who found jurisprudence a gibberish, and left it a science. Never was there a literary partnership so fortunate as that of Mr. Bentham and M. Dumont. The raw material which Mr. Bentham furnished was most precious; but it was unmarketable. He was, assuredly, at once a great logician and a great rhetorician. But the effect of his logic was injured by a vicious arrangement, and the effect of his rhetoric by a vicious style. His mind was vigorous, comprehensive, subtle, fertile of arguments, fertile of illustrations. But he spoke in an unknown tongue; and, that the congregation might be edified, it was necessary that some brother having the gift of interpretation should expound the invaluable jargon. His oracles were of high import; but they were traced on leaves and flung loose to the wind. So negligent was he of the arts of selection, distribution, and compression, that to persons who formed their judgment of him from his works in their undigested state, he seemed to be the least systematic of all philosophers. The truth is, that his opinions formed a system, which, whether sound or unsound, is more exact, more entire, and more consistent with itself than any other. Yet to superficial readers of his works in their original form, and indeed to all readers of those works who did not bring great industry and great acuteness to the study, he seemed to be a man of a quick and ingenious but ill-regulated mind,—who saw truth only by glimpses,—who threw out many striking hints, but who never had thought of combining his doctrines in one harmonious whole.

M. Dumont was admirably qualified to supply what was wanting in Mr. Bentham. In the qualities in which the French writers surpass those of all other nations,— neatness, clearness, precision, condensation,—he surpassed all French writers. If M. Dumont had never been born, Mr. Bentham would still have been a very great man. But he would have been great to himself alone. The fertility of his mind would have resembled the fertility of those vast American wildernesses, in which blossoms and decay a rich but unprofitable vegetation, "wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand, neither he that bindeth up the sheaves his bosom." It would have been with his discoveries as it has been with the "Century of Inventions." His speculations on laws would have been of no more practical use than Lord Worcester's speculations on steam-engines. Some generations hence, perhaps, when legislation had found its Watt, an antiquarian might have published to the world the curious fact, that in the reign of George the Third there had been a man called Bentham, who had given hints of many discoveries made since his time, and who had really, for his age, taken a most philosophical view of the principles of jurisprudence.

Qualities of French writers.

Many persons have attempted to interpret between this powerful mind and the public. But, in our opinion, M. Dumont alone has succeeded. It is remarkable that, in foreign countries, where Mr. Bentham's works are known solely through the medium of the French version, his merit is almost universally acknowledged. Even those who are most decidedly opposed to his political opinions—the very chiefs of the Holy Alliance—have publicly testified their respect for him. In England, on the contrary, many persons who certainly entertained no prejudice against him on political grounds, were long in the habit of mentioning him contemptuously. Indeed, what was said of Bacon's philosophy, may be said of Bentham's. It was in little repute among us, till judgments in its favour came from beyond sea, and convinced us, to our shame, that we had been abusing and laughing at one of the greatest men of the age.

Appreciated in foreign countries.

Philosophy of Bacon and Bentham.

M. Dumont might easily have found employments more gratifying to personal vanity than that of arranging works not his own. But he could have found no employment more useful or more truly honourable. The book before us, hastily written as it is, contains abundant proof, if proof were needed, that he did not become an editor because he wanted the talents which would have made him eminent as a writer.

Useful and honourable employment.

Persons who hold democratical opinions, and who have been accustomed to consider M. Dumont as one of their party, have been surprised and mortified to learn, that he speaks with very little respect of the French Revolution, and of its authors. Some zealous Tories have naturally expressed great satisfaction at finding their

doctrines, in some respects, confirmed by the testimony of an unwilling witness. The date of the work, we think, explains everything. If it had been written ten years earlier, or twenty years later, it would have been very different from what it is. It was written neither during the first excitement of the Revolution, nor at that later period, when the practical good produced by the Revolution had become manifest to the most prejudiced observers; but in those wretched times, when the enthusiasm had abated, and the solid advantages were not yet fully seen. It was written in the year 1799,—a year in which the most sanguine friend of liberty might well feel some misgivings as to the effects of what the National Assembly had done. The evils which attend every great change had been severely felt. The benefit was still to come. The price—a heavy price—had been paid. The thing purchased had not yet been delivered. Europe was swarming with French exiles. The fleets and armies of the second coalition were victorious. Within France, the reign of terror was over; but the reign of law had not commenced. There had been, indeed, during three or four years, a written Constitution, by which rights were defined, and checks provided. But these rights had been repeatedly violated, and those checks had proved utterly inefficient. The laws which had been framed to secure the distinct authority of the executive magistrates, and of the legislative assemblies—the freedom of election—the freedom of debate—the freedom of the press—the personal freedom of citizens, were a dead letter. The ordinary mode in which the Republic was governed, was by *coups d'état*. On one occasion, the legislative councils were placed under military restraint by the directors. Then again, directors were deposed by the legislative councils. Elections were set aside by the executive authority. Ship-loads of writers and speakers were sent, without a legal trial, to die of fever in Guiana. France, in short, was in that state in which revolution, effected by violence, almost always leaves a nation. The habit of obedience had been lost. The spell of prescription had been broken. Those associations on which, far more than on any arguments about property and order, the authority of magistrates rests, had completely passed away. The power of the government consisted merely in the physical force which it could bring to its support. Moral force it had none. It was itself a government, sprung from a recent convulsion. Its own fundamental maxim was, that rebellion might be justifiable. Its own existence proved that rebellion might be successful. The people had been accustomed, during several years, to offer resistance to the constituted authorities on the slightest provocation, and to see the constituted authorities yield to that resistance. The whole political world was "without form and void"—an incessant whirl of hostile atoms, which every moment formed some new combination. The only man who could fix the agitated elements of society in a stable form, was following a wild vision of glory and empire through the Syrian deserts. The time was not yet come, when

> "Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
> stood ruled;"

when, out of the chaos into which the old society had been resolved, were to rise a new dynasty, a new peerage, a new church, and a new code.

The dying words of Madame Roland, "O Liberty! How many crimes are committed in thy name?" were at that time echoed by many of the most upright and benevolent of mankind. M. Guizot has, in one of his admirable pamphlets, happily and justly described M. Laine as "an honest and liberal man, discouraged by the Revolution." This description, at the time when M. Dumont's Memoirs were written, would have applied to almost every honest and liberal man in Europe; and would, beyond all doubt, have applied to M. Dumont himself. To that fanatical worship of the all-wise and all-good people, which had been common a few years before, had succeeded an uneasy suspicion that the follies and vices of the people would frustrate all attempts to serve them. The wild and joyous exultation with which the meeting of the States-General, and the fall of the Bastile had been hailed, had passed away. In its place was dejection, and a gloomy distrust of specious appearances. The philosophers and philanthropists had reigned. And what had their reign produced? Philosophy had brought with it mummeries as absurd as any which had

Date of M. Dumont's work.

State of France in 1799.

Words of Madame Roland.

been practised by the most superstitious zealot of the darkest age. Philanthropy had brought with it crimes as horrible as the massacre of St. Bartholomew. This was the emancipation of the human mind. These were the fruits of the great victory of reason over prejudice. France had rejected the faith of Pascal and Descartes as a nursery fable, that a courtezan might be her idol, and a madman her priest. She had asserted her freedom against Louis, that she might bow down before Robespierre. For a time men thought, that all the boasted wisdom of the eighteenth century was folly; and that those hopes of great political and social ameliorations, which had been cherished by Voltaire and Condorcet, were utterly delusive.

Philosophy and philanthropy.

Under the influence of these feelings, M. Dumont has gone so far as to say, that the writings of Mr. Burke on the French Revolution, though disfigured by exaggeration, and though containing doctrines subversive of all public liberty, had been, on the whole, justified by events, and had probably saved Europe from great disasters. That such a man as the friend and fellow-labourer of Mr. Bentham, should have expressed such an opinion, is a circumstance which well deserves the consideration of uncharitable politicians. These Memoirs have not convinced us that the French Revolution was not a great blessing to mankind. But they have convinced us that very great indulgence is due to those, who, while the Revolution was actually taking place, regarded it with unmixed aversion and horror. We can perceive where their error lay. We can perceive that the evil was temporary, and the good durable. But we cannot be sure that, if our lot had been cast in their times, we should not, like them, have been discouraged and disgusted—that we should not, like them, have seen, in that great victory of the French people, only insanity and crime.

Burke on the French Revolution.

It is curious to observe how some men are applauded, and others reviled, for merely being what all their neighbours are,—for merely going passively down the stream of events,—for merely representing the opinions and passions of a whole generation. The friends of popular government ordinarily speak with extreme severity of Mr. Pitt, and with respect and tenderness of Mr. Canning. Yet the whole difference, we suspect, consisted merely in this,—that Mr. Pitt died in 1806, and Mr. Canning in 1827. During the years which were common to the public life of both, Mr. Canning was assuredly not a more liberal statesman than his patron. The truth is, that Mr. Pitt began his political life at the end of the American War, when the nation was suffering from the effects of corruption. He closed it in the midst of the calamities produced by the French Revolution, when the nation was still strongly impressed with the horrors of anarchy. He changed, undoubtedly. In his youth he had brought in reform bills. In his manhood he brought in gagging bills. But the change, though lamentable, was, in our opinion, perfectly natural, and might have been perfectly honest. He changed with the great body of his countrymen. Mr. Canning, on the other hand, entered into public life when Europe was in dread of the Jacobins. He closed his public life when Europe was suffering under the tyranny of the Holy Alliance. He, too, changed with the nation. As the crimes of the Jacobins had turned the master into something very like a Tory, the events which followed the Congress of Vienna turned the pupil into something very like a Whig.

Canning and Pitt.

So much are men the creatures of circumstances. We see that, if M. Dumont had died in 1799 he would have died, to use the new cant word, a decided "conservative." If Mr. Pitt had lived to 1832, it is our firm belief that he would have been a decided reformer.

The judgment passed by M. Dumont in this work on the French Revolution, must be taken with considerable allowances. It resembles a criticism on a play, of which only the first act has been performed, or on a building from which the scaffolding has not yet been taken down. We have no doubt, that if the excellent author had revised these Memoirs thirty years after the time at which they were written, he would have seen reason to omit a few passages, and to add many qualifications and explanations.

Allowances to be made.

He would not probably have been inclined to retract the censures, just, though severe, which he has passed on the ignorance, the presumption, and the pedantry, of the National Assembly.

But he would have admitted that, in spite of those faults, perhaps even by reason of those faults, that Assembly had conferred inestimable benefits on mankind. It is clear, that among the French of that day, political knowledge was absolutely in its infancy. It would indeed have been strange if it had attained maturity in the time of censors, of *lettres-de-cachet*, and of beds of justice. The electors did not know how to elect. The representatives did not know how to deliberate. M. Dumont taught the constituent body of Montreuil how to perform their functions, and found them apt to learn. He afterwards tried, in concert with Mirabeau, to instruct the National Assembly in that admirable system of Parliamentary tactics, which has been long established in the English House of Commons, and which has made the House of Commons, in spite of all the defects in its composition, the best and fairest debating society in the world. But these accomplished legislators, though quite as ignorant as the mob of Montreuil, proved much less docile, and cried out that they did not want to go to school to the English. Their debates consisted of endless successions of trashy pamphlets, all beginning with something about the original compact of society;—man in the hunting state, and other such foolery. They sometimes diversified and enlivened these long readings by a little rioting. They bawled; they hooted; they shook their fists. They kept no order among themselves. They were insulted with impunity by the crowd which filled their galleries. They gave long and solemn consideration to trifles. They hurried through the most important resolutions with fearful expedition. They wasted months in quibbling about the words of that false and childish Declaration of Rights on which they professed to found their new constitution, and which was at irreconcilable variance with every clause of that constitution. They annihilated in a single night privileges, many of which partook of the nature of property, and ought therefore to have been most delicately handled.

Censure on the National Assembly.

They are called the Constituent Assembly. Never was a name less appropriate. They were not constituent, but the very reverse of constituent. They constituted nothing that stood, or that deserved to last. They had not, and they could not possibly have, the information or the habits of mind which are necessary for the framing of that most exquisite of all machines, a government. The metaphysical cant with which they prefaced their constitution, has long been the scoff of all parties. Their constitution itself,—that constitution which they described as absolutely perfect, and to which they predicted immortality, — disappeared in a few months, and left no trace behind it. They were great only in the work of destruction.

The reverse of constituent.

The glory of the National Assembly is this, that they were in truth, what Mr. Burke called them in austere irony, the ablest architects of ruin that ever the world saw. They were utterly incompetent to perform any work which required a discriminating eye and a skilful hand. But the work which was then to be done was a work of devastation. They had to deal with abuses so horrible and so deeply rooted, that the highest political wisdom could scarcely have produced greater good to mankind than was produced by their fierce and senseless temerity. Demolition is undoubtedly a vulgar task; the highest glory of the statesman is to construct. But there is a time for everything,—a time to set up, and a time to pull down. The talents of revolutionary leaders, and those of the legislator, have equally their use and their season. It is the natural, the almost universal law, that the age of insurrections and proscriptions shall precede the age of good government, of temperate liberty, and liberal order.

Architects of ruin.

Order preceded by insurrection.

And how should it be otherwise? It is not in swaddling-bands that we learn to walk. It is not in the dark that we learn to distinguish colours. It is not under oppression that we learn how to use freedom. The ordinary sophism by which misrule is defended is, when truly stated, this:—The people must continue in slavery, because slavery has generated in them all the vices of slaves. Because they are ignorant, they must remain under a power which has made and which keeps them ignorant. Because they have been made ferocious by misgovernment, they must be misgoverned for ever. If the system under which they live were so mild and liberal,

that under its operation they had become humane and enlightened, it would be safe to venture on a change. But as this system has destroyed morality, and prevented the development of the intellect, —as it has turned men who might, under different training, have formed a virtuous and happy community, into savage and stupid wild beasts,—therefore it ought to last for ever. The English Revolution, it is said, was truly a glorious Revolution. Practical evils were redressed; no excesses were committed; no sweeping confiscations took place; the authority of the laws was scarcely for a moment suspended; the fullest and freest discussion was tolerated in Parliament; the nation showed, by the calm and temperate manner in which it asserted its liberty, that it was fit to enjoy liberty. The French Revolution was, on the other hand, the most horrible event recorded in history,—all madness and wickedness, —absurdity in theory, and atrocity in practice. What folly and injustice in the revolutionary laws! What grotesque affectation in the revolutionary ceremonies! What fanaticism! What licentiousness! What cruelty! Anacharsis, Clootz and Marat,—feasts of the Supreme Being, and marriages of the Loire—trees of liberty, and heads dancing on pikes— the whole forms a kind of infernal farce, made up of everything ridiculous, and everything frightful. This it is to give freedom to those who have neither wisdom nor virtue.

English and French Revolutions.

It is not only by bad men interested in the defence of abuses that arguments like these have been urged against all schemes of political improvement. Some of the highest and purest of human beings conceived such scorn and aversion for the follies and crimes of the French Revolution, that they recanted, in the moment of triumph, those liberal opinions to which they had clung in defiance of persecution. And if we inquire why it was that they began to doubt whether liberty were a blessing, we shall find that it was only because events had proved, in the clearest manner, that liberty is the parent of virtue and of order. They ceased to abhor tyranny merely because it had been signally shown that the effect of tyranny on the hearts and understandings of men, is more demoralizing and more stupifying than had ever been imagined by the most zealous friend of popular rights. The truth is, that a stronger argument against the old monarchy of France may be drawn from the *noyades* and the *fusilades*, than from the Bastile and the *Parc-aux-cerfs*. We believe it to be a rule without an exception, that the violence of a revolution corresponds to the degree of misgovernment which has produced that revolution. Why was the French Revolution so bloody and destructive? Why was our revolution of 1641 comparatively mild? Why was our revolution of 1688 milder still? Why was the American Revolution, considered as an internal movement, the mildest of all? There is an obvious and complete solution of the problem. The English under James the First and Charles the First were less oppressed than the French under Louis the Fifteenth and Louis the Sixteenth. The English were less oppressed after the Restoration than before the great Rebellion. And America, under George the Third, was less oppressed than England under the Stuarts. The reaction was exactly proportioned to the pressure,—the vengeance to the provocation.

Misgovernment producing revolution.

Recantation of opinions.

When Mr. Burke was reminded in his later years of the zeal which he had displayed in the cause of the Americans, he vindicated himself from the charge of inconsistency, by contrasting the wisdom and moderation of the Colonial insurgents of 1776 with the fanaticism and wickedness of the Jacobins of 1792. He was, in fact, bringing an argument *a fortiori* against himself. The circumstances on which he rested his vindication fully proved that the old government of France stood in far more need of a complete change than the old government of America. The difference between Washington and Robespierre,—the difference between Franklin and Barrère,—the difference between the destruction of a few barrels of tea and the confiscation of thousands of square miles,—the difference between the tarring and feathering of a tax-gatherer and the massacres of September,—measuring the difference between the government of America under the rule of England and the government of France under the rule of the Bourbons.

Louis the Sixteenth made great voluntary concessions to his people; and they sent him to the scaffold. Charles the Tenth violated the fundamental laws of the state, established a despotism, and

butchered his subjects for not submitting quietly to that despotism. He failed in his wicked attempt. He was at the mercy of those whom he had injured. The pavements of Paris were still heaped up in barricades;—the hospitals were still full of the wounded;—the dead were still unburied;—a thousand families were in mourning;—a hundred thousand citizens were in arms. The crime was recent;—the life of the criminal was in the hands of the sufferers;—and they touched not one hair of his head. In the first revolution, victims were sent to death by scores for the most trifling acts proved by the lowest testimony, before the most partial tribunals. After the second revolution, those ministers who had signed the ordinances,—those ministers, whose guilt, as it was of the foulest kind, was proved by the clearest evidence,—were punished only with imprisonment. In the first revolution, property was attacked. In the second, it was held sacred. Both revolutions, it is true, left the public mind of France in an unsettled state. Both revolutions were followed by insurrectionary movements. But after the first revolution, the insurgents were almost always stronger than the law; and since the second revolution the law has invariably been found stronger than the insurgents. There is, indeed, much in the present state of France which may well excite the uneasiness of those who desire to see her free, happy, powerful, and secure. Yet if we compare the present state of France with the state in which she was forty years ago, how vast a change for the better has taken place! How little effect, for example, during the first revolution, would the sentence of a judicial body have produced on an armed and victorious party! If, after the 10th of August, or after the prescription of the Gironde, or after the 9th of Thermidor, or after the carnage of Vendemiaire, or after the arrests of Fructidor, any tribunal had decided against the conquerors in favour of the conquered, with what contempt, with what derision, would its award have been received! The judges would have lost their heads, or would have been sent to die in some unwholesome colony. The fate of the victim whom they had endeavoured to save would only have been made darker and more hopeless by their interference.

Charles X.

The law and insurgents.

We have lately seen a signal proof that, in France, the law is now stronger than the sword. We have seen a government, in the very moment of triumph and revenge, submitting itself to the authority of a court of law. A just and independent sentence has been pronounced—a sentence worthy of the ancient renown of that magistracy, to which belong the noblest recollections of French history—which, in an age of persecutors, produced L'Hopital,—which, in an age of courtiers, produced D'Aguesseau—which, in an age of wickedness and madness, exhibited to mankind a pattern of every virtue in the life and in the death of Malesherbes. The respectful manner in which that sentence has been received, is alone sufficient to show how widely the French of this generation differ from their fathers. And how is the difference to be explained? The race, the soil, the climate, are the same. If those dull, honest Englishmen, who explain the events of 1793 and 1794 by saying that the French are naturally frivolous and cruel, were in the right, why is the guillotine now standing idle? Not surely for want of Carlists, of aristocrats, of people guilty of incivism, of people suspected of being suspicious characters. Is not the true explanation this, that the Frenchman of 1832 has been far better governed than the Frenchman of 1789,—that his soul has never been galled by the oppressive privileges of a separate caste,—that he has been in some degree accustomed to discuss political questions, and to perform political functions,—that he has lived for seventeen or eighteen years under institutions which, however defective, have yet been far superior to any institutions that had before existed in France?

Improved institutions.

As the second French Revolution has been far milder than the first, so that great change which has just been effected in England has been milder even than the second French Revolution,—milder than any revolution recorded in history. Some orators have described the reform of the House of Commons as a revolution. Others have denied the propriety of the term. The question, though in seeming merely a question of definition, suggests much curious and interesting matter for reflection. If we look at the magnitude of the reform, it may well be called a

Reform of the House of Commons.

revolution. If we look at the means by which it has been effected, it is merely an Act of Parliament, regularly brought in, read, committed, and passed. In the whole history of England there is no prouder circumstance than this,—that a change which could not, in any other age, or in any other country, have been effected without physical violence, should here have been effected by the force of reason, and under the forms of law. The work of three civil wars has been accomplished by three sessions of Parliament. An ancient and deeply rooted system of abuses has been fiercely attacked and stubbornly defended. It has fallen; and not one sword has been drawn; not one estate has been confiscated; not one family has been forced to emigrate. The bank has kept its credit. The funds have kept their price. Every man has gone forth to his work and to his labour till the evening. During the fiercest excitement of the contest,—during the first fortnight of that immortal May,—there was not one moment at which any sanguinary act committed on the person of any of the most unpopular men in England, would not have filled the country with horror and indignation.

And now that the victory is won, has it been abused? An immense mass of power has been transferred from an oligarchy to the nation. Are the members of the vanquished oligarchy insecure? Does the nation seem disposed to play the tyrant? Are not those who, in any other state of society, would have been visited with the severest vengeance of the triumphant party,—would have been pining in dungeons, or flying to foreign countries,—still enjoying their possessions and their honours, still taking part as freely as ever in public affairs? Two years ago they were dominant. They are now vanquished. Yet the whole people would regard with horror any man who should dare to propose any vindictive measure. So common is this feeling,—so much is it a matter of course among us,—that many of our readers will scarcely understand what we see to admire in it.

A vanquished oligarchy.

To what are we to attribute the unparalleled moderation and humanity which the English people have displayed at this great conjuncture? The answer is plain. This moderation, this humanity, are the fruits of a hundred and fifty years of liberty. During many generations we have had legislative assemblies which, however defective their constitution might be, have always contained many members chosen by the people, and many others eager to obtain the approbation of the people;—assemblies in which perfect freedom of debate was allowed;—assemblies in which the smallest minority had a fair hearing;—assemblies in which abuses, even when they were not redressed, were at least exposed. For many generations we have had the trial by jury, the Habeas Corpus Act, the freedom of the press, the right of meeting to discuss public affairs, the right of petitioning the legislature. A vast portion of the population has long been accustomed to the exercise of political functions, and has been thoroughly seasoned to political excitement. In most other countries there is no middle course between absolute submission and open rebellion. In England there has always been for centuries a constitutional opposition. Thus our institutions had been so good that they had educated us into a capacity for better institutions. There is not a large town in the kingdom which does not contain better materials for a legislature, than all France could furnish in 1789. There is not a spouting-club at any pot-house in London, in which the rules of debate are not better understood, and more strictly observed, than in the Constituent Assembly. There is scarcely a Political Union which could not frame in half an hour a declaration of rights superior to that which occupied the collective wisdom of France for several months.

Fruits of liberty.

It would be impossible even to glance at all the causes of the French Revolution within the limits to which we must confine ourselves. One thing is clear. The government, the aristocracy, and the church, were rewarded after their works. They reaped that which they had sown. They found the nation such as they had made it. That the people had become possessed of irresistible power before they had attained the slightest knowledge of the art of government—that practical questions of vast moment were left to be solved by men to whom politics had been only a matter of theory—that a legislature was composed of persons who were scarcely fit to compose a debating

Government, aristocracy, and church.

society—that the whole nation was ready to lend an ear to any flatterer who appealed to its cupidity, to its fears, or to its thirst for vengeance—all this was the effect of misrule, obstinately continued in defiance of solemn warnings, and of the visible signs of an approaching retribution.

Even while the monarchy seemed to be in its highest and most palmy state, the causes of that great destruction had already begun to operate. They may be distinctly traced even under the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. That reign is the time to which the Ultra Royalists refer as the Golden Age of France. It was in truth one of those periods which shine with an unnatural and delusive splendour, and which are rapidly followed by gloom and decay.

The Golden Age of France.

Concerning Louis the Fourteenth himself, the world seems at last to have formed a correct judgment. He was not a great general; he was not a great statesman; but he was, in one sense of the words, a great king. Never was there so consummate a master of what our James the First would have called king-craft,—of all those arts which most advantageously display the merits of a prince, and most completely hide his defects. Though his internal administration was bad,—though the military triumphs which gave splendour to the early part of his reign were not achieved by himself,—though his later years were crowded with defeats and humiliations,—though he was so ignorant that he scarcely understood the Latin of his mass-book,—though he fell under the control of a cunning Jesuit and of a more cunning old woman,—he succeeded in passing himself off on his people as a being above humanity. And this is the more extraordinary because he did not seclude himself from the public gaze like those Oriental despots whose faces are never seen, and whose very names it is a crime to pronounce lightly. It has been said that no man is a hero to his valet;—and all the world saw as much of Louis the Fourteenth as his valet could see. Five hundred people assembled to see him shave and put on his breeches in the morning. He then kneeled down at the side of his bed, and said his prayers, while the whole assembly awaited the end in solemn silence,—the ecclesiastics on their knees, and the laymen with their hats before their faces. He walked about his gardens with a train of two hundred courtiers at his heels. All Versailles came to see him dine and sup. He was put to bed at night in the midst of a crowd as great as that which had met to see him rise in the morning. He took his very emetics in state, and vomited majestically in the presence of all the *grandes* and *pétites entrées*. Yet though he constantly exposed himself to the public gaze in situations in which it is scarcely possible for any man to preserve much personal dignity, he to the last impressed those who surrounded him with the deepest awe and reverence. The illusion which he produced on his worshippers can be compared only to those illusions to which lovers are proverbially subject during the season of courtship. It was an illusion which affected even the senses. The contemporaries of Louis thought him tall. Voltaire, who might have seen him, and who had lived with some of the most distinguished members of his court, speaks repeatedly of his majestic stature. Yet it is as certain as any fact can be, that he was rather below than above the middle size. He had, it seems, a way of holding himself, a way of walking, a way of swelling his chest and rearing his head, which deceived the eyes of the multitude. Eighty years after his death, the royal cemetery was violated by the revolutionists; his coffin was opened; his body was dragged out; and it appeared that the prince, whose majestic figure had been so long and loudly extolled, was in truth a little man.* That fine expression of Juvenal is singularly applicable, both in its literal and in its metaphorical sense, to Louis the Fourteenth.

Correct judgment of Louis XIV.

Personal appearance.

"Mors sola fatetur
Quantula sint hominum corpuscula."

His person and his government have had the same fate. He had the art of making both appear grand and august, in spite of the clearest evidence that both were below the ordinary standard. Death and time have exposed both the

Person and character.

* Even M. de Chateaubriand, to whom, we should have thought, all the Bourbons would have seemed at least six feet high, admits this fact. "C'est une erreur," says he in his strange memoirs of the Duke of Berri, "de croire que Louis XIV. étoit d'une haute stature. Une cuirasse qui nous reste de lui, et les exhumations de St. Denys, n'ont laissé sur ce point aucun doute."

deceptions. The body of the great King has been measured more justly than it was measured by the courtiers who were afraid to look above his shoe-tie. His public character has been scrutinized by men free from the hopes and fears of Boileau and Molière. In the grave, the most majestic of princes is only five feet eight. In history, the hero and the politician dwindles into a vain and feeble tyrant,—the slave of priests and women,—little in war,—little in government,—little in everything but the art of simulating greatness.

France after the death of Louis XIV.

He left to his infant successor a famished and miserable people, a beaten and humbled army, provinces turned into deserts by misgovernment and persecution, factions dividing the court, a schism raging in the church, an immense debt, an empty treasury, immeasurable palaces, an innumerable household, inestimable jewels and furniture. All the sap and nutriment of the state seemed to have been drawn to feed one bloated and unwholesome excrescence. The nation was withered. The court was morbidly flourishing. Yet it does not appear that the associations which attached the people to the monarchy, had lost strength during his reign. He had neglected or sacrificed their dearest interests; but he had struck their imaginations. The very things which ought to have made him most unpopular,—the prodigies of luxury and magnificence with which his person was surrounded, while, beyond the inclosure of his parks, nothing was to be seen but starvation and despair,—seemed to increase the respectful attachment which his subjects felt for him. That governments exist only for the good of the people appears to be the most obvious and simple of all truths. Yet history proves that it is one of the most recondite. We can scarcely wonder that it should be so seldom present to the minds of rulers, when we see how slowly, and through how much suffering, nations arrive at the knowledge of it.

There was indeed one Frenchman who had discovered those principles which it now seems impossible to miss,—that the many are not made for the use of one,—that the truly good government is not that which concentrates magnificence in a court, but that which diffuses happiness among a people,—that a king who gains victory after victory, and adds province to province, may deserve, not the admiration, but the abhorrence and contempt of mankind. These were the doctrines which Fénélon taught. Considered as an Epic Poem, Telemachus can scarcely be placed above Glover's Leonidas or Wilkie's Epigoniad. Considered as a treatise on politics and morals, it abounds with errors of detail, and the truths which it inculcates seem trite to a modern reader. But if we compare the spirit in which it is written with the spirit which pervades the rest of the French literature of that age, we shall perceive that though in appearance trite, it was in truth one of the most original works that have ever appeared. The fundamental principles of Fénélon's political morality, the tests by which he judged of institutions and of men, were absolutely new to his countymen. He had taught them indeed, with the happiest effect, to his royal pupil. But how incomprehensible they were to most people we learn from St. Simon. That amusing writers tells us, as a thing almost incredible, that the Duke of Burgundy declared it to be his opinion, that kings existed for the good of the people, and not the people for the good of kings. St. Simon is delighted with the benevolence of this saying; but startled by its novelty, and terrified by its boldness. Indeed he distinctly says, that it was not safe to repeat the sentiment in the court of Louis. St. Simon was, of all the members of that court, the least courtly. He was as nearly an oppositionist as any man of his time. His disposition was proud, bitter, and cynical. In religion he was a Jansenist; in politics, a less hearty royalist than most of his neighbours. His opinions and his temper had preserved him from the illusions which the demeanour of Louis produced on others. He neither loved nor respected the king. Yet even this man,—one of the most liberal men in France,—was struck dumb with astonishment at hearing the fundamental axiom of all government propounded,—an axiom which, in our time, nobody in England or France could dispute,—which the stoutest Tory takes for granted as much as the fiercest Radical, and concerning which the Carlist would agree with the most republican deputy of the "extreme left." No person will do justice to Fénélon, who does not constantly keep in mind that Telemachus was written in an age and nation in

Doctrines of Fénelon.

St. Simon.

which old and independent thinkers stared to hear, that twenty millions of human beings did not exist for the gratification of one. That work is commonly considered as a school-book, very fit for children, because its style is easy and its morality blameless; but unworthy of the attention of statesmen and philosophers. We can distinguish in it, if we are not greatly mistaken, the first faint dawn of a long and splendid day of intellectual light,—the dim promise of a great deliverance,—the undeveloped germ of the charter and of the code.

The Duke of Burgundy.

What mighty interests were staked on the life of the Duke of Burgundy! And how different an aspect might the history of France have borne if he had attained the age of his grandfather or of his son;—if he had been permitted to show how much could be done for humanity by the highest virtue in the highest fortune! There is scarcely anything in history more remarkable than the descriptions which remain to us of that extraordinary man. The fierce and impetuous temper which he showed in early youth,—the complete change which a judicious education produced in his character,—his fervid piety,—his large benevolence,—the strictness with which he judged himself,—the liberality with which he judged others,—the fortitude with which alone, in the whole court, he stood up against the commands of Louis, when a religious scruple was concerned, —the charity with which alone, in the whole court, he defended the profligate Orleans against calumniators,—his great projects for the good of the people,—his activity in business,—his taste for letters, —his strong domestic attachments,—even the ungraceful person and the shy and awkward manner which concealed from the eyes of the sneering courtiers of his grandfather so many rare endowments,—make his character the most interesting that is to be found in the annals of his house. He had resolved, if he came to the throne, to disperse that ostentatious court, which was supported at an expense ruinous to the nation,—to preserve peace, —to correct the abuses which were found in every part of the system of revenue,—to abolish or modify oppressive privileges, —to reform the administration of justice, —to revive the institution of the States-General. If he had ruled over France during forty or fifty years, that great movement of the human mind, which no government could have arrested, which bad government only rendered more violent, would, we are inclined to think, have been conducted, by peaceable means, to a happy termination.

Disease and sorrow removed from the world that wisdom and virtue of which it was not worthy. During two generations France was ruled by men who, with all the vices of Louis the Fourteenth, had none of the art by which that magnificent prince passed off his vices for virtues. The people had now to see tyranny naked. That foul Duessa was stripped of her gorgeous ornaments. She had always been hideous; but a strange enchantment had made her seem fair and glorious in the eyes of her willing slaves. The spell was now broken; the deformity was made manifest; and the lovers, lately so happy and so proud, turned away loathing and horror-struck.

Naked tyranny.

First came the Regency. The strictness with which Louis had, towards the close of his life, exacted from those around him an outward attention to religious duties, produced an effect similar to that which the rigour of the Puritans had produced in England. It was the boast of Madame de Maintenon, in the time of her greatness, that devotion had become the fashion. A fashion indeed it was, and, like a fashion, it passed away. The austerity of the tyrant's old age had injured the morality of the higher orders more than even the licentiousness of his youth. Not only had he not reformed their vices, but, by forcing them to be hypocrites, he had shaken their belief in virtue. They had found it so easy to perform the grimace of piety, that it was natural for them to consider all piety as grimace. The times were changed. Pensions, regiments, and abbeys, were no longer to be obtained by regular confession and severe penance; and the obsequious courtiers, who had kept Lent like monks of La Trappe, and who had turned up the whites of their eyes at the edifying parts of sermons preached before the king, aspired to the title *roué* as ardently as they had aspired to that of *dévot;* and went, during Passion Week, to the revels of the Palais Royal as readily as they had formerly repaired to the sermons of Massillon.

The Regency.

The Regent was in many respects the facsimile of our Charles the Second. Like Charles, he was a good-natured man,

utterly destitute of sensibility. Like Charles, he had good natured talents, which a deplorable indolence rendered useless to the state. Like Charles, he thought all men corrupt and interested, and yet did not dislike them for being so. His opinion of human nature was Gulliver's; but he did not regard human nature with Gulliver's horror. He thought that he and his fellow-creatures were Yahoos; and he thought a Yahoo a very agreeable kind of animal. No princes were ever more social than Charles and Philip of Orleans; yet no princes ever had less capacity for friendship. The tempers of these clever cynics were so easy and their minds so languid, that habit supplied in them the place of affection, and made them the tools of people for whom they cared not one straw. In love both were mere sensualists without delicacy or tenderness. In politics, both were utterly careless of faith and of national honour. Charles shut up the Exchequer. Philip patronized the System. The councils of Charles were swayed by the gold of Barillon; the councils of Philip by the gold of Walpole. Charles for private objects made war on Holland, the natural ally of England. Philip for private objects made war on the Spanish branch of the House of Bourbon, the natural ally, indeed the creature, of France. Even in trifling circumstances the parallel might be carried on. Both these princes were fond of experimental philosophy; and passed in the laboratory much time which would have been more advantageously passed at the council-table. Both were more strongly attached to their female relatives than to any other human being; and in both cases it was suspected that this attachment was not perfectly innocent. In personal courage, and in all the virtues which are connected with personal courage, the Regent was indisputably superior to Charles. Indeed Charles but narrowly escaped the strain of cowardice. Philip was eminently brave, and, like most brave men, was generally open and sincere. Charles added dissimulation to his other vices.

Regent Orleans and Charles II.

The administration of the Regent was scarcely less pernicious, and infinitely more scandalous, than that of the deceased monarch. It was by magnificent public works, and by wars conducted on a gigantic scale, that Louis had brought distress on his people. The Regent aggravated that distress by frauds, of which a lame duck on the stock-exchange would have been ashamed. France, even while suffering under the most severe calamities, had reverenced the conqueror. She despised the swindler.

Scandalous administration.

When Orleans and the wretched Dubois had disappeared, the power passed to the Duke of Bourbon; a prince degraded in the public eye by the infamously lucrative part which he had taken in the juggles of the System, and by the humility with which he bore the caprices of a loose and imperious woman. It seemed to be decreed that every branch of the royal family should successively incur the abhorrence and contempt of the nation.

Duke of Bourbon.

Between the fall of the Duke of Bourbon and the death of Fleury, a few years of frugal and moderate government intervened. Then recommenced the downward progress of the monarchy. Profligacy in the court, extravagance in the finances, schism in the church, faction in the Parliaments, unjust war terminated by ignominious peace,—all that indicates and all that produces the ruin of great empires, make up the history of that miserable period. Abroad, the French were beaten and humbled everywhere, by land and by sea, on the Elbe and on the Rhine, in Asia and in America. At home, they were turned over from vizier to vizier, and from sultana to sultana, till they had reached that point beneath which there was no lower abyss of infamy,—till the yoke of Maupeou had made them pine for Choiseul,—till Madame du Barri had taught them to regret Madame de Pompadour.

Downward progress.

But, unpopular as the monarchy had become, the aristocracy was more unpopular still;—and not without reason. The tyranny of an individual is far more supportable than the tyranny of a caste. The old privileges were galling and hateful to the new wealth and the new knowledge. Everything indicated the approach of no common revolution,—of a revolution destined to change, not merely the form of government, but the distribution of property and the whole social system,—of a revolution, the effects of which were to be felt at every fireside in France,—of a new Jaquerie, in which

Aristocracy unpopular.

the victory was to remain with *Jaques bonhomme*. In the van of the movement were the monied men and the men of letters,—the wounded pride of wealth, and the wounded pride of intellect. An immense multitude, made ignorant and cruel by oppression, was raging in the rear.

We greatly doubt whether any course which could have been pursued by Louis the Sixteenth could have averted a great convulsion. But we are sure that, if there was such a course, it was the course recommended by M. Turgot. The church and the aristocracy, with that blindness to danger, that incapacity of believing that anything can be except what has been, which the long possession of power seldom fails to generate, mocked at the counsel which might have saved them. They would not have reform; and they had revolution. They would not pay a small contribution in place of the odious corvées; and they lived to see their castles demolished, and their lands sold to strangers. They would not endure Turgot; and they were forced to endure Robespierre.

Turgot's counsel.

Then the rulers of France, as if smitten with judicial blindness, plunged headlong into the American war. They thus committed at once two great errors. They encouraged the spirit of revolution. They augmented at the same time those public burdens, the pressure of which is generally the immediate cause of revolutions. The event of the war carried to the height the enthusiasm of speculative democrats. The financial difficulties produced by the war, carried to the height the discontent of that larger body of people who cared little about theories, and much about taxes.

American war.

The meeting of the States-General was the signal for the explosion of all the hoarded passions of a century. In that assembly there were undoubtedly very able men. But they had no practical knowledge of the art of government. All the great English revolutions have been conducted by practical statesmen. The French Revolution was conducted by mere speculators. Our constitution has never been so far behind the age, as to have become an object of aversion to the people. The English Revolutions have therefore been undertaken for the purpose of defending, correcting, and restoring,—never for the mere purpose of destroying. Our countrymen have always, even in times of the greatest excitement, spoken reverently of the form of government under which they lived, and attacked only what they regarded as its corruptions. In the very act of innovating they have constantly appealed to ancient prescription; they have seldom looked abroad for models; they have seldom troubled themselves with Utopian theories; they have not been anxious to prove that liberty is a natural right of men; they have been content to regard it as the lawful birthright of Englishmen. Their social contrast is no fiction. It is still extant on the original parchment, sealed with wax which was affixed at Runnymede, and attested by the lordly names of Marischals and Fitzherberts. No general arguments about the original equality of men, no fine stories out of Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos, have ever affected them so much as their own familiar words,—Magna Charta,—Habeas Corpus,—Trial by Jury,—Bill of Rights. This part of our national character has undoubtedly its disadvantages. An Englishman too often reasons on politics in the spirit rather of a lawyer than a philosopher. There is too often something narrow, something exclusive, something Jewish, if we may use the word, in his love of freedom. He is disposed to consider popular rights as the special heritage of the chosen race to which he belongs. He is inclined rather to repel than to encourage the alien proselyte who aspires to a share of his privileges. Very different was the spirit of the Constituent Assembly. They had none of our narrowness; but they had none of our practical skill in the management of affairs. They did not understand how to regulate the order of their own debates; and they thought themselves able to legislate for the whole world. All the past was loathsome to them. All their agreeable associations were connected with the future. Hopes were to them all that recollections are to us. In the institutions of their country they found nothing to love or to admire. As far back as they could look, they saw only the tyranny of one class, and the degradation of another,—Frank and Gaul, knight and villein, gentleman and *roturier*. They hated the monarchy, the church, the nobility. They cared nothing for the States or the Par-

Constituent Assembly.

English and French revolutions.

liament. It was long the fashion to ascribe all the follies which they committed to the writings of the philosophers. We believe that it was misrule, and nothing but misrule, that put the sting into those writings. It is not true that the French abandoned experience for theories. They took up with theories because they had no experience of good government. It was because they had no charter that they ranted about the original contract. As soon as tolerable institutions were given to them, they began to look to those institutions. In 1830 their rallying cry was *Vive la Charte*. In 1789 they had nothing but theories round which to rally. They had seen social distinctions only in a bad form; and it was therefore natural that they should be deluded by sophism about the equality of men. They had experienced so much evil from the sovereignty of kings, that they might be excused for lending a ready ear to those who preached, in an exaggerated form, the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people.

The English, content with their own national recollections and names, have never sought for models in the institutions of Greece or Rome. The French, having nothing in their own history to which they could look back with pleasure, had recourse to the history of the great ancient commonwealths: they drew their notions of those commonwealths, not from contemporary writers, but from romances written by pedantic moralists long after the extinction of public liberty. They neglected Thycydides for Plutarch. Blind themselves, they took blind guides. They had no experience of freedom, and they took their opinions concerning it from men who had no more experience of it than themselves, and whose imaginations, inflamed by mystery and privation, exaggerated the unknown enjoyment;—from men who raved about patriotism without having ever had a country, and eulogized tyrannicide while crouching before tyrants. The maxim which the French legislators learned in this school was, that political liberty is an end, and not a means; that it is not merely valuable as the great safeguard of order, of property, and of morality, but that it is in itself a high and exquisite happiness to which order, property, and morality ought without one scruple to be sacrificed. The lessons which may be learned from ancient history are indeed most useful and important; but they were not likely to be learned by men who, in all their rhapsodies about the Athenian democracy, seemed utterly to forget that in that democracy there were ten slaves to one citizen; and who constantly decorated their invectives against the aristocrats with panegyrics on Brutus and Cato,—two aristocrats, fiercer, prouder, and more exclusive, than any that emigrated with the Count of Artois.

Ancient commonwealths.

We have never met with so vivid and interesting a picture of the National Assembly as that which M. Dumont has set before us. His Mirabeau, in particular, is incomparable. All the former Mirabeaus were daubs in comparison. Some were merely painted from the imagination—others were gross caricatures: this is the very individual, neither god nor demon,—but a man—a Frenchman,—a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, with great talents, with strong passions, depraved by bad education, surrounded by temptations of every kind,—made desperate at one time by disgrace, and then again intoxicated by fame. All his opposite and seemingly inconsistent qualities are in this representation so blended together as to make up a harmonious and natural whole. Till now, Mirabeau was to us, and, we believe, to most readers of history, not a man, but a string of antitheses. Henceforth he will be a real human being, a remarkable and eccentric being indeed, but perfectly conceivable.

The Mirabeau of M. Dumont.

He was fond, M. Dumont tells us, of giving odd compound nicknames. Thus, M. de Lafayette was Grandison-Cromwell; the King of Prussia was Alaric-Cottin; D'Espremenil was Crispin-Catiline. We think that Mirabeau himself might be described, after his own fashion, as a Wilkes-Chatham. He had Wilkes's sensuality, Wilkes's levity, Wilkes's insensibility to shame. Like Wilkes, he had brought on himself the censure even of men of pleasure by the peculiar grossness of his immorality, and by the obscenity of his writings. Like Wilkes, he was heedless, not only of the laws of morality, but of the laws of honour. Yet he affected, like Wilkes, to unite the character of the demagogue to that of the fine gentleman. Like Wilkes, he conciliated, by his good-humour and his high spirits, the regard of many who despised his character. Like Wilkes, he

Characteristics.

was hideously ugly; like Wilkes, he made a jest of his own ugliness; and, like Wilkes, he was, in spite of his ugliness, very attentive to his dress, and very successful in affairs of gallantry.

Resembling Wilkes in the lower and grosser parts of his character, he had, in his higher qualities, some affinity to Chatham. His eloquence, as far as we can judge of it, bore no inconsiderable resemblance to that of the great English minister. He was not eminently successful in long set speeches. He was not, on the other hand, a close and ready debater. Sudden bursts, which seemed to be the effect of inspiration—short sentences which came like lightning, dazzling, burning, striking down everything before them—sentences which, spoken at critical moments, decided the fate of great questions—sentences which at once became proverbs—sentences which everybody still knows by heart—in these chiefly lay the oratorical power both of Chatham and of Mirabeau. There have been far greater speakers, and far greater statesmen, than either of them; but we doubt whether any men have, in modern times, exercised such vast personal influence over stormy and divided assemblies. The power of both was as much moral as intellectual. In true dignity of character, in private and public virtue, it may seem absurd to institute any comparison between them; but they had the same haughtiness and vehemence of temper. In their language and manner there was a disdainful self-confidence, an imperiousness, a fierceness of passion, before which all common minds quailed. Even Murray and Charles Townshend, though intellectually not inferior to Chatham, were always cowed by him. Barnave, in the same manner, though the best debater in the National Assembly, flinched beforet he energy of Mirabeau. Men, except in bad novels, are not all good or all evil. It can scarcely be denied that the virtue of Lord Chatham was a little theatrical. On the other hand, there was in Mirabeau, not indeed anything deserving the name of virtue, but that imperfect substitute for virtue, which is found in almost all superior minds,—a sensibility to the beautiful and the good, which sometimes amounted to sincere enthusiasm; and which, mingled with the desire of admiration, sometimes gave to his character a lustre resembling the lustre of true goodness, —as the "faded splendour wan" which lingered round the fallen archangel, resembled the exceeding brightness of those spirits who had kept their first estate.

Oratorical power.

Mirabeau and Chatham.

There are several other admirable portraits of eminent men in these Memoirs. That of Sieyes in particular, and that of Talleyrand, are masterpieces, full of life and expression. But nothing in the book has interested us more than the view which M. Dumont has presented to us, unostentatiously, and, we may say, unconsciously, of his own character. The sturdy rectitude, the large charity, the good-nature, the modesty, the independent spirit, the ardent philanthropy, the unaffected indifference to money and to fame, make up a character which, while it has nothing unnatural, seems to us to approach nearer to perfection than any of the Grandisons and Allworthys of fiction. The work is not indeed precisely such a work as we had anticipated —it is more lively, more picturesque, more amusing than we had promised ourselves; and it is, on the other hand, less profound and philosophic. But if it is not, in all respects, such as might have been expected from the intellect of M. Dumont, it is assuredly such as might have been expected from his heart.

Admirable portraits.

THE ATHENIAN ORATORS.

(KNIGHT'S QUARTERLY MAGAZINE, AUG. 1824.)

"To he famous orators repair,
Those ancient, whose resistless eloquence
Wielded at will that fierce democratic
Shook the arsenal, and fulmin'd over Greece
To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne."—MILTON.

THE celebrity of the great classical writers is confined within no limits except those which separate civilized from savage man. Their works are the common property of every polished nation. They have furnished subjects for the painter, and models for the poet. In the minds of the educated classes throughout Europe, their names are indissolubly associated with the endearing recollections of childhood—the old schoolroom—the dog-eared grammar—the first prize—the tears so often shed and so quickly dried. So great is the veneration with which they are regarded that even the editors and commentators who perform the lowest menial offices to their memory, are considered like the equerries and chamberlains of sovereign princes, as entitled to a high rank in the table of literary precedence. It is therefore somewhat singular that their productions should so rarely have been examined on just and philosophical principles of criticism.

Classical writers.

The ancient writers themselves afford us but little assistance. When they particularize, they are commonly trivial; when they would generalize they become indistinct. An exception must indeed be made in favour of Aristotle. Both in analysis and in combination that great man was without a rival. No philosopher has ever possessed in an equal degree the talent either of separating established systems into their primary elements or of connecting detached phenomena in harmonious systems. He was the great fashioner of the intellectual chaos; he changed its darkness into light, and its discord into order. He brought to literary researches the same vigour and amplitude of mind to which both physical and metaphysical science are so greatly indebted. His fundamental principles of criticism are excellent. To cite only a single instance:—the doctrine which he established, that poetry is an imitative art, when justly understood, is to the critic what the compass is to the navigator. With it he may venture upon the most extensive excursions; without it he must creep cautiously along the coast or lose himself in a trackless expanse, and trust at best to the guidance of an occasional star. It is a discovery which changes a caprice into a science.

Aristotle.

The general propositions of Aristotle are valuable. But the merit of the superstructure bears no proportion to that of the foundation. This is partly to be ascribed to the character of the philosopher who, though qualified to do all that could be done by the resolving and combining powers of the understanding, seems not to have possessed much of sensibility or imagination. Partly also it may be attributed to the deficiency of materials. The great works of genius which then existed were not either sufficiently numerous or sufficiently varied to enable any man to form a code of literature. To require that a critic should conceive classes of composition which had never existed, and then investigate their principles, would be as unreasonable as the demand of Nebuchadnezzar, who expected his magicians first to tell him his dream and then to interpret it.

Superstructure and foundation.

With all his deficiencies Aristotle was the most enlightened and profound critic of antiquity. Dionysius was far from possessing the same exquisite subtilty, or the same vast comprehension, but he had access to

Dionysius.

a much greater number of specimens, and he had devoted himself, as it appears, more exclusively to the study of elegant literature. His peculiar judgments are of more value than his general principles. He is only the historian of literature. Aristotle is its philosopher.

Quintilian applied to general literature the same principles by which he had been accustomed to judge of the declamations of his pupils. He looks for nothing but rhetoric, and rhetoric not of the highest order. He speaks coldly of the incomparable works of Æschylus. He admires beyond expression those inexhaustible mines of common-places, the plays of Euripides. He bestows a few vague words on the poetical character of Homer. He then proceeds to consider him merely as an orator. An orator Homer doubtless was, and a great orator. But surely nothing is more remarkable, in his admirable works, than the art with which his oratorical powers are made subservient to the purposes of poetry. Nor can I think Quintilian a great critic in his own province. Just as are many of his remarks, beautiful as are many of his illustrations, we can perpetually detect in his thoughts that flavour which the soil of despotism generally communicates to all the fruits of genius. Eloquence was in his time little more than a condiment which served to stimulate in a despot the jaded appetite for panegyric, an amusement for the travelled nobles and the blue-stocking matrons of Rome. It is therefore with him rather a sport than a war; it is a contest of foils, not of swords. He appears to think more of the grace of the attitude than of the direction and vigour of the thrust. It must be acknowledged in justice to Quintilian that this is an error to which Cicero has too often given the sanction both of his precept and example.

Quintilian.

Longinus seems to have had great sensibility, but little discrimination. He gives us eloquent sentences, but no principles. It was happily said that Montesquieu ought to have changed the name of his book from *L'esprit des lois* to *L'esprit sur les lois.* In the same manner, the philosopher of Palmyra ought to have entitled his famous work, not "Longinus on the Sublime," but "The Sublimities of Longinus." The origin of the sublime is one of the most curious and interesting subjects of inquiry that can occupy the attention of a critic. In our own country it has been discussed with great ability, and I think with very little success by Burke and Dugald Stewart. Longinus dispenses himself from all investigations of this nature by telling his friend Terentianus that he always knows everything that can be said upon the question. It is to be regretted that Terentianus did not impart some of his knowledge to his instructor; for, from Longinus we learn only that sublimity means height or elevation,—

Longinus.

ἀκρότης Καὶ ἔξοχη τις λόγων ἐστι τὰ ὤψη.

This name, so commodiously vague, is applied indifferently to the noble prayer of Ajax in the Iliad, and to a passage of Plato about the human body, as full of conceits as an ode of Cowley. Having no fixed standard, Longinus is right only by accident. He is rather a fancier than a critic.

Modern writers have been prevented by many causes from supplying the deficiencies of their classical predecessors. At the time of the revival of literature no man could, without great and painful labour, acquire an accurate and elegant knowledge of the ancient languages. And, unfortunately, those grammatical and philological studies, without which it was impossible to understand the great works of Athenian and Roman genius have a tendency to contract the views and deaden the sensibility of those who follow them with extreme assiduity. A powerful mind, which has been long employed in such studies, may be compared to the gigantic spirit in the Arabian tale, who was persuaded to contract himself to small dimensions, in order to enter within the enchanted vessel, and when his prison had been closed upon him, found himself unable to escape from the narrow boundaries to the measure of which he had reduced his stature. When the means have long been the object of application they are naturally substituted for the end. It was said by Eugene of Savoy that the greatest generals have commonly been those who have been at once raised to command, and introduced to the great operations of war without being employed in the petty calculations and manœuvres which employ the time of an inferior officer. In literature the principle is equally sound. The great tactics of criticism will, in general, be best under-

Modern writers and ancient languages.

stood by those who have not had much practice in drilling syllables and particles. I remember to have observed among the French Anas, a ludicrous instance of this. A scholar, doubtless of great learning, recommends the study of some long Latin treatise, of which I now forget the name, on the religious manners, government, and language of the early Greeks. "For there," says he, "you will learn everything of importance that is contained in the Iliad and Odyssey without the trouble of reading two such tedious books." Alas! it had not occurred to the poor gentleman that all the knowledge to which he attached so much value, was useful only as it illustrated the great poems which he despised and would be as worthless for any other purpose as the mythology of Caffraria or the vocabulary of Otaheite.

Of those scholars who have disdained to confine themselves to verbal criticism few have been successful. The ancient languages have generally a magical influence on their faculties. They were "fools called into a circle by Greek invocations." The Iliad and Æneid were to them not books but curiosities or rather reliques. They no more admired those works for their merits than a good Catholic venerates the house of the Virgin at Loretto for its architecture. Whatever was classical was good. Homer was a great poet; and so was Callimachus. The epistles of Cicero were fine; and so were those of Phalaris. Even with respect to questions of evidence they fell into the same error. The authority of all narrations written in Greek or Latin was the same to them. It never crossed their minds that the lapse of five hundred years or the distance of five hundred leagues could affect the accuracy of a narration;—that Livy could be a less veracious historian than Polybius;—or that Plutarch could know less about the friends of Xenophon than Xenophon himself. Deceived by the distance of time, they seem to consider all the classics as contemporaries; just as I have known people in England, deceived by the distance of place, take it for granted that all persons who live in India are neighbours, and ask an inhabitant of Bombay about the health of an acquaintance a Calcutta. It is to be hoped that no barbartian deluge will ever again pass over Europe. But should such a calamity happen, it seems not improbable that some future Rollin or Gillies will compile a history of England from Miss Porter's Scottish Chiefs, Miss Lee's Recess, and Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's Memoirs.

Literary curiosities.

It is surely time that ancient literature should be examined in a different manner, without pedantical prepossessions, but with a just allowance at the same time for the difference of circumstances and manners. I am far from pretending to the knowledge or ability which such a task would require. All that I mean to offer is a collection of desultory remarks upon a most interesting portion of Greek literature.

It may be doubted whether any compositions which have ever been produced in the world are equally perfect in their kind with the great Athenian orations. Genius is subject to the same laws which regulate the production of cotton and molasses. The supply adjusts itself to the demand. The quantity may be diminished by restrictions and multiplied by bounties. The singular excellence to which eloquence attained at Athens is to be mainly attributed to the influence which it exerted there. In turbulent times, under a constitution purely democratic, among a people educated exactly to that point at which men are most susceptible of strong and sudden impressions, acute, but not sound reasoners, warm in their feelings, unfixed in their principles, and passionate admirers of fine compositions, oratory received such encouragement as it has never since obtained.

Athenian orations.

The taste and knowledge of the Athenian people was a favourite object of the contemptuous derision of Samuel Johnson; a man who knew nothing of Greek literature beyond the common school books, and who seems to have brought to what he had read scarcely more than the discernment of a common schoolboy. He used to assert with that arrogant absurdity which, in spite of his great abilities and virtues, renders him perhaps the most ridiculous character in literary history, that Demosthenes spoke to a people of brutes;—to a barbarous people;—that there could have been no civilization before the invention of printing. Johnson was a keen, but a very narrow-minded observer of mankind. He perpetually confounded their general nature with their particular circumstances. He knew London in-

Dr. Johnson's ignorance of Greek.

timately. The sagacity of his remarks on its society is perfectly astonishing. But Fleet Street was the world to him. He saw that Londoners who did not read were profoundly ignorant; and he inferred that a Greek, who had few or no books, must have been as uninformed as one of Mr. Thrale's draymen.

There seems to be, on the contrary, every reason to believe that in general intelligence the Athenian populace far surpassed the lower orders of any community that ever existed. It must be considered, that to be a citizen was to be a legislator,—a soldier,—a judge—one upon whose voice might depend the fate of the wealthiest tributary state, or the most eminent public man. The lowest offices, both of agriculture and of trade, were in common performed by slaves. The commonwealth supplied its meanest members with the support of life, the opportunity of leisure, and the means of amusement. Books were indeed few, but they were excellent, and they were accurately known. It is not by turning over libraries, but by repeatedly perusing and intently contemplating a few great models, that the mind is best disciplined. A man of letters must now read much that he soon forgets, and much from which he learns nothing worthy to be remembered. The best works employ in general but a small portion of his time. Demosthenes is said to have transcribed six times the history of Thucydides. If he had been a young politician of the present age he might in the same space of time have skimmed innumerable newspapers and pamphlets. I do not condemn that desultory mode of study which the state of things in our day renders a matter of necessity. But I may be allowed to doubt whether the changes on which the admirers of modern institutions delight to dwell have improved our condition so much in reality as in appearance. Rumford, it is said, proposed to the Elector of Bavaria a scheme for feeding his soldiers at a much cheaper rate than formerly. His plan was simply to compel them to masticate their food thoroughly. A small quantity thus eaten would, according to that famous protector, afford more sustenance than a large meal hastily devoured. I do not know how Rumford's proposition was received, but to the mind I believe it will be found more nutritious to digest a page than to devour a volume.

Intelligence of the Athenians.

Books, however, were the least part of the education of an Athenian citizen. Let us for a moment transport ourselves in thought to that glorious city. Let us imagine that we are entering its gates in the time of its power and glory. A crowd is assembled round a portico. All are gazing with delight at the entablature, for Phidias is putting up the frieze. We turn into another street; a rhapsodist is reciting there; men, women, children are thronging round him; the tears are running down their cheeks; their eyes are fixed, their very breath is still; for he is telling how Priam fell at the feet of Achilles and kissed those hands—the terrible—the murderous—which had slain so many of his sons.

The city of Athens.

Καὶ κυσε χεῖρας
δεινὰς, ἀνδροφόνους, ἀί οἱ πολέας κτάνον ἂιας

We enter the public place; there is a ring of youths, all leaning forward with sparkling eyes and gestures of expectation. Socrates is pitted against the famous Atheist of Ionia and has just brought him to a contradiction of terms. But we are interrupted. The herald is crying—"Room for the Prytanes." The general assembly is to meet. The people are swarming in on every side. Proclamation is made—"Who wishes to speak?" There is a shout and a clapping of hands: Pericles is mounting the stand. Then for a play of Sophocles; and away to sing with Aspasia. I know of no modern university which has so excellent a system of education.

System of education.

Knowledge thus acquired and opinions thus formed were indeed likely to be in some respects defective. Propositions which are advanced in discourse generally result from a partial view of the question and cannot be kept under examination long enough to be corrected. Men of great conversational powers almost universally practice a sort of lively sophistry and exaggeration which deceives, for the moment, both themselves and their auditors. Thus we see doctrines which cannot bear a close inspection triumph perpetually in drawing-rooms, in debating societies, and even in legislative or judicial assemblies. To the conversational education of the Athenians I am inclined to attribute the great looseness of reasoning which is remarkable in most of

Defective knowledge.

their scientific writings. Even the most illogical of modern writers would stand perfectly aghast at the puerile fallacies which seem to have deluded some of the greatest men of antiquity. Sir Thomas Lethbridge would stare at the political economy of Xenophon, and the author of "Soirées de Petersbourg," would be ashamed of some of the metaphysical arguments of Plato. But the very circumstances which retarded the growth of science were peculiarly favourable to the cultivation of eloquence. From the early habit of taking a share in animated discussion the intelligent student would derive that readiness of resource, that copiousness of language, and that knowledge of the temper and understanding of an audience, which are far more valuable to an orator than the greatest logical powers.

Horace has prettily compared poems to those paintings of which the effect varies as the spectator changes his stand. The same remark applies with at least equal justice to speeches. They must be read with the temper of those to whom they were addressed, or they must necessarily appear to offend against the laws of taste and reason; as the finest picture, seen in a light different from that for which it was designed, will appear fit only for a sign. This is perpetually forgotten by those who criticize oratory. Because they are reading at leisure, pausing at every line, reconsidering every argument, they forget that the hearers were hurried from point to point too rapidly to detect the fallacies through which they were conducted; that they had no time to disentangle sophisism or to notice slight inaccuracies of expression; that elaborate excellence, either of reasoning or of language, would have been absolutely thrown away. To recur to the analogy of the sister art, these connoisseurs examine a panorama through a microscope, and quarrel with a scene painter because he does not give to his work the exquisite finish of Gerard Dow. Oratory is to be estimated on principles different from those which are applied to other productions. Truth is the object of philosophy and history. Truth is the object even of those works which are peculiarly called works of fiction, but which in fact bear the same relation to history which algebra bears to arithmetic. The merit of poetry in its wildest forms still consists in its truth—truth conveyed to the understanding, not directly by the words, but circuitously by means of imaginative associations which serve as its conductors. The object of oratory alone is not truth, but persuasion. The admiration of the multitude does not make Moore a greater poet than Coleridge, or Beattie a greater philosopher than Berkeley. But the criterion of eloquence is different. A speaker who exhausts the whole philosophy of a question, who displays every grace of style, yet produces no effect on his audience, may be a great essayist, a great statesman, a great master of composition, but he is not an orator. If he miss the mark, it makes no difference hether he have taken aim too high or too low.

Way to read speeches.

Criterion of eloquence.

The effect of the great freedom of the press in England has been in a great measure to destroy this distinction, and to leave among us little of what I call oratory proper. Our legislators, our candidates, on great occasions even our advocates, address themselves less to the audience than to the reporters. They think less of the few hearers than of the innumerable readers. At Athens the case was different; there the only object of the speakers was immediate conviction and persuasion. He therefore who would justly appreciate the merit of the Grecian orators, should place himself as nearly as possible in the situation of their auditors; he should divest himself of his modern feelings and acquirements, and make the prejudices and feelings of the Athenian citizens his own. He who studies their works in this spirit will find that many of those things which to an English reader appear to be blemishes—the violation of those excellent rules of evidence by which our courts of law are regulated—the introduction of extraneous matter—the reference to political expediency in judicial investigations—the assertions without proof—the passionate entreaties—the furious invectives—are really proofs of the prudence and address of the speakers. He must not dwell maliciously on arguments or phrases; but acquiesce in his first impressions. It requires repeated perusal and reflection to decide rightly on any other portion of literature. But with respect to works of which the merit depends on their instantaneous effect, the most hasty judgment is likely to be best.

Oratory proper.

The history of eloquence at Athens is

remarkable. From a very early period great speakers had flourished there. Pisistratus and Themistocles are said to have owed much of their influence to their talents for debate. We learn, with more certainty, that Pericles was distinguished by extraordinary oratorical powers. The substance of some of his speeches is transmitted to us by Thucydides, and that excellent writer has doubtless faithfully reported the general line of his arguments. But the manner, which in oratory is of least as much consequence as the matter, was of no importance to his narration. It is evident that he has not attempted to preserve it. Throughout his work every speech on every subject, whatever may have been the character or the dialect of the speaker, is in exactly the same form. The grave King of Sparta, the furious demagogue of Athens, the general encouraging his army, the captive supplicating for his life, all are represented as speakers in one unvaried style—a style moreover wholly unfit for oratorical purposes. His mode of reasoning is singularly elliptical—in reality most consecutive,—yet in appearance most incoherent. His meaning, in itself sufficiently perplexing, is compressed into the fewest possible words. His great fondness for antithetical expression has not a little conduced to this effect. Every one must have observed how much more the sense is condensed in the verses of Pope and his imitators, who never ventured to continue the same clause from couplet to couplet than in those of poets who allow themselves that license. Every artificial division which is strongly marked and which frequently recurs has the same tendency. The natural and perspicuous expression which spontaneously rises to the mind, will often refuse to accommodate itself to such a form. It is necessary either to expand it into weakness or to compress it into almost impenetrable density. The latter is generally the choice of an able man and was assuredly the choice of Thucydides.

History of eloquence at Athens.

It is scarcely necessary to say that such speeches could never have been delivered. They are perhaps among the most difficult passages in the Greek language, and would probably have been scarcely more intelligible to an Athenian auditor than to a modern reader. Their obscurity was acknowledged by Cicero, who was as intimate with the literature and language of Greece as the most accomplished of its natives, and who seems to have held a respectable rank among the Greek authors. Their difficulty to a modern reader lies not in the words but in the reasoning. A dictionary is of far less use in studying them than a clear head and close attention to the context. They are valuable to the scholar as displaying beyond almost any other composition the powers of the finest of languages;—they are valuable to the philosopher, as illustrating the morals and manners of a most interesting age;—they abound in just thought and energetic expression, but they do not enable us to form any accurate opinion on the merits of the early Greek orators.

Speeches of Pericles.

Though it cannot be doubted that before the Persian wars Athens had produced eminent speakers, yet the period during which eloquence most flourished among her citizens was by no means that of her greatest power and glory. It commenced at the close of the Peloponnesian war. In fact the steps by which Athenian oratory approached to its finished excellence seem to have been almost contemporaneous with those by which the Athenian character and the Athenian empire sunk to degradation. At the time when the little commonwealth achieved those victories which twenty-five eventful centuries have left unequalled, eloquence was in its infancy. The deliverers of Greece became its plunders and oppressors. Unmeasured exaction, atrocious vengeance, the madness of the multitude, the tyranny of the great, filled the Cyclades with tears, and blood, and mourning. The sword unpeopled whole islands in a day. The plough passed over the ruins of famous cities. The imperial republic sent forth her children by thousands to pine in the quarries of Syracuse or to feed the Vultures of Ægospotami. She was at length reduced by famine and slaughter to humble herself before her enemies and to purchase existence by the sacrifice of her empire and her laws. During these disastrous and gloomy years, oratory was advancing towards its highest excellence. And it was when the moral, the political, and the military character of the people was most utterly degraded; it was when the Viceroy of a Macedonian sovereign gave law to Greece that the Courts of Athens witnessed the most splendid

Period when eloquence flourished.

contest of eloquence that the world has ever known.

The causes of this phenomenon it is not, I think, difficult to assign. The division of labour operates on the productions of the orator as it does on those of the mechanic. It was remarked by the ancients that the Pentathlete who divided his attention between several exercises, though he could not vie with a boxer in the use of the cestus, or with one who had confined his attention to running in the contest of the Stadium, yet enjoyed far greater general vigour and health than either. It is the same with the mind. The superiority in technical skill is often more than compensated by the inferiority in general intelligence. And this is peculiarly the case in politics. States have always been best governed by men who have taken a wide view of public affairs, and who have rather a general acquaintance with many sciences than a perfect mastery of one. The union of the political and unpolitical departments in Greece contributed not a little to the splendour of its early history. After their separation, more skilful generals and greater speakers appeared;—but the breed of statesmen dwindled and became almost extinct. Themistocles or Pericles would have been no match for Demosthenes in the assembly or for Iphicrates in the field. But surely they were incomparably better fitted than either for the supreme direction of affairs.

Skill and intelligence.

There is indeed a remarkable coincidence between the progress of the art of war and that of the art of oratory among the Greeks. They both advanced to perfection by contemporaneous steps and from similar causes. The early speakers, like the early warriors of Greece, were merely a militia. It was found that in both employments practice and discipline gave superiority.* Each pursuit, therefore, became first an art and then a trade. In proportion as the professors of each became more expert in their particular craft, they became less respectable in their general character. Their skill had been obtained by too great expense to be employed only from disinterested views. Thus, the soldiers forgot that they were citizens, and the orators that they were statesmen. I know not to what Demosthenes and his famous contemporaries can be so justly compared as to those mercenary troops who in their time overran Greece; or those who, from similar causes, were some centuries ago the scourge of the Italian republics—perfectly acquainted with every part of their profession, irresistible in the field, powerful to defend and to destroy, but defending without love and destroying without hatred. We may despise the characters of these political *Condottieri*, but it is impossible to examine their system of tactics without being amazed at its perfection.

Arts of war and oratory.

I had intended to proceed to this examination and to consider separately the remains of Lysias, of Æschines, of Demosthenes, and of Isocrates, who though, strictly speaking, he was rather a pamphleteer than an orator, deserves on many accounts a place in such a disquisition. The length of my prolegomena compels me to postpone this part of the subject to another occasion. A Magazine is certainly a delightful invention for a very idle or a very busy man. He is not compelled to complete his plan or to adhere to his subject. He may ramble as far as he is inclined and stop as soon as he is tired. No one

Magazine writing.

* It has often occurred to me, that to the circumstances mentioned in the text is to be inferred one of the most remarkable events in Grecian history. I mean the silent but rapid downfall of the Lacedæmonian power. Soon after the termination of the Peloponnesian War, the strength of Lacedæmon began to decline. Its military discipline, its social institutions, were the same. Agesilaus, during whose reign the change took place, was the ablest of its Kings. Yet the Spartan armies were frequently defeated in pitched battles—an occurrence considered impossible in the earlier ages of Greece. They are allowed to have fought most bravely, yet they were no longer attended by the success to which they had formerly been accustomed. No solution of these circumstances is offered as far as I know by any ancient author. The real cause I conceive was this. The Lacedæmonians alone among the Greeks formed a permanent standing army. While the citizens of other commonwealths were engaged in agriculture and trade, they had no employment whatever but the study of military discipline. Hence, during the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars they had that advantage over their neighbours which regular troops always possess over militia. This advantage they lost when other states began at a latter period to employ mercenary forces who were probably as superior to them in the art of war as they had hitherto been to their antagonists.

takes the trouble to recollect his contradictory opinions or his unredeemed pledges. He may be as superficial, as inconsistent, and as careless as he chooses. Magazines resemble those little angels who, according to the pretty Rabbinical tradition, are generated every morning by the brook which rolls over the flowers of Paradise,—whose life is a song,—who warble till sunset and then sink back without regret into nothingness. Such spirits have nothing to do with the detecting spear of Ithuriel or the victorious sword of Michael. It is enough for them to please and be forgotten.

LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME AND

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

PREFACE

TO

LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME.

THAT what is called the history of the Kings and early Consuls of Rome is to a great extent fabulous, few scholars have, since the time of Beaufort, ventured to deny. It is certain that, more than three hundred and sixty years after the date ordinarily assigned for the foundation of the city, the public records were, with scarcely an exception, destroyed by the Gauls. It is certain that the oldest annals of the commonwealth were compiled more than a century and a half after this destruction of the records. It is certain, therefore, that the great Latin writers of the Augustan age did not possess those materials, without which a trustworthy account of the infancy of the republic could not possibly be framed. Those writers own, indeed, that the chronicles to which they had access were filled with battles that were never fought, and Consuls that were never inaugurated; and we have abundant proof that, in these chronicles, events of the greatest importance, such as the issue of the war with Porsena, and the issue of the war with Brennus, were grossly misrepresented. Under these circumstances a wise man will look with great suspicion on the legend which has come down to us. He will perhaps be inclined to regard the princes who are said to have founded the civil and religious institutions of Rome, the son of Mars, and the husband of Egeria, as mere mythological personages, of the same class with Perseus and Ixion. As he draws nearer and nearer to the confines of authentic history, he will become less and less hard of belief. He will admit that the most important parts of the narrative have some foundation in truth. But he will distrust almost all the details, not only because they seldom rest on any solid evidence, but also because he will constantly detect in them, even when they are within the limits of physical possibility, that peculiar character, more easily understood than defined, which distinguishes the creations of the imagination from the realities of the world in which we live.

The early history of Rome is indeed far more poetical than anything else in Latin literature. The loves of the Vestal and the God of War, the cradle laid among the reeds of Tiber, the fig-tree, the she-wolf, the shepherd's cabin, the recognition, the fratricide, the rape of the Sabines, the death of Tarpeia, the fall of Hostus Hostilius, the struggle of Mettus Curtius through the marsh, the women rushing with torn raiment and dishevelled hair between their fathers and their husbands, the nightly meet-

ings of Numa and the Nymph by the well in the sacred grove, the fight of the three Romans and the three Albans, the purchase of the Sibylline books, the crime of Tullia, the simulated madness of Brutus, the ambiguous reply of the Delphian oracle to the Tarquins, the wrongs of Lucretia, the heroic actions of Horatius Cocles, of Scævola, and of Clœlia, the Battle of Regillus won by the aid of Castor and Pollux, the defence of Cremera, the touching story of Coriolanus, the still more touching story of Virginia, the wild legend about the draining of the Alban lake, the combat between Valerius Corvus and the gigantic Gaul, are among the many instances which will at once suggest themselves to every reader.

In the narrative of Livy, who was a man of fine imagination, these stories retain much of their genuine character. Nor could even the tasteless Dionysius distort and mutilate them into mere prose. The poetry shines, in spite of him, through the dreary pedantry of his eleven books. It is discernible in the most tedious and in the most superficial modern works on the early times of Rome. It enlivens the dulness of the Universal History, and gives a charm to the most meagre abridgments of Goldsmith.

Even in the age of Plutarch there were discerning men who rejected the popular account of the foundation of Rome, because that account appeared to them to have the air, not of a history, but of romance or a drama. Plutarch, who was displeased at their incredulity, had nothing better to say in reply to their arguments than that chance sometimes turns poet, and produces trains of events not to be distinguished from the most elaborate plots which are constructed by art.* But though the existence of a poetical element in the early history of the Great City was detected so many years ago, the first critic who distinctly saw from what source that poetical element had been derived was James Perizonius, one of the most acute and learned antiquaries of the seventeenth century. His theory, which, in his own days, attracted little or no notice, was revived in the present generation by Niebuhr, a man who would have been the first writer of his time, if his talent for communicating truths had borne any proportion to his talent for investigating them. That theory had been adopted by several eminent scholars of our own country, particularly by the Bishop of St. David's, by Professor Malden, and by the lamented Arnold. It appears to be now generally received by men conversant with classical antiquity; and indeed it rests on such strong proofs, both internal and external, that it

* Ὑποπτον μὲν ἐνίοις ἐστὶ τὸ δραματικὸν καὶ πλασματῶδες· οὐ δεῖ δὲ ἀπιστεῖν, τὴν τύχην ὁρῶντας, οἵων ποιημάτων δημιουργός ἐστι.—*Plut. Rom.* viii. This remarkable passage has been more grossly misinterpreted than any other in the Greek language, where the sense was so obvious. The Latin version of Cruserius, the French version of Amyot, the old English version by several hands, and the later English version by Langhorne, are all equally destitute of every trace of the meaning of the original. None of the translators saw even that *ποίημα* is a poem. They all render it an event.

will not be easily subverted. A popular exposition of this theory and of the evidence by which it is supported, may not be without interest even for readers who are unacquainted with the ancient anguages.

The Latin literature which has come down to us is of later date than the commencement of the Second Punic War, and consists almost exclusively of works fashioned on Greek models. The Latin metres, heroic, elegiac, lyric, and dramatic, are of Greek origin. The best Latin epic poetry is the feeble echo of the Iliad and Odyssey. The best Latin eclogues are imitations of Theocritus. The plan of the most finished didactic poem in the Latin tongue was taken from Hesiod. The Latin tragedies are bad copies of the masterpieces of Sophocles and Euripides. The Latin comedies are free translations from Demophilus, Menander, and Apollodorus. The Latin philosophy was borrowed, without alteration, from the Portico and the Academy; and the great Latin orators constantly proposed to themselves as patterns the speeches of Demosthenes and Lysias.

But there was an earlier Latin literature, a literature truly Latin, which has wholly perished, which had, indeed, almost wholly perished long before those whom we are in the habit of regarding as the greatest Latin writers were born. That literature abounded with metrical romances, such as are found in every country where there is much curiosity and intelligence, but little reading and writing. All human beings, not utterly savage, long for some information about past times, and are delighted by narratives which present pictures to the eye of the mind. But it is only in very enlightened communities that books are readily accessible. Metrical composition, therefore, which, in a highly civilized nation, is a mere luxury, is, in nations imperfectly civilized, almost a necessary of life, and is valued less on account of the pleasure which it gives to the ear, than on account of the help which it gives to the memory. A man who can invent or embellish an interesting story, and put it into a form which others may easily retain in their recollection, will always be highly esteemed by a people eager for amusement and information, but destitute of libraries. Such is the origin of ballad-poetry, a species of composition which scarcely ever fails to spring up and flourish in every society, at a certain point in the progress towards refinement. Tacitus informs us that songs were the only memorials of the past which the ancient Germans possessed. We learn from Lucan and from Ammianus Marcellinus that the brave actions of the ancient Gauls were commemorated in the verses of Bards. During many ages, and through many revolutions, minstrelsy retained its influence over both the Teutonic and the Celtic race. The vengeance exacted by the spouse of Attila for the murder of Siegfried was celebrated in rhymes, of which Germany is still justly proud. The exploits of Athelstane were commemorated by the Anglo-Saxons, and those of Canute by the Danes, in rude poems, of which a few fragments have come down to us. The chants of the Welsh harpers preserved, through ages of darkness, a faint and doubtful memory of Arthur. In the

Highlands of Scotland may still be gleaned some relics of the old songs about Cuthullin and Fingal. The long struggle of the Servians against the Ottoman power was recorded in lays full of martial spirit. We learn from Herrera that, when a Peruvian Inca died, men of skill were appointed to celebrate him in verses, which all the people learned by heart, and sang in public on days of festival. The feats of Kurroglou, the great freebooter of Turkistan, recounted in ballads composed by himself, are known in every village of Northern Persia. Captain Beechey heard the Bards of the Sandwich Islands recite the heroic achievements of Tamehameha, the most illustrious of their kings. Mungo Park found in the heart of Africa a class of singing-men, the only annalists of their rude tribes, and heard them tell the story of the victory which Damel, the negro prince of the Jaloffs, won over Abdulkader, the Mussulman tyrant of Foota Torra. This species of poetry attained a high degree of excellence among the Castilians, before they began to copy Tuscan patterns. It attained a still higher degree of excellence among the English and the Lowland Scotch, during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. But it reached its full perfection in ancient Greece; for there can be no doubt that the great Homeric poems are generically ballads, though widely distinguished from all other ballads, and indeed from almost all other human compositions, by transcendent sublimity and beauty.

As it is agreeable to general experience that, at a certain stage in the progress of society, ballad-poetry should flourish, so is it also agreeable to general experience that, at a subsequent stage in the progress of society, ballad-poetry should be under-valued and neglected. Knowledge advances: manners change: great foreign models of composition are studied and imitated. The phraseology of the old minstrels becomes obsolete. Their versification, which, having received its laws only from the ear, abounds in irregularities, seems licentious and uncouth. Their simplicity appears beggarly when compared with the quaint forms and gaudy colouring of such artists as Cowley and Gongora. The ancient lays, unjustly despised by the learned and polite, linger for a time in the memory of the vulgar, and are at length too often irretrievably lost. We cannot wonder that the ballads of Rome should have altogether disappeared, when we remember how very narrowly, in spite of the invention of printing, those of our own country and those of Spain escaped the same fate. There is indeed little doubt that oblivion covers many English songs equal to any that were published by Bishop Percy, and many Spanish songs as good as the best of those which have been so happily translated by Mr. Lockhart. Eighty years ago England possessed only one tattered copy of Childe Waters and Sir Cauline, and Spain only one tattered copy of the noble poem of the Cid. The snuff of a candle, or a mischievous dog, might in a moment have deprived the world for ever of any of those fine compositions. Sir Walter Scott, who united to the fire of a great poet the minute curiosity and patient diligence of a great antiquary, was but just in time to save the precious relics of the Minstrelsy of the Border. In Ger-

many, the lay of the Nibelungs had been long utterly forgotten when, in the eighteenth century, it was, for the first time, printed from a manuscript in the old library of a noble family. In truth, the only people who, through their whole passage from simplicity to the highest civilization, never for a moment ceased to love and admire their old ballads, were the Greeks.

That the early Romans should have had ballad-poetry, and that this poetry should have perished, is therefore not strange. It would, on the contrary, have been strange if these things had not come to pass; and we should have been justified in pronouncing them highly probable, even if we had no direct evidence on the subject. But we have direct evidence of unquestionable authority.

Ennius, who flourished in the time of the Second Punic War, was regarded in the Augustan age as the father of Latin poetry. He was, in truth, the father of the second school of Latin poetry, the only school of which the works have descended to us. But from Ennius himself we learn that there were poets who stood to him in the same relation in which the author of the romance of Count Alarcos stood to Garcilaso, or the author of the "Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode" to Lord Surrey. Ennius speaks of verses which the Fauns and the Bards were wont to chant in the old time, when none had yet studied the graces of speech, when none had yet climbed the peaks sacred to the Goddesses of Grecian song. "Where," Cicero mournfully asks, "are those old verses now?" *

Contemporary with Ennius was Quintus Fabius Pictor, the earliest of the Roman annalists. His account of the infancy and youth of Romulus and Remus has been preserved by Dionysius, and contains a very remarkable reference to the ancient Latin poetry. Fabius says that, in his time, his countrymen were still in the habit of singing ballads about the Twins. "Even in the hut of Faustulus,"—so these old lays appear to have run—"the children of Rhea and Mars were, in port and in spirit, not like

* "Quid? Nostri veteres versus ubi sunt?

. . . . . 'Quos olim Fauni vatesque canebant
Cum neque Musarum scopulos quisquam superârat,
Nec dicti studiosus erat.'" *Brutus*, xviii.

The Muses, it should be observed, are Greek divinities. The Italian Goddesses of verse were the Camœnæ. At a later period, the appellations were used indiscriminately; but in the age of Ennius there was probably a distinction. In the epitaph of Nævius, who was the representative of the old Italian school of poetry, the Camœnæ, not the Muses, are represented as grieving for the loss of their votary. The "Musarum scopuli" are evidently the peaks of Parnassus.

Scaliger, in a note on Varro (*De Lingua Latina*, lib. vi.), suggests, with great ingenuity, that the Fauns, who were represented by the superstition of later ages as a race of monsters, half gods and half brutes, may really have been a class of men who exercised in Latium, at a very remote period, the same functions which belonged to the Magians in Persia and to the Bards in Gaul.

unto swineherds or cowherds, but such that men might well guess them to be of the blood of Kings and Gods."*

* Οἱ δὲ ἀνδρωθέντες γίνονται, κατά τε ἀξίωσιν μορφῆς καὶ φρονήματος ὄγκον, οὐ συοφορβοῖς καὶ βουκόλοις ἐοικότες, ἀλλ' οἵους ἄν τις ἀξιώσειε τοὺς ἐκ βασιλείου τε φύντας γένους, καὶ ἀπὸ δαιμόνων σπορᾶς γενέσθαι νομιζομένους, ὡς ἐν τοῖς πατρίοις ὕμνοις ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων ἔτι καὶ νῦν ᾄδεται.—*Dion. Hal.* i. 79. This passage has sometimes been cited as if Dionysius had been speaking in his own person, and had, Greek as he was, been so industrious or so fortunate as to discover some valuable remains of that early Latin poety which the greatest Latin writers of his age regretted as hopelessly lost. Such a supposition is highly improbable; and indeed it seems clear from the context that Dionysius, as Reiske and other editors evidently thought, was merely quoting from Fabius Pictor. The whole passage has the air of an extract from an ancient chronicle, and is introduced by the words, Κόϊντος μὲν Φάβιος, ὁ Πίκτωρ λεγόμενος, τῇδε γράφει.

Another argument may be urged which seems to deserve consideration. The author of the passage in question mentions a thatched hut which, in his time, stood between the summit of Mount Palatine and the Circus. This hut, he says, was built by Romulus, and was constantly kept in repair at the public charge, but never in any respect embellished. Now, in the age of Dionysius there certainly was at Rome a thatched hut, said to have been that of Romulus. But this hut, as we learn from Vitruvius, stood, not near the Circus, but in the Capitol. (*Vit.* ii. 1.) If, therefore, we understand Dionysius to speak in his own person, we can reconcile his statement with that of Vitruvius only by supposing that there were at Rome, in the Augustan age, two thatched huts, both believed to have been built by Romulus, and both carefully repaired and held in high honour. The objections to such a supposition seem to be strong. Neither Dionysius nor Vitruvius speaks of more than one such hut. Dio Cassius informs us that twice, during the long administration of Augustus, the hut of Romulus caught fire (xlviii. 43, liv. 29). Had there been two such huts, would he not have told us of which he spoke? An English historian would hardly give an account of a fire at Queen's College without saying whether it was at Queen's College, Oxford, or at Queen's College, Cambridge. Marcus Seneca, Macrobius, and Conon, a Greek writer from whom Photius has made large extracts, mention only one hut of Romulus, that in the Capitol. (*M. Seneca, Contr.* i. 6; *Macrobius, Sat.* i. 15; *Photius, Bibl.* 186.) Ovid, Livy, Petronius, Valerius, Maximus, Lucius Seneca, and St. Jerome mention only one hut of Romulus, without specifying the site. (*Ovid. Fasti*, iii. 183; *Liv.* v. 53; *Petronius, Fragm.; Val. Max.* iv. 4; *L. Seneca, Consolatio ad Helviam; D. Hieron. ad Paulinianum de Didymo.*)

The whole difficulty is removed if we suppose that Dionysius was merely quoting Fabius Pictor. Nothing is more probable than that the cabin, which in the time of Fabius stood near the Circus, might, long before the age of Augustus, have been transported to the Capitol, as the fittest, by reason both of its safety and of its sanctity, to contain so precious a relic.

The language of Plutarch confirms this hypothesis. He describes, with great precision, the spot where Romulus dwelt, on the slope of Mount Palatine leading to the Circus; but he says not a word implying that the dwelling was still to be seen there. Indeed, his

Cato the Censor, who also lived in the days of the Second Punic War, mentioned this lost literature in his lost work on the antiquities of his country. Many ages, he said, before his time, there were ballads in praise of illustrious men; and these ballads it was the fashion for the guests at banquets to sing in turn while the piper played. "Would," exclaims Cicero, "that we still had the old ballads of which Cato speaks!" *

Valerius Maximus gives us exactly similar information, without mentioning his authority, and observes that the ancient Roman ballads were probably of more benefit to the young than all the lectures of the Athenian schools, and that to the influence of the national poetry were to be ascribed the virtues of such men as Camillus and Fabricius.†

Varro, whose authority on all questions connected with the antiquities of his country is entitled to the greatest respect, tells us that at banquets it was once the fashion for boys to sing, sometimes with and sometimes without instrumental music, ancient ballads in praise of men of former times. These young performers, he observes, were of unblemished character, a circumstance which he probably mentioned because, among the Greeks, and indeed in his time among the Romans also, the morals of singing-boys were in no high repute. ‡

The testimony of Horace, though given incidentally, confirms the statements of Cato, Valerius Maximus, and Varro. The poet predicts that, under the peaceful administration of Augustus, the expressions imply that it was no longer there. The evidence of Solinus is still more to the point. He, like Plutarch, describes the spot where Romulus had resided, and says expressly that the hut had been there, but that in his time it was there no longer. The site, it is certain, was well remembered; and probably retained its old name, as Charing Cross and the Haymarket have done. This is probably the explanation of the words, "casa Romuli," in Victor's description of the Tenth Region of Rome, under Valentinian.

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* Cicero refers twice to this important passage in Cato's Antiquities: "Gravissimus auctor in Originibus dixit Cato, morem apud majores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps, qui accubarent, canerent ad tibiam clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes. Ex quo perspicuum est, et cantus tum fuisse rescriptos vocum sonis, et carmina." —*Tusc. Quæst.* iv. 2. Again: "Utinam exstarent illa carmina, quæ, multis sæculis ante suam ætatem, in epulis esse cantitata a singulis convivis de clarorum virorum laudibus, in Originibus scriptum reliquit Cato."—*Brutus*, xix.

† "Majores natu in conviviis ad tibias egregia superiorum opera carmine comprehensa pangebant, quo ad ea imitanda juventutem alacriorem redderent. . . . Quas Athenas, quam scholam, quæ alienigena studia huic domesticæ disciplinæ prætulerim? Inde oriebantur Camilli, Scipiones, Fabricii, Marcelli, Fabii."—*Val. Max.* ii. 1.

‡ "In conviviis pueri modesti ut cantarent carmina antiqua, in quibus laudes erant majorum, et assa voce, et cum tibicine." Nonius *Assa voce pro sola.*

Romans will, over their full goblets, sing to the pipe, after the fashion of their fathers, the deeds of brave captains, and the ancient legends touching the origin of the city. *

The proposition, then, that Rome had ballad-poetry is not merely in itself highly probable, but is fully proved by direct evidence of the greatest weight.

This proposition being established, it becomes easy to understand why the early history of the city is unlike almost everything else in Latin literature, native where almost everything else is borrowed, imaginative where almost everything else is prosaic. We can scarcely hesitate to pronounce that the magnificent, pathetic, and truly national legends, which present so striking a contrast to all that surrounds them, are broken and defaced fragments of that early poetry which, even in the age of Cato the Censor, had become antiquated, and of which Tully had never heard a line.

That this poetry should have been suffered to perish will not appear strange when we consider how complete was the triumph of the Greek genius over the public mind of Italy. It is probable that, at an early period, Homer and Herodotus furnished some hints to the Latin minstrels:† but it was not till after the war with Pyrrhus that the poetry of Rome began to put off its old Ausonian character. The transformation was soon consummated. The conquered, says Horace, led captive the conquerors. It was precisely at the time at which the Roman people rose to unrivalled political ascendency that they stooped to pass under the intellectual yoke. It was precisely at the time at which the sceptre departed from Greece that the empire of her language and of her arts became universal and despotic. The revolution indeed was not effected without a struggle. Nævius seems to have been the last of the ancient line of poets. Ennius was the founder of a new dynasty. Nævius celebrated the First Punic War in Saturnian verse, the old national verse of Italy.‡ Ennius sang the Second

* "Nosque et profestis lucibus et sacris,
Inter jocosi munera Liberi,
Cum prole matronisque nostris,
Rite Deos prius apprecati,
Virtute functos, more patrum, duces,
Lydis remixto carmine tibiis,
Trojamque, et Anchisen, et almæ
Progeniem Veneris canemus."

Carm. iv. 15.

† See the Preface to the Lay of the Battle of Regillus.

‡ Cicero speaks highly in more than one place of this poem of Nævius; Ennius sneered at it, and stole from it.

As to the Saturnian measure, see Hermann's *Elementa Doctrinæ. Metricæ*, iii. 9.

The Saturnian line, according to the grammarians, consisted of two parts. The first was a catalectic dimeter iambic; the second was composed of three trochees. But the license taken by the early Latin poets seems to have been almost boundless. The most perfect Satur

Punic War in numbers borrowed from the Iliad. The elder poet, in the epitaph which he wrote for himself, and which is a fine specimen of the early Roman diction and versification, plaintively

nian line which has been preserved was the work, not of a professional artist, but of an amateur:

"Dabunt malum Metelli Nævio poetæ."

There has been much difference of opinion among learned men respecting the history of this measure. That it is the same with a Greek measure used by Archilochus is indisputable. (*Bentley, Phalaris*, xi.) But in spite of the authority of Terentianus Maurus, and of the still higher authority of Bentley, we may venture to doubt whether the coincidence was not fortuitous. We constantly find the same rude and simple numbers in different countries, under circumstances which make it impossible to suspect that there has been imitation on either side. Bishop Heber heard the children of a village in Bengal singing "Radha, Radha," to the tune of "My boy Billy." Neither the Castilian nor the German minstrels of the Middle Ages owed anything to Paros or to ancient Rome. Yet both the poem of the Cid and the poem of the Nibelungs contain many Saturnian verses; as—

"Estas nuevas á mio Cid eran venidas."

"Á mi lo dicen; á ti dan las orejades."

"Man möhte michel wunder von Sifride sagen."

"Wa ich den Künic vinde daz sol man mir sagen."

Indeed there cannot be a more perfect Saturnian line than one which is sung in every English nursery—

"The queen was in her parlour eating bread and honey;"

yet the author of this line, we may be assured, borrowed nothing from either Nævius or Archilochus.

On the other hand, it is by no means improbable that, two or three hundred years before the time of Ennius, some Latin minstrel may have visited Sybaris or Crotona, may have heard some verses of Archilochus sung, may have been pleased with the metre, and may have introduced it at Rome. Thus much is certain, that the Saturnian measure, if not a native of Italy, was at least so early and so completely naturalized there that its foreign origin was forgotten.

Bentley says indeed that the Saturnian measure was first brought from Greece into Italy by Nævius. But this is merely *obiter dictum*, to use a phrase common in our courts of law, and would not have been deliberately maintained by that incomparable critic, whose memory is held in reverence by all lovers of learning. The arguments which might be brought against Bentley's assertion—for it is mere assertion, supported by no evidence—are innumerable. A few will suffice.

1. Bentley's assertion is opposed to the testimony of Ennius. Ennius sneered at Nævius for writing on the First Punic War in verses such as the old Italian bards used before Greek literature had been studied. Now the poem of Nævius was in Saturnian verse. Is it possible that Ennius could have used such expressions if the Saturnian verse had been just imported from Greece for the first time?

boasted that the Latin language had died with him.* Thus what to Horace appeared to be the first faint dawn of Roman literature, appeared to Nævius to be its hopeless setting. In truth, one literature was setting, and another dawning.

The victory of the foreign taste was decisive: and indeed we can hardly blame the Romans for turning away with contempt from the rude lays which had delighted their fathers, and giving their whole admiration to the immortal productions of Greece. The national romances, neglected by the great and the refined whose education had been finished at Rhodes or Athens, continued, it may be supposed, during some generations, to delight the vulgar. While Virgil, in hexameters of exquisite modulation, described the sports of rustics, those rustics were still singing their wild Saturnian ballads.† It is not improbable that, at the time when Cicero lamented the irreparable loss of the poems mentioned by Cato, a search among the nooks of the Apennines, as active as the search which Sir Walter Scott made among the descendants of the moss-troopers of Liddesdale, might have brought to light many fine remains of ancient minstrelsy. No such search was made. The Latin ballads perished for ever. Yet discerning critics have thought that they could still perceive in the early history of Rome numerous fragments of this lost poetry, as the traveller on classic ground sometimes finds, built into the heavy wall of a fort or convent, a pillar rich with acanthus leaves, or a frieze where the Amazons and Bacchanals seem to live. The theatres and the temples of the Greek and the Roman were degraded into the quarries of the Turk and the

2. Bentley's assertion is opposed to the testimony of Horace. "When Greece," says Horace, "introduced her arts into our uncivilized country, those rugged Saturnian numbers passed away." Would Horace have said this if the Saturnian numbers had been imported from Greece just before the hexameter?

3. Bentley's assertion is opposed to the testimony of Festus and of Aurelius Victor, both of whom positively say that the most ancient prophecies attributed to the Fauns were in Saturnian verse.

4. Bentley's assertion is opposed to the testimony of Terentianus Maurus, to whom he has himself appealed. Terentianus Maurus does indeed say that the Saturnian measure, though believed by the Romans from a very early period ("credidit vetustas") to be of Italian invention, was really borrowed from the Greeks. But Terentianus Maurus does not say that it was first borrowed by Nævius. Nay, the expressions used by Terentianus Maurus clearly imply the contrary: for how could the Romans have believed, from a very early period, that this measure was the indigenous production of Latium, if it was really brought over from Greece in an age of intelligence and liberal curiosity, in the age which gave birth to Ennius, Plautus, Cato the Censor, and other distinguished writers? If Bentley's assertion were correct, there could have been no more doubt at Rome about the Greek origin of the Saturnian measure than about the Greek origin of hexameters or Sapphics.

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* Aulus Gellius, Noctes Atticæ, i. 24.

† See Servius, in Georg. ii. 385.

Goth. Even so did the ancient Saturnian poetry become the quarry in which a crowd of orators and annalists found the materials for their prose.

It is not difficult to trace the process by which the old songs were transmuted into the form which they now wear. Funeral panegyric and chronicle appear to have been the intermediate links which connected the lost ballads with the histories now extant. From a very early period it was the usage that an oration should be pronounced over the remains of a noble Roman. The orator, as we learn from Polybius, was expected, on such an occasion, to recapitulate all the services which the ancestors of the deceased had, from the earliest time, rendered to the commonwealth. There can be little doubt that the speaker on whom this duty was imposed would make use of all the stories suited to his purpose which were to be found in the popular lays. There can be as little doubt that the family of an eminent man would preserve a copy of the speech which had been pronounced over his corpse. The compilers of the early chronicles would have recourse to these speeches; and the great historians of a later period would have recourse to the chronicles.

It may be worth while to select a particular story, and to trace its probable progress through these stages. The description of the migration of the Fabian house to Cremera is one of the finest of the many fine passages which lie thick in the earlier books of Livy. The Consul, clad in his military garb, stands in the vestibule of his house, marshalling his clan, three hundred and six fighting men, all of the same proud patrician blood, all worthy to be attended by the fasces, and to command the legions. A sad and anxious retinue of friends accompanies the adventurers through the streets; but the voice of lamentation is drowned by the shouts of admiring thousands. As the procession passes the Capitol, prayers and vows are poured forth, but in vain. The devoted band, leaving Janus on the right, marches to its doom through the Gate of Evil Luck. After achieving high deeds of valour against overwhelming numbers, all perish save one child, the stock from which the great Fabian race was destined again to spring for the safety and glory of the commonwealth. That this fine romance, the details of which are so full of poetical truth, and so utterly destitute of all show of historical truth, came originally from some lay which had often been sung with great applause at banquets, is in the highest degree probable. Nor is it difficult to imagine a mode in which the transmission might have taken place.

The celebrated Quintus Fabius Maximus, who died about twenty years before the First Punic War, and more than forty years before Ennius was born, is said to have been interred with extraordinary pomp. In the eulogy pronounced over his body all the great exploits of his ancestors were doubtless recounted and exaggerated. If there were then extant songs which gave a vivid and touching description of an event, the saddest and the most glorious in the long history of the Fabian house, nothing could be more natural than that the panegyrist should borrow

from such songs their finest touches, in order to adorn his speech. A few generations later the songs would perhaps be forgotten, or remembered only by shepherds and vine-dressers. But the speech would certainly be preserved in the archives of the Fabian nobles. Fabius Pictor would be well acquainted with a document so interesting to his personal feelings, and would insert large extracts from it in his rude chronicle. That chronicle, as we know, was the oldest to which Livy had access. Livy would at a glance distinguish the bold strokes of the forgotten poet from the dull and feeble narrative by which they were surrounded, would re-touch them with a delicate and powerful pencil, and would make them immortal.

That this might happen at Rome can scarcely be doubted; for something very like this has happened in several countries, and, among others, in our own. Perhaps the theory of Perizonius cannot be better illustrated than by showing that what he supposes to have taken place in ancient times has, beyond all doubt, taken place in modern times.

"History," says Hume, with the utmost gravity, "has preserved some instances of Edgar's amours, from which, as from a specimen, we may form a conjecture of the rest." He then tells very agreeably the stories of Elfleda and Elfrida, two stories which have a most suspicious air of romance, and which, indeed, greatly resemble, in their general character, some of the legions of early Rome. He cites, as his authority for these two tales, the chronicle of William of Malmesbury, who lived in the time of King Stephen. The great majority of readers suppose that the device by which Elfrida was substituted for her young mistress, the artifice by which Athelwold obtained the hand of Elfrida, the detection of that artifice, the hunting party, and the vengeance of the amorous king, are things about which there is no more doubt than about the execution of Anne Boleyn, or the slitting of Sir John Coventry's nose. But when we turn to William of Malmesbury, we find that Hume, in his eagerness to relate these pleasant fables, has overlooked one very important circumstance. William does indeed tell both the stories; but he gives us distinct notice that he does not warrant their truth, and that they rest on no better authority than that of ballads.*

Such is the way in which these two well-known tales have been handed down. They originally appeared in a poetical form. They found their way from ballads into an old chronicle. The ballads perished; the chronicle remained. A great historian, some centuries after the ballads had been altogether forgotten, consulted the chronicle. He was struck by the lively colouring of these ancient fictions: he transferred them to his pages; and thus we find inserted, as unquestionable facts, in a narrative which is likely to last as long as the English tongue, the inventions of

* "Infamias quas post dicam magis resperserunt cantilenæ." Edgar appears to have been most mercilessly treated in the Anglo-Saxon ballads. He was the favourite of the monks; and the monks and the minstrels were at deadly feud.

some minstrel whose works were probably never committed to writing, whose name is buried in oblivion, and whose dialect has become obsolete. It must, then, be admitted to be possible, or rather highly probable, that the stories of Romulus and Remus, and of the Horatii and Curiatii, may have had a similar origin.

Castilian literature will furnish us with another parallel case. Mariana, the classical historian of Spain, tells the story of the ill-starred marriage which the King Don Alonso brought about between the heirs of Carrion and the two daughters of the Cid. The Cid bestowed a princely dower on his sons-in-law. But the young men were base and proud, cowardly and cruel. They were tried in danger, and found wanting. They fled before the Moors, and once, when a lion broke out of his den, they ran and crouched in an unseemly hiding-place. They knew that they were despised, and took counsel how they might be avenged. They parted from their father-in-law with many signs of love, and set forth on a journey with Doña Elvira and Doña Sol. In a solitary place the bridegrooms seized their brides, stripped them, scourged them, and departed, leaving them for dead. But one of the house of Bivar, suspecting foul play, had followed the travellers in disguise. The ladies were brought back safe to the house of their father. Complaint was made to the king. It was adjudged by the Cortes that the dower given by the Cid should be returned, and that the heirs of Carrion together with one of their kindred should do battle against three knights of the party of the Cid. The guilty youths would have declined the combat; but all their shifts were vain. They were vanquished in the lists, and for ever disgraced, while their injured wives were sought in marriage by great princes.*

Some Spanish writers have laboured to show, by an examination of dates and circumstances, that this story is untrue. Such confutation was surely not needed; for the narrative is on the face of it a romance. How it found its way into Mariana's history is quite clear. He acknowledges his obligations to the ancient chronicles, and had doubtless before him the "Cronica del famoso Cavellero Cid Ruy Diez Campeador," which had been printed as early as the year 1552. He little suspected that all the most striking passages in this chronicle were copied from a poem of the twelfth century—a poem of which the language and versification had long been obsolete, but which glowed with no common portion of the fire of the Iliad. Yet such was the fact. More than a century and a half after the death of Mariana, this venerable ballad, of which one imperfect copy on parchment, four hundred years old, had been preserved at Bivar, was for the first time printed. Then it was found that every interesting circumstance of the story of the heirs of Carrion was derived by the eloquent Jesuit from a song of which he had never heard, and which was composed by a minstrel whose very name had long been forgotten.†

* Mariana, lib. x. cap. 4.

† See the account which Sanchez gives of the Bivar manuscript in the first volume of the *Coleccion de Poesias Castellanas anteriores al Siglo XV*. Part of the story of the lords of Carrion, in the poem of the Cid, has been translated by Mr. Frere in a manner above all praise

Such, or nearly such, appears to have been the process by which the lost ballad-poetry of Rome was transformed into history. To reverse that process, to transform some portions of early Roman history back into the poetry out of which they were made, is the object of this work.

In the following poems the author speaks, not in his own person, but in the persons of ancient minstrels who know only what a Roman citizen, born three or four hundred years before the Christian era, may be supposed to have known, and who are in nowise above the passions and prejudices of their age and nation. To these imaginary poets must be ascribed some blunders which are so obvious that it is unnecessary to point them out. The real blunder would have been to represent these old poets as deeply versed in general history, and studious of chronological accuracy. To them must also be attributed the illiberal sneers at the Greeks, the furious party-spirit, the contempt for the arts of peace, the love of war for its own sake, the ungenerous exultation over the vanquished, which the reader will sometimes observe. To portray a Roman of the age of Camillus or Curius as superior to national antipathies, as mourning over the devastation and slaughter by which empire and triumphs were to be won, as looking on human suffering with the sympathy of Howard, or as treating conquered enemies with the delicacy of the Black Prince, would be to violate all dramatic propriety. The old Romans had some great virtues —fortitude, temperance, veracity, spirit to resist oppression, respect for legitimate authority, fidelity in the observing of contracts, disinterestedness, ardent patriotism—but Christian charity and chivalrous generosity were alike unknown to them.

It would have been obviously improper to mimic the manner of any particular age or country. Something has been borrowed, however, from our own old ballads, and more from Sir Walter Scott, the great restorer of our ballad-poetry. To the Iliad still greater obligations are due; and those obligations have been contracted with the less hesitation, because there is reason to believe that some of the old Latin minstrels really had recourse to that inexhaustible store of poetical images.

It would have been easy to swell this little volume to a very considerable bulk, by appending notes filled with quotations; but to a learned reader such notes are not necessary; for an unlearned reader they would have little interest; and the judgment passed both by the learned and by the unlearned on a work of the imagination will always depend much more on the general character and spirit of such a work than on minute details.

LAYS OF ANCIENT ROME.

HORATIUS.

THERE can be little doubt that among those parts of early Roman history which had a poetical origin was the legend of Horatius Cocles. We have several versions of the story, and these versions differ from each other in points of no small importance. Polybius, there is reason to believe, heard the tale recited over the remains of some Consul or Prætor descended from the old Horatian patricians, for he introduces it as a specimen of the narratives with which the Romans were in the habit of embellishing their funeral oratory. It is remarkable that according to him Horatius defended the bridge alone, and perished in the waters. According to the chronicles which Livy and Dionysius followed, Horatius had two companions, swam safe to shore, and was loaded with honours and rewards.

These discrepancies are easily explained. Our own literature, indeed, will furnish an exact parallel to what may have taken place at Rome. It is highly probable that the memory of the war of Porsena was preserved by compositions much resembling the two ballads which stand first in the *Relics of Ancient English Poetry*. In both those ballads the English, commanded by the Percy, fight with the Scots, commanded by the Douglas. In one of the ballads the Douglas is killed by a nameless English archer, and the Percy by a Scottish spearman: in the other the Percy slays the Douglas in single combat, and is himself made prisoner. In the former, Sir Hugh Montgomery is shot through the heart by a Northumbrian bowman: in the latter he is taken, and exchanged for the Percy. Yet both the ballads relate to the same event, and that an event which probably took place within the memory of persons who were alive when both the ballads were made. One of the minstrels says:

> "Old men that knowen the grounde well yenoughe
> Call it the battel of Otterburn:
> At Otterburn began this spurne
> Upon a monnyn day.
> Ther was the dougghte Doglas slean:
> The Perse never went away."

The other poet sums up the event in the following lines :

" Thys fraye bygan at Otterborne
Bytwene the nyghte and the day:
Ther the Dowglas lost hys lyfe,
And the Percy was lede away."

It is by no means unlikely that there were two old Roman lays about the defence of the bridge ; and that, while the story which Livy has transmitted to us was preferred by the multitude, the other, which ascribed the whole glory to Horatius alone, may have been the favourite with the Horatian house.

The following ballad is supposed to have been made about a hundred and twenty years after the war which it celebrates, and just before the taking of Rome by the Gauls. The author seems to have been an honest citizen, proud of the military glory of his country, sick of the disputes of factions, and much given to pining after good old times which had never really existed. The allusion, however, to the partial manner in which the public lands were allotted could proceed only from a plebeian ; and the allusion to the fraudulent sale of spoils marks the date of the poem, and shows that the poet shared in the general discontent with which the proceedings of Camillus, after the taking of Veii, were regarded.

The penultimate syllable of the name Porsena has been shortened in spite of the authority of Niebuhr, who pronounces, without assigning any ground for his opinion, that Martial was guilty of a decided blunder in the line,

" Hanc spectare manum Porsena non potuit."

It is not easy to understand how any modern scholar, whatever his attainments may be—and those of Niebuhr were undoubtedly immense—can venture to pronounce that Martial did not know the quantity of a word which he must have uttered and heard uttered a hundred times before he left school. Niebuhr seems also to have forgotten that Martial has fellow-culprits to keep him in countenance. Horace has committed the same decided blunder ; for he gives us, as a pure iambic line,

" Minacis aut Etrusca Porsenæ manus.

Silius Italicus has repeatedly offended in the same way, as when he says,

" Cernitur effugiens ardentem Porsena dextram : "

and again,

" Clusinum vulgus, cum, Porsena magne, jubebas.'

A modern writer may be content to err in such company.

Niebuhr's supposition that each of the three defenders of the

bridge was the representative of one of the three patrician tribes is both ingenious and probable, and has been adopted in the following poem :

HORATIUS.

A LAY MADE ABOUT THE YEAR OF THE CITY CCCLX.

LARS PORSENA of Clusium
  By the Nine Gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
  Should suffer wrong no more.
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
  And named a trysting day,
And bade his messengers ride forth,
East and west and south and north,
  To summon his array.

II.

East and west and south and north
  The messengers ride fast,
And tower and town and cottage
  Have heard the trumpet's blast.
Shame on the false Etruscan
  Who lingers in his home,
When Porsena of Clusium
  Is on the march for Rome.

III.

The horsemen and the footmen
  Are pouring in amain
From many a stately market-place ;
  From many a fruitful plain ;
From many a lonely hamlet,
  Which, hid by beech and pine,
Like an eagle's nest, hangs on the crest
  Of purple Apennine ;

IV.

From lordly Volaterræ,
  Where scowls the far-famed hold
Piled by the hands of giants
  For godlike kings of old ;
From seagirt Populonia,
  Whose sentinels descry
Sardinia's snowy mountain-tops
  Fringing the southern sky ;

v.

From the proud mart of Pisæ,
Queen of the western waves,
Where ride Massilia's triremes
Heavy with fair-haired slaves;
From where sweet Clanis wanders
Through corn and vines and flowers;
From where Cortona lifts to heaven
Her diadem of towers.

VI.

Tall are the oaks whose acorns
Drop in dark Auser's rill;
Fat are the stags that champ the boughs
Of the Ciminian hill;
Beyond all streams Clitumnus
Is to the herdsman dear;
Best of all pools the fowler loves
The great Volsinian mere.

VII.

But now no stroke of woodman
Is heard by Auser's rill;
No hunter tracks the stag's green path
Up the Ciminian hill;
Unwatched along Clitumnus
Grazes the milk-white steer;
Unharmed the water fowl may dip
In the Volsinian mere.

VIII.

The harvests of Arretium,
This year, old men shall reap,
This year, young boys in Umbro
Shall plunge the struggling sheep;
And in the vats of Luna,
This year, the must shall foam
Round the white feet of laughing girls
Whose sires have marched to Rome.

IX.

There be thirty chosen prophets,
The wisest of the land,
Who alway by Lars Porsena
Both morn and evening stand:
Evening and morn the Thirty
Have turned the verses o'er,
Traced from the right on linen white
By mighty seers of yore.

x.

And with one voice the Thirty
Have their glad answer given:
"Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
Go forth, beloved of Heaven;
Go, and return in glory
To Clusium's royal dome;
And hang round Nurscia's altars
The golden shields of Rome."

xi.

And now hath every city
Sent up her tale of men;
The foot are fourscore thousand,
The horse are thousands ten:
Before the gates of Sutrium
Is met the great array.
A proud man was Lars Porsena
Upon the trysting day.

xii.

For all the Etruscan armies
Were ranged beneath his eye,
And many a banished Roman,
And many a stout ally;
And with a mighty following
To join the muster came
The Tusculan Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name.

xiii.

But by the yellow Tiber
Was tumult and affright:
From all the spacious champaign
To Rome men took their flight.
A mile around the city,
The throng stopped up the ways;
A fearful sight it was to see
Through two long nights and days.

xiv.

For aged folks on crutches,
And women great with child,
And mothers sobbing over babes
That clung to them and smiled,
And sick men borne in litters
High on the necks of slaves,
And troops of sun-burned husbandmen
With reaping hooks and staves,

XV.

And droves of mules and asses
Laden with skins and wine,
And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
And endless herds of kine,
And endless trains of waggons
That creaked beneath the weight
Of corn-sacks and of household goods,
Choked every roaring gate.

XVI.

Now, from the rock Tarpeian,
Could the wan burghers spy
The line of blazing villages
Red in the midnight sky.
The Fathers of the City,
They sat all night and day,
For every hour some horseman came
With tidings of dismay.

XVII.

To eastward and to westward
Have spread the Tuscan bands;
Nor house, nor fence, nor dovecote
In Crustumerium stands.
Verbenna down to Ostia
Hath wasted all the plain;
Astur hath stormed Janiculum,
And the stout guards are slain.

XVIII.

I wis, in all the Senate,
There was no heart so bold,
But sore it ached and fast it beat,
When that ill news was told,
Forthwith up rose the Consul,
Up rose the Fathers all;
In haste they girded up their gowns,
And hied them to the wall.

XIX.

They held a council standing
Before the River-Gate;
Short time was there, ye well may guess,
For musing or debate.
Out spake the Consul roundly:
"The bridge must straight go down;
For, since Janiculum is lost,
Nought else can save the town."

XX.

Just then a scout came flying,
All wild with haste and fear;
"To arms! to arms! Sir Consul:
Lars Porsena is here."
On the low hills to westward
The Consul fixed his eye,
And saw the swarthy storm of dust
Rise fast along the sky.

XXI.

And nearer fast and nearer
Doth the red whirlwind come;
And louder still and still more loud,
From underneath that rolling cloud,
Is heard the trumpet's war-note proud,
The trampling, and the hum.
And plainly and more plainly
Now through the gloom appears,
Far to left and far to right,
In broken gleams of dark-blue light,
The long array of helmets bright,
The long array of spears.

XXII.

And plainly and more plainly,
Above that glimmering line,
Now might ye see the banners
Of twelve fair cities shine;
But the banner of proud Clusium
Was highest of them all,
The terror of the Umbrian,
The terror of the Gaul.

XXIII.

And plainly and more plainly
Now might the burghers know,
By port and vest, by horse and crest,
Each warlike Lucumo.
There Cilnius of Arretium
On his fleet roan was seen;
And Astur of the four-fold shield,
Girt with the brand none else may wield,
Tolumnius with the belt of gold,
And dark Verbenna from the hold
By reedy Thrasymene.

XXIV.

Fast by the royal standard,
O'erlooking all the war,
Lars Porsena of Clusium
Sat in his ivory car.
By the right wheel rode Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name;
And by the left false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame

XXV.

But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
On the house-tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses,
And shook its little fist.

XXVI.

But the Consul's brow was sad,
And the Consul's speech was low,
And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe,
"Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down;
And if they once may win the bridge,
What hope to save the town?"

XXVII.

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his Gods,

XXVIII.

"And for the tender mother
Who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife who nurses
His baby at her breast,
And for the holy maidens
Who feed the eternal flame,
To save them from false Sextus
That wrought the deed of shame?

XXIX.

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
With all the speed ye may;
I, with two more to help me,
Will hold the foe in play.
In yon strait path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"

XXX.

Then out spake Spurius Lartius;
A Ramnian proud was he:
"Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee."
And out spake strong Herminius;
Of Titian blood was he:
"I will abide on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee."

XXXI.

"Horatius," quoth the Consul,
"As thou sayest, so let it be."
And straight against that great array
Forth went the dauntless Three.
For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.

XXXII.

Then none was for a party;
Then all were for the state;
Then the great man helped the poor,
And the poor man loved the great:
Then lands were fairly portioned;
Then spoils were fairly sold:
The Romans were like brothers
In the brave days of old.

XXXIII.

Now Roman is to Roman
More hateful than a foe,
And the Tribunes beard the high,
And the Fathers grind the low.
As we wax hot in faction,
In battle we wax cold:
Wherefore men fight not as they fought
In the brave days of old.

XXXIV.

Now while the three were tightening
  Their harness on their backs,
The Consul was the foremost man
  To take in hand an axe:
And Fathers mixed with Commons
  Seized hatchet, bar, and crow,
And smote upon the planks above,
  And loosed the props below.

XXXV.

Meanwhile the Tuscan army,
  Right glorious to behold,
Came flashing back the noonday light,
Rank behind rank, like surges bright
  Of a broad sea of gold.
Four hundred trumpets sounded
  A peal of warlike glee,
As that great host, with measured tread,
And spears advanced, and ensigns spread,
Rolled slowly towards the bridge's head,
  Where stood the dauntless Three.

XXXVI.

The Three stood calm and silent,
  And looked upon the foes,
And a great shout of laughter
  From all the vanguard rose:
And forth three chiefs came spurring
  Before that deep array;
To earth they sprang, their swords they drew,
And lifted high their shields, and flew
  To win the narrow way:

XXXVII.

Aunus from green Tifernum,
  Lord of the Hill of Vines;
And Seius, whose eight hundred slaves
  Sicken in Ilva's mines;
And Picus, long to Clusium
  Vassal in peace and war,
Who led to fight his Umbrian powers
From that grey crag where, girt with towers,
The fortress of Nequinum lowers
  O'er the pale waves of Nar.

XXXVIII.

Stout Lartius hurled down Aunus
Into the stream beneath:
Herminius struck at Seius,
And clove him to the teeth:
At Picus brave Horatius
Darted one fiery thrust;
And the proud Umbrian's gilded arms
Clashed in the bloody dust.

XXXIX.

Then Ocnus of Falerii
Rushed on the Roman Three;
And Lausulus of Urgo,
The rover of the sea;
And Aruns of Volsinium,
Who slew the great wild boar,
The great wild boar that had his den
Amidst the reeds of Cosa's fen,
And wasted fields, and slaughtered men,
Along Albinia's shore.

XL.

Herminius smote down Aruns:
Lartius laid Ocnus low:
Right to the heart of Lausulus
Horatius sent a blow.
"Lie there," he cried, "fell pirate!
No more, aghast and pale,
From Ostia's walls the crowd shall mark
The track of thy destroying bark.
No more Campania's hinds shall fly
To woods and caverns when they spy
Thy thrice accursed sail."

XLI.

But now no sound of laughter
Was heard among the foes.
A wild and wrathful clamour
From all the vanguard rose.
Six spears' lengths from the entrance
Halted that mighty mass,
And for a space no man came forth
To win the narrow pass.

XLII.

But hark! the cry is Astur;
And lo! the ranks divide;
And the great Lord of Luna
Comes with his stately stride.
Upon his ample shoulders
Clangs loud the fourfold shield,
And in his hand he shakes the brand
Which none but he can wield.

XLIII.

He smiled on those bold Romans
A smile serene and high;
He eyed the flinching Tuscans,
And scorn was in his eye.
Quoth he "The she-wolf's litter
Stand savagely at bay.
But will ye dare to follow,
If Astur clears the way?"

XLIV.

Then, whirling up his broadsword
With both hands to the height,
He rushed against Horatius,
And smote with all his might.
With shield and blade Horatius
Right deftly turned the blow.
The blow, though turned, came yet too nigh
It missed his helm, but gashed his thigh:
The Tuscans raised a joyful cry
To see the red blood flow.

XLV.

He reeled, and on Herminius
He leaned one breathing space,
Then, like a wild cat mad with wounds,
Sprang right at Astur's face;
Through teeth, and skull, and helmet
So fierce a thrust he sped,
The good sword stood a hand-breadth out
Behind the Tuscan's head.

XLVI.

And the great Lord of Luna
Fell at that deadly stroke,
As falls on Mount Alvernus
A thunder-smitten oak.

Far o'er the crashing forest
The giant arms lie spread ;
And the pale augurs, muttering low,
Gaze on the blasted head.

XLVII.

On Astur's throat Horatius
Right firmly pressed his heel,
And thrice and four times tugged amain,
Ere he wrenched out the steel.
"And see," he cried, "the welcome,
Fair guests, that waits you here !
What noble Lucumo comes next
To taste our Roman cheer ?"

XLVIII.

But at his haughty challenge
A sullen murmur ran,
Mingled of wrath, and shame, and dread,
Along that glittering van.
There lacked not men of prowess,
Nor men of lordly race ;
For all Etruria's noblest
Were round the fatal place.

XLIX.

But all Etruria's noblest
Felt their hearts sink to see
On the earth the bloody corpses,
In the path the dauntless Three ;
And, from the ghastly entrance
Where those bold Romans stood,
All shrank, like boys who unaware,
Ranging the woods to start a hare,
Come to the mouth of the dark lair
Where, growling low, a fierce old bear
Lies amidst bones and blood.

L.

Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack :
But those behind cried "Forward !"
And those before cried "Back !"
And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array ;
And on the tossing sea of steel,
To and fro the standards reel ;
And the victorious trumpet-peal
Dies fitfully away.

LI.

Yet one man for one moment
Stood out before the crowd;
Well known was he to all the Three
And they gave him greeting loud,
"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay, and turn away?
Here lies the road to Rome."

LII.

Thrice looked he at the city;
Thrice looked he at the dead;
And thrice came on in fury,
And thrice turned back in dread:
And, white with fear and hatred,
Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
The bravest Tuscans lay.

LIII.

But meanwhile axe and lever
Have manfully been plied;
And now the bridge hangs tottering
Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"
Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius,
Back, ere the ruin fall!"

LIV.

Back darted Spurius Lartius;
Herminius darted back:
And, as they passed, beneath their feet
They felt the timbers crack.
But when they turned their faces,
And on the farther shore
Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more.

LV.

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream:
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

LVI.

And, like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the rein,
The furious river struggled hard,
And tossed his tawny mane.
And burst the curb, and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free,
And whirling down, in fierce career,
Battlement, and plank, and pier,
Rushed headlong to the sea.

LVII.

Alone stood brave Horatius,
But constant still in mind;
Thrice thirty thousand foes before,
And the broad flood behind.
"Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
With a smile on his pale face.
"Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
"Now yield thee to our grace."

LVIII.

Round turned he, as not deigning
Those craven ranks to see;
Nought spake he to Lars Porsena,
To Sextus nought spake he;
But he saw on Palatinus
The white porch of his home;
And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

LIX.

"Oh, Tiber! father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
Take thou in charge this day!"
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
The good sword by his side,
And with his harness on his back,
Plunged headlong in the tide.

XL.

No sound of joy or sorrow
Was heard from either bank;
But friends and foes in dumb surprise,
With parted lips and straining eyes,
Stood gazing where he sank;