

“Macaulay has exhibited many high attainments, many dazzling talents, much singular and well-trained power; but the quality which would most strike the observers of the interior man is what may be called his inexperienced nature. Men of genius are in general distinguished by their extreme susceptibility to external experience. Finer and softer than other men, every exertion of their will, every incident of their lives, influences them more deeply than it would others. Their essence is at once finer and more impressible; it receives a distincter mark, and receives it more easily than the souls of the herd. From a peculiar sensibility the man of genius bears the stamp of life commonly more clearly than his fellows; even casual associations make a deep impression on him: examine his mind, and you may discern his fortunes. Macaulay has nothing of this. You could not tell what he has been. His mind shows no trace of change. What he is, he was; and what he was, he is. He early attained a high development, but he has not increased it since; years have come, but they have whispered little; as was said of the second Pitt, ‘He never grew, he was cast.’ The volume of speeches which he has published place the proof of this in every man’s hand. His first speeches are as good as his last, his last scarcely richer than his first. He came into public life at an exciting season; he shared, of course, in that excitement, and the same excitement still quivers in his mind. He delivered marvellous rhetorical exercises on the Reform Bill when it passed; he speaks of it with rhetorical interest even now. He is still the man of ’32. From that era he looks on the past. . . .

“All this was very natural at the moment. Nothing could be more probable than that a young man of the greatest talents, entering at once into important life at a conspicuous opportunity, should exaggerate its importance; he would fancy it was the ‘crowning achievement,’ the greatest ‘in the tide of time.’ But the singularity is, that he should retain the idea now; that years

have brought no influence, experience no change. The events of twenty years have been full of rich instruction on the events of twenty years ago, but they have not instructed him. His creed is a fixture. It is the same on his peculiar topic—on India. Before he went there he made a speech on the subject; Lord Canterbury, who must have heard a million speeches, said it was the best he had ever heard. It is difficult to fancy that so much vivid knowledge could be gained from books, from horrible Indian treatises, that such imaginative mastery should be possible without actual experience. Not forgetting, or excepting, the orations of Burke, it was perhaps as remarkable a speech as was ever made on India by an Englishman who had not been in India. Now he has been there he speaks no better, rather worse; he spoke excellently without experience, he speaks no better with it; if anything, it rather puts him out. His speech on the Indian charter a year or two ago was not finer than that on the charter of 1833. Before he went to India he recommended that writers should be examined in the classics; after being in India he recommended that they should be examined in the same way. He did not say that he had seen the place in the meantime; he did not think that had anything to do with it. You could never tell from any difference in his style what he had seen, or what he had not seen. He is so insensible to passing objects that they leave no distinctive mark, no intimate peculiar trace.

“Such a man would naturally think literature more instructive than life. Hazlitt said of Mackintosh, ‘He might like to read an *account* of India; but India itself, with its burning shining face, was a mere blank, an endless waste to him. Persons of this class have no more to say to a plain matter of fact staring them in the face, than they have to say to a *hippopotamus*.’ This was a keen criticism on Sir James, savouring of the splenetic mind from which it came. As a complete estimate it would be a most unjust one of Macaulay,

but we know that there is a whole class of minds which prefers the literary delineation of objects to the actual eyesight of them" (*Literary Studies*, ii. 224-226).

I do not stop to ask whether we ought to agree with this criticism or not, for I have only made use of it to emphasise my earlier quotations, and to make plainer what I mean when, borrowing, as I am now able to do, Bagehot's own words, I say of him, that he most surely had an *experiencing nature*, and impressed the stamp of life on everything he wrote.

This is the reason why Mr. Bagehot is so great a favourite with literary men. Most authors who write books in their libraries cherish at the bottom of their hearts, if not a dislike, at least a gloomy suspicion, of books and bookishness; they hanker after life—after the hippopotamus. I once took a very considerable author into a police-court; I thought it might chance to amuse him. He stood entranced whilst some poor ragamuffin's misdemeanours and improprieties were brought home to him, a short sentence passed, and the prisoner led away to a too familiar doom. Then we went out, and no sooner were we in the street than my author smote his staff upon the pavement and bitterly bewailed the hard fate that had prevented his being called to the Bar and becoming a "Beak." I gently reminded him of his books, quite a comely row upon the shelf. "Hang my books!" he cried, waving his stick in the direction of the magistrate's chair. "When that fellow sends a poor devil to prison for six weeks, to prison he goes; but when I publish a book, *nothing happens*."

Mr. Bagehot's books are full of actuality. His pages are so animated that something seems to happen in almost every one of them. The hippopotamus sticks out his head, as does the ox with that wonderful wet nose in the foreground of Rubens' *Nativity* in the Antwerp Gallery.

"The reason why so few good books are written is

that so few people who can write know anything. In general, an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiment of the best authors, but he is out of the way of employing his own eyes and ears. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see; his life is a vacuum. The mental habits of Robert Southey, which about a year ago were so extensively praised in the public journals, is the type of literary existence, just as the praise bestowed on it shows the admiration excited by it among literary people. He wrote poetry (as if anybody could) before breakfast; he read during breakfast; he wrote history until dinner; he corrected proof-sheets between dinner and tea; he wrote an essay for the *Quarterly* afterwards, and after supper, by way of relaxation, composed the *Doctor*, a lengthy and elaborate jest. Now, what can anyone think of such a life, except how clearly it shows that the habits best fitted for communicating information, formed with the best care and daily regulated by the best motives, are exactly the habits which are likely to afford a man the least information to communicate? Southey had no events, no experiences. His wife kept house and allowed him pocket-money, just as if he had been a German professor devoted to accents, tobacco, and the dates of Horace's amours. And it is pitiable to think that so meritorious a life was only made endurable by a painful delusion. He thought that day by day and hour by hour he was accumulating stores for the instruction and entertainment of a long posterity. His epics were to be in the hands of all men, and his history of Brazil the 'Herodotus of the South American Republics.' As if his epics were not already dead, and as if the people who now cheat at Valparaiso care a *real* who it was that cheated those before them! Yet it was only by a conviction like this that an industrious and calligraphic man (for such was Robert Southey), who might have earned money as a clerk, worked all his days for half a clerk's wages at

occupation much duller and more laborious" (*Literary Studies*, i. 137).

But not only is Mr. Bagehot a great favourite with those dignified beings who write books at their leisure in the library, but his works are invariably to be found on the tables of editors, journalists, reviewers—the whole fraternity of ready writers, and this for another set of reasons. He is one of those extraordinary men whose remarks are made for the first time. Most of our sayings have been hacked about long before they get into print; an air of staleness clings to them. True it is there is always somebody—may God bless him!—in every audience who may be relied upon never to have heard anything, but for all that, originality is a great quality. Nor does it stop quite there. Mr. Bagehot is not only an original writer, but he presents you with his thoughts and fancies in an unworked state. He is not an artist; he does not stop to elaborate and dress up his material; but having said something which is worth saying and has not been said before, this strange writer is content to pass hurriedly on to say something else. There is more meat on Mr. Bagehot's bones for the critics than on almost anybody else's; hence his extreme utility to the nimble-witted and light-hearted gentry aforementioned. Bagehot crops up all over the country. His mind is lent out; his thoughts toss on all waters; his brew, mixed with a humbler element, may be tapped everywhere; he has made a hundred small reputations. Nothing would have pleased him better; his fate would have jumped with his ironical humour.

Thus far we have found Mr. Bagehot to possess an experiencing nature, the stamp of life, a *vivida vis* of description, and an observation of mankind, not from the study window or from a club window, but from places where real business is done.

Mr. Bagehot was a mathematician, a moral philosopher, a political economist, a trained, though not a practising, lawyer, a banker, a shipowner, and from

1860 till his too early death in 1877 the editor and manager of the *Economist*. In addition to all this, he was a reader and critic of books.

One of his best known works is a description of the money market he characteristically called *Lombard Street*, because, says he, "I wish to deal and to show that I mean to deal with concrete realities." The bank-rate was no more of a mystery to him than is the Cabinet to Lord Salisbury; he was quite at home with Foreign Exchanges; he writes as familiarly about the direful suspension of Overend and Gurney as any of you might do about the French Revolution, or the Renaissance, or the Greek drama; he had mastered the niceties of Conveyancing in the chambers of Sir Charles Hall, and the mysteries of Special Pleading in those of Mr. Justice Quain; and no sooner had he mastered these niceties and mysteries than they were all abolished by Acts of Parliament. Attorneys, he somewhere remarks, are of the world, and the world is for attorneys. The prowling faculties, he thinks, will have their way. In many of his moods Mr. Bagehot was certainly a most mundane person; he had no fine Lucretian contempt for the thousand and one laborious nothings men nickname duties or for the pursuits of the average man. I cannot say he revered business as did that delightful Mr. Garth in *Middlemarch*, for reverence was a plant of slow growth in Mr. Bagehot's breast; but he always speaks of it, as of all the other concerns of Englishmen, including the House of Lords, with respect tempered by amusement.

The hum of affairs sounds through all his writings. How best is business to be transacted here on this planet, in this country, and to-day? You may know men by their favourite quotations, and a prime favourite with Bagehot is Bishop Butler's "To such a being as man, in such a world as the present." His famous book on the *Constitution*, though it may require bringing down to date—for the British Constitution has not stood still during the quarter of a century that has slipped away

since Mr. Bagehot's lamented death—is full of his characteristics, his lively insight into the actual workings of political machinery, his sense both of the imperfections and of the importance of a working machine, of the advantage of accustoming people to go on doing the same thing in the same way, not because it is the best of all possible ways—that it never is—but because “to such a being as man, in such a world as this,” a habit and a rule are of the utmost importance.

In all this Mr. Bagehot is mundane—very mundane. He has been called cynical, and if I knew what that word means in our modern usage, I might agree that cynical he was.

But he had another side.

Mr. R. H. Hutton, Mr. Bagehot's great ally, and custodian of his fame, wrote the life of his friend that appears in the second volume of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, a splendid series of volumes that has struck a blow at one of our oldest native industries—that of the miscellaneous writer, who, until the completion of this publication, could always turn an honest penny by collecting stray information, from this quarter and from that, about more or less obscure notabilities in our history, and printing it in a magazine, and afterwards, it may be, including it with other trifles in a neat little volume destined to flutter its hour. These great combinations are fatal to the small trader. In the course of this short memoir, Mr. Hutton refers to Mr. Bagehot's obligations to his early friends and teachers—Dr. Prichard, Professor de Morgan, and that fine scholar and stoic Mr. George Long. Their influence, of course, I have no means of tracing. Influences are subtle things, and even in one's own case

“Who can point as with a wand,
And say this portion of the river of my mind
Came from that fountain?”

There are, however, two men whose influence over

Mr. Bagehot's powerful and original mind was all-pervading, *Wordsworth* and *Newman*. He did not become a disciple of either; his was not a disciple's mind. He paid these two great writers a truer compliment than he would have done had he sunk his individuality into theirs, for he allowed their individualities to colour and temper his own.

I will give an example of the Wordsworth influence. Mr. Bagehot wrote an essay on the *First Edinburgh Reviewers*. He is sympathetic. There was a good deal of the old Whig about him. He occupies some thirteen pages in friendly description of Lord Jeffrey and his friends—"men," so he writes, "of a cool, moderate, resolute firmness, not gifted with high imagination, little prone to enthusiastic sentiment, heedless of large theories and speculations, careless of dreamy scepticism, with a clear view of the next step, and a wise intention to take it, a strong conviction that the elements of knowledge are true, and a steady belief that the present world can and should be quietly improved."

What nice people! I hope there are a great many of them in the new London County Council.

But after thirteen pages in praise of the Whigs, Mr. Bagehot grows restive. The sympathetic reader hears afar off the roar of the distant breakers; the tide of the reaction has set in, for, so it appears, the Whigs hated mysticism. "Yes," says *Mr. Bagehot*.

"A clear, precise, discriminating intellect shrinks at once from the symbolic, the unbounded, the indefinite. *The misfortune is that mysticism is true.* There certainly are kinds of truth, borne in, as it were, instinctively on the human intellect, most influential on the character and the heart, yet hardly capable of stringent statement, difficult to limit by an elaborate definition. Their course is shadowy; the mind seems rather to have seen than to see them, more to feel after than definitely apprehend them. They commonly involve an infinite element, which, of course, cannot be stated precisely, or else a

first principle—an original tendency—of our intellectual constitution, which it is impossible not to feel, and yet which it is hard to extricate in terms and words. Of this latter kind is what has been called the religion of nature, or, most exactly, perhaps, the religion of the imagination. This is an interpretation of the world. According to it the beauty of the universe has a meaning, its grandeur a soul, its sublimity an expression. As we gaze on the faces of those whom we love . . . as a charm and a thrill seem to run along the tone of a voice, to haunt the mind with a mere word ; so in nature the mystical sense finds a motion in the mountain, and a power in the waves, and a meaning in the long white line of the shore, and a thought in the blue of heaven, an unbounded being in the vast, void air, and

* Wakeful watchings in the pointed stars.*

There is a philosophy in this which might be explained, if explaining were to our purpose. But be this as it may, it is certain that Mr. Wordsworth preached this kind of religion and that Lord Jeffrey did not believe a word of it. His cool, sharp, collected mind revolted from its mysticism ; his detective intelligence was absorbed in its apparent fallaciousness ; his light humour made sport with the sublimities of the preacher ; his love of perspicuity was vexed by its indefiniteness ; the precise philosopher was amazed at its mystic unintelligibility. Yet we do not mean that in this great literary feud either of the combatants had all the right or gained all the victory. The world has given judgment. Both Mr. Wordsworth and Lord Jeffrey have received their reward. The one had his own generation, the laughter of men, the applause of drawing-rooms, the concurrence of the crowd ; the other a succeeding age, the fond enthusiasm of secret students, the lonely rapture of lonely minds. And each has received according to his kind. If all cultivated men speak differently because of the existence of Wordsworth and Coleridge, if not a

thoughtful English book has appeared for forty years without some trace for good or evil of their influence, if sermon-writers subsist upon their thoughts, if 'sacred poets' thrive by translating their weaker portion into the speech of women; if, when all this is over, some sufficient part of their writing will ever be fitting food for wild musing and solitary meditation, surely this is because they possessed the inner nature—'an intense and glowing mind,' 'the vision and the faculty divine.' But if, perchance, in their weaker moments the great authors of the *Lyrical Ballads* did ever imagine that the world was to pause because of their verses, that *Peter Bell* would be popular in drawing-rooms, that *Christabel* would be perused in the City, that people of fashion would make a handbook of the *Excursion*, it was well for them to be told at once that this was not so. Nature ingeniously prepared a shrill, artificial voice, which spoke in season and out of season, enough, and more than enough, what will ever be the idea of the cities of the plain concerning those who live alone among the mountains; of the frivolous concerning the grave; of the gregarious concerning the recluse; of those who laugh concerning those who laugh not; of the common concerning the uncommon; of those who lend on usury concerning those who lend not; the notion of the world of those whom it will not reckon among the righteous. It said, 'This won't do!' And so in all time will the lovers of polished Liberalism speak concerning the intense and lonely prophet" (*Literary Studies*, i. 26).

As for Newman, Mr. Bagehot must have had the *Parochial Sermons* by heart. Two of the most famous, entitled, *The Invisible World* and the *Greatness and Littleness of Human Life*, seem to have become incorporate with Mr. Bagehot's innermost nature. They are not obviously congruous with his pursuits. What have bankers to do with the invisible world? One has heard of the Divine Economy, but that is something

different from the *Economist*. However, there these sermons are, underneath his mundaneness, his humorous treatment of things, his aloofness from all ecclesiasticisms. He wrote about *Lombard Street* like a lover, about the *British Constitution* like a polished Member of Parliament, about the gaiety of *Sir John Falstaff* like a humorist. "If," says he, "most men were to save up all the gaiety of their whole lives, it would come about to the gaiety of one speech of Falstaff." There's a banker's balance for you! But amidst it all, ever and anon

" From the soul's subterranean depths upborne,
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs and floating echoes "

of the *Invisible World* and the *Greatness and Littleness of Human Life*.

For example, all of a sudden, in the middle of an article on that most charming, touching, sincere poet Béranger, we come upon this :

" This shrewd sense gives a solidity to the verses of Béranger which the social and amusing sort of poetry commonly wants, but nothing can redeem it from the reproach of wanting *back* thought. This is inevitable in such literature ; as it professes to delineate for us the light essence of a fugitive world, it cannot be expected to dwell on those deep and eternal principles on which that world is based. It ignores them, as light talk ignores them. The most opposite thing to the poetry of Society is the poetry of inspiration. There exists, of course, a kind of imagination which detects the secrets of the universe—which fills us sometimes with dread, sometimes with hope—which awakens the soul, which makes pure the feelings, which explains Nature, reveals what is above Nature, chastens ' the deep heart of man.' Our senses teach us what the world is, our intuitions where it is. We see the blue and gold of the world, its lively amusements, its gorgeous if superficial splendour, its currents of men ; we feel its

light spirits, we enjoy its happiness ; we enjoy it ; and we are puzzled. What is the object of all this ? Why do we do all this ? What is the universe *for* ? Such a book as Béranger's suggests this difficulty in its strongest form. It embodies the essence of all that pleasure-loving, pleasure-giving, unaccountable world in which men spend their lives ; which they are compelled to live in, but which the moment you get out of it seems so odd, that you can hardly believe it is real. On this account, as we were saying before, there is no book the impression of which varies so much in different moods of mind. Sometimes no reading is so pleasant, at others you half despise and half hate the idea of it ; it seems to sum up and make clear the littleness of your own nature " (*Literary Studies*, ii. 294).

I always thought this bit of Newmanism singularly out of place in an essay on Béranger, whose view of the strange world and bewildering events he was condemned to live in and among was quite free from frivolity ; but Bagehot was too much of a moral and political philosopher, too much also of a banker, to be perfect as a critic of literature. It is very delightful to have a man of affairs writing about books. It is most refreshing and invigorating as well as unusual, but, of course, qualities have their defects. Mr. Bagehot is too much alive to the risks of the social structure, far too anxious lest any convention on which it seems to rest should be injured in the handling, to be quite at his ease on the pleasant slopes of Parnassus. For example, he never cared for *Tristram Shandy*, which he thought should be read in extracts. He calls it an indecent novel written by a clergyman. Had Sterne been in the diocese of Barchester in Mrs. Proudie's time, that would have been her view of *Tristram Shandy*. I can see her now wagging a forefinger, and hear her saying : " Surely, surely ! " And she would have been quite right in saying what she said. But Mr. Bagehot will have it that *Tristram* is not a first-class book, and hurls at its head

an epithet that has now lost all its terrors ; he calls it "provincial."

I am not here to defend *Tristram Shandy*. It is indecent, but "surely, surely" Archdeacon Paley was no more an indecent man than Archdeacon Grantley, and the author of the *Evidences of Christianity* declared that the *summum bonum* of human existence was to sit still and read *Tristram Shandy*. I shelter myself behind Archdeacon Paley.

A strain of very severe morality runs through all Mr. Bagehot's literary criticism. It is noticeable in his reviews of Thackeray and Dickens. I have no quarrel with it.

I have heard Mr. Bagehot called a paradoxical writer. This is absurd. A paradoxical talker he may have been. Conversation without paradox is apt to be dull as still champagne, but in his considered writings, after he had outgrown his boyish *ἕβρις*, a love of the truth is conspicuous throughout. He is pre-eminently a sensible, truthful man. But, there is the rub ; he hated dulness, apathy, pomposity, the time-worn phrase, the greasy platitude. His writings are an armoury of offensive weapons against pompous fools. The revenge taken by these paltry, meaningless persons is to hiss *paradox* whenever the name of their tormentor is mentioned.

Mr. Bagehot, in fact, possessed in large measure a quality he greatly admired, and with his usual happy gift of nomenclature called *animated moderation*. In his little book *Physics and Politics* he writes :

"If anyone were asked to describe what it is which distinguishes the writings of a man of genius, who is also a great man of the world, from all other writings, I think he would use the words, 'animated moderation.' He would say that such writings are never slow, are never expansive, are never exaggerated ; that they are always instinct with judgment, and yet that judgment is never a dull judgment ; that they have as much spirit in them as would go to make a wild writer, and

yet that every line of them is the product of a sane and sound writer. The best and almost perfect instance of this in English is Scott. Homer was perfect in it, as far as we can judge. Shakspeare is often perfect in it for long together; though, then, from the defects of a bad education and a vicious age, he loses himself in excesses. Still, Homer and Shakspeare at his best, and Scott, though in other respects so unequal to them, have this remarkable quality in common: this union of life with measure, of spirit with reasonableness."

Without stopping to compare Bagehot's books with the *Iliad*, with Shakspeare or with Scott, I may safely add their author to the list of "animated moderators." He is vivacious, witty, full of comparisons and examples, all colloquial, familiar; but he is never a wild writer, always sober however convivial, and a sensible man, whose definition of style was to write like a human being.

A most agreeable trait of his writings is his free-handedness. He practises no small economies, he makes you free of his house and table; he does not, as do some mercantile authors, hand you things across a counter. I have already referred to this characteristic, but I return to it because it is so agreeable. He writes like a gentleman. And not only is Mr. Bagehot freehanded, he is also full of pleasant surprises and delectable speculations. He leads you into a pleasant country, and delights you with a variegated landscape. Thus, in the book just mentioned, *Physics and Politics*, you suddenly encounter a most agreeable speculation as to how it happens that different styles of writing are fashionable at different times.

"The true explanation is, I think, something like this. One considerable writer gets a sort of start, because what he writes is somewhat more—only a little more very often, as I believe—congenial to the minds around him than any other sort. This writer is very often not the one whom posterity remembers, not the

one who carries the style of the age farthest towards its ideal type, and gives it its charm and its perfection. It was not Addison who began the essay-writing of Queen Anne's time, but Steele; it was the vigorous forward man who struck out the rough notion, though it was the wise and meditative man who improved upon it and elaborated it, and whom posterity reads. Some strong writer, or group of writers, thus seize on the public mind, and a curious process soon assimilates other writers in appearance to them. To some extent, no doubt, this assimilation is effected by a process most intelligible and not at all curious, the process of conscious imitation. A sees that B's style of writing answers, and he imitates it. But definitely-aimed mimicry like this is always rare; original men who like their own thoughts, do not willingly clothe them in words they feel they borrow. No man, indeed, can think to much purpose when he is studying to write a style not his own. After all, very few men are at all equal to the steady labour, the stupid and mistaken labour mostly, of *making* a style. Most men catch the words that are in the air, and the rhythm which comes to them they do not know from whence; an unconscious imitation determines their words, and makes them say what of themselves they would never have thought of saying.

"Everyone who has written in more than one newspaper knows how invariably his style catches the tone of another, when in turn he begins to write for that. He probably would rather write the traditional style to which the readers of the journal are used, but he does not set himself to copy it; he would have to force himself in order *not* to write it, if that was what he wanted. Exactly in this way, just as a writer for a journal without a distinctly framed purpose gives the readers of the journal the sort of words and the sort of thoughts they are used to, so on a larger scale, the writers of an age, without thinking of it, give to the readers of the age the sort of words and the sort of

thoughts—the special literature, in fact—which those readers like and prize. And not only does the writer, without thinking, choose the sort of style and meaning which are most in vogue, but the writer is himself chosen. A writer does not begin to write in the traditional rhythm of an age unless he feels, or fancies he feels, a sort of aptitude for writing it; any more than a writer tries to write in a journal in which the style is uncongenial or impossible to him. Indeed, if he mistakes, he is soon weeded out; the editor rejects, the age will not read, his compositions. How painfully this traditional style cramps great writers whom it happens not to suit is curiously seen in Wordsworth, who was bold enough to break through it, and, at the risk of contemporary neglect, to frame a style of his own. But he did so knowingly, and he did so with an effort.”

As Mr. Bagehot's life advanced ill-health came to live with him; and to a man of his vivacity, adaptability, and undying curiosity, it must have been hard whilst still in the middle passage of life to scent the night air; but there are few traces of despondency to be found in his writings. I can call to mind but one; it occurs in *Physics and Politics*, where he says: “What writers are expected to write they write, or else they do not write at all, but, like the writer of these lines, stop discouraged, live disheartened, and die, leaving fragments which their friends treasure, but a rushing world never heeds.”

Die Mr. Bagehot did in his fifty-first year, and it is easy to understand how a man of his grasp and scope would be disposed to cast an almost contemptuous glance upon his actual intellectual output. Well can I fancy his saying, “Call you *that* a life's work?” “The petty done, the undone vast” form a contrast Mr. Bagehot was the last man in the world to forget. But books, like their authors, have strange fates, and Mr. Bagehot's books have a destiny yet unfulfilled.

His first volume of collected essays, published in

1858 under the odd title *Estimates of some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, attracted the attention of a very few; but the same essays, when reprinted after his death with additions in two volumes and called *Literary Studies*, reached a large number of readers, many of whom belonged to the predatory classes, who read books to make use of them. All Mr. Bagehot's other books had, considering their subjects, a really great sale. My copy of *Lombard Street* is, I notice, in the eighth edition. In the United States a large Insurance Company presented all their policy-holders with a complete set of Mr. Bagehot's works, printed and carefully revised (he was a somewhat careless writer) for the occasion. This I have been told on high authority. The special edition I have never seen. The example is one to be commended.

It can therefore hardly be said that the rushing world has paid no heed to what Mr. Bagehot humbly called his fragments. His friends still treasure them, but the popular judgment is likely to prove on their side. It is not wise to despise the popular judgment. Mr. Bagehot writes of John Austin: "Mr. Austin was always talking of the formidable community of fools." He had no popularity, little wish for popularity, little respect for popular judgment. This is a great error. The world is often wiser than any philosopher. "There is someone," said a great man of the world, "wiser than Voltaire and wiser than Napoleon; *c'est tout le monde*."

Give the world time and it will be right, and the last person it will willingly forget is a writer like Mr. Bagehot, who loved life better than books.

Doubtless Mr. Bagehot's delightful humoursomeness has a little interfered with his reputation as a philosopher, moral and political. It is a great shame, but one always remembers the playfulness of a writer—some purely human touch of his—so much better than one does his philosophy or history. Mr. Bagehot in his essay on Lord Althorp has said some really excellent things

about the great Reform Bill—things any man is the better for remembering; but the thing I always remember is the reason he gives for Lord Althorp's leaving off hunting after his wife's death, a loss he felt with terrible keenness. "He gave up," says Mr. Bagehot, "not only society, which was no great trial, but also hunting, not because he believed it to be wrong, but because he did not think it seemly or suitable that a man after such a loss should be so very happy as he *knew hunting would make him.*"

No one but Bagehot could have given this sentence the peculiar twist it now possesses.

How admirable, too, is his well-known jest, "A man's mother is his misfortune; his wife is his fault;" yet in a philosopher and economist such merriment is dangerous. But humour—particularly when it is good-humour—though it may sometimes get in a man's way, is never a permanent obstacle to his fame.

My time is up, and I have said very little. My object was not to give a précis of Mr. Bagehot's books—that must have been dull—or to assign him his true place in the providential order of the world—that would have been impertinent—but merely to shake the tree, so that you might see for yourselves, as the fruit fell from it, what a splendid crop it bears.

To know Walter Bagehot through his books is one of the good things of life.

A ROGUE'S MEMOIRS.

ONE is often tempted of the devil to forswear the study of history altogether as the pursuit of the Unknowable. "How is it possible," he whispers in our ear, as we stand gloomily regarding the portly calf-bound volumes without which no gentleman's library is complete, "how is it possible to suppose that you have there, on your shelves, the actual facts of history—a true record of what men, dead long ago, felt and thought?" Yet, if we have not, I for one, though of a literary turn, would sooner spend my leisure playing skittles with boors than in reading sonorous lies in stout volumes.

"It is not so much," wilyly insinuates the Tempter, "that these renowned authors lack knowledge. Their habit of giving an occasional reference (though the verification of these is usually left to the malignancy of a rival and less popular historian) argues at least some reading. No; what is wanting is ignorance, carefully acquired and studiously maintained. This is no paradox. To carry the truisms, theories, laws, language of to-day, along with you in your historical pursuits, is to turn the muse of history upside down—a most disrespectful proceeding; and yet to ignore them—to forget all about them—to hang them up with your hat and coat in the hall, to remain there whilst you sit in the library composing your immortal work, which is so happily to combine all that is best in Gibbon and Macaulay—a sneerless Gibbon and an impartial Macaulay—is a task which, if it be not impossible, is, at all events, of huge difficulty.

"Another blemish in English historical work has

been noticed by the Rev. Charles Kingsley, and may therefore be referred to by me without offence. Your standard historians, having no unnatural regard for their most indefatigable readers, the wives and daughters of England, feel it incumbent upon them to pass over, as unfit for dainty ears and dulcet tones, facts, and rumours of facts, which none the less often determined events by stirring the strong feelings of your ancestors, whose conduct, unless explained by this light, must remain enigmatical.

“When, to these anachronisms of thought and omissions of fact, you have added the dishonesty of the partisan historian and the false glamour of the picturesque one, you will be so good as to proceed to find the present value of history!”

Thus far the Enemy of Mankind.

An admirable lady orator is reported lately to have “brought down” Exeter Hall by observing, “in a low but penetrating voice,” that the devil was a very stupid person. It is true that Ben Jonson is on the side of the lady, but I am far too orthodox to entertain any such opinion; and though I have, in this instance of history, so far resisted him as to have refrained from sending my standard historians to the auction mart—where, indeed, with the almost single exception of Mr. Grote’s History of Greece (the octavo edition in twelve volumes), prices run so low as to make cartage a consideration—I have still of late found myself turning off the turnpike of history to loiter down the primrose paths of men’s memoirs of themselves and their times.

Here at least, so we argue, we are comparatively safe. Anachronisms of thought are impossible; omissions out of regard for female posterity unlikely, and as for party spirit, if found, it forms part of what lawyers call the *res gestæ*, and has therefore a value of its own. Against the perils of the picturesque, who will insure us?

But when we have said all this, and, sick of prosing, would begin reading, the number of really readable

memoirs is soon found to be but few. This is, indeed, unfortunate; for it launches us off on another prose-journey by provoking the question, What makes memoirs interesting?

Is it necessary that they should be the record of a noble character? Certainly not. We remember Pepys, who—well, never mind what he does. We call to mind Cellini; *he* runs behind a fellow-creature, and with "admirable address" sticks a dagger in the nape of his neck, and long afterwards records the fact, almost with reverence, in his life's story. Can anything be more revolting than some portions of the revelation Benjamin Franklin was pleased to make of himself in writing? And what about Rousseau? Yet, when we have pleaded guilty for these men, a modern Savonarola, who had persuaded us to make a bonfire of their works, would do well to keep a sharp look-out, lest at the last moment we should be found substituting *Pearson on the Creed* for Pepys, Coleridge's *Friend* for Cellini, John Foster's *Essays* for Franklin, and Roget's *Bridgewater Treatise* for Rousseau.

Neither will it do to suppose that the interest of a memoir depends on its writer having been concerned in great affairs, or lived in stirring times. The dullest memoirs written even in English, and not excepting those maimed records of life known as "religious biography," are the work of men of the "attaché" order, who, having been mixed up in events which the newspapers of the day chronicled as "Important Intelligence," were not unnaturally led to cherish the belief that people would like to have from their pens full, true, and particular accounts of all that then happened, or, as they, if moderns, would probably prefer to say, transpired. But the World, whatever an overbold Exeter Hall may say of her old associate the Devil, is not a stupid person, and declines to be taken in twice; and turning a deaf ear to the most painstaking and trustworthy accounts of deceased Cabinets and silenced

Conferences, goes journeying along her broad way, chuckling over some old joke in Boswell, and reading with fresh delight the all-about-nothing letters of Cowper and Lamb.

How then does a man—be he good or bad—big or little—a philosopher or a fribble—St. Paul or Horace Walpole—make his memoirs interesting?

To say that the one thing needful is individuality is not quite enough. To be an individual is the inevitable, and in most cases the unenviable, lot of every child of Adam. Each one of us has, like a tin soldier, a stand of his own. To have an individuality is no sort of distinction, but to be able to make it felt in writing is not only distinction but under favouring circumstances immortality.

Have we not all some correspondents, though probably but few, from whom we never receive a letter without feeling sure that we shall find inside the envelope something written that will make us either glow with the warmth or shiver with the cold of our correspondent's life? But how many other people are to be found, good, honest people, too, who no sooner take pen in hand than they stamp unreality on every word they write. It is a hard fate, but they cannot escape it. They may be as literal as the late Earl Stanhope, as painstaking as Bishop Stubbs, as much in earnest as Mr. Gladstone—their lives may be noble, their aims high, but no sooner do they seek to narrate to us their story than we find it is not to be. To hearken to them is past praying for. We turn from them as from a guest who has outstayed his welcome. Their writing wearies, irritates, disgusts.

Here then, at last, we have the two classes of memoir writers—those who manage to make themselves felt, and those who do not. Of the latter, a very little is a great deal too much; of the former we can never have enough.

What a liar was Benvenuto Cellini!—who can believe

a word he says? To hang a dog on his oath would be a judicial murder. Yet when we lay down his memoirs and let our thoughts travel back to those far-off days he tells us of, there we see him standing, in bold relief, against the black sky of the past, the very man he was. Not more surely did he, with that rare skill of his, stamp the image of Clement VII. on the papal currency than he did the impress of his own singular personality upon every word he spoke and every sentence he wrote.

We ought, of course, to hate him, but do we? A murderer he has written himself down. A liar he stands self-convicted of being. Were anyone in the nether world bold enough to call him thief, it may be doubted whether Rhadamanthus would award him the damages for which we may be certain he would loudly clamour. Why do we not hate him? Listen to him!

“Upon my uttering these words, there was a general outcry, the noblemen affirming that I promised too much. But one of them, who was a great philosopher, said in my favour, ‘From the admirable symmetry of shape and happy physiognomy of this young man, I venture to engage that he will perform all he promises, and more.’ The Pope replied, ‘I am of the same opinion;’ then calling Trajano, his gentleman of the bedchamber, he ordered him to fetch me five hundred ducats.”

And so it always ended; suspicions, aroused most reasonably, allayed most unreasonably, and then—ducats. He deserved hanging, but he died in his bed. He wrote his own memoirs after a fashion that ought to have brought posthumous justice upon him, and made them a literary gibbet, on which he should swing, a creaking horror, for all time; but nothing of the sort has happened. The rascal is so symmetrical, and his physiognomy, as it gleams upon us through the centuries, so happy, that we cannot withhold our ducats, though we may accompany the gift with a shower of abuse.

This only proves the profundity of an observation made by Mr. Bagehot—a man who carried away into

the next world more originality of thought than is now to be found in the Three Estates of the Realm. Whilst remarking upon the extraordinary reputation of the late Francis Horner and the trifling cost he was put to in supporting it, Mr. Bagehot said that it proved the advantage of "keeping an atmosphere."

The common air of heaven sharpens men's judgments. Poor Horner, but for that kept atmosphere of his, always surrounding him, would have been bluntly asked, "What he had done since he was breeched," and in reply he could only have muttered something about the currency. As for our especial rogue Cellini, the question would probably have assumed this shape: "Rascal, name the crime you have not committed, and account for the omission."

But these awkward questions are not put to the lucky people who keep their own atmospheres. The critics, before they can get at them, have to step out of the everyday air, where only achievements count and the Decalogue still goes for something, into the kept atmosphere, which they have no sooner breathed than they begin to see things differently, and to measure the object thus surrounded with a tape of its own manufacture. Horner—poor, ugly, a man neither of words nor deeds—becomes one of our great men; a nation mourns his loss and erects his statue in the Abbey. Mr. Bagehot gives several instances of the same kind, but he does not mention Cellini, who is, however, in his own way, an admirable example.

You open his book—a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Lying indeed! Why, you hate prevarication. As for murder, your friends know you too well to mention the subject in your hearing, except in immediate connection with capital punishment. You are, of course, willing to make some allowance for Cellini's time and place—the first half of the sixteenth century and Italy. "Yes," you remark, "Cellini shall have strict justice at my hands." So you say as you settle yourself in your

chair and begin to read. We seem to hear the rascal laughing in his grave. His spirit breathes upon you from his book—peeps at you roguishly as you turn the pages. His atmosphere surrounds you; you smile when you ought to frown, chuckle when you should groan, and—O final triumph!—laugh aloud when, if you had a rag of principle left, you would fling the book into the fire. Your poor moral sense turns away with a sigh, and patiently awaits the conclusion of the second volume.

How cautiously does he begin, how gently does he win your ear by his seductive piety! I quote from Mr. Roscoe's translation:—

“It is a duty incumbent on upright and credible men of all ranks, who have performed anything noble or praiseworthy, to record, in their own writing, the events of their lives; yet they should not commence this honourable task before they have passed their fortieth year. Such, at least, is my opinion, now that I have completed my fifty-eighth year, and am settled in Florence, where, considering the numerous ills that constantly attend human life, I perceive that I have never before been so free from vexations and calamities, or possessed of so great a share of content and health as at this period. Looking back on some delightful and happy events of my life, and on many misfortunes so truly overwhelming that the appalling retrospect makes me wonder how I have reached this age in vigour and prosperity, through God's goodness I have resolved to publish an account of my life; and . . . I must, in commencing my narrative, satisfy the public on some few points to which its curiosity is usually directed; the first of which is to ascertain whether a man is descended from a virtuous and ancient family. . . . I shall therefore now proceed to inform the reader how it pleased God that I should come into the world.”

So you read on page 1; what you read on page 191 is this:—

“Just after sunset, about eight o'clock, as this musqueteer stood at his door with his sword in his hand, when he had done supper, I with great address came close up to him with a long dagger, and gave him a violent back-handed stroke, which I aimed at his neck. He instantly turned round, and the blow, falling directly upon his left shoulder, broke the whole bone of it; upon which he dropped his sword, quite overcome by the pain, and took to his heels. I pursued, and in four steps came up with him, when, raising the dagger over his head, which he lowered down, I hit him exactly upon the nape of the neck. The weapon penetrated so deep that, though I made a great effort to recover it again, I found it impossible.”

So much for murder. Now for manslaughter, or rather Cellini's notion of manslaughter.

“Pompeo entered an apothecary's shop at the corner of the Chiavica, about some business, and stayed there for some time. I was told he had boasted of having bullied me, but it turned out a fatal adventure to him. Just as I arrived at that quarter he was coming out of the shop, and his bravoës, having made an opening, formed a circle round him. I thereupon clapped my hand to a sharp dagger, and having forced my way through the file of ruffians, laid hold of him by the throat, so quickly and with such presence of mind, that there was not one of his friends could defend him. I pulled him towards me to give him a blow in front, but he turned his face about through excess of terror, so that I wounded him exactly under the ear; and upon repeating my blow, he fell down dead. It had never been my intention to kill him, but blows are not always under command.”

We must all feel that it would never have done to have begun with these passages, but long before the 191st page has been reached Cellini has retreated into his own atmosphere, and the scales of justice have been hopelessly tampered with.

That such a man as this encountered suffering in the

course of his life, should be matter for satisfaction to every well-regulated mind; but, somehow or another, you find yourself pitying the fellow as he narrates the hardships he endured in the Castle of S. Angelo. He is so symmetrical a rascal! Just hear him! listen to what he says well*on in the second volume, after the little incidents already quoted:

“ Having at length recovered my strength and vigour, after I had composed myself and resumed my cheerfulness of mind, I continued to read my Bible, and so accustomed my eyes to that darkness, that though I was at first able to read only an hour and a half, I could at length read three hours. I then reflected on the wonderful power of the Almighty upon the hearts of simple men, who had carried their enthusiasm so far as to believe firmly that God would indulge them in all they wished for; and I promised myself the assistance of the Most High, as well through His mercy as on account of my innocence. Thus turning constantly to the Supreme Being, sometimes in prayer, sometimes in silent meditation on the divine goodness, I was totally engrossed by these heavenly reflections, and came to take such delight in pious meditations that I no longer thought of past misfortunes. On the contrary, I was all day long singing psalms and many other compositions of mine, in which I celebrated and praised the Deity.”

Thus torn from their context, these passages may seem to supply the best possible falsification of the previous statement that Cellini told the truth about himself. Judged by these passages alone, he may appear a hypocrite of an unusually odious description. But it is only necessary to read his book to dispel that notion. He tells lies about other people; he repeats long conversations, sounding his own praises, during which, as his own narrative shows, he was not present; he exaggerates his own exploits, his sufferings—even, it may be, his crimes; but when we lay down his book, we feel we are saying good-bye to a man whom we know.

He has introduced himself to us, and though doubtless we prefer saints to sinners, we may be forgiven for liking the company of a live rogue better than that of the lay-figures and empty clock-cases labelled with distinguished names, who are to be found doing duty for men in the works of our standard historians. What would we not give to know Julius Cæsar one half as well as we know this outrageous rascal? The saints of the earth, too, how shadowy they are! Which of them do we really know? Excepting one or two ancient and modern Quietists, there is hardly one amongst the whole number who being dead yet speaketh. Their memoirs far too often only reveal to us a hazy something, certainly not recognisable as a man. This is generally the fault of their editors, who, though men themselves, confine their editorial duties to going up and down the diaries and papers of the departed saint, and obliterating all human touches. This they do for the "better prevention of scandals;" and one cannot deny that they attain their end, though they pay dearly for it.

I shall never forget the start I gave when, on reading some old book about India, I came across an after-dinner jest of Henry Martyn's. The thought of Henry Martyn laughing over the walnuts and the wine was almost, as Robert Browning's unknown painter says, "too wildly dear;" and to this day I cannot help thinking that there must be a mistake somewhere.

To return to Cellini, and to conclude. On laying down his "Memoirs," let us be careful to recall our banished moral sense, and make peace with her, by passing a final judgment on this desperate sinner, which perhaps, after all, we cannot do better than by employing language of his own concerning a monk, a fellow-prisoner of his, who never, so far as appears, murdered anybody, but of whom Cellini none the less felt himself entitled to say:

"I admired his shining qualities, but his odious vices I freely censured and held in abhorrence."

* THE VIA MEDIA.

THE world is governed by logic. Truth as well as Providence is always on the side of the strongest battalions. An illogical opinion only requires rope enough to hang itself.

Middle men may often seem to be earning for themselves a place in Universal Biography, and middle positions frequently seem to afford the final solution of vexed questions; but this double delusion seldom outlives a generation. The world wearies of the men, for, attractive as their characters may be, they are for ever telling us, generally at great length, how it comes about that they stand just where they do, and we soon tire of explanations and forget apologists. The positions, too, once hailed with such acclaim, so eagerly recognised as the true refuges for poor mortals anxious to avoid being run over by fast-driving logicians, how untenable do they soon appear! how quickly do they grow antiquated! how completely they are forgotten!

The Via Media, alluring as is its direction, imposing as are its portals, is, after all, only what Londoners call a blind alley, leading nowhere.

“Ratiocination,” says one of the most eloquent and yet exact of modern writers,* “is the great principle of order in thinking: it reduces a chaos into harmony, it catalogues the accumulations of knowledge; it maps out for us the relations of its separate departments. It enables the independent intellects of many acting and reacting on each other to bring their collective force to bear upon the same subject-matter. If language is an inestimable gift to man, the logical faculty prepares

* Dr. Newman in the *Grammar of Assent*.

it for our use. Though it does not go so far as to ascertain truth, still, it teaches us the *direction* in which truth lies, and *how propositions lie towards each other*. Nor is it a slight benefit to know what is needed for the proof of a point, what is wanting in a theory, how a theory hangs together, and *what will follow if it be admitted.*"

This great principle of order in thinking is what we are too apt to forget. "Give us," cry many, "safety in our opinions, and let who will be logical. An Englishman's creed is compromise; his *bête noire* extravagance. We are not saved by syllogism." Possibly not; but yet there can be no safety in an illogical position, and one's chances of snug quarters in eternity cannot surely be bettered by our believing at one and the same moment of time self-contradictory propositions.

But, talk as we may, for the bulk of mankind it will doubtless always remain true that a truth does not exclude its contradictory. Darwin and Moses are both right. Between the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Matthew Arnold there is no difference.

If the too apparent absurdity of this is pressed home, the baffled illogician, persecuted in one position, flees into another, and may be heard assuring his tormentor that in a period like the present, which is so notoriously transitional, a logician is as much out of place as a bull in a china shop, and that unless he is quiet, and keeps his tail well wrapped round his legs, the mischief he will do to his neighbours' china creeds and delicate porcelain opinions is shocking to contemplate. But this excuse is no longer admissible. The age has remained transitional so unconscionably long, that we cannot consent to forego the use of logic any longer. For a decade or two it was all well enough, but when it comes to fourscore years one's patience gets exhausted. Carlyle's celebrated Essay, *Characteristics*, in which this transitional period is diagnosed with unrivalled acumen, is half a

century old. Men have been born in it—have grown old in it—have died in it. It has outlived the old Court of Chancery. It is high time the spurs of logic were applied to its broken-winded sides.

Notwithstanding the obstinate preference the “bulk of mankind” always show for demonstrable errors over undeniable truths, the number of persons is daily increasing who have begun to put a value upon mental coherency and to appreciate the charm of a logical position.

It was common talk at one time to express astonishment at the extending influence of the Church of Rome, and to wonder how people who went about unaccompanied by keepers could submit their reason to the Papacy, with her open rupture with science and her evil historical reputation. From astonishment to contempt is but a step. We first open wide our eyes and then our mouths.

“Lord So-and-so, his coat bedropt with wax,
All Peter’s chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom,
Believes,—who wonders and who cares?”

It used to be thought a sufficient explanation to say either that the man was an ass or that it was all those Ritualists. But gradually it became apparent that the pervert was not always an ass, and that the Ritualists had nothing whatever to do with it. If a man’s tastes run in the direction of Gothic Architecture, free seats, daily services, frequent communions, lighted candles, and Church millinery, they can all be gratified, not to say glutted, in the Church of his baptism.

It is not the Roman ritual, however splendid, nor her ceremonial, however spiritually significant, nor her system of doctrine, as well arranged as Roman law and as subtle as Greek philosophy, that makes Romanists nowadays.

It is when a person of religious spirit and strong convictions as to the truth and importance of certain dogmas—few in number it may be; perhaps only one, the Being of God—first becomes fully alive to the tendency

and direction of the most active opinions of the day; when, his alarm quickening his insight, he reads as it were between the lines of books, magazines, and newspapers; when, struck with a sudden trepidation, he asks, "Where is this to stop? how can I, to the extent of a poor ability, help to stem this tide of opinion which daily increases its volume and floods new territory?"—then it is that the Church of Rome stretches out her arms and seems to say, "Quarrel not with your destiny, which is to become a Catholic. You may see difficulties and you may have doubts. They abound everywhere. You will never get rid of them. But I, and I alone, have never coquetted with the spirit of the age. I, and I alone, have never submitted my creeds to be overhauled by infidels. Join me, acknowledge my authority, and you need dread no side attack and fear no charge of inconsistency. Succeed finally I must, but even were I to fail, yours would be the satisfaction of knowing that you had never held an opinion, used an argument, or said a word, that could fairly have served the purpose of your triumphant enemy."

At such a crisis as this in a man's life, he does not ask himself, How little can I believe? With how few miracles can I get off?—he demands sound armour, sharp weapons, and, above all, firm ground to stand on—a good footing for his faith—and these he is apt to fancy he can get from Rome alone.

No doubt he has to pay for them, but the charm of the Church of Rome is this: when you have paid her price you get your goods—a neat assortment of coherent, interdependent, logical opinions.

It is not much use, under such circumstances, to call the convert a coward, and facetiously to inquire of him what he really thinks about St. Januarius. Nobody ever began with Januarius. I have no doubt a good many Romanists would be glad to be quit of him. He is part of the price they have to pay in order that their title to the possession of other miracles may be quieted. If

you can convince the convert that he can disbelieve Januarius of Naples without losing his grip of Paul of Tarsus, you will be well employed; but if you begin with merry gibes, and end with contemptuously demanding that he should have done with such nonsense and fling the rubbish overboard, he will draw in his horns, and perhaps, if he knows his Browning, murmur to himself:—

“To such a process I discern no end.
Cutting off one excrescence to see two;
There is ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife. I cut and cut again:
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God Himself?”

To suppose that no person is logically entitled to fear God and to ridicule Januarius at the same time is doubtless extravagant, but to do so requires care. There is an “order in thinking. We must consider how propositions lie towards each other—how a theory hangs together, and what will follow if it be admitted.”

It is eminently desirable that we should consider the logical termini of our opinions. Travelling up to town last month from the West, a gentleman got into my carriage at Swindon, who, as we moved off and began to rush through the country, became unable to restrain his delight at our speed. His face shone with pride, as if he were pulling us himself. “What a charming train!” he exclaimed. “This is the pace I like to travel at.” I indicated assent. Shortly afterwards, when our windows rattled as we rushed through Reading, he let one of them down in a hurry, and cried out in consternation, “Why, I want to get out here.” “Charming train,” I observed. “Just the pace I like to travel at; but it is awkward if you want to go anywhere except Paddington.” My companion made no reply; his face ceased to shine, and as he sat whizzing past his dinner, I mentally compared his recent exultation with that of those who in the present day extol much of its spirit, use many of its arguments, and partake in most of its

triumphs, in utter ignorance as to whitherwards it is all tending as surely as the Great Western rails run into Paddington. "Poor victims!" said a distinguished divine, addressing the Evangelicals, then rejoicing over their one legal victory, the "Gorham Case;" "do you dream that the spirit of the age is working for you, or are you secretly prepared to go further than you avow?"

Mr. Matthew Arnold's friends, the Nonconformists, are, as a rule, nowadays, bad logicians. What Dr. Newman has said of the Tractarians is (with but a verbal alteration) also true of a great many Nonconformists: "Moreover, there are those among them who have very little grasp of principle, even from the natural temper of their minds. They see this thing is beautiful, and that is in the Fathers, and a third is expedient, and a fourth pious; but of their connection one with another, their hidden essence and their life, and the bearing of external matters upon each and upon all, they have no perception or even suspicion. They do not look at things as part of a whole, and often will sacrifice the most important and precious portions of their creed, or make irremediable concessions in word or in deed, from mere simplicity and want of apprehension."

We have heard of grown-up Baptists asked to become, and actually becoming, godfathers and godmothers to Episcopalian babies! What terrible confusion is here! A point is thought to be of sufficient importance to justify separation on account of it from the whole Christian Church, and yet not to be of importance enough to debar the separatist from taking part in a ceremony whose sole significance is that it gives the lie direct to the point of separation.

But we all of us—Churchmen and Dissenters alike—select our opinions far too much in the same fashion as ladies are reported, I dare say quite falsely, to do their afternoon's shopping—this thing because it is so pretty, and that thing because it is so cheap. We pick and choose, take and leave, approbate and reprobate in a

breath. A familiar anecdote is never out of place. An English captain, anxious to conciliate a savage king, sent him on shore, for his own royal wear, an entire dress suit. His majesty was graciously pleased to accept the gift, and as it never occurred to the royal mind that he could, by any possibility, wear all the things himself, with kingly generosity he distributed what he did not want amongst his Court. This done, he sent for the donor to thank him in person. As the captain walked up the beach, his majesty advanced to meet him, looking every inch a king in the sober dignity of a dress-coat. The waistcoat imparted an air of pensive melancholy that mightily became the Prime Minister, whilst the Lord Chamberlain, as he skipped to and fro in his white gloves, looked a courtier indeed. The trousers had become the subject of an unfortunate dispute, in the course of which they had sustained such injuries as to be hardly recognisable. The captain was convulsed with laughter.

But, in truth, the mental toilet of most of us is as defective and almost as risible as was that of this savage Court. We take on our opinions without paying heed to conclusions, and the result is absurd. Better be without any opinions at all. A naked savage is not necessarily an undignified object; but a savage in a dress-coat and nothing else is, and must ever remain, a mockery and a show. There is a great relativity about a dress-suit. In the language of the logicians, the name of each article not only denotes that particular, but connotes all the rest. Hence it came about that that which, when worn in its entirety, is so dull and decorous, became so provocative of Homeric laughter when distributed amongst several wearers.

No person with the least tincture of taste can ever weary of Dr. Newman, and no apology is therefore offered for another quotation from his pages. In his story, *Loss and Gain*, he makes one of his characters, who has just become a Catholic, thus refer to the stock Anglican divines, a class of writers who are, at all events,

immensely superior to the Ellicotts and Farrars of these latter days: "I am embracing that creed which upholds the divinity of tradition with Laud, consent of Fathers with Beveridge, a visible Church with Bramhall, dogma with Bull, the authority of the Pope with Thorndyke, penance with Taylor, prayers for the dead with Ussher, celibacy, asceticism, ecclesiastical discipline with Bingham." What is this to say but that, according to the Cardinal, our great English divines have divided the Roman dress-suit amongst themselves?

This particular charge may perhaps be untrue, but with that I am not concerned. If it is not true of them, it is true of somebody else. "That is satisfactory so far as Mr. Lydgate is concerned," says Mrs. Farebrother in *Middlemarch*, with an air of precision; "but as to Bulstrode, the report may be true of some other son."

We must all be acquainted with the reckless way in which people pluck opinions like flowers—a bud here, and a leaf there. The bouquet is pretty to-day, but you must look for it to-morrow in the oven.

There is a sense in which it is quite true what our other Cardinal has said about Ultramontanes, Anglicans, and Orthodox Dissenters all being in the same boat. They all of them enthrone Opinion, holding it to be, when encased in certain dogmas, Truth Absolute. Consequently they have all their martyrologies—the bright roll-call of those who have defied Cæsar even unto death, or at all events gaol. They all, therefore, put something above the State, and apply tests other than those recognised in our law courts.

The precise way by which they come at their opinions is only detail. Be it an infallible Church, an infallible Book, or an inward spiritual grace, the outcome is the same. The Romanist, of course, has to bear the first brunt, and is the most obnoxious to the State; but he must be slow of comprehension and void of imagination who cannot conceive of circumstances arising in this country when the State should assert it to be its duty to

violate what even Protestants believe to be the moral law of God. Therefore, in opposing Ultramontaniam, as it surely ought to be opposed, care ought to be taken by those who are not prepared to go all lengths with Cæsar, to select their weapons of attack, not from his armoury, but from their own.

How ridiculous it is to see some estimable man who subscribes to the Bible Society, and takes what he calls "a warm interest" in the heathen, chuckling over some scoffing article in a newspaper—say about a Church Congress—and never perceiving, so unaccustomed is he to examine directions, that he is all the time laughing at his own folly! Aunt Nesbit, in *Dred*, considered Gibbon a very pious writer. "I am sure," says she, "he makes the most religious reflections all along. I liked him particularly on that account." This poor lady had some excuse. A vein of irony like Gibbon's is not struck upon every day; but readers of newspapers, when they laugh, ought to be able to perceive what it is they are laughing at.

Logic is the prime necessity of the hour. Decomposition and transformation is going on all around us, but far too slowly. Some opinions, bold and erect as they may still stand, are in reality but empty shells. One shove would be fatal. Why is it not given?

The world is full of doleful creatures, who move about demanding our sympathy. I have nothing to offer them but doses of logic, and stern commands to move on or fall back. Catholics in distress about Infallibility; Protestants devoting themselves to the dismal task of paring down the dimensions of this miracle, and reducing the credibility of that one—as if any appreciable relief from the burden of faith could be so obtained; sentimental sceptics, who, after labouring to demolish what they call the chimera of superstition, fall to weeping as they remember they have now no lies to teach their children; democrats who are frightened at the rough voice of the people and aristocrats flirting with democracy. Logic, if it cannot cure, might at least silence these gentry.

THE MUSE OF HISTORY.

TWO distinguished men of letters, each an admirable representative of his University—Mr. John Morley and Professor Seeley—have published opinions on the subject of history, which, though very likely to prove right, deserve to be carefully considered before assent is bestowed upon them.

Mr. Morley, when President of the Midland Institute, and speaking in the Town Hall of Birmingham, said: "I do not in the least want to know what happened in the past, except as it enables me to see my way more clearly through what is happening to-day," and this same indifference is professed, though certainly nowhere displayed, in other parts of Mr. Morley's writings.*

Professor Seeley never makes his point quite so sharp as this, and probably would hesitate to do so, but in the *Expansion of England* he expounds a theory of history largely based upon an indifference like that which Mr. Morley professed at Birmingham. His book opens thus: "It is a favourite maxim of mine that history, while it should be scientific in its method, should pursue a practical object—that is, it should not merely gratify the reader's curiosity about the past, but modify his view of the present and his forecast of the future. Now, if this maxim be sound, the history of England ought to end with something that might be called a moral."

This, it must be admitted, is a large order. The task of the historian, as here explained, is not merely to tell us the story of the past, and thus gratify our curiosity, but, pursuing a practical object, to seek to modify our views of the present and help us in our forecasts of the

* *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. iii., p. 9.

future, and this the historian is to do, not unconsciously and incidentally, but deliberately and of set purpose. One can well understand how history, so written, will usually begin with a maxim, and invariably end with a moral.

What we are afterwards told in the same book follows in logical sequence upon our first quotation—namely, that “history fades into *mere literature* (the italics are ours) when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics.” In this grim sentence we read the dethronement of Clio. The poor thing must forswear her father’s house, her tuneful sisters, the invocation of the poet, the worship of the dramatist, and keep her terms at the University, where, if she is really studious and steady, and avoids literary companions (which ought not to be difficult), she may hope some day to be received into the Royal Society as a second-rate science. The people who do not usually go to the Royal Society will miss their old playmate from her accustomed slopes, but, even were they to succeed in tracing her to her new home, access would be denied them; for Professor Seeley, that stern custodian, has his answer ready for all such seekers. “If you want recreation, you must find it in Poetry, particularly Lyrical Poetry. Try Shelley. We can no longer allow you to disport yourselves in the Fields of History as if they were a mere playground. Clio is enclosed.”

At present, however, this is not quite the case; for the old literary traditions are still alive, and prove somewhat irritating to Professor Seeley, who, though one of the most even-tempered of writers, is to be found almost angry with Thackeray, a charming person, who, as we all know, had, after his lazy literary fashion, made an especial study of Queen Anne’s time, and who cherished the pleasant fancy that a man might lie in the heather with a pipe in his mouth, and yet, if he had only an odd volume of the *Spectator* or the *Tatler* in his hand, be learning history all the time. “As we read in these delightful pages,” says the author of *Esmond*, “the past age returns; the England of our ancestors is

revivified ; the Maypole rises in the Strand ; the beaux are gathering in the coffee-houses ;" and so on, in the style we all know and love so well, and none better, we may rest assured, than Professor Seeley himself, if only he were not tortured by the thought that people were taking this to be a specimen of the science of which he is a *Regius Professor*. His comment on this passage of Thackeray's is almost a groan. "What is this but the old literary groove, leading to no trustworthy knowledge?" and certainly no one of us, from letting his fancy gaze on the Maypole in the Strand, could ever have foretold the Griffin. On the same page he cries : "Break the drowsy spell of narrative. Ask yourself questions, set yourself problems ; your mind will at once take up a new attitude. Now, modern English history breaks up into two grand problems—the problem of the Colonies and the problem of India." The Cambridge School of History with a vengeance !

In a paper read at the South Kensington Museum in 1884, Professor Seeley observes : "The essential point is this, that we should recognise that to study history is to study not merely a narrative, but *at the same time* certain theoretical studies." He then proceeds to name them :—Political philosophy, the comparative study of legal institutions, political economy, and international law.

These passages are, I think, adequate to give a fair view of Professor Seeley's position. History is a science, to be written scientifically and to be studied scientifically in conjunction with other studies. It should pursue a practical object and be read with direct reference to practical politics—using the latter word, no doubt, in an enlightened sense. History is not a narrative of all sorts of facts—biographical, moral, political—but of such facts as a scientific diagnosis has ascertained to be historically interesting. In fine, history, if her study is to be profitable and not a mere pastime, less exhausting than skittles and cheaper than horse exercise, must be dominated by some theory capable of verification by

reference to certain ascertained facts belonging to a particular class.

Is this the right way of looking upon history? The dictionaries tell us that history and story are the same word, and are derived from a Greek source, signifying information obtained by inquiry. The natural definition of history, therefore, surely is the story of man upon earth, and the historian is he who tells us any chapter or fragment of that story. All things that on earth do dwell have, no doubt, their history as well as man; but when a member, however humble, of the human race speaks of history without any explanatory context, he may be presumed to be alluding to his own family records, to the story of humanity during its passage across the earth's surface.

"A talent for history"—I am quoting from an author whose style, let those mock at it who may, will reveal him—"may be said to be born with us as our chief inheritance. History has been written with quipo-threads, with feather pictures, with wampum belts, still oftener with earth-mounds and monumental stone-heaps, whether as pyramid or cairn; for the Celt and the Copt, the red man as well as the white, lives between two eternities, and warring against oblivion, he would fain unite himself in clear, conscious relation, as in dim, unconscious relation he is already united, with the whole future and the whole past."

To keep the past alive for us is the pious function of the historian. Our curiosity is endless, his the task of gratifying it. We want to know what happened long ago. Performance of this task is only proximately possible; but none the less it must be attempted, for the demand for it is born afresh with every infant's cry. History is a pageant, and not a philosophy.

Poets, no less than professors, occasionally say good things even in prose, and the following oracular utterance of Shelley is not pure nonsense:—"History is the cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men. The

past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills the theatre of everlasting generations with her harmony."

If this be thought a little too fanciful, let me adorn these pages with a passage from one of the great masters of English prose—Walter Savage Landor. Would that the pious labour of transcription could confer the tiniest measure of the gift! In that bundle of imaginary letters Landor called *Pericles and Aspasia*, we find Aspasia writing to her friend Cleone as follows:

"To-day there came to visit us a writer who is not yet an author; his name is Thucydides. We understand that he has been these several years engaged in preparation for a history. Pericles invited him to meet Herodotus, when that wonderful man had returned to our country, and was about to sail from Athens. Until then it was believed by the intimate friends of Thucydides that he would devote his life to poetry, and, such is his vigour both of thought and expression, that he would have been the rival of Pindar. Even now he is fonder of talking on poetry than any other subject, and blushed when history was mentioned. By degrees, however, he warmed, and listened with deep interest to the discourse of Pericles on the duties of a historian.

" 'May our first Athenian historian not be the greatest,' said he, 'as the first of our dramatists has been, in the opinion of many. We are growing too loquacious, both on the stage and off. We make disquisitions which render us only more and more dim-sighted, and excursions that only consume our stores. If some among us who have acquired celebrity by their compositions, calm, candid, contemplative men, were to undertake the history of Athens from the invasion of Xerxes, I should expect a fair and full criticism on the orations of Antiphon, and experience no disappointment at their forgetting the battle of Salamis. History, when she has lost her Muse, will lose her dignity, her occupation, her character, her name. She will wander about the Agora; she will start, she will stop, she will look wild, she will

look stupid, she will take languidly to her bosom doubts, queries, essays, dissertations, some of which ought to go before her, some to follow, and all to stand apart. The field of history should not merely be well tilled, but well peopled. None is delightful to me or interesting in which I find not as many illustrious names as have a right to enter it. We might as well in a drama place the actors behind the scenes, and listen to the dialogue there, as in a history push valiant men back and protrude ourselves with husky disputations. Show me rather how great projects were executed, great advantages gained, and great calamities averted. Show me the generals and the statesmen who stood foremost, that I may bend to them in reverence; tell me their names, that I may repeat them to my children. Teach me whence laws were introduced, upon what foundation laid, by what custody guarded, in what inner keep preserved. Let the books of the treasury lie closed as religiously as the Sibyl's; leave weights and measures in the market-place, Commerce in the harbour, the Arts in the light they love, Philosophy in the shade; place History on her rightful throne, and at the sides of her Eloquence and War.' "

This is, doubtless, a somewhat full-dress view of history. Landor was not one of our modern dressing-gown-and-slippers kind of authors. He always took pains to be splendid, and preferred stately magnificence to chatty familiarity. But, after allowing for this, is not the passage I have quoted infused with a great deal of the true spirit which should animate the historian, and does it not seem to take us by the hand and lead us very far away from Professor Seeley's maxims and morals, his theoretical studies, his political philosophy, his political economy, and his desire to break the drowsy spell of narrative, and to set us all problems? I ask this question in no spirit of enmity towards these theoretical studies, nor do I doubt for one moment that the student of history proper, who has a turn in their

directions, will find his pursuit made only the more fascinating the more he studies them—just as a little botany is said to add to the charm of a country walk; but—and surely the assertion is not necessarily paradoxical—these studies ought not to be allowed to disfigure the free-flowing outline of the historical Muse, or to thicken her clear utterance, which in her higher moods chants an epic, and in her ordinary moods recites a narrative which need not be drowsy.

As for maxims, we all of us have our “little hoard of maxims” wherewith to preach down our hearts and justify anything shabby we may have done; but the less we import their cheap wisdom into history the better. The author of the *Expansion of England* will probably agree with Burke in thinking that “a great empire and little minds go ill together,” and so, surely, *à fortiori*, must a mighty universe and any possible maxim. There have been plenty of brave historical maxims before Professor Seeley’s, though only Lord Bolingbroke’s has had the good luck to become itself historical.* And as for theories, Professor Flint, a very learned writer, has been at the pains to enumerate fourteen French and thirteen German philosophies of history current (though some, I expect, never ran either fast or far) since the revival of learning.

We are (are we not?) in these days in no little danger of being philosophy-ridden, and of losing our love for facts simply as facts. So long as Carlyle lived the concrete had a representative, the strength of whose epithets sufficed, if not to keep the philosophers in awe, at least to supply their opponents with stones. But now it is different. Carlyle is no more a model historian than is Shakspeare a model dramatist. The merest tyro can count the faults of either on his clumsy fingers.

* “I will answer you by quoting what I have read somewhere or other, in Dionysius Halicarnassensis I think, that history is philosophy teaching by examples.” See Lord Bolingbroke’s *Second Letter on the Study and Use of History*.

That born critic, the late Sir George Lewis, had barely completed his tenth year before he was able, in a letter to his mother, to point out to her the essentially faulty structure of *Hamlet*, and many a duller wit, a decade or two later, in his existence, has come to the conclusion that *Frederick the Great* is far too long. But whatever were Carlyle's faults, his historical method was superbly naturalistic. Have we a historian left us so honestly possessed as he was with the genuine historical instinct, the true enthusiasm to know what happened; or one half so fond of a story for its own sake, or so in love with things, not for what they were, but simply because they were? "What wonderful things are events!" wrote Lord Beaconsfield in *Coningsby*; "the least are of greater importance than the most sublime and comprehensive speculations." To say this is to go perhaps too far; certainly it is to go farther than Carlyle, who none the less was in sympathy with the remark; for he also worshipped events, believing as he did that but for the breath of God's mouth they never would have been events at all. We thus find him always treating even comparatively insignificant facts with a measure of reverence, and handling them lovingly, as does a book-hunter the shabbiest pamphlet in his collection. We have only to think of Carlyle's essay on the *Diamond Necklace* to fill our minds with his qualifications for the proud office of the historian. Were that inimitable piece of workmanship to be submitted to the criticisms of the new scientific school, we doubt whether it would be so much as classed, whilst the celebrated description of the night before the battle of Dunbar in *Cromwell*, or any hundred scenes from *The French Revolution*, would, we expect, be catalogued as good examples of that degrading process whereby history fades into mere literature.

This is not a question, be it observed, of style. What is called a picturesque style is generally a great trial. Who was it who called Professor Masson's style Carlyle

on wooden legs? What can be drearier than when a plain matter-of-fact writer attempts to be animated, and tries to make his characters live by the easy but futile expedient of writing about them in the present tense? What is wanted is a passion for facts; the style may be left to take care of itself. Let me name a historian who detested fine writing, and who never said to himself, "Go to, I will make a description," and who yet was dominated by a love for facts, whose one desire always was to know what happened, to dispel illusion, and establish the true account—Dr. S. R. Maitland, of the Lambeth Library, whose volumes entitled *The Dark Ages* and *The Reformation* are to history what Milton's *Lycidas* is said to be to poetry: if they do not interest you, your tastes are not historical.

The difference, we repeat, is not of style, but of aim. Is history a pageant or a philosophy? That eminent historian, Lord Macaulay, whose passion for letters and for "mere literature" ennobled his whole life, has expressed himself in some places, I need scarcely add in a most forcible manner, in the same sense as Mr. Morley. In his well-known essay on history, contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1828, we find him writing as follows: "Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent amongst them like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value." And again: "No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future." These are strong passages; but Lord Macaulay was a royal eclectic, and was quite out of sympathy with the majority of that brotherhood who are content to tone down their contradictories to the dull level of ineptitudes. Macaulay never toned down his contradictories, but, heightening everything all round, went on his sublime way, rejoicing like a strong man to run a race, and well knowing that he could give anybody five yards in fifty and win easily.

It is, therefore, no surprise to find him, in the very essay in which he speaks so contemptuously of facts, laying on with his vigorous brush a celebrated purple patch I would gladly transfer to my own dull page were it not too long and too well known. A line or two taken at random will give its purport.

“A truly great historian would reclaim those materials the novelist has appropriated. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon and for their phraseology in *Old Mortality*, for one half of King James in Hume and for the other half in the *Fortunes of Nigel*. . . . Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest, from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw, from the throne of the legate to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders, the stately monastery with the good cheer in its refectory, and the tournament with the heralds and ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold, would give truth and life to the representation.” It is difficult to see what abstract truth interpenetrates the cheer of the refectory, or what just calculations with respect to the future even an upholsterer could draw from a cloth, either of state or of gold; whilst most people will admit that, when the brilliant essayist a few years later set himself to compose his own magnificent history, so far as he interpenetrated it with the abstract truths of Whiggism, and calculated that the future would be satisfied with the first Reform Bill, he did ill and guessed wrong.

To reconcile Macaulay's utterances on this subject is beyond my powers, but of two things I am satisfied: the first is that, were he to come to life again, a good many of us would be more careful than we are how we write about him; and the second is that, on the happening of the same event, he would be found protesting against the threatened domination of all things by scientific theory. A Western American, who was once compelled to spend some days in Boston, was accus-

tomed in after-life to describe that seat of polite learning to his horrified companions in California as a city in whose streets Respectability stalked unchecked. This is just what philosophical theories are doing amongst us, and a decent person can hardly venture abroad without one, though it does not much matter which one. Everybody is expected to have "a system of philosophy with principles coherent, interdependent, subordinate, and derivative," and to be able to account for everything, even for things it used not to be thought sensible to believe in, like ghosts and haunted houses. Keats remarks in one of his letters with great admiration upon what he christens Shakspeare's "negative capability," meaning thereby Shakspeare's habit of complaisant observation from outside of theory, and his keen enjoyment of the unexplained facts of life. He did not pour himself out in every strife. We have but little of this negative capability. The ruddy qualities of delightfulness, of pleasantness, are all "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." The varied elements of life—the

"Murmur of living,
Stir of existence,
Soul of the world"—

seem to be fading from literature. Pure literary enthusiasm sheds but few rays. To be lively is to be flippant, and epigram is dubbed paradox.

That many people appear to like a drab-coloured world hung round with dusky shreds of philosophy is sufficiently obvious. These persons find any relaxation they may require from a too severe course of theories, religious, political, social, or now, alas! historical, in the novels of Mr. W. D. Howells, an American gentleman who has not been allowed to forget that he once asserted of fiction what Professor Seeley would be glad to be able to assert of history, that the drowsy spell of narrative has been broken. We are to look for no more Sir Walters, no more Thackerays, no more Dickens. The

stories have all been told. Plots are exploded. Incident is over. In moods of dejection these dark sayings seemed only too true. Shakspeare's saddest of sad lines rose to one's lips :—

“My grief lies onward and my joy behind.”

Behind us are *Ivanhoe* and *Guy Mannering*, *Pendennis* and *The Virginians*, *Pecksniff* and *Micawber*. In front of us stretch a never-ending series, a dreary vista of *Foregone Conclusions*, *Counterfeit Presentments*, and *Undiscovered Countries*. But the darkest watch of the night is the one before the dawn, and relief is often nearest us when we least expect it. All this gloomy nonsense was suddenly dispelled, and the fact that really and truly, and behind this philosophical arras, we were all inwardly ravening for stories was most satisfactorily established by the incontinent manner in which we flung ourselves into the arms of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, to whom we could almost have raised a statue in the market-place for having written *Treasure Island*.

But to return to history. The interests of our poor human life, which seems to become duller every day, require that the fields of history should be kept for ever unenclosed, and be a free breathing-place for a pallid population well-nigh stifled with the fumes of philosophy.

Were we, imaginatively, to propel ourselves forward to the middle of the next century, and to fancy a well-equipped historian armed with the digested learning of Gibbon, endowed with the eye of Carlyle, and say one-fifteenth of his humour (even then a dangerous allotment in a dull world), the moral gravity of Dr. Arnold, the critical sympathy of Sainte-Beuve, and the style of Dr. Newman, approaching the period through which we have lived, should we desire this talented mortal to encumber himself with a theory into which to thrust all our doings as we toss clothes into a portmanteau; to set himself to extract the essence of some new political philosophy, capable of being applied to the practical politics of his

own day, or to busy himself with problems or economics ? To us personally, of course, it is a matter of indifference how the historians of the twentieth century conduct themselves ; but ought not our altruism to bear the strain of a hope that at least one of the band may avoid all these things, and, leaving political philosophy to the political philosopher and political economy to the political economist, remember that the first, if not the last, duty of the historian is to narrate, to supply the text not the comment, the subject not the sermon, and proceed to tell our grandchildren and remoter issue the story of our lives ? The clash of arms will resound through his pages as musically as ever it does through those of the elder historians as he tells of the encounter between the Northern and Southern States of America, in which Right and Might, those great twin-brethren, fought side by side ; but Romance, that ancient parasite, clung affectionately with her tendril-hands to the mouldering walls of an ancient wrong, thus enabling the historian, whilst awarding the victor's palm to General Grant, to write kindly of the lost cause, dear to the heart of a nobler and more chivalrous man, General Lee, of the Virginian army. And again, is it not almost possible to envy the historian to whom will belong the task of writing with full information, and all the advantage of the true historic distance, the history of that series of struggles and heroisms, of plots and counter-plots, of crimes and counter-crimes, resulting in the freedom of Italy, and of telling to a world, eager to listen, the life-story of Joseph Mazzini ?

“ Of God nor man was ever this thing said,
 That he could give
 Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead
 Mother might live.
 But this man found his mother dead and slain,
 With fast-sealed eyes,
 And bade the dead rise up and live again,
 And she did rise.”

Nor will our imaginary historian be unmindful of Cavour,

or fail to thrill his readers by telling them how, when the great Italian statesman, with many sins upon his conscience, lay in the very grasp of death, he interrupted the priests, busy at their work of intercession, almost roughly, with the exclamation, "Pray not for me. Pray for Italy!" whilst if he be one who has a turn for that ironical pastime, the dissection of a king, the curious character, and muddle of motives, calling itself Carlo Alberto, will afford him material for at least two paragraphs of subtle interest. Lastly, if our historian is ambitious of a larger canvas and of deeper colours, what is there to prevent him, bracing himself to the task,

"As when some mighty painter dips
His pencil in the hues of earthquake and eclipse,"

from writing the epitaph of the Napoleonic legend?

But all this time I hear Professor Seeley whispering in my ear, "What is this but the old literary groove leading to no trustworthy knowledge?" If by trustworthy knowledge is meant demonstrable conclusions, capable of being expressed in terms at once exact and final, trustworthy knowledge is not to be gained from the witness of history, whose testimony none the less must be received, weighed, and taken into account. Truly observes Carlyle: "If history is philosophy teaching by examples, the writer fitted to compose history is hitherto an unknown man. Better were it that mere earthly historians should lower such pretensions, and, aiming only at some picture of the thing acted, which picture itself will be but a poor approximation, leave the inscrutable purport of them an acknowledged secret." "Some picture of the thing acted." Here we behold the task of the historian; nor is it an idle, fruitless task. Science is not the only or the chief source of knowledge. The *Iliad*, Shakspeare's plays, have taught the world more than the *Politics* of Aristotle or the *Novum Organum* of Bacon.

Facts are not the dross of history, but the true metal,

and the historian is a worker in that metal. He has nothing to do with abstract truth, or with practical politics, or with forecasts of the future. A worker in metal he is, and has certainly plenty of what Lord Bacon used to call "stuff" to work upon; but if he is to be a great historian, and not a mere chronicler, he must be an artist as well as an artisan, and have something of the spirit which animated such a man as Francesco Francia of Bologna, now only famous as a painter, but in his own day equally celebrated as a worker in gold, and whose practice it was to sign his pictures with the word Goldsmith after his name, whilst he engraved Painter on his golden crucifixes.

The true historian, therefore, seeking to compose a true picture of the thing acted, must collect facts, select facts, and combine facts. Methods will differ, styles will differ. Nobody ever does anything exactly like anybody else; but the end in view is generally the same, and the historian's end is truthful narration. Maxims he will have, if he is wise, never a one; and as for a moral, if he tell his story well, it will need none; if he tell it ill, it will deserve none.

The stream of narrative flowing swiftly, as it does, over the jagged rocks of human destiny, must often be turbulent and tossed; it is, therefore, all the more the duty of every good citizen to keep it as undefiled as possible, and to do what in him lies to prevent peripatetic philosophers on the banks from throwing their theories into it, either dead ones to decay, or living ones to drown. Let the philosophers ventilate their theories, construct their blow-holes, extract their essences, discuss their maxims, and point their morals as much as they will; but let them do so apart. History must not lose her muse, or "take to her bosom doubts, queries, essays, dissertations, some of which ought to go before her, some to follow, and all to stand apart." Let us at all events secure our narrative first—sermons and philosophy the day after.

CAMBRIDGE AND THE POETS.

WHY all the English poets, with a barely decent number of exceptions, have been Cambridge men has always struck me, as did the abstinence of the Greeks from malt Mr. Calverley, "as extremely curious." But in this age of detail, one must, however reluctantly, submit to prove one's facts, and I, therefore, propose to institute a "Modest Inquiry" into this subject. Imaginatively, I shall don proctorial robes, and armed with a duster, saunter up and down the library, putting to each poet as I meet him the once dreaded question, "Sir, are you a member of this University?"

But whilst I am arranging myself for this function, let me utilise the time by making two preliminary observations—the first one being that, as to-day is Sunday, only such free libraries are open as may happen to be attached to public-houses, and I am consequently confined to my own poor shelves, and must be forgiven even though I make some palpable omissions. The second is that I exclude from my survey living authors. I must do so; their very names would excite controversy about a subject which, when wisely handled, admits of none.

I now pursue my inquiry. That Chaucer was a Cambridge man cannot be proved. It is the better opinion that he was (how else should he have known anything about the Trumpington Road?), but it is only an opinion, and as no one has ever been found reckless enough to assert that he was an Oxford man, he must be content to "sit out" this inquiry along with Shakspeare, Webster, Ford, Pope, Cowper, Burns, and Keats, no one of whom ever kept his terms at either University. Spenser is, of course, the glory of the Cambridge Pem-

broke, though were the fellowships of that college made to depend upon passing a yearly examination in the *Faerie Queen*, to be conducted by Dean Church, there would be wailing and lamentation within her rubicund walls. Sir Thomas Wyatt was at St. John's, Fulke Greville Lord Brooke at Jesus, Giles and Phineas Fletcher were at King's, Herrick was first at St. John's, but migrated to the Hall, where he is still reckoned very pretty reading, even by boating men. Cowley, most precocious of poets, and Suckling were at Trinity, Waller at King's, Francis Quarles was of Christ's. The Herbert family were divided, some going to Oxford and some to Cambridge, George, of course, falling to the lot of Cambridge. John Milton's name alone would deify the University where he pursued his almost sacred studies. Andrew Marvell, a pleasant poet and savage satirist, was of Trinity. The author of *Hudibras* is frequently attributed to Cambridge, but, on being interrogated, he declined to name his college—always a suspicious circumstance.

I must not forget Richard Crashaw, of Peterhouse. Willingly would I relieve the intolerable tedium of this dry inquiry by transcribing the few lines of his now beneath my eye. But I forbear, and "steer right on."

Of dramatists we find Marlowe (untimelier death than his was never any) at Corpus; Greene (I do not lay much stress on Greene) was both at St. John's and Clare. Ben Jonson was at St. John's, so was Nash. John Fletcher (whose claims to be considered the senior partner in his well-known firm are simply paramount) was at Corpus. James Shirley, the author of *The Maid's Revenge* and of the beautiful lyric beginning "The glories of our birth and state," in the innocence of his heart first went to St. John's College, Oxford, from whence he was speedily sent down, for reasons which the delightful author of *Athenæ Oxonienses* must really be allowed to state for himself. "At the same time (1612) Dr. William Laud presiding at that house,

he had a very great affection for Shirley, especially for the pregnant parts that were visible in him, but then, having a broad or large mole upon his left cheek, which some esteemed a deformity, that worthy doctor would often tell him that he was an unfit person to take the sacred function upon him, and should never have his consent to do so." Thus treated, Shirley left Oxford, that "home of lost causes," but not apparently of large moles, and came to Cambridge, and entered at St. Catharine's Hall, where, either because the authorities were not amongst those who esteemed a broad or large mole upon the left cheek to be a deformity, or because a mole, more or less, made no sort of difference in the personal appearance of the college, or for other good and sufficient reasons, Shirley was allowed without, I trust, being often told of his mole, to proceed to his degree and to Holy Orders.

Starting off again, we find John Dryden, whose very name is a tower of strength (were he to come to life again he would, like Mr. Brown of Calaveras, "clean out half the town"), at Trinity. In this poet's later life he said he liked Oxford better. His lines on this subject are well known :

"Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
Than his own Mother-University.
Thebes did his rude, unknowing youth engage,
He chooses Athens in his riper age."

But idle preferences of this sort are beyond the scope of my present inquiry. After Dryden we find Garth at Peterhouse and charming Matthew Prior at John's. Then comes the great name of Gray. Perhaps I ought not to mention Christopher Smart, who was a Fellow of Pembroke; and yet the author of *David*, under happier circumstances, might have conferred additional poetic lustre even upon the college of Spenser.*

* This passage was written before Mr. Browning's *Parleyings* had appeared. Christopher is now "a person of importance," and needs no apology.

Between the years 1790 and 1805 we find Byron and his bear at Trinity, Coleridge at Jesus, and Wordsworth at St. John's. The last-named poet was fully alive to the honour of belonging to the same University as Milton. In language not unworthy of Mr. Trumbull, the well-known auctioneer in *Middlemarch*, he has recorded as follows :

“ Among the band of my compeers was one
Whom chance had stationed in the very room
Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard,
Be it confest that for the first time seated
Within thy innocent lodge and oratory,
One of a festive circle, I poured out
Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride
And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
Never excited by the fumes of wine
Before that hour or since.” *

I know of no more amiable trait in the character of Cambridge men than their willingness to admit having been drunk *once*.

After the great name of Wordsworth any other must seem small, but I must, before concluding, place on record Præd, Macaulay, Kingsley, and Calverley.

A glorious Roll-call indeed !

“ Earth shows to Heaven the names by thousands told
That crown her fame.”

So may Cambridge.

Oxford leads off with one I could find it in my heart to grudge her, beautiful as she is—Sir Philip Sidney. Why, I wonder, did he not accompany his friend and future biographer, Fulke Greville, to Cambridge? As Dr. Johnson once said to Boswell, “ Sir, you *may* wonder ! ” Sidney most indisputably was at Christchurch. Old George Chapman, who I suppose was young once, was (I believe) at Oxford, though I have known Cambridge to claim him. Lodge and Peele were at Oxford, so were Francis Beaumont and his brother Sir John.

* *The Prelude*, p. 55.

Philip Massinger, Shakerley Marmion, and John Marston are of Oxford, also Watson and Warner. Henry Vaughan the Silurist, Sir John Davies, George Sandys, Samuel Daniel, Dr. Donne, Lovelace, and Wither belong to the sister University, so did Dr. Brady; but Oxford must not claim all the merit of the metrical version of the Psalms, for Brady's colleague, Dr. Nahum Tate, was a Dublin man. Otway and Collins, Young, Johnson, Charles Wesley, Southey, Landor, Hartley Coleridge, Beddoes, Keble, Isaac Williams, Faber, and Clough are names of which their University may well be proud. But surely, when compared with the Cambridge list, a falling-off must be admitted.

A poet indeed once came into residence at University College, whose single name—for, after all, poets must be weighed and not counted—would have gone far to right the balance, but is Oxford bold enough to claim Shelley as her own? She sent him down, not for riotous living, for no purer soul than his ever haunted her courts, but for wanting to discuss with those whose business it was to teach him questions of high philosophy. Had Shelley only gone to Trinity in 1810, I feel sure wise and witty old Dr. Mansel would never have sent him down. Spenser, Milton, and Shelley! What a triad of immortal fames they would have made. As it is, we expect Oxford, with her accustomed composure, will insist upon adding Shelley to her score; but even when she has been allowed to do so, she must own herself beaten both in men and metal.

But this being so—why was it so? It is now my turn to own myself defeated. I cannot for the life of me tell how it happened.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO TELL A GOOD BOOK FROM A BAD ONE?

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT EDINBURGH ON
NOVEMBER 3, 1899.

DURING the last few months a saying of Voltaire's has been sounding uncomfortably in my ears. It occurs in one of his amusing letters from England. He remarks: "The necessity of saying something, the perplexity of having nothing to say, and a desire of being witty are three circumstances which alone are capable of making even the greatest writer ridiculous." A hasty assent to an ill-considered request has placed me where I am to-night. The popularity of Lord Rosebery has filled this hall, and I feel the direful necessity of saying something, whilst, at the same time, a rigorously conducted self-examination has made plain to me what is the perplexity of having nothing to say. As for the desire of being witty, there was a time, I frankly confess, when I was consumed by it; I am so no longer. This desire of being witty, sneered at as it always is, has in most cases an honourable because a humane origin. It springs from pity for the audience. It is given but to half a dozen men in a century really to teach their grown-up contemporaries, whilst to inflame them by oratory is happily the province of a very few, but to bore them well-nigh to extinction is within the scope of most men's powers. This desire to amuse just a little ought not, therefore, to be so very contemptible, springing as it does from the pity that is akin to love. But now, to me, at all events, it matters not to whom this desire is related or by whom it was begot. I have

done with it. Ten years in the House of Commons and on the political platform have cured me of a weakness I now feel to be unmanly. I no longer pity my audiences; I punish them.

Having made this point clear, I pass on.

There is something truly audacious in my talking to Edinburgh people on a question of Taste; indeed, it is not only an audacious, but an *eerie* thing to do. I remember, Lord Rosebery, how you were affected, so you have told us, the first time you addressed the society of which you are now president, by the air of old-world wisdom that hung about Lord Colonsay. But, at all events, that venerable lawyer was then in the flesh. To-night I seem surrounded by ghosts in wigs, the ghosts of Edinburgh men all famous in their day, some famous for all days, who, at the very sound of the word *Taste* uttered after all this lapse of years in this hall, have hurried hither this wet and stormy night, full of doubts and suspicions, to hear how a theme once their very own may come to be handled by a stranger at the end of a century not their own.

“What else should tempt them back to taste our air
Except to see how their successors fare?”

I shall say nothing to offend these courtly shades. I am far too much in doubt about the Present, far too perturbed about the Future, to be otherwise than profoundly reverential towards the Past. Besides, as they cannot speak, it would be ill-bred even to poke a little fun at them. I wish it were otherwise. I wish—how I wish!—that Lord Rosebery could now call upon Dr. Blair to address you—the great Dr. Blair, whose *Lectures on Taste* may still be had of the Edinburgh second-hand booksellers for a sum it would be ungenerous to state in figures. After all, the best books are the cheapest. Mr. Home, the author of *Douglas*, would, I dare say, conquer the shyness that pursued him through life and say a few words in response to a call; “Jupiter”

Carlyle would probably prefer to reserve till supper-time (the meal when mostly truth is spoken) his trenchant criticisms. It would be honouring the occasion too much to suppose that the great Adam Smith would care to attend, or a greater than Adam Smith, David Hume, a man who, though the twentieth century may slip his collar, has more than any other single thinker dominated the nineteenth, from its tremendous beginnings to its sombre close. David Hume is, of all others, the Edinburgh man I should most like to hear on the *Standard of Taste*. One hundred and fifty-seven years have gone by since he published an essay on this very subject, to which I shall refer in a minute.

I have raised the subject of taste and a standard of taste by asking the question, "Is it possible to tell a good book from a bad one?" This almost involves an affirmative reply. A well-known Nonconformist divine wrote a short treatise which he entitled, *Is it Possible to make the Best of Both Worlds?* But this world, at all events, always persisted (much to the author's annoyance) in calling the book *How to make the Best of Both Worlds*, whilst in the trade the volume was always referred to (curtly enough) as *Binney's Best*.

The world is a vulgar place, but it has the knack, the vulgar knack, of hitting nails on the head. Unless, in the opinion of the author, it *was* possible to make the best of both worlds, there was small probability of a prosperous Protestant divine asking the question at all; and in the same way, unless I am prepared to answer my own query with a blunt negative and to sit down, it becomes necessary to drop a hint or two as to how a good book may be known from a bad one.

Firstly, it is a very difficult thing to do, but difficulty is no excuse. Are there not treatises extant which instruct their readers how to tell a good horse from a bad one, and even, so overreaching is the ambition of man, how to boil a potato?—both feats of great skill and infrequent achievement.

Secondly, not only is the task difficult, but the necessity for mastering it is urgent. The matter really presses.

It is, I know, usual when a man like myself, far gone in middle life, finds himself addressing a company containing many young people, to profess great sorrow for his own plight and to heap congratulations on the youthful portion of his audience. I am in no mood to-night for any such polite foolery. When I think of the ever-increasing activity of the press, home, foreign, and colonial—the rush of money into the magazine market, the growth of what is called education, the extension of the copyright laws, and the spread of what Goethe somewhere calls “the noxious mist, the dropping poison of half culture”—so far from congratulating those of you who are likely to be alive fifty years hence, I feel far more disposed to offer these unlucky youths and maidens my sincerest condolences, and to reserve all my congratulations for myself.

The output of books is astounding. Their numbers destroy their reputation. A great crowd of books is as destructive of the literary instinct, which is a highly delicate thing, as is a London evening party of the social instinct. Novel succeeds novel, speculative treatise speculative treatise, in breathless haste, each treading upon the heels of its predecessor, and followed by a noisy crowd of critics bellowing and shouting praise or blame. Newspaper paragraphs about the books that are to be rub the bloom off these peaches long before they lie upon our tables. The other day I read this announcement: “The Memoir of Dr. Berry, of Wolverhampton, will bear the *simple* title, *Life of the Rev. C. A. Berry, D.D.*” Heavens! what other title could it bear? These paragraphs are usually inspired by the publisher, for nowhere is competition more fierce than among publishers, who puff their own productions and extol the often secret charms of their kept authors with an impetuosity almost indelicate. In the wake of the

publisher and the critic there sidles by a subtler shape, the literary interviewer, one of the choicest products of the age, who, playing with deft fingers on that most responsive of all instruments, human vanity, supplies the newspapers with columns of confessions taken down from the lips of authors themselves, who seem to be glad to tell us how they came to be the great creatures advertisement has made them, how their first books got themselves written, and which of their creations they themselves love the best. Let us never be tempted to underrate the labours of the interviewer. There is apt to be far more of that delicious compound human nature in the writings of the interviewer than in the works of the interviewed. If those authors only knew it, by far their most interesting character is their own.

But not only is the output enormous, and what may be called the undergrowth rank, but the treatment is too frequently crude. Penmen, as bookwriters are now pleasingly called, in their great haste to carry their goods early to market, are too apt to gobble up what they take to be the results of scientific investigation; and stripping them bare of the conditions and qualifications properly belonging to scientific methods, to present them to the world as staple truths, fit matter for æsthetic treatment. There is something half comic, half tragic in the almost headlong apprehension of half-born truths by half-educated minds. Whilst the serious investigator is carefully "sounding his dim and perilous way," making good his ground as he goes,

"Till captive Science yields her last retreat,"

these half-inspired dabblers, these ready-reckoners, are already hawking the discovery about the streets, making it the *motif* of their jejune stage-plays and the text of their blatant discourses.

To stay this Niagara, to limit this output, is, of course, impossible. Nothing can stop it. Agricultural depression *did not* hit it. Declining trade never affected

it. It is confidently anticipated that the millionaires of the future will be the writers of really successful shilling shockers and farces that take the town. *Charley's Aunt* has made more money than would be represented by the entire fortunes of Sir Walter Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens all added together.

Our concern to-night is with none of these fine folks. I, for one, am always ready to prostrate myself at the feet of Genius. Nothing will ever induce me to quarrel with genius. Without it there would be no rapture in reading, and small joy in life. Talent must be a very delightful thing both to possess and to exercise. Learning is for ever honourable; industry is always respectable. To be a successful impostor, a really fraudulent author, to live in luxury by the bad taste of your contemporaries, to splash with the mud from the wheels of your fast-driven curricule the blind Miltons and angry Carlyles of your own day as they painfully pedestrianise the pavement, must have an element of fun about it—but it is not for us. I am assuming that we do not belong to the many who write, or to the many who criticise in print what is written, but to the few who read. How are *we* to tell a good book from a bad one? Not for the purpose of making money out of the process, but for the solace of our own souls, for the education of our own powers, for the increase of our own joys. It is done by the exercise of a discriminative faculty called Taste. If you ask that amusing figment the man in the street what Taste is, the only answers you are likely to get are that "Tastes differ," or "What is one man's meat is another man's poison," or "All is grist that comes to my mill," or "*De gustibus non est disputandum*;" most discouraging replies every one of them. Nor would it be wise to attempt to minimise these differences of Taste; they are most real. Hume, in the Essay I promised to quote from, says only too truthfully:

"Every voice is united in applauding elegance, pro-

priety, simplicity, spirit in writing; and in blaming fustian, affectation, coldness, and a false brilliancy. But when critics come to particulars this seeming unanimity vanishes, and it is found they had affixed a very different meaning to their expressions. In all matters of opinion in science the case is opposite. The difference among men is there oftener found to lie in generals than in particulars, and to be less in reality than in appearance. An explanation of the terms commonly ends the controversy, and the disputants are surprised to find that they had been quarrelling while, at bottom, they agreed in their judgment."

The truth of this is obvious. We all hate fustian and affectation; but were I to have such bad taste as to inquire whether that popular novelist Mr. A. B. ever writes anything but fustian, or whether the exquisite style of Mr. C. D. has not a strong savour of affectation about it, I should excite angry passions.

But as it is Hume's contention that there is a standard of Taste, he necessarily proceeds to say, "that though this axiom (namely, that tastes differ), by passing into a proverb, seems to have attained the sanction of common-sense, there is certainly a species of common-sense which opposes it." Having said this, Hume determined to give his readers an illustration of this standard, and in order to do so, he adopted the common and useful device of selecting extreme instances. He took two authors so good that all, he thought, must acknowledge their goodness, and two authors so bad that all, he thought, must acknowledge their badness. "Whoever," he writes, "would assert an equality of genius and elegance between Ogilby and Milton, or Bunyan and Addison, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance than if he had maintained a molehill to be as high as Teneriffe or a pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found persons who give the preference to the former authors, no one pays attention to such a taste, and we pronounce without scruple the sentiment

of these pretended critics to be absurd and ridiculous."

Hume's first illustration will pass muster. In the case of *Ogilby v. Milton*, the pursuer has long since been dismissed with expenses; but otherwise with Bunyan *v. Addison*, for dearly as we may love Sir Roger de Coverley, and fond though we may be of taking a turn among the tombs in Westminster Abbey with Mr. Spectator, Bunyan's Christian and Faithful, his Mr. Worldly-Wiseman, Giant Despair, Vanity Fair, and Interpreter's House have established for themselves a homestead in the minds and memories of the English-speaking race, from which they can only be evicted along with Moses in the Bulrushes, Daniel in the Lions' Den, the Canterbury Pilgrims, Rosalind in the Forest of Arden, and Jeannie Deans in the Robber's Cave, near Gunnersley Hill, in Lincolnshire.

So difficult is it to be a critic! The good-natured ghost of St. David will pardon a reference only made for the purpose of remarking how, if he made a bad shot in 1742, it is more than probable—nay, it is certain—that the critics of 1899 do not always hit the target.

The fact is, and we may as well recognise it frankly, all critical judgments are and must ever remain liable to two sources of variation, to both of which Hume refers. The one is the different humours of particular men, the other is the particular manners and opinions of our age and country. There is no escaping from these, and this being so, it is idle to expect the abolition of differences of opinion in matters of taste. How Hume came to go wrong—for I assume he did go wrong—about John Bunyan we can see from his use of the word *elegance* in conjunction with *genius*; "an equality of genius and elegance," he wrote. Elegance was one of the catch-words of the eighteenth century. It was, at all events, a sensible catch-word, though, like all catch-words, sure occasionally to mislead.

The upshot of all this is depressing and discouraging

to the very last degree. In the realm of morals we may believe with the great Bishop Butler that there is in every man a superior principle of reflection or conscience which passes judgment upon himself, which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself and approves or condemns accordingly. In the region of the exact sciences, among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true. But who will dare so to lay down the law about the life of a book, or the future of a picture, or the reputation of a building; and yet who can doubt that in the realm of beauty there is a reign of law, a superior principle of reflection, passing judgment and magisterially asserting itself on every fit occasion?

Butler's theory of the conscience has been called "the pope in your bosom theory." What happiness to have an æsthetic pope, a prisoner in the Vatican of your own breast!

Speaking for myself, I could wish for nothing better, apart from moral worth, than to be the owner of a taste at once manly, refined, and unaffected, which should enable me to appreciate real excellence in literature and art, and to depreciate bad intentions and feeble execution wherever I saw them. To be for ever alive to merit in poem or in picture, in statue or in bust; to be able to distinguish between the grand, the grandiose, and the merely bumptious; to perceive the boundary between the simplicity which is divine and that which is ridiculous, between gorgeous rhetoric and vulgar ornamentation, between pure and manly English meant to be spoken or read, and sugared phrases, which seem intended, like lollipops, for suction; to feel yourself going out in joyful admiration for whatever is noble and permanent, and freezing inwardly against whatever is pretentious, wire-drawn and temporary—this, indeed, is to taste of the fruit of the tree, once forbidden, of the knowledge of good and evil.

But this is simply to extol what has not yet been proved to be attainable. What is "good taste"? My kingdom for a definition. I think the best is Burke's, given by him in that treatise on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, which he wrote before he handed over to Lord Rockingham and the Duke of Richmond and Lord John Cavendish what was meant for mankind. "I mean by the word taste no more than that faculty or those faculties of the mind which are affected with or form a judgment of the works of imagination and the elegant arts. The cause of a wrong taste is a defect of judgment, and this may arise from a natural weakness of the understanding, or, which is much more commonly the case, it may arise from a want of proper and well-directed exercise which alone can make it strong and ready. . . . It is known that the taste is improved, exactly as we improve our judgment by extending our knowledge, by a steady attention to our object, and by frequent exercise; they who have not taken these methods, if their taste decides quickly, it is always uncertainly, and their quickness is owing to their presumption and rashness, and not to any hidden irradiation that in a moment dispels all darkness from their minds."

"The cause of a wrong taste," says Burke, "is a defect of judgment;" and here I must add on my own account that nobody comes into this world with a ripe judgment. You are as likely to be born with a silk hat on your head as with good taste implanted in your breast. To go wrong is natural, to go right is discipline. Generation after generation of boys go to schools and universities to be taught to play cricket, to row, and nowadays how to play golf. Each generation reproduces with startling fidelity to the type the same old familiar, deep-rooted faults. No generation escapes them, but each in its turn has painfully to be taught to leave undone the things that naturally they would do, and do those things which, if left to themselves, they would most certainly leave undone. With oaths and

revelings are they adjured to abandon nature and to practise art, to dig up the faults they were born with, and to adopt in their place methods which time has approved and discipline established. Success is very partial, but sometimes it does happen that a patient teacher finds an apt scholar, and then, when, after weary months, it may be years of practice, something like perfection is attained, and we see before us a finished oarsman, a faultless bat, a brilliant golfer, we exclaim with admiration as we watch the movements so graceful, so easy, so effective, of this careful product of artifice, "How naturally he does it!"

Gentlemen, if you want to find the natural man at work, you must look for him in the bunkers of life. There you will find crowds of them trying to get out and upbraiding the ill-luck that (as they think) got them in. Their actions are animated, their language is strong, but neither actions nor language are in good taste.

If, then, we would possess good taste we must take pains about it. We must study models, we must follow examples, we must compare methods, and (above anything else) we must crucify the natural man. If there is one thing to be dreaded in these matters, it is what is called the unaided intelligence of the masses. A crudely-coloured oleograph of the Albert Memorial may give pleasure to an unaided intelligence, but is that pleasure to be compared in depth of satisfaction with that which is afforded when the educated eye feasts upon the nature-interpreting canvas of a great artist?

All, I think, are agreed about the study of the models; of the things which are attested, the things which, as St. Augustine says, "*sana mens omnium hominum attestatur.*" The elegant Addison agrees. "Literary taste," says he, "is the faculty which discerns the beauties of an author with pleasure and the imperfections with dislike. If a man would know whether he is possessed of this faculty, I would have him read over the celebrated works of antiquity, which have stood the

test of so many different ages and countries." Hume says the same thing. So does Goethe, who said to Eckermann, "Taste is only to be educated by contemplation not of the tolerably good, but of the truly excellent. I therefore show you only the best works, and when you are *grounded* in these you will have a standard for the rest, which you will know how to value without overrating them. And I show you the best in each class, that you may perceive that no class is to be despised, but that each gives delight when a man of genius attains the highest point." Mr. Matthew Arnold strongly held the same view, and recommended us all to carry in our heads scraps of Homer and Virgil, of Dante and Shakspeare, of Milton and Keats, and whenever we are required, as we so often are, to admire the worthless and extol the commonplace, to murmur these passages under our breath as a kind of taste- tonic. Somewhat in the same way the excellent John Howard used in his prison visitations to secrete small weighing scales about his person, and after asking to see a prisoner's ration of food would whip out his machine and convict the gaoler before his face of trying to palm off one pound for two. Mr. Arnold's pocket scales for testing poets have been ridiculed, but I recommend their use unhesitatingly.

We may then, I think, assume that the best way of telling a good book from a bad one is to make yourself as well acquainted as you can with some of the great literary models. Do not be frightened of them. They afford the widest choice; they are for all moods. There is no need to like them all alike. The language difficulty presses heavily upon some, but, as we are seeking only our own good, and not aspiring to instruct the world, we need not postpone our own critical education until we can read Sophocles for fun. No doubt it would be well if we all could, but just as it is better to spend three days in Rome or three hours in Athens than never to see those cities, so it is better to read the *An-*

tigone in the translation of Mr. Jebb than not to read it at all. It is all very well for scholars to turn up their noses at translations, but plain Britons, whose greatest book is a translation by divers hands, and whose daily prayers have been done into English for them from the Latin, may be well content, if they do not happen to be masters of the languages of antiquity, or of all the tongues of the modern world, to gain through the medium of the best translations some insight into the ways of thought and modes of expression of the sovereigns of literature, the lords of human smiles and tears. But, indeed, with the *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* in your pocket, and such volumes as *Chambers's Encyclopædia of Literature* on your shelf, the man who has only his own English at command has ample room and verge enough within which to cultivate a taste which ought to be sufficiently sound to prevent him from wallowing among the potsherds, or, decked out with vulgar fairings, from following some charlatan in his twenty-eighth edition.

We begin, then, with tradition—with tradition, which plays so great a part in religion, in law, in life. Genius may occasionally flout it, but I am assuming we have no genius. We shall do well to pay tradition reverence. It would be a nice inquiry whether it is better for a man's morale to be a rebel or a slave; but I am not concerned with it to-night. Veneration for the models does not involve servility.

It is a tremendous saying of Landor's, "We admire by tradition and we criticise by caprice."

To admire by tradition is a poor thing. Far better really to admire Miss Gabblegoose's novels than pretend to admire Miss Austen's. Nothing is more alien to the spirit of pure enjoyment than simulated rapture, borrowed emotion. If after giving a classic a fair chance you really cannot abide him, or remain hermetically sealed against his charm, it is perhaps wisest to say nothing about it, though if you do pluck up heart of

grace and hit him a critical rap over his classical costard it will not hurt him, and it may do you good. But let the rap succeed and not precede a careful study, for depend upon it it is no easy matter to become a classic. A thousand snares beset the path to immortality, as we are pleased to call a few centuries of fame. Rocks, snows, avalanches, bogs—you may climb too high for your head, you may sink too low for your soul; you may be too clever by half or too dull for endurance, you may be too fashionable or too outrageous; there are a hundred ways to the pit of oblivion. Therefore, when a writer has by general consent escaped his age, when he has survived his environment, it is madness and folly for us, the children of a brief hour, to despise the great literary tradition which has put him where he is. But, I repeat, to respect tradition is not to admire traditionally.

Tradition is the most trustworthy advertisement and the wisest advice. Ah, advertisement! there, indeed, is a word to make one blush. Ruskin has somewhere told us that we are not to buy our books by advertisement, but by advice. It is very difficult nowadays to distinguish between the two. Into how many homes has the *Times* succeeded in thrusting the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the *Century Dictionary*? The *Daily News* has its own edition of Dickens, whilst the *Standard* daily trumpets the astounding merits of an Anglo-American compound which compresses into twenty volumes the best of everything. These newspapers advise us in their advertisement columns to buy books in the sale of which their proprietors are personally interested. Is their advice advertisement, or is their advertisement advice?

The advice given you by literary tradition is, at all events, absolutely independent. I therefore say, be shy of quarrelling with tradition, but by all means seek to satisfy yourselves that the particular tradition is sound. We criticise by caprice; this is the other half of Landor's

saying. The history of criticism is a melancholy one. What are we to say to the blank indifference of our fathers to *Sartor Resartus*, to *Bells and Pomegranates*, to the early poems of Tennyson and Matthew Arnold and William Morris, to *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*? Are we likely to be wiser than our fathers? All we can do is to keep hard at it crucifying the natural man. This is best done, as Burke said, by *extending our knowledge, by a steady attention to our object, and by frequent exercise.*

In extending our knowledge we must keep our eye on the models, be they books or pictures, marbles or bricks. We must, as far as possible, widen our horizons, and be always exercising our wits by constant comparisons. Above all must we ever be on our guard against prejudice, nor should we allow paradox to go about unchained.

I go back to Hume. "Strong sense united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to be judges of the fine arts;" and again he says, "It is rare to meet with a man who has a just taste without a sound understanding."

Go get thee understanding, become possessed of strong sense, if thou wouldst know how to tell a good book from a bad one. You may have—though it is not likely—Homer by heart, Virgil at your fingers' ends, all the great models of dignity, propriety and splendour may be on your shelves, and yet if you are without understanding, without the happy mixture of strong sense and delicacy of sentiment, you will fail to discern amid the crowd and crush of authors the difference between the good and the bad; you will belong to the class who preferred Cleveland to Milton, Montgomery to Keats, Moore to Wordsworth, Tupper to Tennyson.

Understanding may be got. By taking thought we can add to our intellectual stature. Delicacy may be acquired. Good taste is worth striving after, it adds to the joy of the world.

“ For most men in a brazen prison live,
 Where in the sun’s hot eye,
 With heads bent o’er their toil, they languidly
 Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,
 Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall ;
 And as year after year
 Fresh products of their barren labour fall
 From their tired hands, and rest
 Never yet comes more near,
 Gloom settles slowly down over their breast,
 And while they try to stem
 The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest,
 Death in their prison reaches them,
 Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.”

From this brazen prison, from this barren toil, from this deadly gloom, who would not make his escape if he could ? A cultivated taste, an educated eye, a pure enthusiasm for literature, are keys which may let us out if we like. But even here one must be on one’s guard against mere *connoisseurship*. “ Taste,” said Carlyle—and I am glad to quote that great name before I have done—“ if it means anything but a paltry *connoisseurship*, must mean a general susceptibility to truth and nobleness, a sense to discern and a heart to love and reverence all beauty, order, and goodness, wheresoever or in whatsoever forms and accomplishments they are to be seen.”

Wordsworth’s shepherd, Michael, who

“ Had been alone
 Amid the heart of many thousand mists
 That came to him and left him on the heights,”

had doubtless a greater susceptibility to truth and nobleness than many an *Edinburgh* or *Quarterly* reviewer ; but his love, as Wordsworth tells us, was a blind love, and his books, other than his Bible, were the green valleys and the streams and brooks.

[There is no harm in talking about books, still less in reading them, but it is folly to pretend to worship them.

* Deign on the passing world to turn your eyes,
 And pause awhile from letters to be wise.”

To tell a good book from a bad one is, then, a troublesome job, demanding, *first*, a strong understanding; *second*, knowledge, the result of study and comparison; *third*, a delicate sentiment. If you have some measure of these gifts, which, though in part the gift of the gods, may also be acquired, and can always be improved, and can avoid *prejudice*—political prejudice, social prejudice, religious prejudice, irreligious prejudice, the prejudices of the place where you could not help being born, the prejudices of the university whither chance sent you, all the prejudices that came to you by way of inheritance, and all the prejudices you have picked up on your own account as you went along—if you can give all these the slip and manage to live just a little above the clouds and mists of your own generation, why then, with luck, you may be right nine times out of ten in your judgment of a dead author, and ought not to be wrong more frequently than perhaps three times out of seven in the case of a living author; for it is, I repeat, a very difficult thing to tell a good book from a bad one.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE COWDENBEATH
(FIFESHIRE) LITERARY SOCIETY ON OCTOBER 15, 1896.

THERE is a story told of an ancient dandy in London who, taking, one sunny afternoon, his accustomed stroll down Bond Street, met an acquaintance hurrying in the direction of Westminster. "Whither away so fast this hot day?" murmured the dandy. "To the House of Commons," cried his strenuous friend, brushing past him. "What!" said the dandy, with a yawn, "does that go on still?" Yes; the House of Commons still goes on, still attracts an enormous, some think an inordinate, amount of public attention. What are called "politics" occupy in Great Britain a curiously prominent place. Literature, art, science, are avenues to a fame more enduring, more agreeable, more personally attractive than that which awaits at the end of his career the once prominent party politician. Yet with us a party leader looms more largely in the public mind, excites more curiosity, than almost any other description of mortal. He often appears where he would not seem to have any particular business. If a bust is to be unveiled of a man of letters, if a public eulogium is to be pronounced on a man of science, if the health is to be proposed of a painter or an actor, or if some distinguished foreigner is to be feasted, the astute managers of the function, anxious to draw a crowd, and to make the thing a success, try, in the first instance, at all events, to secure the presence of Mr. Balfour, or Lord Rosebery, or Lord Salisbury, or Mr. Chamberlain, rather than of Lord Kelvin or Mr. Leslie Stephen. The fact is

that politicians, and particularly the heroes of the House of Commons, the gladiators of politics, share in the country some of the popularity which naturally belongs to famous jockeys, which once belonged to the heroes of the prize ring. It is more difficult to explain this than to understand it. Our party strife, our Parliamentary contests, have long presented many of the features of a sport. When Mr. Gladstone declared in the House of Commons, with an irresistible twinkle of the eye, that he was an "old Parliamentary hand," the House was convulsed with laughter, and the next morning the whole country chuckled with delight. We all liked to think that our leading statesman was not only full of enthusiasm and zeal, but also a wily old fellow, who knew a thing or two better than his neighbours. I have always thought the instantaneous popularity of this remark of Mr. Gladstone's illustrates very well the curiously mixed feelings we entertain towards those great Parliamentary chieftains who have made their reputations on the floor of the House of Commons. There is nothing noble or exalted in the history of the House of Commons. Indeed, a devil's advocate, had he the requisite talent, could easily deliver an oration as long and as eloquent as any of Burke's or Sheridan's, taking as his subject the stupidity, cowardice, and, until quite recent times, the corruption of the House of Commons. I confess I cannot call to mind a single occasion in its long and remarkable history when the House of Commons, as a whole, played a part either obviously heroic or conspicuously wise; but we all of us can recall hundreds of occasions when, heroism and wisdom being greatly needed, the House of Commons exhibited either selfish indifference, crass ignorance, or the vulgarest passion. Nor can it honestly be said that our Parliamentary heroes have been the noblest of our race. Among great Ministers, Sir Robert Walpole had good sense; Lord North, a kind heart; the elder Pitt, a high spirit; his son, a lofty nature; Peel, a sense of duty; Lord John Russell,

a dauntless courage ; Disraeli, patience to wait ; but for no one of these distinguished men is it possible to have any very warm personal regard. If you turn to men who have never been powerful Ministers, the language of eulogy is perhaps a little easier. Edmund Burke, alone of Parliamentary orators, lives on in his speeches, full as they are of wisdom and humanity ; through the too fierce argumentations of Charles James Fox, that great man with a marred career, there always glowed a furious something which warms my heart to its innermost depth. John Bright is a great Parliamentary figure, though many of his speeches lack a "gracious somewhat." Richard Cobden's oratory possessed one unique quality : it almost persuaded his political opponents that he was right and they were wrong. Among the many brilliant lawyers who have, like birds of passage, flitted through the House of Commons, usually on their way to what they thought to be better things, I know but one of whom I could honestly say, "May my soul be with his ! " I refer to Sir Samuel Romilly, the very perfection in my eyes of a lawyer, a gentleman, and a member of Parliament, whose pure figure stands out in the frieze of our Parliamentary history like the figure of Apollo amongst a herd of satyrs and goats. And he, in a fit of depression, made an end of himself.

No, the charm—the undeniable charm ; the strength—the unquestioned strength ; the utility—of the House of Commons do not depend upon the nobility of the characters of either its leaders or its rank and file ; nor on its insight into affairs—its capacity to read the signs of the times, its moral force, still less its spiritual depth ; but because it has always, somehow or other, both before Reform Bills and after Reform Bills, represented truthfully and forcefully, not the best sense of the wisest people, not the loftiest aspirations of the noblest people, but the primary instincts, the rooted habits of a mixed race of men and women destined in the strange provi-

dence of God to play a great part in the history of the world. A zealous philanthropy may well turn pale at the history of the House of Commons which, all through the eighteenth century, tolerated with fearful composure the infamies of the slave trade, the horrors of our gaols, the barbarity of our criminal code, the savagery of the press-gang, the heathenism of the multitude, the condition of things in our mines. The eager reformer must blush as he reads of our Parliamentary representation—of rotten boroughs, of deserted villages with two members, and of Manchester with none. The financial purist must shudder as he studies the Civil List, and ponders over the pensions and sinecures which spread corruption broadcast through the land. It is true enough, and yet the fact remains, that all this time the British nation was stumbling and groaning along the path which has floated the Union Jack in every quarter of the globe. I do not know that it can be said the House of Commons did much to assist the action of this drama; but, at all events, it did not succeed in frustrating it.

However, my object to-night is to say something about the House of Commons as it exists at present, and as it strikes the humble individual who has sat in it for seven years as your representative. Well, first of all I am a Scottish member, and as a Scottish member one's attitude to the House of Commons is not a little that of an outsider. Scotland has nothing to do with the early history of the English Parliament. Until 1707 you had a Parliament of your own, with Lords and Commons sitting all together cheek by jowl. A great economy of time, for, as Andrew Fairservice in *Rob Roy* puts it, there was no need then for Lords and Commons to have their havers twice over. There is no need to be ashamed of the old Scots Parliament. It passed laws of unrivalled brevity and perfect intelligibility, a now lost art. Scotland owes more to its old Parliament than it yet does to the United Parliament. If you seek a record of its labours, you will find one in an essay penned sixty

years ago by a Scotch Tory, the very man who wrote a history of Europe in twenty volumes, to prove that Heaven was always on the side of the Tories.*

The old Scots Parliament met for the last time on March 25, 1707. Unions are never popular. The Union of England and Scotland was undoubtedly most unpopular. One member for Fifeshire voted for it, and two against it. I wonder which way I should have voted. Cupar, Burntisland, Kinghorn, Dunfermline, Inverkeithing, and Queensferry voted Aye; but St. Andrews, Dysart, Kirkcaldy, Pittenweem, voted No. The first article of the Treaty for Union, which involved the rest, was carried by 116 votes against 83; and then, as Lord Seafield said, "There was the end of an auld sang;" but some day—who knows?—the auld sang may be set to a new tune. But this much is certain—the new tune will in no way affect the loyalty of Scotsmen to the Union of the two countries. But for that Union Scotland would not stand where she does in the eyes of the world. What Scotland wanted, what Scotland standing alone could never have had, was a theatre wide enough for the energy of her sons. A country so small, so barren, could never have supplied such a theatre. Scotsmen must have taken service abroad, and spent their lives fighting other men's battles, or building up other men's fortunes. United with South Britain she has been able to play a glorious part both at home and abroad, and this she has done without losing either her Scottish character or her Scottish accent. Still, the fact remains that the seventy-two members from Scotland preserve a character of their own among the 590 representatives from England, Wales, and Ireland. This must be so. Scotch law is very different from English law. We have in Scotland our own laws and our own judicature. A Scotsman cannot be sued in an English court unless he is snapped with a writ whilst sojourning in that strange land. Scotland has her own religion;

* *Alison's Essays*, vol. i.

for, though I am far from saying that traces of a common Christianity may not be found lurking both in Presbyterianism and Episcopacy, still, speaking as a Parliament man, the religions of the two countries may be considered as distinct. In England, those who do not believe in the Divine authority of Episcopacy, who deny either the validity of the orders of the Episcopalian clergy or that there are such things as holy orders at all, who repudiate the Sacramentarian system, and hate the pretensions of a priesthood, are engaged in a daily, bitter strife with the Church party, with which Scotland has as yet no concern. The educational system is different. Here you have universal School Boards, and pay an allegiance—sometimes real, sometimes formal—to a Catechism which, though often supposed to be the most Scotch thing in existence, was, as a matter of fact, compiled in England by Englishmen. In England School Boards are far from universal, and clerically conducted schools provide the education of half the school-going population. The Scottish system of local government is different in important respects from the English. For example, your Parish Councils administer the Poor Law; in England they do not. Your rating system is different. Here the rate is divided between the owner and the occupier; in England the occupier pays the whole rate. All these differences invite different treatment—there have to be English Bills and Scotch Bills; and though some Scotch members may honestly try to understand English Bills, I never knew an English member, unless he was by birth a Scotsman, who ever took, or pretended to take, the least trouble to understand a Scotch Bill. They vote if they happen to be in the House while Scotch business is being discussed, but they vote as they are told by their party managers. It follows, as I say, from this that a Scotch member surveys the House of Commons somewhat as an outsider.

The great characteristic of the House of Commons is that it is a deliberative and consultative chamber, meet-

ing together for the purposes of framing laws (if it considers any new laws necessary) which are to bind the whole nation, and of criticising the Executive. It does not meet for the purpose of oratory, or to strengthen party organisation, but to frame laws of universal obligation and to find fault with or support Ministers. This at once gets rid of the platform orator, and establishes the difference between public meetings and the House of Commons. It is no discredit to the public meeting or to the House of Commons to say that what will find favour with the one excites the disgust of the other, for the two have little in common. The object of a speaker at a public meeting is to excite enthusiasm and to spread his faith; but in the House of Commons his object is to remove objections, to state propositions in a way least likely to make reply easy, to show that a scheme is practicable and free from particular injustices, to handle figures with dexterity, and to avoid empty phraseology. There is nothing the House of Commons hates more than to be reminded of the purgatorial flames through which each member has had to pass in order to take his seat by the side of the Speaker; and therefore it is that the utterance in all innocence, by some new member of either party, of the cries and watchwords with which he was accustomed to enliven his electioneering speeches never fails to excite the angry groans of his opponents and the sarcastic smiles of his friends. Nor is there anything dishonest in this. There is a time for all things, and the House of Commons is before everything a deliberative and consultative assembly. Another marked characteristic of the House of Commons is its total indifference to outside reputations or great fortunes. Local magnates, manufacturers whose chimneys blacken a whole countryside, merchants whose ships plough the broad and narrow seas, speculators in cotton and in sugar, mayors and provosts whose portraits adorn town halls, whose names are household words in their own districts, lawyers so eminent that

they will not open their mouths in the courts for less than a hundred guineas, need not hope to be received by the House of Commons otherwise than with languid indifference. If they prove to be bores, so much the worse; if they prove not to be bores, so much the better. If they push themselves to the front, it will be by Parliamentary methods; if they remain insignificant, it is only what was to be expected. Never was an assembly so free from all taint of mercenariness as the House of Commons. It does not care a snap of its fingers whether the income of a new member is £100,000 a year or £3 a week—whether his father was a duke or a blacksmith; its only concern with him is that, if he has anything to say, he may say it, and that if he has nothing to say, he will say nothing.

The House of Commons is often said to be a place of great good-fellowship. Within certain necessarily restricted limits it is. It is difficult to maintain aloofness. You may find yourself serving on a Committee alongside some one whose public utterances or party intrigues you have always regarded with aversion; but it may easily be that you agree with him, not, it may be, as to the Government of Ireland or the sacred principles of Free Trade, but as to the prudence or folly of a particular line of railway, or the necessity of a new water-supply for some large town. You hob-a-nob at luncheon, you grumble together over your dinner, you lament the spread of football clubs and brass bands in your respective constituencies; you criticise your leaders, and are soon quite at home in the society of the very man you thought you detested. There is nothing like a common topic to break the ice, and two members of Parliament have always something to talk about. But further than this it is hard to go. The House is too large. Amongst an assembly of 670 men well on in life the hand of Death is always busy. Vacancies occur with startling regularity. The only uncertainty is, who is to drop out of the ranks. "Death of a Member of Parliament" is a common

announcement on the placards of the evening papers; and then the thriftiest of Scotch members fumbles for his bawbee, buys the paper, stops under the next lamp-post to see who it is who has gone, whose figure will no more be seen in the Tea-room and the Lobby. Whoever it is, big man or little, a silent member or a talkative one, a wise man or a fool, his place will soon be filled up, and his party Whip will be heard moving for a new writ to issue for the Borough of Small-Talk in the place of Jeremiah Jones, deceased. "Poor Jones!" we all say; "not a bad fellow, Jones; I suppose Brown will get the seat this time."

I know no place where the great truth that no man is necessary is brought home to the mind so remorselessly, and yet so refreshingly, as the House of Commons. Over even the greatest reputations it closes with barely a bubble. And yet the vanity of politicians is enormous. Lord Melbourne, you will remember, when asked his opinion of men, replied, with his accustomed expletive, which I omit as unfit for the polite ear of Cowdenbeath, "Good fellows, very good fellows, but vain, very vain."

There is a great deal of vanity, both expressed and concealed, in the House of Commons. I often wonder why, for I cannot imagine a place where men so habitually disregard each other's feelings, so openly trample on each other's egotisms. You rise to address the House. The Speaker calls on you by name. You begin your speech. Hardly are you through with the first sentence when your oldest friend, your college chum, the man you have appointed guardian of your infant children, rises in his place, gives you a stony stare, and, seizing his hat in his hand, ostentatiously walks out of the House, as much as to say, "I can stand many things, but not this."

Whilst speaking in the House I have never failed to notice one man, at all events, who was paying me the compliment of the closest attention, who never took his eyes off me, who hung upon my words, on whom every-

thing I was saying seemed to be making the greatest impression. In my early days I used to address myself to this man, and try my best to make my discourse worthy of his attention; but sad experience has taught me that this solitary auditor is not in the least interested either in me or in my speech, and that the only reason why he listens so intently and eyes me so closely is because he has made up his mind to follow me, and is eager to leap to his feet, in the hope of catching the Speaker's eye, the very moment I sit down. Yet, for all this, vanity thrives in the House—though what it feeds on I cannot say. We are all anxious to exaggerate our own importance, and desperately anxious to make reputations for ourselves and to have our names associated with some subject—to pose as its patron and friend. On great Parliamentary nights these vanities, from which even our leaders are not wholly exempt, are very conspicuous. On such occasions the House of Commons has reminded me of a great drying-ground, where all the clothes of a neighbourhood may be seen fluttering in a gale of wind. There are night-gowns and shirts and petticoats so distended and distorted by the breeze as to seem the garments of a race of giants, rather than of poor mortal man; even the stockings of some slim maiden, when puffed out by the lawless wind, assume dropsical proportions. But the wind sinks, having done its task, and then the matter-of-fact washer-woman unpegs the garments, sprinkles them with water, and ruthlessly passes over them her flat-irons, and, lo and behold! these giant's robes are reduced to their familiar, domestic, and insignificant proportions.

A marked characteristic of the House of Commons is its generosity. We have heard far too much lately of contending jealousies. The only thing the House is really jealous of is its own reputation. If a member, no matter who he is, or where he sits, or what he says, makes a good speech and creates a powerful impression, nobody is more delighted, more expansively and effu-

sively delighted, than Sir William Harcourt. On such occasions he glows with generosity. And this is equally true of Mr. Balfour, and indeed of the whole House, which invariably welcomes talent and rejoices over growing reputations.

Members of Parliament may be divided into two classes—Front Bench men and Back Bench men. The former are those who fill or have filled posts in an Administration, and they sit either on the Government Bench or on the Front Opposition Bench. These personages enjoy certain privileges, and the most obvious of these privileges is that they speak with a table in front of them, whereby they are enabled cunningly to conceal their notes. Now, the private or Back Bench member has no place in which to conceal his notes, save his hat, a structure ill fitted for the purpose. Another of the privileges of a Front Bench man is that he has, or is supposed to have, a right of intervention in debate just when he chooses. This is an enormous advantage. Just consider the unhappy fate of a private member who is anxious to speak during an important debate. He prepares his speech, and comes down to the House with it concealed about his person. He bides his time; an excellent opportunity occurs; nobody has as yet said what he is going to say; he rises in his place; but, alas! fifteen other members with fifteen other speeches in their pockets rise too, and the Speaker calls on one of them, and down falls our unhappy member, to wait another opportunity. This may happen frequently, and often does happen fifteen or sixteen times. He has to sit still and hear other men mangle his arguments, quote his quotations. Night follows night, and the speech remains undelivered, festering in his brain, polluting his mind. At last he gets his chance—the Speaker calls out his name; but by this time he has got sick of the subject—it has grown weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. He has lost his interest, and soon loses the thread of his discourse; he flounders and flops, has

recourse to his hat, repeats himself, grows hot and uncomfortable, forgets his best points, and finally sits down dejected, discouraged, disappointed. And all the time his wife is in the Ladies' Gallery gnashing her teeth at the poor figure he is cutting! No wonder he hates the Front Bench man. But there are gradations in the Front Bench. Between the leaders of the House, who bag all the best moments, and the humble Under Secretary or Civil Lord there is a great gulf fixed. These latter gentry are not allowed to speak at all, except on matters relating to their departments, or when they are told off to speak by the leader. Nothing is more amusing than to notice the entire eclipse of some notorious chatterbox who has been given some minor post in an Administration. Before he took office he was chirping on every bough; hardly a night passed but his sweet voice was to be heard. After he has taken office he frequently has to hold his tongue for a whole session. Poor fellow! he will sometimes buttonhole you in the Lobby, and almost tearfully complain of the irksomeness of office, and tell you how he longs for the hour of emancipation, when once more his voice, like that of the turtle, shall be heard in the land. If you gently remind him of the salary he draws, and hint that it may be some consolation even for silence, ten to one he walks away in a huff, and attributes your innocent remarks to jealousy. Between the Front Bench and the Back Bench there has always been a feud. Front Bench men of the first rank are too apt, so it is said, to regard the House of Commons as a show run for their benefit, to look upon themselves as a race of actor-managers who arrange the play-bill, and divide all the best parts among themselves. The traditions of Parliament foster this idea. But the Back Bench men are not always in the mood to submit to be for ever either the audience or the supernumeraries, and whenever they get the chance of asserting themselves against their leaders they take it. But in public they seldom get the chance, so they have to

content themselves with being as disagreeable in private as they possibly can. What I think is a just complaint, frequently made by Back Benchers, relates to the habit Parliamentary leaders of late have greatly indulged in of occupying an enormous amount of time abusing one another for past inconsistencies of conduct. These amenities, sometimes called *tu quoques*, or "You are another," are infinitely wearisome, and proceed upon the mistaken assumption that the House of Commons greatly concerns itself with the political reputation of its leaders. It does nothing of the sort. What it wants is leaders who can make business go, who will show sport, and lead their hounds across a good line of country.

As a Back Benchman, the only real complaint I have to make is of the woeful waste of time. One goes down to the House every day—Saturdays and Wednesdays excepted—at 4 o'clock, and you are supposed to remain there till midnight. On Wednesdays the House meets at 12 and adjourns at 5.30. What do we do all this time? To be interested in everything that is going on is flatly impossible. A quantity of the business is of a local character, dealing with places and schemes of which we know and can know nothing. Then there are terribly protracted debates on the second readings of Bills, occasionally interesting, but necessarily full of repetitions. I do not well see how this is to be prevented; but it is a shocking infliction. The Committee stage of a Bill you have really mastered is interesting and instructive, but even this stage is too protracted; and then comes a later stage—the report stage—when a great deal is said all over again; and even this is frequently followed by a debate on the third reading. Of course, you are not in the House all the time. There are the Library, the Tea-room, and the Smoking-room, where you may play chess and draughts, but no other game whatsoever. But nobody does anything vehemently. An air of languor pervades the whole place. Listlessness abounds. Members stroll from one room to another, turn over the

newspapers, and yawn in each other's faces. In the summer months, the Terrace by the riverside has been recently converted into a kind of watering-place. From five o'clock to seven it is crowded with fine ladies and country cousins, drinking tea and devouring strawberries. Occasionally some Parliamentary person of importance will choose to stalk by, and even—such is the affability of true greatness—have a cup of tea with a party of friends. A poorer way of killing time has not, I think, yet been discovered; but it is a convincing proof of the *ennui* of Parliamentary life.

The great problem of Ministers is the reform of the rules of the House of Commons—how to make the House at once a deliberative and yet a business-like assembly.

And yet men do not willingly strike off the chains of this slavery. A private member of Parliament nowadays gets nothing, neither pudding nor praise, in exchange for his time and his money. Patronage he has absolutely none—not a single place, even in the Post-Office, to give away. Nor has he a single privilege that I am aware of. His routine duties on committees are onerous, nor are his opportunities of making speeches, if he wishes to do so, otherwise than few and far between. His leaders treat him with frigid civility, and nobody cares for a letter from him unless it encloses a postal order for at least ten shillings. And yet the labour of winning a seat and of retaining a seat is very great; nor is the expense insignificant.

When one thinks of all the different ways of spending £700, a Parliamentary election does not obviously strike you as being one of the most delightful. It may be said you have the opportunity of legislating on your own account. You may bring in a Bill of your own, and have the satisfaction of hearing it read a third time. Hardly is this true. In former days some of the most useful laws in the Statute Book were pioneered through the House by private members. But now, so greedy have Governments become, that they take nearly all

the time available for legislative purposes, and, unless the private member gets the first place in the ballot, he has not a chance of carrying any measure through if it excites the least opposition. But when all is said and done, the House of Commons is a fascinating place. It has one great passion, one genuine feeling, and that is, to represent and give practical expression to the mind of the whole nation. It has no prejudices in this matter, for it has no existence independent of its creators. It has nothing to do with the choice of its component parts. The constituencies may send up whom they choose, but these persons, when they do come up, must not expect to be hailed as "Saviours of Society." No; they must be content to be parts of a whole, to give and take, to hear their pet creeds, faiths, and fancies rudely questioned, tested, and weighed. A great nation will never consent to be dominated either by a sect or by an interest. And yet, if the House of Commons has a leaning to any particular class of member—which by rights it ought not to have—it is for an increased direct representation of the wage-earning community. I hope such representatives may be forthcoming in greater numbers as time goes on. But if they are to do any good in the House of Commons, they must go there, not as conquering heroes to whom the unknown future belongs, but as Britons anxious to contribute out of their special knowledge, from their hived experience, to the collective wisdom of the nation; they must be willing to learn as well as to teach, to increase the stock of their information, to acknowledge mistakes, to widen their views; and, above all, must they recognise that the mighty river of our national existence, if it is to continue to flow as triumphantly as before, must continue to be fed by many tributary streams.

There are, I know, those who affect to believe that representative assemblies do not stand where they did, and that the day of their doom is not far distant. I see no reason to believe anything of the kind, for, scan

the horizon as you may, you cannot discover what there is to take their place. We have no mind for military despotisms, even if we had a military hero. Nor are we disposed to believe in the superior wisdom of that so-called statesmanship which is manufactured in Government offices. Better by far the occasional mistakes of a free people and a popular assembly than the deadly and persistent errors of diplomatists and hereditary statesmen. The House of Commons will, I cannot doubt, be still going on when the twentieth century breathes its last. Change it will know, and reform; but, founded as it is upon a rational and manly system of representation, why should it not always continue to reflect, cautiously but truthfully, the mind and will of the British people?

BOOK-BUYING.

A MOST distinguished Englishman, who, great as he was in many directions, was perhaps inherently more a man of letters than anything else, has been overheard mournfully to declare that there were more booksellers' shops in his native town long years ago, when he was a boy in it, than are to-day to be found within its boundaries. And yet the place "all unabashed" now boasts its bookless self a city!

Mr. Gladstone was, of course, referring to second-hand bookshops. Neither he nor any other sensible man puts himself out about new books. When a new book is published, read an old one, was the advice of a sound though surly critic. It is one of the boasts of letters to have glorified the term "second-hand," which other crafts have "soiled to all ignoble use." But why it has been able to do this is obvious. All the best books are necessarily second-hand. The writers of to-day need not grumble. Let them "bide a wee." If their books are worth anything, they, too, one day will be second-hand. If their books are not worth anything, there are ancient trades still in full operation amongst us—the pastrycooks and the trunkmakers—who must have paper.

But is there any substance in the plaint that nobody now buys books, meaning thereby second-hand books? The late Mark Pattison, who had 16,000 volumes, and whose lightest word has therefore weight, once stated that he had been informed, and verily believed, that there were men of his own University of Oxford who, being in uncontrolled possession of annual incomes of not less than £500, thought they were doing the thing handsomely if they expended £50 a year upon their

libraries. But we are not bound to believe this unless we like. There was a touch of morosity about the late Rector of Lincoln which led him to take gloomy views of men, particularly Oxford men.

No doubt arguments *à priori* may readily be found to support the contention that the habit of book-buying is on the decline. I confess to knowing one or two men, not Oxford men either, but Cambridge men (and the passion of Cambridge for literature is a byword), who, on the plea of being pressed with business, or because they were going to a funeral, have passed a bookshop in a strange town without so much as stepping inside "just to see whether the fellow had anything." But painful as facts of this sort necessarily are, any damaging inference we might feel disposed to draw from them is dispelled by a comparison of price-lists. Compare a bookseller's catalogue of 1862 with one of the present year, and your pessimism is washed away by the tears which unrestrainedly flow as you see what *bonnes fortunes* you have lost. A young book-buyer might well turn out upon Primrose Hill and bemoan his youth, after comparing old catalogues with new.

Nothing but American competition, grumble some old stagers.

Well! why not? This new battle for the books is a free fight, not a private one, and Columbia has "joined in." Lower prices are not to be looked for. The book-buyer of 1950 will be glad to buy at to-day's prices. I take pleasure in thinking he will not be able to do so. Good finds grow scarcer and scarcer. True it is that but a few short weeks ago I picked up (such is the happy phrase, most apt to describe what was indeed a "street casualty") a copy of the original edition of *Endymion* (Keats's poem—O subscriber to Mudie's!—not Lord Beaconsfield's novel) for the easy equivalent of half a crown; but then that was one of my lucky days. The enormous increase of booksellers' catalogues and their wide circulation amongst the trade has already produced

a hateful uniformity of prices. Go where you will it is all the same to the odd sixpence. Time was when you could map out the country for yourself with some hopefulness of plunder. There were districts where the Elizabethan dramatists were but slenderly protected. A raid into the "bonnie North Countrie" sent you home again cheered with chap-books and weighted with old pamphlets of curious interests; whilst the West of England seldom failed to yield a crop of novels. I remember getting a complete set of the Brontë books in the original issues at Torquay, I may say, for nothing. Those days are over. Your country bookseller is, in fact, more likely, such tales does he hear of London auctions, and such catalogues does he receive by every post, to exaggerate the value of his wares than to part with them pleasantly, and as a country bookseller should, "just to clear my shelves, you know, and give me a bit of room." The only compensation for this is the catalogues themselves. You get *them*, at least, for nothing, and it cannot be denied that they make mighty pretty reading.

These high prices tell their own tale, and force upon us the conviction that there never were so many private libraries in course of growth as there are to-day.

Libraries are not made; they grow. Your first two thousand volumes present no difficulty, and cost astonishingly little money. Given £400 and five years, and an ordinary man can in the ordinary course, without undue haste or putting any pressure upon his taste, surround himself with this number of books, all in his own language, and thenceforward have at least one place in the world in which it is possible to be happy. But pride is still out of the question. To be proud of having two thousand books would be absurd. You might as well be proud of having two top-coats. After your first two thousand difficulty begins, but until you have ten thousand volumes the less you say about your library the better. *Then* you may begin to speak.

It is no doubt a pleasant thing to have a library left you. The present writer will disclaim no such legacy, but hereby undertakes to accept it, however dusty. But good as it is to inherit a library, it is better to collect one. Each volume then, however lightly a stranger's eye may roam from shelf to shelf, has its own individuality, a history of its own. You remember where you got it, and how much you gave for it; and your word may safely be taken for the first of these facts, but not for the second.

The man who has a library of his own collection is able to contemplate himself objectively, and is justified in believing in his own existence. No other man but he would have made precisely such a combination as his. Had he been in any single respect different from what he is, his library, as it exists, never would have existed. Therefore, surely he may exclaim, as in the gloaming he contemplates the backs of his loved ones, "They are mine, and I am theirs."

But the eternal note of sadness will find its way even through the keyhole of a library. You turn some familiar page, of Shakspeare it may be, and his "infinite variety," his "multitudinous mind," suggests some new thought, and as you are wondering over it you think of Lycidas, your friend, and promise yourself the pleasure of having his opinion of your discovery the very next time when by the fire you two "help waste a sullen day." Or it is, perhaps, some quaint, tenderer fancy that engages your solitary attention, something in Sir Philip Sidney or Henry Vaughan, and then you turn to look for Phyllis, ever the best interpreter of love, human or divine. Alas! the printed page grows hazy beneath a filmy eye as you suddenly remember that Lycidas is dead—"dead ere his prime"—and that the pale cheek of Phyllis will never again be relumined by the white light of her pure enthusiasm. And then you fall to thinking of the inevitable, and perhaps, in your present mood, not unwelcome hour, when the "ancient peace" of your old

friends will be disturbed, when rude hands will dislodge them from their accustomed nooks and break up their goodly company.

“Death bursts amongst them like a shell,
And strews them over half the town.”

They will form new combinations, lighten other men's toil, and soothe another's sorrow. Fool that I was to call anything *mine* !

BOOKWORMS.

GREAT is bookishness and the charm of books. No doubt there are times and seasons in the lives of most reading men when they rebel against the dust of libraries and kick against the pricks of these monstrously accumulated heaps of words. We all know "the dark hour" when the vanity of learning and the childishness of merely literary things are brought home to us in such a way as almost to avail to put the pale student out of conceit with his books, and to make him turn from his best-loved authors as from a friend who has outstayed his welcome, whose carriage we wish were at the door. In these unhappy moments we are apt to call to mind the shrewd men we have known, who have been our blithe companions on breezy fells, heathery moor, and by the stream side, who could neither read nor write, or who, at all events, but rarely practised those Cadmean arts. Yet they could tell the time of day by the sun, and steer through the silent night by the stars; and each of them had—as Emerson, a very bookish person, has said—a dial in his mind for the whole bright calendar of the year. How racy was their talk; how wise their judgments on men and things; how well they did all that at the moment seemed worth doing; how universally useful was their garnered experience—their acquired learning! How wily were these illiterates in the pursuit of game—how ready in an emergency! What a charm there is about out-of-door company! Who would not sooner have spent a summer's day with Sir Walter's humble friend, Tom Purday, than with Mr. William Wordsworth of Rydal Mount! It is, we can only suppose, reflections such as these that make country

gentlemen and farmers the sworn foes they are of education and the enemies of School Boards.

I only indicate this line of thought to condemn it. Such temptations come from below. Great, we repeat, is bookishness and the charm of books. Even the writings, the ponderous writings, of that portentous parson, the Rev. T. F. Dibdin, with all their lumbering gaiety and dust-choked rapture over first editions, are not hastily to be sent packing to the auction-room. Much red gold did they cost us, these portly tomes, in bygone days, and on our shelves they shall remain till the end of our time, unless our creditors intervene—were it only to remind us of years when our enthusiasms were pure though our tastes may have been crude.

Some years ago Mr. Blades, the famous printer and Caxtonist, published in vellum covers a small volume which he christened *The Enemies of Books*. It made many friends, and now a revised and enlarged version in comely form, adorned with pictures, and with a few prefatory words by Dr. Garnett, has made its appearance. Mr. Blades himself has left this world for a better one, where—so piety bids us believe—neither fire nor water nor worm can despoil or destroy the pages of heavenly wisdom. But the book-collector must not be caught nursing mere sublunary hopes. There is every reason to believe that in the realms of the blessed the library, like that of Major Ponto, will be small though well selected. Mr. Blades had, as his friend Dr. Garnett observes, a debonair spirit—there was nothing fiery or controversial about him. His attitude towards the human race and its treatment of rare books was rather mournful than angry. For example, under the head of "Fire," he has occasion to refer to that great destruction of books of magic which took place at Ephesus, to which St. Luke has called attention in his Acts of the Apostles. Mr. Blades describes this holocaust as righteous, and only permits himself to say in a kind of undertone that he feels a certain mental disquietude and un-

easiness at the thought of the loss of more than £18,000 worth of books, which could not but have thrown much light (had they been preserved) on many curious questions of folk-lore. Personally, I am dead against the burning of books. A far worse, because a corrupt, proceeding, was the scandalously horrid fate that befell the monastic libraries at our disgustingly conducted, even if generally beneficent, Reformation. The greedy nobles and landed gentry, who grabbed the ancient foundations of the old religion, cared nothing for the books they found cumbering the walls, and either devoted them to vile domestic uses or sold them in shiploads across the seas. It may well be that the monks—fine, lusty fellows!—cared more for the contents of their fish-ponds than of their libraries; but, at all events, they left the books alone to take their chance—they did not rub their boots with them or sell them at the price of old paper. A man need have a very debonair spirit who does not lose his temper over our blessed Reformation. Mr. Blades, on the whole, managed to keep his.

Passing from fire, Mr. Blades has a good deal to say about water, and the harm it has been allowed to do in our collegiate and cathedral libraries. With really creditable composure he writes: "Few old libraries in England are now so thoroughly neglected as they were thirty years ago. The state of many of our collegiate and cathedral libraries was at that time simply appalling. I could mention many instances—one especially—where, a window having been left broken for a long time, the ivy had pushed through and crept over a row of books, each of which was worth hundreds of pounds. In rainy weather the water was conducted as by a pipe along the tops of the books, and soaked through the whole." Ours is indeed a learned Church. Fancy the mingled amazement and dismay of the Dean and Chapter when they were informed that all this mouldering literary trash had "boodle" in it. "In another and a smaller collection the rain came through on to a bookcase through a

skylight, saturating continually the top shelf, containing Caxtons and other English books, one of which, although rotten, was sold soon after by permission of the Charity Commissioners for £200." Oh, those scoundrelly Charity Commissioners! How impertinent has been their interference with the loving care and guardianship of the Lord's property by His lawfully consecrated ministers! By the side of these anthropoid apes, the genuine book-worm, the paper-eating insect, ravenous as he once was, has done comparatively little mischief. Very little seems known of the creature, though the purchaser of Mr. Blades's book becomes the owner of a life-size portrait of the miscreant in one, at all events, of his many shapes. Mr. Birdsall, of Northampton, sent Mr. Blades, in 1879, by post, a fat little worm he had found in an old volume. Mr. Blades did all, and more than all, that could be expected of a humane man to keep the creature alive, actually feeding him with fragments of Caxtons and seventeenth-century literature; but it availed not, for in three weeks the thing died, and as the result of a post-mortem was declared to be *Æcophera pseudopretella*. Some years later Dr. Garnett, who has spent a long life obliging men of letters, sent Mr. Blades two Athenian worms which had travelled to this country in a Hebrew Commentary; but, lovely and pleasant in their lives, in their deaths they were not far divided. Mr. Blades, at least, mourned their loss. The energy of book-worms, like that of men, greatly varies. Some go much farther than others. However fair they may start on the same folio, they end very differently. Once upon a time 212 worms began to eat their way through a stout folio printed in the year 1477, by Peter Schoeffer, of Mentz. It was an ungodly race they ran, but let me trace their progress. By the time the sixty-first page was reached all but four had given in, either slinking back the way they came, or perishing *en route*. By the time the eighty-sixth page had been reached but one was left, and he evidently on his last legs, for he failed to pierce his way

through page 87. At the other end of the same book another lot of worms began to bore, hoping, I presume, to meet in the middle, like the makers of submarine tunnels, but the last survivor of this gang only reached the sixty-ninth page from the end. Mr. Blades was of opinion that all these worms belonged to the *Anobium pertinax*. Worms have fallen upon evil days, for, whether modern books are readable or not, they have long since ceased to be edible. The worm's instinct forbids him to "eat the china clay, the bleaches, the plaster of Paris, the sulphate of barytes, the scores of adulterants now used to mix with the fibre." Alas, poor worm! Alas, poor author! Neglected by the *Anobium pertinax*, what chance is there of anyone, man or beast, a hundred years hence reaching his eighty-seventh page!

Time fails me to refer to bookbinders, frontispiece collectors, servants and children, and other enemies of books; but the volume I refer to is to be had of the booksellers, and is a pleasant volume, worthy of all commendation. Its last words set me thinking; they are:

"Even a millionaire will ease his toils, lengthen his life, and add 100 per cent. to his daily pleasures, if he becomes a bibliophile; while to the man of business with a taste for books, who through the day has struggled in the battle of life, with all its irritating rebuffs and anxieties, what a blessed season of pleasurable repose opens upon him as he enters his sanctum, where every article wafts him a welcome and every book is a personal friend!"

As for the millionaire, I frankly say I have no desire his life should be lengthened, and care nothing about adding 100 per cent. to his daily pleasures. He is a nuisance, for he has raised prices nearly 100 per cent. We curse the day when he was told it was the thing to buy old books; and, if he must buy old books, why is he not content with the works of Gibbon, Hume, and Robertson, and Flavius Josephus, that learned Jew? But it is not the millionaire who set me thinking; it is

the harassed man of business ; and what I am wondering is, whether, in sober truth and earnestness, it is possible for him, as he shuts his library door and finds himself inside, to forget his rebuffs and anxieties—his maturing bills and overdue argosies—and to lose himself over a favourite volume. The “ article ” that wafts him welcome I take to be his pipe. That he will put the “ article ” into his mouth and smoke it I have no manner of doubt ; my dread is lest, in ten minutes’ time, the book should have dropt into his lap and the man’s eyes be staring into the fire. But for a’ that, and a’ that—great is bookishness and the charm of books.

CONFIRMED READERS.

DR. JOHNSON is perhaps our best example of a confirmed reader. Malone once found him sitting in his room roasting apples and reading a history of Birmingham. This staggered even Malone, who was himself a somewhat far-gone reader.

"Don't you find it rather dull?" he ventured to inquire.

"Yes," replied the Sage, "it is dull."

Malone's eyes then rested on the apples, and he remarked he supposed they were for medicine.

"Why, no," said Johnson; "I believe they are only there because I wanted something to do. I have been confined to the house for a week, and so you find me roasting apples and reading the history of Birmingham."

This anecdote pleasingly illustrates the habits of the confirmed reader. Nor let the worldling sneer. Happy is the man who, in the hours of solitude and depression, can read a history of Birmingham. How terrible is the story Welbore Ellis told of Robert Walpole in his magnificent library, trying book after book, and at last, with tears in his eyes, exclaiming, "It is all in vain: I cannot read!"

Edmund Malone, the Shakspearian commentator and first editor of *Boswell's Johnson*, was as confirmed a reader as it is possible for a book-collector to be. His own life, by Sir James Prior, is full of good things, and is not so well known as it should be. It smacks of books and bookishness.

Malone, who was an Irishman, was once, so he would have us believe, deeply engaged in politics; but he then fell in love, and the affair, for some unknown reason,

ending unhappily, his interest ceased in everything, and he was driven as a last resource to books and writings. Thus are commentators made. They learn in suffering what they observe in the margin. Malone may have been driven to his pursuits, but he took to them kindly, and became a vigorous and skilful book-buyer, operating in the market both on his own behalf and on that of his Irish friends with great success.

His good fortune was enormous, and this although he had a severely restricted notion as to price. He was no reckless bidder, like Mr. Harris, late of Covent Garden, who, just because David Garrick had a fine library of old plays, was determined to have one himself at whatever cost. In Malone's opinion half a guinea was a big price for a book. As he grew older he became less careful, and in 1805, which was seven years before his death, he gave Ford, a Manchester bookseller, £25 for the Editio Princeps of *Venus and Adonis*. He already had the edition of 1596—a friend had given it him—bound up with Constable's and Daniel's Sonnets and other rarities, but he very naturally yearned after the edition of 1593. He fondly imagined Ford's copy to be unique: there he was wrong, but as he died in that belief, and only gave £25 for his treasure, who dare pity him? His copy now reposes in the Bodleian. He secured Shakspeare's Sonnets (1609) and the first edition of the *Rape of Lucrece* for two guineas, and accounted half a crown a fair average price for quarto copies of Elizabethan plays.

Malone was a truly amiable man, of private fortune and endearing habits. He lived on terms of intimacy with his brother book-collectors, and when they died attended the sale of their libraries and bid for his favourite lots, grumbling greatly if they were not knocked down to him. At Topham Beauclerk's sale in 1781, which lasted nine days, Malone bought for Lord Charlemont "the pleasauntest workes of George Gascoigne, Esquire, with the princely pleasures at Kenilworth Castle, 1587."

He got it cheap (£1, 7s.), as it wanted a few leaves, which Malone thought he had; but to his horror, when it came to be examined, it was found to want eleven more leaves than he had supposed. "Poor Mr. Beauclerk," he writes, "seems never to have had his books examined or collated, otherwise he would have found out the imperfections." Malone was far too good a book-collector to suggest a third method of discovering a book's imperfections—namely, reading it. Beauclerk's library only realised £5,011, and as the Duke of Marlborough had a mortgage upon it of £5,000, there must have been after payment of the auctioneer's charges a considerable deficit.

But Malone was more than a book-buyer, more even than a commentator: he was a member of the Literary Club, and the friend of Johnson, Reynolds, and Burke. On July 28, 1789, he went to Burke's place, the Gregories, near Beaconsfield, with Sir Joshua, Wyndham, and Mr. Courtenay, and spent three very agreeable days. The following extract from the recently published Charlemont papers has interest:

"As I walked out before breakfast with Mr. Burke, I proposed to him to revise and enlarge his admirable book on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, which the experience, reading, and observation of thirty years could not but enable him to improve considerably. But he said the train of his thoughts had gone another way, and the whole bent of his mind turned from such subjects, and that he was much fitter for such speculations at the time he published that book than now."

Between the Burke of 1758 and the Burke of 1789 there was a difference indeed, but the forcible expressions, "the train of my thoughts" and "the whole bent of my mind," serve to create a new impression of the tremendous energy and fertile vigour of this amazing man. The next day the party went over to Amersham and admired Mr. Drake's trees, and listened to Sir Joshua's criticisms of Mr. Drake's pictures. This was a fortnight after the taking of the Bastille. Burke's

hopes were still high. The Revolution had not yet spoiled his temper.

Amongst the Charlemont papers is an amusing tale I do not remember having ever seen before of young Philip Stanhope, the recipient of Lord Chesterfield's famous letters :

“ When at Berne, where he passed some of his boyhood in company with Harte and the excellent Mr., now Lord, Eliott (Heathfield of Gibraltar), he was one evening invited to a party where, together with some ladies, there happened to be a considerable number of Bernese senators, a dignified set of elderly gentlemen, aristocratically proud, and perfect strangers to fun. These most potent, grave, and reverend signors were set down to whist, and were so studiously attentive to the game, that the unlucky brat found little difficulty in fastening to the backs of their chairs the flowing tails of their ample periwigs, and in cutting, unobserved by them, the ties of their breeches. This done, he left the room, and presently re-entered crying out, ‘ Fire ! Fire ! ’ The affrighted burgomasters suddenly bounced up, and exhibited to the amazed spectators their senatorial heads and backs totally deprived of ornament or covering.”

Young Stanhope was no ordinary child. There is a completeness about this jest which proclaims it a masterpiece. One or other of its points might have occurred to anyone, but to accomplish both at once was to show real distinction.

Sir William Stanhope, Lord Chesterfield's brother, felt no surprise at his nephew's failure to acquire the graces. “ What,” said he, “ could Chesterfield expect ? His mother was Dutch, he was educated at Leipsic, and his tutor was a pedant from Oxford.”

Papers which contain anecdotes of this kind carry with them their own recommendation. We hear on all sides complaints—and I hold them to be just complaints—of the abominable high prices of English books. Thirty shillings, thirty-six shillings, are common prices.

The thing is too barefaced. His Majesty's Stationery Office set an excellent example. They sell an octavo volume of 460 closely but well-printed pages, provided with an excellent index, for one shilling and elevenpence. There is not much editing, but the quality of it is good.

If anyone is confined to his room, even as Johnson was when Malone found him roasting apples and reading a history of Birmingham, he cannot do better than surround himself with the publications of the Historical Manuscripts Commission; they will cost him next to nothing, tell him something new on every page, revive a host of old memories and scores of half-forgotten names, and perhaps tempt him to become a confirmed reader.

FIRST EDITIONS.

THIS is an age of great publicity. Not only are our streets well lighted, but also our lives. The cosy nooks and corners, crannies, and dark places where, in old-fashioned days, men hugged their private vices without shamefacedness have been swept away as ruthlessly as Seven Dials. All the questionable pursuits, fancies, foibles of silly, childish man are discussed grimly and at length in the newspapers and magazines. Our poor hobby-horses are dragged out of the stable, and made to show their shambling paces before the mob of gentlemen who read with ease. There has been much prate lately of as innocent a foible as ever served to make men self-forgetful for a few seconds of time—the collecting of first editions. Somebody hard up for “copy” denounced this pastime, and made merry over a *virtuoso's* whim. Somebody else—Mr. Slater, I think it was—thought fit to put in a defence, and thereupon a dispute arose as to why men bought first editions dear when they could buy last editions cheap. Brutal, domineering fellows bellowed their complete indifference to Shakespeare's Quartos till timid *dilettanti* turned pale and fled.

The fact, of course, is that in such a dispute as this there is but one thing to do—namely, to persuade the Attorney-General of the day to enter up a *nolle prosequi*, and for him who collects first editions to go on collecting. There is nothing to be serious about in the matter. It is not literature. Some of the greatest lovers of letters who have ever lived—Dr. Johnson, for example, and Thomas de Quincey and Carlyle—have cared no more for first editions than I do for Brussels sprouts. You may love Molière with a love surpassing your love of

woman without any desire to beggar yourself in Paris by purchasing early copies of the plays. You may be perfectly content to read Walton's *Lives* in an edition of 1905, if there is one; and as for *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver* and the *Vicar of Wakefield*—are they not eternal favourites, and just as tickling to the fancy in their nineteenth-century dress as in their eighteenth? The whole thing is but a hobby—but a paragraph in one chapter of the vast, but most agreeable, history of human folly. If John Doe is blankly indifferent to Richard Roe's Elizabethan dramatists, it is only fair to remember how sublime is Richard's contempt for John's collection of old musical instruments. If these gentlemen are wise they will discuss, when they meet, the weather, or the Death Duties, or some other extraneous subject, and leave their respective hobbies in the stable. Never mind what your hobby is—books, prints, drawings, china, scarabæi, lepidoptera—keep it to yourself and for those like-minded with you. Sweet indeed is the community of interest, delightful the intercourse which a common foible begets; but correspondingly bitter and distressful is the forced union of nervous zeal and pitiless indifference. Spare us the so-called friends who come and gape and stare and go! What is more painful than the chatter of the connoisseur as it falls upon the long ears of the ignoramus! Collecting is a secret sin—the great pushing public must be kept out. It is sheer madness to puff and praise your hobby, and to invite Dick, Tom, and Harry to inspect your stable: such conduct is to invite rebuff, to expose yourself to just animadversion. Keep the beast in its box. This is my first advice to the hobby-hunter.

My second piece of advice is equally important, particularly at the present time, when the world is too much with us, and it is this—never convert a taste into a trade. The moment you become a tradesman you cease to be a hobbyist. When the love of money comes in at the window the love of books runs out at the door. There has

been of late years a good deal of sham book-collecting. The morals of the Stock Exchange have corrupted even the library. Sordid souls have been induced by wily second-hand booksellers to buy books for no other reason than because the price demanded was a high one. This is the very worst possible reason for buying a book. Whether it is ever wise to buy a book, as Aulus Gellius used to do, simply because it is cheap, and regardless of its condition, is a debatable point, but to buy one dear at the mere bidding of a bookseller is to debase yourself. The result of this ungodly traffic has been to enlarge for the moment the circle of book-buyers by including in it men with commercial instincts, sham hobbyists. But these impostors have been lately punished in the only way they could be punished—namely, in their pockets—by a heavy fall of prices. The stuff they were induced to buy has not, and could not, maintain its price, and the shops are now full of the volumes which, seven or ten years ago, fetched fancy sums.

If a young book-collector does but bear in mind the two bits of advice I have proffered him, he may safely be bidden godspeed and congratulated on his choice of a hobby, for it is, without a shadow of a doubt, the cheapest he could have chosen. Even without means to acquire the treasures of a Quaritch or a Pickering, he may yet derive infinite delight from the perusal of the many hundreds of catalogues that now weekly issue from the second-hand booksellers in town and country. He may write an imaginary letter, ordering the books he has previously selected from the catalogue, and then he has only to forget to post it to avoid all disagreeable consequences.

The constant turnover of old books is amazing. There seems no rest in this world even for folios and quartos. The first edition of old Burton's *Anatomy*, printed at Oxford in a small quarto in 1621, rises to the surface as a rule no less than four times a year; so,

too, does Coryat's *Crudities*, hastily gobbled up in five months' travels in France, Savoy, Italy, Germany, etc., 1611. What a seething, restless place this world is, to be sure! The constant recurrence of copies of the same books is almost startling. Hardly a year passes but every book of first-rate importance and interest is knocked down to the highest bidder. No doubt there are still old libraries where, buried in dust and cobwebs, the folios and quartos lie undisturbed; but to turn the pages or examine the index of *Book Prices Current* is to have a vision before your eyes of whole regiments of books passing and repassing across the stage amidst the loud cries of auctioneers and the bidding of book-sellers.

In the auction-mart taste is pretty steady. The old favourites hold their own. Every now and again an immortal joins their ranks. Puffing and pretension may win the ear of the outside public, and extort praise from the press, but inside the rooms of a Sotheby, a Puttick, or a Hodgson, these foolish persons count for nothing, and their names are seldom heard. Were an author to turn the pages of *Book Prices Current*, he could hardly fail, as he there read the names of famous men of old, to breathe the prayer, "May my books some day be found forming part of this great tidal wave of literature which is for ever breaking on Earth's human shores!" But the vanity of authors is endless, and their prayers are apt to be but empty things.

OLD BOOKSELLERS.

THERE has just been a small flutter amongst those who used to be called stationers or text-writers in the good old days, before printing was, and when even Peers of the Realm (now so highly educated) could not sign their names, or, at all events, preferred not to do so—booksellers they are now styled—and the question which agitates them is discount. Having mentioned this, one naturally passes on.

No great trade has an obscurer history than the book trade. It seems to lie choked in mountains of dust which it would be suicidal to disturb. Men have lived from time to time of literary skill—Dr. Johnson was one of them—who had knowledge, extensive and peculiar, of the traditions and practices of “the trade,” as it is proudly styled by its votaries; but nobody has ever thought it worth his while to make record of his knowledge, which accordingly perished with him, and is now irrecoverably lost.

In old days booksellers were also publishers, frequently printers, and sometimes paper-makers. Jacob Tonson not only owned Milton's *Paradise Lost*—for all time, as he fondly thought, for little did he dream of the fierce construction the House of Lords was to put upon the Copyright Act of Queen Anne—not only was Dryden's publisher, but also kept shop in Chancery Lane, and sold books across the counter. He allowed no discount, but, so we are told, “spoke his mind upon all occasions, and flattered no one,” not even glorious John.

For a long time past the trades of bookselling and book-publishing have been carried on apart. This has doubtless rid booksellers of all the unpopularity which

formerly belonged to them in their other capacity. This unpopularity is now heaped as a whole upon the publishers, who certainly need not dread the doom awaiting those of whom the world speaks well.

A tendency of the two trades to grow together again is perhaps noticeable. For my part, I wish they would. Some publishers are already booksellers, but the books they sell are usually only new books. Now it is obvious that the true bookseller sells books both old and new. Some booksellers are occasional publishers. May each usurp—or, rather, reassume—the business of the other, whilst retaining his own!

The world, it must be admitted, owes a great deal of whatever information it possesses about the professions, trades, and occupations practised and carried on in its midst to those who have failed in them. Prosperous men talk "shop," but seldom write it. The book that tells us most about booksellers and bookselling in bygone days is the work of a crack-brained fellow who published and sold in the reigns of Queen Anne and George I., and died in 1733 in great poverty and obscurity. I refer to John Dunton, whose *Life and Errors* in the edition in two volumes edited by J. B. Nichols, and published in 1818, is a common book enough in the second-hand shops, and one which may be safely recommended to everyone, except, indeed, to the unfortunate man or woman who is not an adept in the art, craft, or mystery of skipping.

The book will strangely remind the reader of Amory's *Life of John Bunce*—those queer volumes to which many a reader has been sent by Hazlitt's intoxicating description of them in his *Round Table*, and a few perhaps by a shy allusion contained in one of the essays of Elia. The real John Dunton has not the boundless spirits of the fictitious John Bunce; but in their religious fervour, their passion for flirtation, their tireless egotism, and their love of character-sketching, they greatly resemble one another.

It is this last characteristic that imparts real value to Dunton's book, and makes it, despite its verbiage and tortuosity, throb with human interest. For example, he gives us a short sketch of no less than 135 then living London booksellers in this style: "Mr. Newton is full of kindness and good-nature. He is affable and courteous in trade, and is none of those men of forty whose religion is yet to chuse, for his mind (like his looks) is serious and grave; and his neighbours tell me his understanding does not improve too fast for his practice, for he is not religious by start or sally, but is well fixed in the faith and practice of a Church of England man—and has a handsome wife into the bargain."

Most of the 135 booksellers were good men, according to Dunton, but not all. "Mr. Lee in Lombard Street. Such a pirate, such a cormorant was never before. Copies, books, men, shops, all was one. He held no propriety right or wrong, good or bad, till at last he began to be known; and the booksellers, not enduring so ill a man among them, spewed him out, and off he marched to Ireland, where he acted as *felonious Lee* as he did in London. And as Lee lived a thief, so he died a hypocrite; for being asked on his death-bed if he would forgive Mr. C. (that had formerly wronged him), 'Yes,' said Lee, 'if I die, I forgive him; but if I happen to live, I am resolved to be revenged on him.'"

The Act of Union destroyed the trade of these pirates, but their felonious editions of eighteenth-century authors still abound. Mr. Gladstone, I need scarcely say, was careful in his Home Rule Bill (which was denounced by thousands who never read a line of it) to withdraw copyright from the scope of action of his proposed Dublin Parliament.

There are nearly eleven hundred brief character-sketches in Dunton's book, of all sorts and kinds, but with a preference for bookish people, divines, both of

the Establishment and out of it, printers and authors. Sometimes, indeed, the description is short enough, and tells one very little. To many readers, references so curt to people of whom they never heard, and whose names are recorded nowhere else, save on their mouldering grave-stones, may seem tedious and trivial, but for others they will have a strange fascination. Here are a few examples :

“Affable *Wiggins*. His conversation is general but never impertinent.

“The kind and golden *Venables*. He is so good a man, and so truly charitable, he that will write of him must still write more.

“Mr. *Bury*—my old neighbour in Redcross Street. He is a plain honest man, sells the best coffee in all the neighbourhood, and lives in this world like a spiritual stranger and pilgrim in a foreign country.

“Anabaptist (alias *Elephant*) *Smith*. He was a man of great sincerity and happy contentment in all circumstances of life.”

If an affection for passages of this kind be condemned as trivial, and akin to the sentimentalism of the man in Calverley's poem who wept over a box labelled “This side up,” I will shelter myself behind Carlyle, who was evidently deeply moved, as his review of Boswell's Johnson proves, by the life-history of Mr. F. Lewis, “of whose birth, death, and whole terrestrial *res gestæ* this only, and, strange enough, this actually, survives—‘Sir, he lived in London, and hung loose upon society. *Stat* PARVI hominis umbra.’” On that peg Carlyle's imagination hung a whole biography.

Dunton, who was the son of the Rector of Aston Clinton, was apprenticed, about 1675, to a London bookseller. He had from the beginning a great turn both for religion and love. He, to use his own phrase, “sat under the powerful ministry of Mr. Doolittle.” “One Lord's day, and I remember it with sorrow, I was to hear the Rev. Mr. Doolittle, and it was then

and there the beautiful Rachel Seaton gave me that fatal wound."

The first book Dunton ever printed was by the Rev. Mr. Doolittle, and was of an eminently religious character.

"One Lord's Day (and I am very sensible of the sin) I was strolling about just as my fancy led me, and, stepping into Dr. Annesley's meeting-place—where, instead of engaging my attention to what the Doctor said, I suffered both my mind and eyes to run at random—I soon singled out a young lady that almost charmed me dead; but, having made my inquiries, I found to my sorrow she was pre-engaged." However, Dunton was content with the elder sister, one of the three daughters of Dr. Annesley. The one he first saw became the wife of the Reverend Samuel Wesley, and the mother of John and Charles. The third daughter is said to have been married to Daniel De Foe.

As soon as he was out of his apprenticeship, Dunton set up business as a publisher and bookseller. He says grimly enough:

"A man should be well furnished with an honest policy if he intends to set out to the world nowadays. And this is no less necessary in a bookseller than in any other tradesman, for in that way there are plots and counter-plots, and a whole army of hackney authors that keep their grinders moving by the travail of their pens. These gormandisers will eat you the very life out of a *copy* so soon as ever it appears, for as the times go, *Original* and *Abridgement* are almost reckoned as necessary as man and wife."

The mischief to which Dunton refers was permitted by the stupidity of the judges, who refused to consider an abridgment of a book any interference with its copyright. Some learned judges have, indeed, held that an abridger is a benefactor, but as his benefactions are not his own, but another's, a shorter name might be found for him. The law on the subject is still uncertain.

Dunton proceeds: "Printing was now the uppermost in my thoughts, and hackney authors began to ply me with *specimens* as earnestly and with as much passion and concern as the watermen do passengers with *Oars* and *Scullers*. I had some acquaintance with this generation in my apprenticeship, and had never any warm affection for them, in regard I always thought their great concern lay more in *how much a sheet*, than in any generous respect they bore to the *Commonwealth of Learning*; and indeed the learning itself of these gentlemen lies very often in as little room as their honesty, though they will pretend to have studied for six or seven years in the Bodleian Library, to have turned over the Fathers, and to have read and digested the whole compass both of human and ecclesiastic history, when, alas! they have never been able to understand a single page of St. Cyprian, and cannot tell you whether the Fathers lived before or after Christ."

Yet of one of this hateful tribe Dunton is able to speak well. He declares Mr. Bradshaw to have been the best accomplished hackney author he ever met with. He pronounces his style incomparably fine. He had quarrelled with him, but none the less he writes: "If Mr. Bradshaw is yet alive, I here declare to the world and to him that I freely forgive him what he owes, both in money and books, if he will only be so kind as to make me a visit. But I am afraid the worthy gentleman is dead, for he was wretchedly overrun with melancholy, and the very blackness of it reigned in his countenance. He had certainly performed wonders with his pen, had not his proverty pursued him and almost laid the necessity upon him to be unjust."

All hackney authors were not poor. Some of the compilers and abridgers made what even now would be considered by popular novelists large sums. Scotsmen were very good at it. Gordon and Campbell

became wealthy men. If authors had a turn for politics, Sir Robert Walpole was an excellent paymaster. Arnall, who was bred an attorney, is stated to have been paid £11,000 in four years by the Government for his pamphlets.

"Come, then, I'll comply.
Spirit of Arnall, aid me while I lie!"

It cannot have been pleasant to read this, but then Pope belonged to the opposition, and was a friend of Lord Bolingbroke, and would consequently say anything.

There is not a more interesting and artless autobiography to be read than William Hutton's, the famous bookseller and historian of Birmingham. Hutton has been somewhat absurdly called the English Franklin. He is not in the least like Franklin. He has none of Franklin's supreme literary skill, and he was a loving, generous, and tender-hearted man, which Franklin certainly was not. Hutton's first visit to London was paid in 1749. He walked up from Nottingham, spent three days in London, and then walked back to Nottingham. The jaunt, if such an expression is applicable, cost him eleven shillings less fourpence. Yet he paid his way. The only money he spent to gain admission to public places was a penny to see Bedlam.

Interesting, however, as is Hutton's book, it tells us next to nothing about book-selling, except that in his hands it was a prosperous undertaking.

ITINERARIES.

ANYONE who is teased by the notion that it would be pleasant to be remembered, in the sense of being read, after death, cannot do better to secure that end than compose an Itinerary and leave it behind him in manuscript, with his name legibly inscribed thereon. If an honest bit of work, noting distances, detailing expenses, naming landmarks, moors, mountains, harbours, docks, buildings—indeed, anything which, as lawyers say, savours of realty—and but scantily interspersed with reflections, and with no quotations, why, then, such a piece of work, however long publication may be delayed—and a century or two will not matter in the least—cannot fail, whenever it is printed, to attract attention, to excite general interest and secure a permanent hold in every decent library in the kingdom.

Time cannot stale an Itinerary. *Iter, Via, Actus* are words of pith and moment. Stage-coaches, express trains, motor-cars, have written, or are now writing, their eventful histories over the face of these islands; but, whatever changes they have made or are destined to make, they have left untouched the mystery of the road, although for the moment the latest comer may seem injuriously to have affected its majesty.

The Itinerist alone among authors is always sure of an audience. No matter where, no matter when, he has but to tell us how he footed it and what he saw by the wayside, and we must listen. How can we help it? Two hundred years ago, it may be, this Itinerist came through our village, passed by the wall of our homestead, climbed our familiar hill, and went on his

way; it is perhaps but two lines and a half he can afford to give us, but what lines they are! How different with sermons, poems, and novels! On each of these is the stamp of the author's age; sentiments, fashions, thoughts, faiths, phraseology, all worn out—a cold, dirty grate, where once there was a blazing fire. Cheerlessness personified! Leland's anti-Papal treatise in forty-five chapters remains in learned custody—a manuscript; a publisher it will never find. We still have Papists and anti-Papists; in this case the fire still blazes, but the grates are of an entirely different construction. Leland's treatise is out of date. But his *Itinerary* in nine volumes, a favourite book throughout the eighteenth century, which has graced many a bookseller's catalogue for the last hundred years, and seldom without eliciting a purchaser—Leland's *Itinerary* is to-day being reprinted under the most able editorship. The charm of the road is irresistible. The *Vicar of Wakefield* is a delightful book, with a great tradition behind it and a future still before it; but it has not escaped the ravages of time, and I would, now, at all events, gladly exchange it for Oliver Goldsmith's *Itinerary through Germany with a Flute!*

Vain authors, publisher's men, may write as they like about *Shakspeare's* country, or *Scott's* country, or *Carlyle's* country, or *Crockett's* country, but—

“Oh, good gigantic smile of the brown old earth!”

the land laughs at the delusions of the men who hurriedly cross its surface.

“Rydal and Fairfield are there,—
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead,
So it is, so it will be for aye,
Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely, a mortal is dead.”

These reflections, which by themselves would be enough to sink even an *Itinerary*, seemed forced upon

me by the publication of *A Journey to Edenborough in Scotland by Joseph Taylor, Late of the Inner Temple, Esquire*. This journey was made two hundred years ago in the Long Vacation of 1705, but has just been printed from the original manuscript, under the editorship of Mr. William Cowan, by the well-known Edinburgh bookseller, Mr. Brown, of Princes Street, to whom all lovers of things Scottish already owe much.

Nobody can hope to be less known than this our latest Itinerist, for not only is he not in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but it is at present impossible to say which of two Joseph Taylors he was. The House of the Winged Horse has ever had Taylors on its roll, the sign of the Middle Temple, a very fleecy sheep, being perhaps unattractive to the clan, and in 1705 it so happened that not only were there two Taylors, but two Joseph Taylors, entitled to write themselves "of the Inner Temple, Esquire." Which was the Itinerist? Mr. Cowan, going by age, thinks that the Itinerist can hardly have been the Joseph Taylor who was admitted to the Inn in 1663, as in that case he must have been at least fifty-eight when he travelled to Edinburgh. For my part, I see nothing in the *Itinerary* to preclude the possibility of its author having attained that age at the date of its composition. I observe in the *Itinerary* references which point to the Itinerist being a Kentish man, and he mentions more than once his "Cousin D'aeth." Research among the papers of the D'aeths of Knowlton Court, near Dover, might result in the discovery which of these two Taylors really was the Itinerist. As nothing else is at present known about either, the investigation could probably be made without passion or party or even religious bias. It might be best begun by Mr. Cowan telling us in whose custody he found the manuscript, and how it came there. These statements should always be made when old manuscripts are first printed.

The journey began on August 2, 1705. The party

consisted of Mr. Taylor and his two friends, Mr. Harrison and Mr. Sloman. They travelled on horseback, and often had difficulties with the poor beast that carried their luggage. They reached Edinburgh in the evening of August 31, and left it on their return journey on September 8, and got home on the 25th of the same month. The *Itinerary* concludes as follows :

“ Thus we spent almost 2 months in a Journey of many 100 miles, sometimes thro’ very charming Countries, and at other times over desolate and Barren Mountaines, and yet met with no particular misfortune in all the Time.”

I may say at once of these three Itinerists—Mr. Taylor, Mr. Harrison, and Mr. Sloman—that they appear to have been thoroughly commonplace, well behaved, occasionally hilarious Englishmen, ready to endure whatever befell them, if unavoidable; accustomed to take their ease in their inn and to turn round and look at any pretty woman they might chance to meet on their travels. Their first experience of what the Itinerist calls “ the prodigies of Nature,” “ at once an occasion both of Horror and Admiration,” was in the Peak Country “ described in poetry by the ingenious Mr. Cotton.” This part of the world they “ did ” with something of the earnestness of the modern tourist. But I hardly think they enjoyed themselves. The “ prodigious ” caverns and strange petrifications shocked them; “ nothing can be more terrible or shocking to Nature.” Mam Tor, with its 1,710 feet, proved very impressive, “ a vast high mountain reaching to the very clouds.” This gloom of the Derbyshire hills and stony valleys was partially dispelled for our travellers by a certain “ fair Gloriana ” they met at Buxton, with whom they had great fun, “ so much the greater, because we never expected such heavenly enjoyments in so desolate a country.” If it be on susceptibilities of this nature that Mr. Cowan rests his case for thinking that the Itinerist can hardly have attained “ the blasted

antiquity" of fifty-eight, we must think Mr. Cowan a trifle hasty, or a very young man, perhaps under forty, which is young for an editor.

After describing, somewhat too much like an auctioneer, the splendours of Chatsworth, "a Paradise in the deserts of Arabia," the Itinerist proceeds on his way north through Nottingham to Belvoir Castle, where "my Lord Rosses Gentleman (to whom Mr. Harrison was recommended) entertained us by his Lordship's command with good wine and the best of malt liquors which the cellar abounds with;" the pictures in the Long Gallery were shown them by "my Lord himself." At Doncaster, "a neat market-town which consists only in one long street," they had some superlative salmon just taken out of the river. By Knaresborough Spaw, where they drank the waters and had icy cold baths, and dined at the ordinary with a parson whose conversation startled the propriety of the Templar, the travellers made their way to York, and for the first and last time a few pages of *Guide Book* are improperly introduced. Then on to Scarborough.

"The next morning early we left Scarborough and travelled through a dismall road, particularly near Robins Hood Bay; we were obliged to lead our horses, and had much ado to get down a vast craggy mountain which lyes within a quarter of a mile of it. The Bay is about a mile broad, and inhabited by poor fishermen. We stopt to taste some of their liquor and discourse with them. They told us the French privateers came into the Very Bay and took 2 of their Vessels but the day before, which were ransom'd for £25 a piece. We saw a great many vessels lying upon the Shore, the masters not daring to venture out to sea for fear of undergoing the same fate."

We boast too readily of our inviolate shores.

A curious description is given of the Duke of Buckingham's alum works near Whitby. The travellers then procured a guide, and traversed "the vast moors

which lye between Whitby and Gisborough." The civic magnificence of Newcastle greatly struck our travellers, who, happier than their modern successors, were able to see the town miles off. The Itinerist quotes with gusto the civic proverb that the men of Newcastle pay nothing for the Way, the Word, or the Water, "for the Ministers of Religion are maintained, the streets paved, and the Conduits kept up at the publick charge." A disagreeable account is given of the brutishness of the people employed in the salt works at Tynemouth. At Berwick the travellers got into trouble with the sentry, but the mistake was rectified with the captain of the guard over "2 bowles of punch, there being no wine in the town."

Scotland was now in sight, and the travellers became grave, as befitted the occasion. They were told that the journey that lay before them was extremely dangerous, that 'twould be difficult to escape with their lives, much less (ominous words) without "the distemper of the country." But Mr. Taylor, Mr. Harrison, and Mr. Sloman were as brave as Mr. Pickwick, and they would on. "Yet notwithstanding all these sad representations, we resolv'd to proceed and stand by one another to the last."

What the Itinerists thought of Scotland when they got there is not for me to say. I was once a Scottish member.

They arrived in Edinburgh at a great crisis in Scottish history. They saw the Duke of Argyll, as Queen Anne's Lord High Commissioner, go to the Parliament House in this manner :

"First a coach and six Horses for his Gentlemen, then a Trumpet, then his own coach with six white horses, which were very fine, being those presented by King William to the Duke of Queensbury, and by him sold to the Duke of Argyle for £300; next goes a troop of Horse Guards, cloathed like my Lord of Oxford's Regiment, but the horses are of several colours;

and the Lord Chancellor and the Secretary of State, and the Lord Chief Justice Clerk, and other officers of State close the cavalcade in coaches and six horses. Thus the Commissioner goes and returns every day."

The Itinerists followed the Duke and his procession into the Parliament House, and heard debated the great question—the greatest of all possible questions for Scotland—whether this magnificence should cease, whether there should be an end of an auld sang—in short, whether the proposed Act of Union should be proceeded with. By special favour, our Itinerists had leave to stand upon the steps of the throne, and witnessed a famous fiery and prolonged debate, the Duke once turning to them and saying, *sotto voce*, "It is now deciding whether England and Scotland shall go together by the ears." How it was decided we all know, and that it was wisely decided no one doubts; yet, when we read our Itinerist's account of the Duke's coach and horses, and the cavalcade that followed him, and remember that this was what happened every day during the sitting of the Parliament, and must not be confounded with the greater glories of the first day of a Parliament, when every member, be he peer, knight of the shire, or burgh member, had to ride on horseback in the procession, it is impossible not to feel the force of Miss Grisel Dalmahoy's appeal in the *Heart of Midlothian*, she being an ancient sempstress, to Mr. Saddle-tree, the harness-maker:

"And as for the Lords of States ye suld mind the riding o' the Parliament in the gude auld time before the Union. A year's rent o' mony a gude estate gaed for horse-graith and harnessing, forby broidered robes and foot-mantles that wad hae stude by their lane with gold and brocade, and that were muckle in my ain line."

The graphic account of a famous debate given by Taylor is worth comparing with the *Lockhart Papers* and Hill Burton. The date is a little troublesome.

According to our Itinerist, he heard the discussion as to whether the Queen or the Scottish Parliament should nominate the Commissioners. Now, according to the histories, this all-important discussion began and ended on September 1, but our Itinerist had only arrived in Edinburgh the night before the first, and gives us to understand that he owed his invitation to be present to the fact that whilst in Edinburgh he and his friends had had the honour to have several lords and members of Parliament to dine, and that these guests informed him "of the grand day when the Act was to be passed or rejected." The Itinerist's account is too particular—for he gives the result of the voting—to admit of any possibility of a mistake, and he describes how several of the members came afterwards to his lodgings, and, so he writes, "embraced us with all the outward marks of love and kindness, and seemed mightily pleased at what was done, and told us we should now be no more English and Scotch, but Brittons." In the matter of nomenclature, at all events, the promises of the Union have not been carried out.

After September 1 the Parliament did not meet till the 4th, when an Address was passed to the Queen, but apparently without any repetition of debate. So it really is a little difficult to reconcile the dates. Perhaps Itinerists are best advised to keep off public events.

How our travellers escaped the "national distemper" and journeyed home by Ecclefechan, Carlisle, Shap Fell, Liverpool, Chester, Coventry, and Warwick must be read in the *Journey* itself, which, though it only occupies 182 small pages, is full of matter and even merriment; in fact, it is an excellent itinerary.

EPITAPHS.

EPITAPHS, if in rhyme, are the real literature of the masses. They need no commendation and are beyond all criticism. A Cambridge don, a London bus-driver, will own their charm in equal measure. Strange indeed is the fascination of rhyme. A commonplace hitched into verse instantly takes rank with Holy Scripture. This passion for poetry, as it is sometimes called, is manifested on every side; even tradesmen share it, and as the advertisements in our newspapers show, are willing to pay small sums to poets who commend their wares in verse. The widow bereft of her life's companion, the mother bending over an empty cradle, find solace in thinking what doleful little scrag of verse shall be graven on the tombstone of the dead. From the earliest times men have sought to squeeze their loves and joys, their sorrows and hatreds, into distichs and quatrains, and to inscribe them somewhere, on walls or windows, on sepulchral urns and gravestones, as memorials of their pleasure or their pain.

“ Hark ! how chimes the passing bell—
There's no music to a knell ;
All the other sounds we hear
Flatter and but cheat our ear.”

So wrote Shirley the dramatist, and so does he truthfully explain the popularity of the epitaph as distinguished from the epigram. Who ever wearies of Martial's “ Erotion ” ?—

“ Hic festinata requiescit Erotion umbra,
Crimine quam fati sexta peremit hiems.
Quisquis eris nostri post me regnator agelli
Manibus exiguis annua justa dato.”

Sic lare perpetuo, sic turba sospite, solus
Flebilis in terra sit lapis iste tua"—

so prettily Englished by Leigh Hunt :

" Underneath this greedy stone
Lies little sweet Erotion,
Whom the Fates with hearts as cold
Nipped away at six years old.
Those, whoever thou may'st be,
That hast this small field after me,
Let the yearly rites be paid
To her little slender shade ;
So shall no disease or jar
Hurt thy house or chill thy Lar,
But this tomb be here alone
The only melancholy stone."

Our English epitaphs are to be found scattered up and down our country churchyards—" uncouth rhymes," as Gray calls them, yet full of the sombre philosophy of life. They are fast becoming illegible, worn out by the rain that raineth every day, and our prim, present-day parsons do not look with favour upon them, besides which—to use a clumsy phrase—besides which most of our churchyards are now closed against burials, and without texts there can be no sermons :

" I'll stay and read my sermon here,
And skulls and bones shall be my text.
* * * * *
Here learn that glory and disgrace,
Wisdom and Folly, pass away,
That mirth hath its appointed space,
That sorrow is but for a day ;
That all we love and all we hate,
That all we hope and all we fear,
Each mood of mind, each turn of fate,
Must end in dust and silence here."

The best epitaphs are the grim ones. Designed, as epitaphs are, to arrest and hold in their momentary grasp the wandering attention and languid interest of the passer-by, they must hit him hard and at once, and this they can only do by striking some very responsive

chord, and no chords are so immediately responsive as those which relate to death, and, it may be, judgment to come.

Mr. Aubrey Stewart, in his interesting *Selection of English Epigrams and Epitaphs*, published by Chapman and Hall, quotes an epitaph from a Norfolk churchyard which I have seen in other parts of the country. The last time I saw it was in the Forest of Dean. It is admirably suited for the gravestone of any child of very tender years, say four :

“ When the Archangel's trump shall blow
And souls to bodies join,
Many will wish their lives below
Had been as short as mine.”

It is uncouth, but it is warranted to grip.

Frequently, too, have I noticed how constantly the attention is arrested by Pope's well-known lines from his magnificent “Verses to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady,” which are often to be found on tombstones :

“ So peaceful rests without a stone and name
What once had beauty, titles, wealth, and fame.
How loved, how honoured once avails thee not,
To whom related or by whom begot.
A heap of dust alone remains of thee ;
'Tis all thou art and all the proud shall be.”

I wish our modern poetasters who deny Pope's claim to be a poet no worse fate than to lie under stones which have engraved upon them the lines just quoted, for they will then secure in death what in life was denied them—the ear of the public.

Next to the grim epitaph, I should be disposed to rank those which remind the passer-by of his transitory estate. In different parts of the country—in Cumberland and Cornwall, in Croyland Abbey, in Llangollen Churchyard, in Melton Mowbray—are to be found lines more or less resembling the following :

“ Man’s life is like unto a winter’s day,
 Some break their fast and so depart away,
 Others stay dinner then depart full fed,
 The longest age but sups and goes to bed.
 O reader, there behold and see
 As we are now, so thou must be.”

The complimentary epitaph seldom pleases. To lie like a tombstone has become a proverb. Pope’s famous epitaph on Newton :

“ Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night,
 God said, Let Newton be ! and all was light,”

is hyperbolic and out of character with the great man it seeks to honour. It was intended for Westminster Abbey. I rejoice at the preference given to prose Latinity.

The tender and emotional epitaphs have a tendency to become either insipid or silly. But Herrick has shown us how to rival Martial :

UPON A CHILD THAT DIED.

“ Here she lies a pretty bud
 Lately made of flesh and blood ;
 Who as soon fell fast asleep
 As her little eyes did peep.
 Give her strewings, but not stir
 The earth that lightly covers her.”

Mr. Dodd, the editor of the admirable volume called *The Epigrammatists*, published in Bohn’s Standard Library, calls these lines a model of simplicity and elegance. So they are, but they are very vague. But then the child was very young. Erotion, one must remember, was six years old. Ben Jonson’s beautiful epitaph on S. P., a child of Queen Elizabeth’s Chapel, beginning,

“ Weep with me all you that read
 This little story ;
 And know for whom the tear you shed
 Death’s self is sorry,”

is fine poetry, but it is not life or death as plain people

know those sober realities. The flippant epitaph is always abominable. Gay's, for example :

“ Life is a jest, and all things show it.
I thought so once, but now I know it.”

But *does* he know it ? Ay, there's the rub ! The note of Christianity is seldom struck in epitaphs. There is a deep-rooted paganism in the English people which is for ever bubbling up and asserting itself in the oddest of ways. Coleridge's epitaph for himself is a striking exception :

“ Stop, Christian passer-by ! stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast, Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seemed he.
O lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.,
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death !
Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for fame,
He ask'd and hoped through Christ. Do thou the same.”

AUTHORS IN COURT.

THERE is always something a little ludicrous about the spectacle of an author in pursuit of his legal remedies. It is hard to say why, but like a sailor on horseback, or a Quaker at the play, it suggests that incongruity which is the soul of things humorous. The courts are of course as much open to authors as to the really deserving members of the community; and, to do the writing fraternity justice, they have seldom shown any indisposition to enter into them—though if they have done so joyfully, it must be attributed to their natural temperament, which (so we read) is easy, rather than to the mirthful character of legal process.

To write a history of the litigations in which great authors have been engaged would indeed be *renovare dolorem*, and is no intention of mine; though the subject is not destitute of human interest—indeed, quite the opposite.

Great books have naturally enough, being longer lived, come into court even more frequently than great authors. *Paradise Lost*, *The Whole Duty of Man*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Thomson's *Seasons*, *Rasselas*, all have a legal as well as a literary history. Nay, Holy Writ herself has raised some nice points. The king's exclusive prerogative to print the authorised version has been based by some lawyers on the commercial circumstance that King James paid for it out of his own pocket. Hence, argued they, cunningly enough, it became his, and is now his successor's. Others have contended more strikingly that the right of multiplying copies of the Scriptures necessarily belongs to the king as head of the Church. A few have been found to question the right alto-

gether, and to call it a job. As her late Majesty was pleased to abandon the prerogative, and has left all her subjects free (though at their own charges) to publish the version of her learned predecessor, the Bible does not now come into court on its own account. But whilst the prerogative was enforced, the king's printers were frequently to be found seeking injunctions to restrain the vending of the Word of God by (to use Carlyle's language) "Mr. Thomas Teggs and other extraneous persons." Nor did the judges, on proper proof, hesitate to grant what was sought. It is perhaps interesting to observe that the king never claimed more than the text. It was always open to anybody to publish even King James's version, if he added notes of his own. But how shamefully was this royal indulgence abused! Knaveish booksellers, anxious to turn a dishonest penny out of the very Bible, were known to publish Bibles with so-called notes, which upon examination turned out not to be *bona-fide* notes at all, but sometimes mere indications of assent with what was stated in the text, and sometimes simple ejaculations. And as people as a rule preferred to be without notes of this character they used to be thoughtfully printed at the very edge of the sheet, so that the scissors of the binder should cut them off and prevent them annoying the reader. But one can fancy the question, "What is a *bona-fide* note?" exercising the legal mind.

Our great lawyers on the bench have always treated literature in the abstract with the utmost respect. They have in many cases felt that they too, but for the grace of God, might have been authors. Like Charles Lamb's solemn Quaker, "they had been wits in their youth." Lord Mansfield never forgot that, according to Mr. Pope, he was a lost Ovid. Before ideas in their divine essence the judges have bowed down. "A literary composition," it has been said by them, "so long as it lies dormant in the author's mind, is absolutely in his own possession." Even Mr. Horatio Sparkins, of whose brilliant table-

talk this observation reminds us, could not more willingly have recognised an obvious truth.

But they have gone much further than this. Not only is the repose of the dormant idea left undisturbed, but the manuscript to which it, on ceasing to be dormant, has been communicated, is hedged round with divinity. It would be most unfair to the delicacy of the legal mind to attribute this to the fact, no doubt notorious, that whilst it is easy (after, say, three years in a pleader's chambers) to draw an indictment against a man for stealing paper, it is not easy to do so if he has only stolen the ideas and used his own paper. There are some quibbling observations in the second book of Justinian's *Institutes*, and a few remarks of Lord Coke's which might lead the thoughtless to suppose that in their protection of an author's manuscripts the courts were thinking more of the paper than of the words put upon it; but that this is not so clearly appears from our law as it is administered in the Bankruptcy branch of the High Court.

Suppose a popular novelist were to become a bankrupt—a supposition which, owing to the immense sums these gentlemen are now known to make, is robbed of all painfulness by its impossibility—and his effects were found to consist of the three following items: first, his wearing apparel; second, a copy of *Whitaker's Almanack* for the current year; and third, the manuscript of a complete and hitherto unpublished novel, worth in the Row, let us say, one thousand pounds. These are the days of cash payments, so we must not state the author's debts at more than fifteen hundred pounds. It would have been difficult for him to owe more without incurring the charge of imprudence. Now, how will the law deal with the effects of this bankrupt? Ever averse to exposing any one to criminal proceedings, it will return to him his clothing, provided its cash value does not exceed twenty pounds, which, as authors have left off wearing bloom-coloured garments even as they have left off

writing *Vicars of Wakefield*, it is not likely to do. This humane rule disposes of item number one. As to *Whitaker's Almanack*, it would probably be found necessary to take the opinion of the court; since, if it be a tool of the author's trade, it will not vest in the official receiver and be divisible amongst the creditors, but, like the first item, will remain the property of the bankrupt—but otherwise, if not such a tool. On a point like this the court would probably wish to hear the evidence of an expert—of some man like Mr. George Augustus Sala, who knows the literary life to the back-bone. This point disposed of, or standing over for argument, there remains the manuscript novel, which, as we have said, would, if sold in the Row, produce a sum not only sufficient to pay the costs of the argument about the *Almanack* and of all parties properly appearing in the bankruptcy, but also, if judiciously handled, a small dividend to the creditors. But here our law steps in with its chivalrous, almost religious respect for ideas, and declares that the manuscript shall not be taken from the bankrupt and published without his consent. In ordinary cases everything a bankrupt has, save the clothes for his back and the tools of his trade, is ruthlessly torn from him. Be it in possession, reversion, or remainder, it all goes. His incomes for life, his reversionary hopes, are knocked down to the speculator. In vulgar phrase, he is "cleaned out." But the manuscripts of the bankrupt author, albeit they may be worth thousands, are not recognised as property; they are not yet dedicate to the public. The precious papers, despite all their writer's misfortunes, remain his—his to croon and to dream over, his to alter and re-transcribe, his to withhold, ay, his to destroy, if he should deem them, either in calm judgment, or in a despairing hour, unhappy in their expression or unworthy of his name.

There is something positively tender in this view. The law may be an ass, but it is also a gentleman.

Of course, in my imaginary case, if the bankrupt were

to withhold his consent to publication, his creditors, even though it were held that the *Almanack* was theirs, would get nothing. I can imagine them grumbling, and saying (what will not creditors say?): "We fed this gentleman whilst he was writing this precious manuscript. Our joints sustained him, our bread filled him, our wine made him merry. Without our goods he must have perished. By all legal analogies we ought to have a lien upon that manuscript. We are wholly indifferent to the writer's reputation. It may be blasted for all we care. It was not as an author but as a customer that we supplied his very regular wants. It is now our turn to have wants. We want to be paid."

These amusing, though familiar, cries of distress need not disturb our equanimity or interfere with our admiration for the sublime views as to the sanctity of unpublished ideas entertained by the Court of Bankruptcy.

We have thus found, so far as we have gone, the profoundest respect shown by the law both for the dormant ideas and the manuscripts of the author. Let us now push boldly on, and inquire what happens when the author withdraws his interdict, takes the world into his confidence, and publishes his book.

Our old Common Law was clear enough. Subject only to laws or customs about licensing and against profane books and the like, the right of publishing and selling any book belonged exclusively to the author and persons claiming through him. Books were as much the subjects of property-rights as lands in Kent or money in the bank. The term of enjoyment knew no period. Fine fantastic ideas about genius endowing the world and transcending the narrow bounds of property were not countenanced by our Common Law. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in the year 1680, belonged to Mr. Ponder; *Paradise Lost*, in the year 1739, was the property of Mr. Jacob Tonson. Mr. Ponder and Mr. Tonson had acquired these works by purchase. Property-rights

of this description seem strange to us, even absurd. But that is one of the provoking ways of property-rights. Views vary. Perhaps this time next century it will seem as absurd that Ben Mac Dhui should ever have been private property as it now does that in 1739 Mr. Tonson should have been the owner "of man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree." This is not said with any covered meaning, but is thrown out gloomily with the intention of contributing to the general depreciation of property.

If it be asked how came it about that authors and booksellers allowed themselves to be deprived of valuable and well-assured rights—to be in fact disinherited, without so much as an expostulatory ode or a single epigram—it must be answered, strange as it may sound, it happened accidentally and through tampering with the Common Law.

Authors are indeed a luckless race. To be deprived of your property by Act of Parliament is a familiar process, calling for no remarks save of an objugatory character; but to petition Parliament to take away your property—to get up an agitation against yourself, to promote the passage through both Houses of the Act of spoliation, is unusual; so unusual indeed that I make bold to say that none but authors would do such things. That they did these very things is certain. It is also certain that they did not mean to do them. They did not understand the effect of their own Act of Parliament. In exchange for a term of either fourteen or twenty-one years, they gave up not only for themselves, but for all before and after them, the whole of time. Oh! miserable men! No enemy did this; no hungry mob clamoured for cheap books; no owner of copyrights so much as weltered in his gore. The rights were unquestioned: no one found fault with them. The authors accomplished their own ruin. Never, surely, since the well-nigh incredible folly of our first parents lost us Eden and put us to the necessity of earning our

living, was so fine a property—perpetual copyright—bartered away for so paltry an equivalent.

This is how it happened. Before the Revolution of 1688 printing operations were looked after, first by the Court of Star Chamber, which was not always engaged, as the perusal of constitutional history might lead one to believe, in torturing the unlucky, and afterwards by the Stationers' Company. Both these jurisdictions revelled in what is called summary process, which lawyers sometimes describe as *brevi manu*, and suitors as "short shrift." They hailed before them the Mr. Thomas Teggs of the period, and fined them heavily and confiscated their stolen editions. Authors and their assignees liked this. But then came Dutch William and the glorious Revolution. The press was left free; and authors and their assignees were reduced to the dull level of unlettered persons; that is to say, if their rights were interfered with, they were compelled to bring an action, of the kind called "trespass on the case," and to employ astute counsel to draw pleadings with a pitfall in each paragraph, and also to incur costs; and in most cases, even when they triumphed over their enemy, it was only to find him a pauper from whom it was impossible to recover a penny. Nor had the law power to fine the offender or to confiscate the pirated edition; or if it had this last power, it was not accustomed to exercise it, deeming it unfamiliar and savouring of the Inquisition. Grub Street grew excited. A noise went up "most musical, most melancholy,

"As of cats that wail in chorus."

It was the Augustan age of literature. Authors were listened to. They petitioned Parliament, and their prayer was heard. In the eighth year of good Queen Anne the first copyright statute was passed, which, "for the encouragement of learned men to compose and write useful books," provided that the authors of books already printed who had not transferred their rights, and the

booksellers or other persons who had purchased the copy of any books in order to print or reprint the same, should have the sole right of printing them for a term of twenty-one years from the tenth of April, 1710, and no longer; and that authors of books not then printed should have the sole right of printing for fourteen years, and no longer. Then followed, what the authors really wanted the Act for, special penalties for infringement. And there was peace in Grub Street for the space of twenty-one years. But at the expiration of this period the fateful question was stirred—what had happened to the old Common Law right in perpetuity? Did it survive this peddling Act, or had it died, ingloriously smothered by a statute? That fine old book—once on every settle—*The Whole Duty of Man*, first raised the point. Its date of publication was 1657, so it had had its term of twenty-one years. That term having expired, what then? The proceedings throw no light upon the vexed question of the book's authorship. Sir Joseph Jekyll was content with the evidence before him that, in 1735 at all events, *The Whole Duty of Man* was, or would have been but for the statute, the property of one Mr. Eyre. He granted an injunction, thus in effect deciding that the old Common Law had survived the statute. Nor did the defendant appeal, but sat down under the affront, and left *The Whole Duty of Man* alone for the future.

Four years later there came into Lord Hardwicke's court "silver-tongued Murray," afterwards Lord Mansfield, then Solicitor-General, and on behalf of Mr. Jacob Tonson moved for an injunction to restrain the publication of an edition of *Paradise Lost*. Tonson's case was, that *Paradise Lost* belonged to him, just as the celebrated ewer by Benvenuto Cellini once belonged to the late Mr. Beresford Hope. He proved his title by divers mesne assignments and other acts in the law, from Mrs. Milton—the poet's third wife, who exhibited such skill in the art of widowhood, surviving her husband as she did for fifty-three years. Lord Hardwicke granted the

injunction. It looked well for the Common Law. Thomson's *Seasons* next took up the wondrous tale. This delightful author, now perhaps better remembered by his charming habit of eating peaches off the wall with both hands in his pockets, than by his great work, had sold the book to Andrew Millar, the bookseller whom Johnson respected because, said he, "he has raised the price of literature." If so, it must have been but low before, for he only gave Thomson a hundred guineas for "Summer," "Autumn," and "Winter," and some other pieces. The "Spring" he bought separately, along with the ill-fated tragedy, *Sophonisba*, for one hundred and thirty-seven pounds ten shillings. A knave called Robert Taylor pirated Millar's Thomson's *Seasons*; and on the morrow of All Souls in Michaelmas, in the seventh year of King George the Third, Andrew Millar brought his plea of trespass on the case against Robert Taylor, and gave pledges of prosecution, to wit, John Doe and Richard Roe. The case was recognised to be of great importance, and was argued at becoming length in the King's Bench. Lord Mansfield and Justices Willes and Aston upheld the Common Law. It was, they declared, unaffected by the statute. Mr. Justice Yates dissented, and in the course of a judgment occupying nearly three hours, gave some of his reasons. It was the first time the Court had ever finally differed since Mansfield presided over it. Men felt the matter could not rest there. Nor did it. Millar died, and went to his own place. His executors put up Thomson's *Poems* for sale by public auction, and one Beckett bought them for five hundred and five pounds. When we remember that Millar only gave two hundred and forty-two pounds ten shillings for them in 1729, and had therefore enjoyed more than forty years' exclusive monopoly, we realise not only that Millar had made a good thing out of his brother Scot, but what great interests were at stake. Thomson's *Seasons*, erst Millar's, now became Beckett's; and when one Donaldson of Edinburgh brought out an edition of

the poems, it became the duty of Beckett to take proceedings, which he did by filing a bill in the Court of Chancery.*

These proceedings found their way, as all decent proceedings do, to the House of Lords—farther than which you cannot go, though ever so minded. It was now high time to settle this question, and their lordships accordingly, as was their proud practice in great cases, summoned the judges of the land before their bar, and put to them five carefully-worded questions, all going to the points—what was the old Common Law right, and has it survived the statute? Eleven judges attended, heard the questions, bowed, and retired to consider their answers. On the fifteenth of February, 1774, they reappeared, and it being announced that they differed, instead of being locked up without meat, drink, or firing until they agreed, they were requested to deliver their opinions with their reasons, which they straightway proceeded to do. The result may be stated with tolerable accuracy thus: by ten to one they were of opinion that the old Common Law recognized perpetual copyright. By six to five they were of opinion that the statute of Queen Anne had destroyed this right. The House of Lords adopted the opinion of the majority, reversed the decree of the Court below, and thus Thomson's *Seasons* became your *Seasons*, my *Seasons*, anybody's *Seasons*. But by how slender a majority! To make it even more exciting, it was notorious that the most eminent judge on the Bench (Lord Mansfield) agreed with the minority; but owing to the combined circumstances of his having already, in a case practically between the same parties and relating to the same matter, expressed his opinion, and of his being not

* Donaldson was a well-known man in Edinburgh. He was Boswell's first publisher, and on one occasion gave that gentleman a dinner consisting mainly of pig. Johnson's view of his larcenous proceedings is stated in the *Life*. Thurlow was his counsel in this litigation. Donaldson's Hospital in Edinburgh represents the fortune made by this publisher.

merely a judge but a peer, he was prevented (by etiquette) from taking any part, either as a judge or as a peer, in the proceedings. Had he not been prevented (by etiquette), who can say what the result might have been?

Here ends the story of how authors and their assignees were disinherited by mistake, and forced to content themselves with such beggarly terms of enjoyment as a hostile legislature doles out to them.

As the law now stands, they may enjoy their own during the period of the author's life, *plus* seven years, or the period of forty-two years, whichever may chance to prove the longer.

So strangely and so quickly does the law colour men's notions of what is inherently decent, that even authors have forgotten how fearfully they have been abused and how cruelly robbed. Their thoughts are turned in quite other directions. I do not suppose they will care for these old-world memories. Their great minds are tossing on the ocean which pants dumbly-passionate with dreams of royalties. If they could only shame the English-reading population of the United States to pay for their literature, all would be well. Whether they ever will, depends upon themselves. If English authors will publish their books cheap, Brother Sam may, and probably will, pay them a penny a copy, or some such sum. If they will not, he will go on stealing. It is wrong, but he will do it. "He says," observes an American writer, "that he was born of poor but honest parents. I say, 'Bah!'"*

* Copyright in the United States has since been conceded on certain terms.

A CONNOISSEUR.

IT must always be rash to speak positively about human nature, whose various types of character are singularly tough, and endure, if not for ever, for a very long time; yet some types do seem to show signs of wearing out. The connoisseur, for example, here in England is hardly what he was. He has specialised, and behind him there is now the bottomless purse of the multi-millionaire, who buys as he is bidden, and has no sense of prices. If the multi-millionaire wants a thing, why should he not have it? The gaping mob, penniless but appreciative, looks on and cheers his pluck.

Mr. Frederick Locker, about whom I wish to write a few lines, was an old-world connoisseur, the shy recesses of whose soul Addison might have penetrated in the page of a *Spectator*—and a delicate operation it would have been.

My father-in-law was only once in the witness-box. I had the felicity to see him there. It was a dispute about the price of a picture, and in the course of his very short evidence he hazarded the opinion that the grouping of the figures (they were portraits) was in bad taste. The Judge, the late Mr. Justice Cave, an excellent lawyer of the old school, snarled out, "Do you think you could explain to *me* what is taste?" Mr. Locker surveyed the Judge through the eyeglass which seemed almost part of his being, with a glance modest, deferential, deprecatory, as if suggesting "Who am I to explain anything to *you*?" but at the same time critical, ironical, and humorous. It was but for one brief moment; the eyeglass dropped, and there came the mournful answer, as from a man baffled at all

points: "No, my lord; I should find it impossible!" The Judge grunted a ready, almost a cheerful, assent.

Properly to describe Mr. Locker, you ought to be able to explain both to judge and jury what you mean by taste. He sometimes seemed to me to be *all* taste. Whatever subject he approached—was it the mystery of religion, or the moralities of life, a poem or a print, a bit of old china or a human being—whatever it might be, it was along the avenue of taste that he gently made his way up to it. His favourite word of commendation was *pleasing*, and if he ever brought himself to say (and he was not a man who scattered his judgments, rather was he extremely reticent of them) of a man, and still more of a woman, that he or she was *unpleasing*, you almost shuddered at the fierceness of the condemnation, knowing, as all Locker's intimate friends could not help doing, what the word meant to him. "Attractive" was another of his critical instruments. He meets Lord Palmerston, and does not find him "attractive" (*My Confidences*, p. 155).

This is a temperament which when cultivated, as it was in Mr. Locker's case, by a life-long familiarity with beautiful things in all the arts and crafts, is apt to make its owner very susceptible to what some stirring folk may not unjustly consider the trifles of life. Sometimes Locker might seem to overlook the dominant features, the main object of the existence either of a man or of some piece of man's work, in his sensitively keen perception of the beauty, or the lapse from beauty, of some trait of character or bit of workmanship. This may have been so. Mr. Locker was more at home, more entirely his own delightful self, when he was calling your attention to some humorous touch in one of Bewick's tail-pieces, or to some plump figure in a group by his favourite Stothard, than when handling a Michael Angelo drawing or an amazing Blake. Yet, had it been his humour, he could have played the showman to Michael Angelo and Blake at

least as well as to Bewick, Stothard, or Chodowiecki. But a modesty, marvellously mingled with irony, was of the very essence of his nature. No man expatiated less. He never expounded anything in his born days; he very soon wearied of those he called "strong" talkers. His critical method was in a conversational manner to direct your attention to something in a poem or a picture, to make a brief suggestion or two, perhaps to apply an epithet, and it was all over, but your eyes were opened. Rapture he never professed, his tones were never loud enough to express enthusiasm, but his enjoyment of what he considered good, wherever he found it—and he was regardless of the set judgments of the critics—was most intense and intimate. His feeling for anything he liked was fibrous: he clung to it. For all his rare books and prints, if he liked a thing he was very tolerant of its *format*. He would cut a drawing out of a newspaper, frame it, hang it up, and be just as tender towards it as if it were an impression with the unique *remarque*.

Mr. Locker had probably inherited his virtuoso's whim from his ancestors. His great-grandfather was certified by Johnson in his life of Addison to be a gentleman "eminent for curiosity and literature," and though his grandfather, the Commodore, who lives for ever in our history as the man who taught Nelson the lesson that saved an Empire—"Lay a Frenchman close, and you will beat him"—was no collector, his father, Edward Hawke Locker, though also a naval man, was not only the friend of Sir Walter Scott, but a most judicious buyer of pictures, prints, and old furniture.

Frederick Locker was born in 1821, in Greenwich Hospital, where Edward Hawke Locker was Civil Commissioner. His mother was the daughter of one of the greatest book-buyers of his time, a man whose library it took nine days to disperse—the Rev. Jonathan Boucher, the friend and opponent of George Washington, an ecclesiastic who might have been first Bishop of

Edinburgh, but who died a better thing, the Vicar of Epsom.

Frederick Locker grew up among pretty things in the famous hospital. Water-colours by Lawrence, Prout, Girtin, Turner, Chinnery, Paul Sandby, Cipriani, and other masters; casts after Canova; mezzotints after Sir Joshua; Hogarth's famous picture of David Garrick and his wife, now well hung in Windsor Castle, were about him, and early attracted his observant eye. Yet the same things were about his elder brother Arthur, an exceedingly clever fellow, who remained quite curiously impervious to the impressiveness of pretty things all his days.

Locker began collecting on his own account after his marriage, in 1850, to a daughter of Lord Byron's enemy, the Lord Elgin who brought the marbles from Athens to Bloomsbury. His first object, at least so he thought, was to make his rooms pretty. From the beginning of his life as a connoisseur he spared himself no pains, often trudging miles, when not wanted at the Admiralty Office, in search of his prey. If any mercantile-minded friend ever inquired what anything had cost, he would be answered with a rueful smile, "Much shoe leather." He began with old furniture, china, and bric-à-brac, which ere long somewhat inconveniently filled his small rooms. Prices rose, and means in those days were as small as the rooms. No more purchases of Louis Seize and blue majolica and Palissy ware could be made. Drawings by the old masters and small pictures were the next objects of the chase. Here again the long purses were soon on his track, and the pursuit had to be abandoned, but not till many treasures had been garnered. Last of all he became a book-hunter, beginning with little volumes of poetry and the drama from 1590 to 1610; and as time went on the boundaries expanded, but never so as to include black letter.

I dare not say Mr. Locker had all the characteristics of a great collector, or that he was entirely free from the

whimsicalities of the tribe of connoisseurs, but he was certainly endowed with the chief qualifications for the pursuit of rarities, and remained clear of the unpleasant vices that so often mar men's most innocent avocations. Mr. Locker always knew what he wanted and what he did not want, and never could be persuaded to take the one for the other; he did not grow excited in the presence of the quarry; he had patience to wait, and to go on waiting, and he seldom lacked courage to buy.

He rode his own hobby-horse, never employing experts as buyers. For quantity he had no stomach. He shrank from numbers. He was not a Bodleian man; he had not the sinews to grapple with libraries. He was the connoisseur throughout. Of the huge acquisitiveness of a Heber or a Huth he had not a trace. He hated a crowd, of whatsoever it was composed. He was apt to apologise for his possessions, and to depreciate his tastes. As for boasting of a treasure, he could as easily have eaten beef at breakfast.

So delicate a spirit, armed as it was for purposes of defence with a rare gift of irony and a very shrewd insight into the weaknesses and noisy falsettos of life, was sure to be misunderstood. The dull and coarse witted found Locker hard to make out. He struck them as artificial and elaborate, perhaps as frivolous, and yet they felt uneasy in his company lest there should be a lurking ridicule behind his quiet, humble demeanour. There was, indeed, always an element of mockery in Locker's humility.

An exceedingly spiteful account of him, in which it is asserted that "most of his rarest books are miserable copies" (how book-collectors can hate one another!), ends with the reluctant admission: "He was eminently a gentleman, however, and his manners were even courtly, yet virile." Such extorted praise is valuable.

I can see him now before me, with a nicely graduated foot-rule in his delicate hand, measuring with grave precision the height to a hair of his copy of *Robinson*

Crusoe (1719), for the purpose of ascertaining whether it was taller or shorter than one being vaunted for sale in a bookseller's catalogue just to hand. His face, one of much refinement, was a study, exhibiting alike a fixed determination to discover the exact truth about the copy and a humorous realisation of the inherent triviality of the whole business. Locker was a philosopher as well as a connoisseur.

The Rowfant Library has disappeared. Great possessions are great cares. "But ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land-rats, water-thieves, and land-thieves—I mean pirates; and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks." To this list the nervous owner of rare books must add fire, that dread enemy of all the arts. It is often difficult to provide stabling for dead men's hobby-horses. It were perhaps absurd in a world like this to grow sentimental over a parcel of old books. Death, the great unbinder, must always make a difference.

Mr. Locker's poetry now forms a volume of the *Golden Treasury Series*. The *London Lyrics* are what they are. They have been well praised by good critics, and have themselves been made the subject of good verse.

"Apollo made one April day
A new thing in the rhyming way;
Its turn was neat, its wit was clear,
It wavered 'twixt a smile and tear.
Then Momus gave a touch satiric,
And it became a *London Lyric*."

AUSTIN DOBSON.

In another copy of verses Mr. Dobson adds:

"Or where discern a verse so neat,
So well-bred and so witty—
So finished in its least conceit,
So mixed of mirth and pity?"

"Pope taught him rhythm, Prior ease,
Praed buoyancy and banter;
What modern bard would learn from these?
Ah, *tempora mutantur!*"

Nothing can usefully be added to criticism so just, so searching, and so happily expressed.

Some of the *London Lyrics* have, I think, achieved what we poor mortals call immortality—a strange word to apply to the piping of so slender a reed, to so slight a strain—yet

“In small proportions we just beauties see.”

It is the simplest strain that lodges longest in the heart. Mr. Locker's strains are never precisely *simple*. The gay enchantment of the world and the sense of its bitter disappointments murmur through all of them, and are fatal to their being simple, but the unpretentiousness of a *London Lyric* is akin to simplicity.

His relation to his own poetry was somewhat peculiar. A critic in every fibre, he judged his own verses with a severity he would have shrunk from applying to those of any other rhyming man. He was deeply dissatisfied, almost on bad terms, with himself, yet for all that he was convinced that he had written some very good verses indeed. His poetry meant a great deal to him, and he stood in need of sympathy and of allies against his own despondency. He did not get much sympathy, being a man hard to praise, for unless he agreed with your praise it gave him more pain than pleasure.

I am not sure that Mr. Dobson agrees with me, but I am very fond of Locker's paraphrase of one of Clément Marot's *Épigrammes*; and as the lines are redolent of his delicate connoisseurship, I will quote both the original (dated 1544) and the paraphrase:

DU RYS DE MADAME D'ALLEBRET.

“Elle a très bien ceste gorge d'albastre,
Ce doux parler, ce cler tainct, ces beaux yeulx ;
Mais en effect, ce petit rys follastre,
C'est à mon gré ce qui lui sied le mieulx ;
Elle en pourroit les chemins et les lieux
Où elle passé à plaisir inciter ;
Et si ennuy me venoit contrister
Tant que par mort fust ma vie abbatue,

Il me faudroit pour me resusciter
Que ce rys la duguel elle me tue."

"How fair those locks which now the light wind stirs!
What eyes she has, and what a perfect arm!
And yet methinks that little laugh of hers—
That little laugh—is still her crowning charm.
Where'er she passes, countryside or town,
The streets make festa and the fields rejoice.
Should sorrow come, as 'twill, to cast me down,
Or Death, as come he must, to hush my voice,
Her laugh would wake me just as now it thrills me—
That little, giddy laugh wherewith she kills me."

'Tis the very laugh of Millamant in *The Way of the World*! "I would rather," cried Hazlitt, "have seen Mrs. Abington's Millamant than any Rosalind that ever appeared on the stage." Such wishes are idle. Hazlitt never saw Mrs. Abington's Millamant. I have seen Miss Ethel Irving's Millamant, *dulce ridentem*, and it was that little giddy laugh of hers that reminded me of Marot's Epigram and of Frederick Locker's paraphrase. So do womanly charms endure from generation to generation, and it is one of the duties of poets to record them.

In 1867 Mr. Locker published his *Lyra Elegantiarum, A Collection of Some of the Best Specimens of Vers de Société and Vers d'Occasion in the English Languages by Deceased Authors*. In his preface Locker gave what may now be fairly called the "classical" definition of the verses he was collecting. "*Vers de société* and *vers d'occasion* should" (so he wrote) "be short, elegant, refined, and fanciful, not seldom distinguished by heightened sentiment, and often playful. The tone should not be pitched high; it should be idiomatic and rather in the conversational key; the rhythm should be crisp and sparkling, and the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish, and completeness; for however trivial the subject-matter may be—indeed, rather in proportion to its triviality, subordination to the rules of composition and perfection of execution

should be strictly enforced. The definition may be further illustrated by a few examples of pieces, which, from the absence of some of the foregoing qualities, or from the excess of others, cannot be properly regarded as *vers de société*, though they may bear a certain generic resemblance to that species of poetry. The ballad of 'John Gilpin,' for example, is too broadly and simply ludicrous; Swift's 'Lines on the Death of Marlborough,' and Byron's 'Windsor Poetics,' are too savage and truculent; Cowper's 'My Mary' is far too pathetic; Herrick's lyrics to 'Blossoms' and 'Daffodils' are too elevated; 'Sally in our Alley' is too homely and too entirely simple and natural; while the 'Rape of the Lock,' which would otherwise be one of the finest specimens of *vers de société* in any language, must be excluded on account of its length, which renders it much too important."

I have made this long quotation because it is an excellent example of Mr. Locker's way of talking about poets and poetry, and of his intimate, searching, and unaffected criticism.

Lyra Elegantiarum is a real, not a bookseller's collection. Mr. Locker was a great student of verse. There was hardly a stanza of any English poet, unless it was Spenser, for whom he had no great affection, which he had not pondered over and clearly considered as does a lawyer his cases. He delighted in a complete success, and grieved over any lapse from the fold of metrical virtue, over any ill-sounding rhyme or unhappy expression. The circulation of *Lyra Elegantiarum* was somewhat interfered with by a "copyright" question. Mr. Locker had a great admiration for Landor's short poems, and included no less than forty-one of them, which he chose with the utmost care. Publishers are slow to perceive that the best chance of getting rid of their poetical wares (and Landor was not popular) is to have attention called to the artificer who produced them. The Landorian publisher objected, and the *Lyra*

had to be "suppressed"—a fine word full of hidden meanings. The second-hand booksellers, a wily race, were quick to perceive the significance of this, and have for more than thirty years obtained inflated prices for their early copies, being able to vend them as possessing the *Suppressed Verses*. There is a great deal of Locker in this collection. To turn its pages is to renew intercourse with its editor.

In 1879 another little volume instinct with his personality came into existence and made friends for itself. He called it *Patchwork*, and to have given it any other name would have severely taxed his inventiveness. It is a collection of stories, of *ana*, of quotations in verse and prose, of original matter, of character-sketches, of small adventures, of table-talk, and of other things besides, if other things, indeed, there be. If you know *Patchwork* by heart you are well equipped. It is intensely original throughout, and never more original than when its matter is borrowed. Readers of *Patchwork* had heard of Mr. Creevey long before Sir Herbert Maxwell once again let that politician loose upon an unlettered society.

The book had no great sale, but copies evidently fell into the hands of the more judicious of the pressmen, who kept it by their sides, and every now and again

"Waled a portion with judicious care"

for quotation in their columns. The *Patchwork* stories thus got into circulation one by one. Kind friends of Mr. Locker's, who had been told, or had discovered for themselves, that he was somewhat of a wag, would frequently regale him with bits of his own *Patchwork*, introducing them to his notice as something they had just heard, which they thought he would like—murdering his own stories to give him pleasure. His countenance on such occasions was a *rendezvous* of contending emotions, a battlefield of rival forces. Politeness ever prevailed, but it took all his irony and sad philosophy to hide his pain. *Patchwork* is such a good collec-

tion of the kind of story he liked best that it was really difficult to avoid telling him a story that was *not* in it. I made the blunder once myself with a Voltairean anecdote. Here it is as told in *Patchwork*: "Voltaire was one day listening to a dramatic author reading his comedy, and who said, 'Ici le chevalier rit!' He exclaimed: 'Le chevalier est *bien* heureux!'" I hope I told it fairly well. He smiled sadly, and said nothing, not even *Et tu, Brute!*

In 1886 Mr. Locker printed for presentation a catalogue of his printed books, manuscripts, autograph letters, drawings, and pictures. Nothing of his own figures in this catalogue, and yet in a very real sense the whole is his. Most of the books are dispersed, but the catalogue remains, not merely as a record of rarities and bibliographical details, dear to the collector's heart, but as a token of taste. Just as there is, so Wordsworth reminds us, "a spirit in the woods," so is there still, brooding over and haunting the pages of the "Rowfant Catalogue," the spirit of true connoisseurship. In the slender lists of Locker's "Works" this book must always have a place.

Frederick Locker died at Rowfant on May 30, 1895, leaving behind him, carefully prepared for the press, a volume he had christened *My Confidences: An Autographical Sketch addressed to My Descendants*.

In due course the book appeared, and was misunderstood at first by many. It cut a strange, outlandish figure among the crowd of casual reminiscences it externally resembled. Glancing over the pages of *My Confidences*, the careless library subscriber encountered the usual number of names of well-known personages, whose appearance is supposed by publishers to add sufficient zest to reminiscences to secure for them a sale large enough, at any rate, to recoup the cost of publication. Yet, despite these names, Mr. Locker's book is completely unlike the modern memoir. Beneath a carefully-constructed, and perhaps slightly

artificially maintained, frivolity of tone, the book is written in deadly earnest. Not for nothing did its author choose as one of the mottoes for its title-page, "Ce ne sont mes gestes que j'écrie; c'est moy." It may be said of this book, as of Senancour's *Oberman* :

" A fever in these pages burns ;
Beneath the calm they feign,
A wounded human spirit turns
Here on its bed of pain."

The still small voice of its author whispers through *My Confidences*. Like Montaigne's *Essays*, the book is one of entire good faith, and strangely uncovers a personality.

As a tiny child Locker was thought by his parents to be very like Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of Puck, an engraving of which was in the home at Greenwich Hospital, and certainly Locker carried to his grave more than a suspicion of what is called Puckishness. In *My Confidences* there are traces of this quality.

Clearly enough the author of *London Lyrics*, the editor of *Lyra Elegantiarum*, of *Patchwork*, and the whimsical but sincere compiler of *My Confidences* was more than a mere connoisseur, however much connoisseurship entered into a character in which taste played so dominant a part.

Stronger even than taste was his almost laborious love of kindness. He really took too much pains about it, exposing himself to rebuffs and misunderstandings ; but he was not without his rewards. All down-hearted folk, sorrowful, disappointed people, the unlucky, the ill-considered, the *mésestimés*—those who found themselves condemned to discharge uncongenial duties in unsympathetic society, turned instinctively to Mr. Locker for a consolation, so softly administered that it was hard to say it was intended. He had friends everywhere, in all ranks of life, who found in him an infinity of solace, and for his friends there was nothing he would not do. It seemed as if he could not spare

himself. I remember his calling at my chambers one hot day in July, when he happened to have with him some presents he was in course of delivering. Among them I noticed a bust of Voltaire and an unusually lively tortoise, generally half-way out of a paper bag. Wherever he went he found occasion for kindness, and his whimsical adventures would fill a volume. I sometimes thought it would really be worth while to leave off the struggle for existence, and gently to subside into one of Lord Rowton's homes in order to have the pleasure of receiving in my new quarters a first visit from Mr. Locker. How pleasantly would he have mounted the stair, laden with who knows what small gifts?—a box of mignonette for the window-sill, an old book or two, as likely as not a live kitten, for indeed there was never an end to the variety or ingenuity of his offerings! How felicitous would have been his greeting! How cordial his compliments! How abiding the sense of his unpatronizing friendliness! But it was not to be. One can seldom choose one's pleasures.

In his *Patchwork* Mr. Locker quotes Gibbon's encomium on Charles James Fox. Anyone less like Fox than Frederick Locker it might be hard to discover, but fine qualities are alike wherever they are found lodged; and if Fox was as much entitled as Locker to the full benefit of Gibbon's praise, he was indeed a good fellow.

"In his tour to Switzerland Mr. Fox gave me two days of free and private society. He seemed to feel and even to envy the happiness of my situation, while I admired the powers of a superior man as they are blended in his character with the softness and simplicity of a child. *Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempted from the taint of malevolence, vanity, and falsehood.*"

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