms of a geometrical progression proceed *per saltum;* and in the series 2, 4, 8, 16, it is as unmeaning to say that 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, in any possible sense, have a place, or can be introduced to any purpose, as that $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{8}$, $\frac{1}{16}$, or other fractions, are true numbers at all.[b] The case, however, is widely different when we use numbers as merely the signs of something capable of continuous increase or decrease; of space, of duration, of velocity. These are, for our convenience, divided by arbitrary intervals, to which the numerical unit is made to correspond. But as these intervals are indefinitely divisible, the unit is supposed capable of division into fractional parts, each

[b] Few books of arithmetic, or even algebra, draw the reader's attention at the outset to this essential distinction between discrete and continuous quantity, which is almost sure to be overlooked in all their subsequent reasonings. Wallis has done it properly: after stating very clearly that there are no proper numbers but integers, he meets the objection, that fractions are called intermediate numbers. Concedo quidem sic responderi posse; concedo etiam numeros quos fractos vocant, sive fractiones, esse quidam uni et nulli quasi intermedios. Sed addo, quod jam transitur εἰς ἀλλὸ γένος. Respondetur enim non de *quot*, sed de *quanto*. Pertinet igitur hæc responsio propriè loquendo, non tam ad quantitatem discretam, seu numerum, quam ad continuam; prout hora supponitur esse quid continuum in partes divisibile, quamvis quidem harum partium ad totum ratio numeris exprimatur. Mathesis Universalis, c. 1.

of them a representation of the ratio which a portion of the interval bears to the whole. And thus also we must see, that as fractions of the unit bear a relation to uniform quantity, so all the integral numbers which do not enter into the terms of a geometrical progression correspond to certain portions of variable quantity. If a body falling down an inclined plane acquires a velocity at one point which would carry it through two feet in a second, and at a lower point one which would carry it through four feet in the same time, there must, by the nature of a continually accelerated motion, be some point between these where the velocity might be represented by the number three. Hence, wherever the numbers of a common geometrical series, like 2, 4, 8, 16, represent velocities at certain intervals, the intermediate numbers will represent velocities at intermediate intervals; and thus it may be said that all numbers are terms of a geometrical progression, but one which should always be considered as what it is—a progression of continuous, not discrete quantity, capable of being indicated by number, but not number itself.

7. It was a necessary consequence, that if all numbers could be treated as terms of a progression, and if their indices could be found like those of an ordinary series, the method of finding products of terms by addition of indices would be universal. The means that Napier adopted for this purpose were surprisingly ingenious; but it would be difficult to make them clear to those who are likely to require it, especially without the use of lines. It may suffice to say that his process was laborious in the highest degree, consisting of the interpolation of 6931472 mean proportionals between 1 and 2, and repeating a similar and still more tedious operation for all prime numbers. The logarithms of other numbers were easily obtained, according to the fundamental principle of the invention, by adding their factors. Logarithms appear to have been so called because they are the sum of these mean ratios, λόγων ἀριθμός.

By Napier.

8. In the original tables of Napier the logarithm of 10 was 2.3025850. In those published afterwards (1618), he changed this for 1.0000000, making, of course, that of 100, 2.0000000, and so forth. This construction has been followed since; but those of

Tables of Napier and Briggs.

the first method are not wholly neglected; they are called hyperbolical logarithms from expressing a property of that curve. Napier found a coadjutor well worthy of him in Henry Briggs, professor of geometry at Gresham College. It is uncertain from which of them the change in the form of logarithms proceeded. Briggs, in 1618, published a table of logarithms up to 1000, calculated by himself. This was followed in 1624 by his greater work, Arithmetica Logarithmica, containing the logarithms of all natural numbers as high as 20,000, and again from 90,000 to 100,000. These are calculated to fourteen places of decimals; thus reducing the error, which, strictly speaking, must always exist from the principle of logarithmical construction, to an almost infinitesimal fraction. He had designed to publish a second table, with the logarithms of sines and tangents to the 100th part of a degree. This he left in a considerably advanced state; and it was published by Gellibrand in 1633. Gunter had as early as 1620 given the logarithms of sines and tangents on the sexagesimal scale, as far as seven decimals. Vlacq, a Dutch bookseller, printed in 1628 a translation of Briggs's Arithmetica Logarithmica, filling up the interval from 20,000 to 90,000 with logarithms calculated to eleven decimals. He published also, in 1633, his Trigonometrica Artificialis, the most useful work, perhaps, that had appeared, as it incorporated the labours of Briggs and Gellibrand. Kepler came like a master to the subject; and observing that some foreign mathematicians disliked the theory upon which Napier had explained the nature of logarithms, as not rigidly geometrical, gave one of his own, to which they could not object. But it may probably be said, that the very novelty to which the disciples of the ancient geometry were averse, the introduction of the notion of velocity into mathematical reasoning, was that which linked the abstract science of quantity with nature, and prepared the way for that expansive theory of infinites, which bears at once upon the subtlest truths that can exercise the understanding, and the most evident that can fall under the senses.

Kepler's new geometry.

9. It was, indeed, at this time that the modern geometry, which, if it deviates something from the clearness and precision of the ancient, has incomparably the advantage over it in its reach

of application, took its rise. Kepler was the man that led the way. He published in 1615 his Nova Stereometria Doliorum, a treatise on the capacity of casks. In this he considers the various solids which may be formed by the revolution of a segment of a conic section round a line which is not its axis, a condition not unfrequent in the form of a cask. Many of the problems which he starts he is unable to solve. But what is most remarkable in this treatise is that he here suggests the bold idea, that a circle may be deemed to be composed of an infinite number of triangles, having their bases in their circumference, and their common apex in the centre; a cone, in like manner, of infinite pyramids, and a cylinder of infinite prisms.[c] The ancients had shown, as is well known, that a polygon inscribed in a circle, and another described about it, may, by continual bisection of their sides, be made to approach nearer to each other than by any assignable difference. The circle itself lay, of course, between them. Euclid contents himself with saying that the circle is greater than any polygon that can be inscribed in it, and less than any polygon that can be described about it. The method by which they approximated to the curve space by continual increase or diminution of the rectilineal figure was called exhaustion; and the space itself is properly called by later geometers the limit. As curvilineal and rectilineal spaces cannot possibly be compared by means of superposition, or by showing that their several constituent portions could be made to coincide, it had long been acknowledged by the best geometers impossible to quadrate by a direct process any curve surface. But Archimedes had found, as to the parabola, that there was a rectilineal space, of which he could indirectly demonstrate that it was equal, that is, could not be unequal, to the curve itself.

Its difference from the ancient.

10. In this state of the general problem, the ancient methods of indefinite approximation having prepared the way, Kepler came to his solution of questions which regarded the capacity of vessels. According to Fabroni he supposed solids to consist of an infinite number of surfaces, surfaces of an infinity of lines, lines of infinite points.[d] If this be

[c] Fabroni, Vitæ Italorum, i. 272.

[d] Idem quoque solida cogitavit ex infinito numero superficierum existere, superficies autem ex lineis infinitis, ac lineis ex infinitis punctis. Ostendit ipse quantum ea ratione brevior fieri via possit

strictly true, he must have left little, in point of invention, for Cavalieri. So long as geometry is employed as a method of logic, an exercise of the understanding on those modifications of quantity which the imagination cannot grasp, such as points, lines, infinites, it must appear almost an offensive absurdity to speak of a circle as a polygon with an infinite number of sides. But when it becomes the handmaid of practical art, or even of physical science, there can be no other objection than always arises from incongruity and incorrectness of language. It has been found possible to avoid the expressions attributed to Kepler; but they seem to denote, in fact, nothing more than those of Euclid or Archimedes; that the difference between a magnitude and its limit may be regularly diminished, till without strictly vanishing it becomes less than any assignable quantity, and may consequently be disregarded in reasoning upon actual bodies.

Adopted by Galileo.

11. Galileo, says Fabroni, trod in the steps of Kepler, and in his first dialogue on mechanics, when treating of a cylinder cut out of an hemisphere, became conversant with indivisibles (familiarem habere cœpit cum indivisibilibus usum). But in that dialogue he confused the metaphysical notions of divisible quantity, supposing it to be composed of unextended indivisibles; and not venturing to affirm that infinites could be equal or unequal to one another, he preferred to say that words denoting equality or excess could only be used as to finite quantities. In his fourth dialogue on the centre of gravity, he comes back to the exhaustive method of Archimedes.[e]

Extended by Cavalieri.

12. Cavalieri, professor of mathematics at Bologna, the generally reputed father of the new geometry, though Kepler seems to have so greatly anticipated him, had completed his Method of Indivisibles in 1626. The book was not published till 1635. His leading principle is that solids are composed of an infinite number of surfaces placed one above another as their indivisible elements. Surfaces are formed in

ad vera quædam captu difficiliora, cum antiquarum demonstrationum circuitus ac methodus inter se comparandi figuras circumscriptas et inscriptas iis planis aut solidis, quæ mensuranda essent, ita declinarentur. Fabroni, Vitæ Italorum, i. 272.

[e] Ibid.

like manner by lines, and lines by points. This, however, he asserts with some excuse and explanation; declaring that he does not use the words so strictly as to have it supposed that divisible quantities truly and literally consist of indivisibles, but that the ratio of solids is the same as that of an infinite number of surfaces, and the ratio of surfaces the same as that of an infinite number of lines; and to put an end to cavil, he demonstrated that the same consequences would follow if a method should be adopted, borrowing nothing from the consideration of indivisibles.[f] This explanation seems to have been given after his method had been attacked by Guldin in 1640.

Applied to the ratios of solids.

13. It was a main object of Cavalieri's geometry to demonstrate the proportions of different solids. This is partly done by Euclid, but generally in an indirect manner. A cone, according to Cavalieri, is composed of an infinite number of circles decreasing from the base to the summit, a cylinder of an infinite number of equal circles. He seeks therefore the ratio of the sum of all the former to that of all the latter. The method of summing an infinite series of terms in arithmetical progression was already known. The diameters of the circles in the cone decreasing uniformly were in arithmetical progression, and the circles would be as their squares. He found that when the number of terms is infinitely great, the sum of all the squares described on lines in arithmetical progression, is exactly one-third of the greatest square multiplied by the number of terms. Hence the cone is one-third of a cylinder of the same base and altitude, and similar proof may be given as to the ratios of other solids.

14. This bolder geometry was now very generally applied in difficult investigations. A proof was given in

[f] Non eo rigore a se voces adhiberi, ac si dividuæ quantitates verè ac propriè ex indivisibilibus existerent; verumtamen id sibi duntaxat velle, ut proportio solidorum eadem esset ac ratio superficierum omnium numero infinitarum, et proportio superficierum eadem ac illa infinitarum linearum: denique ut omnia, quæ contra dici poterant, in radice præcideret, demonstravit, easdem omnino consecutiones erui, si methodi aut rationes adhiberentur omnino diversæ, quæ nihil ab indivisibilium consideratione penderent. Fabroni.

Il n'est aucun cas dans la géométrie des indivisibles, qu'on ne puisse facilement réduire à la forme ancienne de démonstration. Ainsi, c'est s'arrêter à l'écorce que de chicaner sur le mot d'indivisibles. Il est impropre si l'on veut, mais il n'en résulte aucun danger pour la géométrie; et loin de conduire à l'erreur, cette méthode, au contraire, a été utile pour atteindre à des vérités qui avoient échappé jusqu'alors aux efforts des géomètres. Montucla, vol. ii. p. 39.

the celebrated problems relative to the cycloid, which served as a test of skill to the mathematicians of that age. The cycloid is the curve described by a point in a circle, while it makes one revolution along an horizontal base, as in the case of a carriage-wheel. It was far more difficult to determine its area. It was at first taken for the segment of a circle. Galileo considered it, but with no success. Mersenne, who was also unequal to the problem, suggested it to a very good geometer, Roberval, who after some years, in 1634, demonstrated that the area of the cycloid is equal to thrice the area of the generating circle. Mersenne communicated this discovery to Descartes, who, treating the matter as easy, sent a short demonstration of his own. On Roberval's intimating that he had been aided by a knowledge of the solution, Descartes found out the tangents of the curve, and challenged Roberval and Fermat to do the same. Fermat succeeded in this, but Roberval could not achieve the problem, in which Galileo also and Cavalieri failed; though it seems to have been solved afterwards by Viviani. "Such," says Montucla, "was the superiority of Descartes over all the geometers of his age, that questions which most perplexed them cost him but an ordinary degree of attention." In this problem of the tangents (and it might not perhaps have been worth while to mention it otherwise in so brief a sketch) Descartes made use of the principle introduced by Kepler, considering the curve as a polygon of an infinite number of sides, so that an infinitely small arc is equal to its chord. The cycloid has been called by Montucla the Helen of geometers. This beauty was at least the cause of war, and produced a long controversy. The Italians claim the original invention as their own; but Montucla seems to have vindicated the right of France to every solution important in geometry. Nor were the friends of Roberval and Fermat disposed to acknowledge so much of the exclusive right of Descartes as was challenged by his disciples. Pascal, in his history of the cycloid, enters the lists on the side of Roberval. This was not published till 1658.

Problem of the cycloid.

15. Without dwelling more minutely on geometrical treatises of less importance, though in themselves valuable, such as that of Gregory St.

Progress of algebra.

Vincent in 1647, or the Cyclometricus of Willebrod Snell in 1621, we come to the progress of analysis during this period. The works of Vieta, it may be observed, were chiefly published after the year 1600. They left, as must be admitted, not much in principle for the more splendid generalizations of Harriott and Descartes. It is not unlikely that the mere employment of a more perfect notation would have led the acute mind of Vieta to truths which seem to us who are acquainted with them but a little beyond what he discovered.

Briggs. Girard.

16. Briggs, in his Arithmetica Logarithmica, was the first who clearly showed what is called the Binomial Theorem, or a compendious method of involution, by means of the necessary order of coefficients in the successive powers of a binomial quantity. Cardan had partially, and Vieta more clearly, seen this, nor, as far as his notation went, was it likely to escape the profound mind of the latter. Albert Girard, a Dutchman, in his Invention Nouvelle en Algèbre, 1629, conceived a better notion of negative roots than his predecessors. Even Vieta had not paid attention to them in any solution. Girard, however, not only assigns their form, and shows that in a certain class of cubic equations there must always be one or two of this description, but uses this remarkable expression: "A negative solution means in geometry that the *minus* recedes as the *plus* advances."[g] It seems manifest that till some such idea suggested itself to the minds of analysts, the consideration of negative roots, though they could not possibly avoid perceiving their existence, would merely have confused their solutions. It cannot, therefore, be surprising that not only Cardan and Vieta, but Harriott himself, should have paid little attention to them.

Harriott.

17. Harriott, the companion of Sir Walter Raleigh in Virginia, and the friend of the Earl of Northumberland, in whose house he spent the latter part of his life, was destined to make the last great discovery in the pure science of algebra. Though he is mentioned here after Girard, since the Artis Analyticæ Praxis was not published till 1631, this was ten years after the author's death. Harriott arrived at a complete

[g] La solution par moins s'explique en géométrie en rétrogradant, et le moins recule où le plus avance. Montucla, p. 112.

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Progress of algebra.

theory of the genesis of equations, which Cardan
Vieta had but partially conceived. By bringing
terms on one side, so as to make them equal to zero
found out that every unknown quantity in an equation
has as many values as the index of its powers in
first term denotes; and that these values, in a necessary
sequence of combinations, form the co-efficients of the
succeeding terms into which the decreasing powers of
the unknown quantity enter, as they do also, by their
united product, the last or known term of the equation.
This discovery facilitated the solution of equations by
the necessary composition of their terms which it displayed.
It was evident, for example, that each integral
root of an equation must be a factor, and consequently
divisor, of the last term.[h]

18. Harriott introduced the use of small letters instead
of capitals in algebra; he employed vowels for
unknown, consonants for known quantities, and joined
them to express their product.[i] There is certainly not
much in this; but its evident convenience renders it
wonderful that it should have been reserved for so late
an era. Wallis, in his History of Algebra, ascribes to
Harriott a long list of discoveries, which have been
reclaimed for Cardan and Vieta, the great founders
of the higher algebra, by Cossali and Montucla.[k]
The latter of these writers has been charged, even by
foreigners, with similar injustice towards our country-
man; and that he has been provoked by what he thought
the unfairness of Wallis to something like a depreciation
of Harriott, seems as clear as that he has himself robbed
Cardan of part of his due credit in swelling the account
of Vieta's discoveries. From the general integrity

intuitive acuteness in all mathematical reasoning, he
may in this, as in other instances, have divined the
whole theory by himself. Montucla extols the algebra
of Descartes, that is, so much of it as can be fairly
claimed for him without any precursor, very highly;
and some of his inventions in the treatment of equations
have long been current in books on that science. He
was the first who showed what were called impossible
or imaginary roots, though he never assigns them, deem-
ing them no quantities at all. He was also, perhaps, the
first who fully understood negative roots, though he still
retains the appellation, false roots, which is not so good
as Harriott's epithet, privative. According to his pane-
gyrist, he first pointed out that in every equation (the
terms being all on one side) which has no imaginary
roots, there are as many changes of signs as positive
roots, as many continuations of them as negative.

22. The geometer next in genius to Descartes, and
perhaps nearer to him than to any third, was
Fermat, a man of various acquirements, of high
rank in the parliament of Toulouse, and of a mind inca-
pable of envy, forgiving of detraction, and delighting in
truth, with almost too much indifference to praise. The
works of Fermat were not published till long after
his death in 1665; but his frequent discussions with
Descartes, by the intervention of their common corre-
spondent Mersenne, render this place more appropriate
for the introduction of his name. In these controversies
Descartes never behaved to Fermat with the respect due
to his talents; in fact, no one was ever more jealous of
his own pre-eminence, or more unwilling to acknowledge
the claims of those who scrupled to follow him im-
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of his fame. Yet it is this unhappy temper of Descartes
which ought to render us more slow to credit the sus-
picions of his designed plagiarism from the discoveries
of others; since this, combined with his unwillingness
to acknowledge their merits, and affected ignorance of
their writings, would form a character we should not
readily ascribe to a man of great genius, and whose own
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Fermat.

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light. Thus Roberval discovered the same method of indivisibles as Cavalieri, and Descartes must equally have been led to his theory of tangents by that of Kepler. Fermat also, who was in possession of his principal discoveries before the geometry of Descartes saw the light, derived from Kepler his own celebrated method, *de maximis et minimis*: a method of discovering the greatest or least value of a variable quantity, such as the ordinate of a curve. It depends on the same principle as that of Kepler. From this he deduced a rule for drawing tangents to curves different from that of Descartes. This led to a controversy between the two geometers, carried on by Descartes, who yet is deemed to have been in the wrong, with his usual quickness of resentment. Several other discoveries, both in pure algebra and geometry, illustrate the name of Fermat.[p]

Algebraic geometry not successful at first.

23. The new geometry of Descartes was not received with the universal admiration it deserved. Besides its conciseness and the inroad it made on old prejudices as to geometrical methods, the general boldness of the author's speculations in physical and metaphysical philosophy, as well as his indiscreet temper, alienated many who ought to have appreciated it; and it was in his own country, where he had ceased to reside, that Descartes had the fewest admirers. Roberval made some objections to his rival's algebra, but with little success. A commentary on the treatise of Descartes by Schooten, professor of geometry at Leyden, first appeared in 1649.

Astronomy —Kepler.

24. Among those who devoted themselves ardently and successfully to astronomical observations at the end of the sixteenth century, was John Kepler, a native of Wirtemburg, who had already shown that he was likely to inherit the mantle of Tycho Brahe. He published some astronomical treatises of comparatively small importance in the first years of the present period. But in 1609 he made an epoch in that science by his Astronomia Nova αἰτιολογητὸς, or Commentaries on the Planet Mars. It had been always assumed that the heavenly bodies revolve in circular orbits round their centre, whether this were taken to be the sun or

[p] A good article on Fermat by M. Maurice will be found in the Biographie Universelle.

the earth. There was, however, an apparent eccentricity or deviation from this circular motion, which it had been very difficult to explain, and for this Ptolemy had devised his complex system of epicycles. No planet showed more of this eccentricity than Mars; and it was to Mars that Kepler turned his attention. After many laborious researches he was brought by degrees to the great discovery, that the motion of the planets, among which, having adopted the Copernican system, he reckoned the earth, is not performed in circular but in elliptical orbits, the sun not occupying the centre but one of the foci of the curve; and, secondly, that it is performed with such a varying velocity, that the areas described by the radius vector, or line which joins this focus to the revolving planet, are always proportional to the times. A planet, therefore, moves less rapidly as it becomes more distant from the sun. These are the first and second of the three great laws of Kepler. The third was not discovered by him till some years afterwards. He tells us himself that, on the 8th of May, 1618, after long toil in investigating the proportion of the periodic times of the planetary movements to their orbits, an idea struck his mind, which, chancing to make a mistake in the calculation, he soon rejected. But a week after, returning to the subject, he entirely established his grand discovery, that the squares of the times of revolution are as the cubes of the mean distances of the planets. This was first made known to the world in his Mysterium Cosmographicum, published in 1619; a work mingled up with many strange effusions of a mind far more eccentric than any of the planets with which it was engaged. In the Epitome Astronomiæ Copernicanæ, printed the same year, he endeavours to deduce this law from his theory of centrifugal forces. He had no small insight into the principles of universal gravitation, as an attribute of matter; but several of his assumptions as to the laws of motion are not consonant to truth. There seems indeed to have been a considerable degree of good fortune in the discoveries of Kepler; yet this may be deemed the reward of his indefatigable laboriousness, and of the ingenuousness with which he renounced any hypothesis that he could not reconcile with his advancing knowledge of the phænomena.

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mass is whirled in a number of distinct vortices, each of
which carries along with it a planet. The centrifugal
motion impels every particle in these vortices at each
instant to fly off from the sun in a straight line; but it is
retained by the pressure of those which have already
escaped and form a denser sphere beyond it. Light is
no more than the effect of particles seeking to escape
from the centre, and pressing one on another, though
perhaps without actual motion.[s] The planetary vortices
contain sometimes smaller vortices, in which the satel-
lites are whirled round their principal.

Such, in a few words, is the famous Cartesian
theory, which, fallen in esteem as it now is, stood its
ground on the continent of Europe for nearly a century,
the simplicity of the Newtonian system, and above
its conformity to the reality of things, gained an
disputed predominance. Besides the arbitrary sup-
positions of Descartes, and the various objections that
were raised against the absolute plenum of space and
other parts of his theory, it has been urged that his
vortices are not reconcilable, according to the laws of
motion in fluids, with the relation, ascertained by Kepler,
between the periods and distances of the planets; nor
does it appear why the sun should be in the focus, rather
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years it has seemed not impossible that a part of his
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into the schools of philosophy. His doctrine as to the
nature of light, improved as it was by Huygens, is daily
gaining ground over that of Newton; that of a subtle
ether pervading space, which in fact is nearly the same
thing, is becoming a favourite speculation, if we are not
yet to call it an established truth; and the affirmative
of the problem which an eminent writer has started,
whether this ether has a vorticose motion round the sun,
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...III.

...the passage of Mercury over the sun was witnessed

panella. If Descartes himself had been more patient towards opinions which he had not formed in his own mind, that constant divine agency, to which he was, on other occasions, apt to resort, could not but have suggested a sufficient explanation of the gravity of matter, without endowing it with self-agency. He had, however, fallen upon a complicated and original scheme, the most celebrated, perhaps, though not the most admirable, of the novelties which Descartes brought into philosophy.

Cartesian theory of the world.

34. In a letter to Mersenne, Jan. 9th, 1639, he shortly states that notion of the material universe which he afterwards published in the Principia Philosophiæ. "I will tell you," he says, "that I conceive, or rather I can demonstrate, that besides the matter which composes terrestrial bodies, there are two other kinds: one very subtle, of which the parts are round or nearly round like grains of sand, and this not only occupies the pores of terrestrial bodies, but constitutes the substance of all the heavens; the other incomparably more subtle, the parts of which are so small, and move with such velocity, that they have no determinate figure, but readily take at every instant that which is required to fill all the little intervals which the other does not occupy."[r] To this hypothesis of a double ether he was driven by his aversion to admit any vacuum in nature; the rotundity of the former corpuscles having been produced, as he fancied, by their continual circular motions, which had rubbed off their angles. This seems at present rather a clumsy hypothesis, but it is literally that which Descartes presented to the world.

35. After having thus filled the universe with different sorts of matter, he supposes that the subtler particles, formed by the perpetual rubbing off of the angles of the larger in their progress towards sphericity, increased by degrees till there was a superfluity that was not required to fill up the intervals; and this, flowing towards the centre of the system, became the sun, a very subtle and liquid body, while in like manner the fixed stars were formed in other systems. Round these centres the whole

[r] Vol. viii. p. 73.

mass is whirled in a number of distinct vortices, each of which carries along with it a planet. The centrifugal motion impels every particle in these vortices at each instant to fly off from the sun in a straight line; but it is retained by the pressure of those which have already escaped and form a denser sphere beyond it. Light is no more than the effect of particles seeking to escape from the centre, and pressing one on another, though perhaps without actual motion.[a] The planetary vortices contain sometimes smaller vortices, in which the satellites are whirled round their principal.

36. Such, in a few words, is the famous Cartesian theory, which, fallen in esteem as it now is, stood its ground on the continent of Europe for nearly a century, till the simplicity of the Newtonian system, and above all, its conformity to the reality of things, gained an undisputed predominance. Besides the arbitrary suppositions of Descartes, and the various objections that were raised against the absolute plenum of space and other parts of his theory, it has been urged that his vortices are not reconcilable, according to the laws of motion in fluids, with the relation, ascertained by Kepler, between the periods and distances of the planets; nor does it appear why the sun should be in the focus, rather than in the centre of their orbits. Yet within a few years it has seemed not impossible that a part of his bold conjectures will enter once more with soberer steps into the schools of philosophy. His doctrine as to the nature of light, improved as it was by Huygens, is daily gaining ground over that of Newton; that of a subtle ether pervading space, which in fact is nearly the same thing, is becoming a favourite speculation, if we are not yet to call it an established truth; and the affirmative of a problem which an eminent writer has started, whether this ether has a vorticose motion round the sun, would not leave us very far from the philosophy which it has been so long our custom to turn into ridicule.

37. The passage of Mercury over the sun was witnessed

[a] J'ai souvent averti que par la lumière je n'entendois pas tant le mouvement que cette inclination ou propension que ces petits corps ont à se mouvoir, et que ce que je dirois du mouvement, pour être plus aisément entendu, se devoit rapporter à cette propension; d'où il est manifeste que selon moi l'on ne doit entendre autre chose par les couleurs que les différentes variétés qui arrivent en ces propensions. Vol. vii. p. 193.

by Gassendi in 1631. This phænomenon, though it excited great interest in that age, from its having been previously announced, so as to furnish a test of astronomical accuracy, recurs too frequently to be now considered as of high importance. The transit of Venus is much more rare. It occurred on Dec. 4, 1639, and was then only seen by Horrox, a young Englishman of extraordinary mathematical genius. There is reason to ascribe an invention of great importance, though not perhaps of extreme difficulty, that of the micrometer, to Horrox.

Transits of Mercury and Venus.

38. The satellites of Jupiter and the phases of Venus are not so glorious in the scutcheon of Galileo as his discovery of the true principles of mechanics. These, as we have seen in the preceding volume, were very imperfectly known till he appeared; nor had the additions to that science since the time of Archimedes been important. The treatise of Galileo, Della Scienza Mecanica, has been said, I know not on what authority, to have been written in 1592. It was not published, however, till 1634, and then only in a French translation by Mersenne, the original not appearing till 1649. This is chiefly confined to statics, or the doctrine of equilibrium; it was in his dialogues on motion, Della Nuova Scienza, published in 1638, that he developed his great principles of the science of dynamics, the moving forces of bodies. Galileo was induced to write his treatise on mechanics, as he tells us, in consequence of the fruitless attempts he witnessed in engineers to raise weights by a small force, "as if with their machines they could cheat nature, whose instinct as it were by fundamental law is that no resistance can be overcome except by a superior force." But as one man may raise a weight to the height of a foot by dividing it into equal portions, commensurate to his power, which many men could not raise at once, so a weight, which raises another greater than itself, may be considered as doing so by successive instalments of force, during each of which it traverses as much space as a corresponding portion of the larger weight. Hence the velocity, of which space uniformly traversed in a given time is the measure, is inversely as the masses of the weights, and thus the equilibrium of the straight

Laws of Mechanics.

Statics of Galileo.