

the ditch of Schweidnitz, and fill it up with their dead bodies, that the rear may pass-over them dry-shod, and gain the honour? How many earnest rugged Cromwells, Knoxes, poor Peasant Covenanters, wrestling, battling for very life, in rough miry places, have to struggle, and suffer, and fall, greatly censured, *bemired*,—before a beautiful Revolution of Eighty-eight can step-over them in official pumps and silk-stockings, with universal three-times-three!

It seems to me hard measure that this Scottish man, now after three-hundred years, should have to plead like a culprit before the world; intrinsically for having been, in such way as it was then possible to be, the bravest of all Scotchmen! Had he been a poor Half-and-half, he could have crouched into the corner, like so many others; Scotland had not been delivered; and Knox had been without blame. He is the one Scotchman to whom, of all others, his country and the world owe a debt. He has to plead that Scotland would forgive him for having been worth to it any million 'unblamable' Scotchmen that need no forgiveness! He bared his breast to the battle; had to row in French galleys, wander forlorn in exile, in clouds and storms; was censured, shot-at through his windows; had a right sore fighting life: if this world were his place of recompense, he had made but a bad venture of it. I cannot apologise for Knox. To him it is very indifferent, these two-hundred-and-fifty years or more, what men say of him. But we, having got above all those details of his battle, and living now in clearness on the fruits of his victory, we, for our own sake, ought to look through the rumours and controversies enveloping the man, into the man himself.

For one thing, I will remark that this post of Prophet to his Nation was not of his seeking; Knox had lived forty years quietly obscure, before he became conspicuous. He was the son of poor parents; had got a college education; become a Priest; adopted the Reformation, and seemed well content to guide his own steps by the light of it, nowise unduly intruding it on others. He had lived as Tutor in gentlemen's families; preaching when any body of persons wished to hear his doctrine: resolute he to walk by the truth, and speak the truth when called to do it; not ambitious of more; not fancying

himself capable of more. In this entirely obscure way he had reached the age of forty; was with the small body of Reformers who were standing siege in St. Andrew's Castle,—when one day in their chapel, the Preacher after finishing his exhortation to these fighters in the forlorn hope, said suddenly, That there ought to be other speakers, that all men who had a priest's heart and gift in them ought now to speak;—which gifts and heart one of their own number, John Knox the name of him, had: Had he not? said the Preacher, appealing to all the audience: what then is *his* duty? The people answered affirmatively; it was a criminal forsaking of his post, if such a man held the word that was in him silent. Poor Knox was obliged to stand-up; he attempted to reply; he could say no word;—burst into a flood of tears, and ran out. It is worth remembering, that scene. He was in grievous trouble for some days. He felt what a small faculty was his for this great work. He felt what a baptism he was called to be baptised withal. He 'burst into tears.'

Our primary characteristic of a Hero, that he is sincere, applies emphatically to Knox. It is not denied anywhere that this, whatever might be his other qualities or faults, is among the truest of men. With a singular instinct he holds to the truth and fact; the truth alone is there for him, the rest a mere shadow and deceptive nonentity. However feeble, forlorn the reality may seem, on that and that only *can* he take his stand. In the Galleys of the River Loire, whither Knox and the others, after their Castle of St. Andrew's was taken, had been sent as Galley-slaves,—some officer or priest, one day, presented them an Image of the Virgin Mother, requiring that they, the blasphemous heretics, should do it reverence. Mother? Mother of God? said Knox, when the turn came to him: This is no Mother of God: this is '*a pented bredd*,'—a piece of wood, I tell you, with paint on it! She is fitter for swimming, I think, than for being worshipped, added Knox; and flung the thing into the river. It was not very cheap jesting there: but come of it what might, this thing to Knox was and must continue nothing other than the real truth; it was a *pented bredd*: worship it he would not.

He told his fellow-prisoners, in this darkest time, to be of

courage ; the Cause they had was the true one, and must and would prosper ; the whole world could not put it down. Reality is of God's making ; it is alone strong. How many *pented bredds*, pretending to be real, are fitter to swim than to be worshipped !—This Knox cannot live but by fact : he clings to reality as the shipwrecked sailor to the cliff. He is an instance to us how a man, by sincerity itself, becomes heroic : it is the grand gift he has. We find in Knox a good honest intellectual talent, no transcendent one ;—a narrow, inconsiderable man, as compared with Luther : but in heartfelt instinctive adherence to truth, in *sincerity*, as we say, he has no superior ; nay, one might ask, What equal he has ? The heart of him is of the true Prophet cast. “He lies there,” said the Earl of Morton at his grave, “who never feared the face of man.” He resembles, more than any of the moderns, an Old-Hebrew Prophet. The same inflexibility, intolerance, rigid narrow-looking adherence to God's truth, stern rebuke in the name of God to all that forsake truth : an Old-Hebrew Prophet in the guise of an Edinburgh Minister of the Sixteenth Century. We are to take him for that ; not require him to be other.

Knox's conduct to Queen Mary, the harsh visits he used to make in her own palace, to reprove her there, have been much commented upon. Such cruelty, such coarseness fills us with indignation. On reading the actual narrative of the business, what Knox said, and what Knox meant, I must say one's tragic feeling is rather disappointed. They are not so coarse, these speeches ; they seem to me about as fine as the circumstances would permit ! Knox was not there to do the courtier ; he came on another errand. Whoever, reading these colloquies of his with the Queen, thinks they are vulgar insolences of a plebeian priest to a delicate high lady, mistakes the purport and essence of them altogether. It was unfortunately not possible to be polite with the Queen of Scotland, unless one proved untrue to the Nation and Cause of Scotland. A man who did not wish to see the land of his birth made a hunting-field for intriguing ambitious Guises, and the Cause of God trampled underfoot of Falsehoods, Formulas and the Devil's Cause, had no method of making himself agreeable ! “Better that women weep,” said Morton, “than that bearded

men be forced to weep." Knox was the constitutional opposition-party in Scotland: the Nobles of the country, called by their station to take that post, were not found in it; Knox had to go, or no one. The hapless Queen;—but the still more hapless Country, if *she* were made happy! Mary herself was not without sharpness enough, among her other qualities: "Who are you," said she once, "that presume to school the nobles and sovereign of this realm?"—"Madam. a subject born within the same," answered he. Reasonably answered! If the 'subject' have truth to speak, it is not the 'subject's' footing that will fail him here.—

We blame Knox for his intolerance. Well surely it is good that each of us be as tolerant as possible. Yet, at bottom, after all the talk there is and has been about it, what is tolerance? Tolerance has to tolerate the *unessentials*; and to see well what that is. Tolerance has to be noble, measured, just in its very wrath, when it can tolerate no longer. But, on the whole, we are not altogether here to tolerate! We are here to resist, to control and vanquish withal. We do not 'tolerate' Falsehoods, Thieveries, Iniquities, when they fasten on us; we say to them, Thou art false, thou art not tolerable! We are here to extinguish Falsehoods, and put an end to them, in some wise way! I will not quarrel so much with the way; the doing of the thing is our great concern. In this sense Knox was, full surely, intolerant.

A man sent to row in French Galleys, and suchlike, for teaching the Truth in his own land, cannot always be in the mildest humour! I am not prepared to say that Knox had a soft temper; nor do I know that he had what we call an ill temper. An ill nature he decidedly had not. Kind honest affections dwelt in the much-enduring, hard-worn, ever-battling man. That he *could* rebuke Queens, and had such weight among those proud turbulent Nobles, proud enough whatever else they were; and could maintain to the end a kind of virtual Presidency and Sovereignty in that wild realm, he who was only 'a subject born within the same:' this of itself will prove to us that he was found, close at hand, to be no mean acrid man; but at heart a healthful, strong, sagacious man. Such alone can bear rule in that kind. They blame him for

pulling-down cathedrals, and so forth, as if he were a seditious rioting demagogue : precisely the reverse is seen to be the fact, in regard to cathedrals and the rest of it, if we examine ! Knox wanted no pulling-down of stone edifices ; he wanted leprosy and darkness to be thrown out of the lives of men. Tumult was not his element ; it was the tragic feature of his life that he was forced to dwell so much in that. Every such man is the born enemy of Disorder ; hates to be in it : but what then ? Smooth Falsehood is not Order ; it is the general sumtotal of *Disorder*. Order is *Truth*,—each thing standing on the basis that belongs to it : Order and Falsehood cannot subsist together.

Withal, unexpectedly enough, this Knox has a vein of drolery in him ; which I like much, in combination with his other qualities. He has a true eye for the ridiculous. His *History*, with its rough earnestness, is curiously enlivened with this. When the two Prelates, entering Glasgow Cathedral, quarrel about precedence ; march rapidly up, take to hustling one another, twitching one another's rochets, and at last flourishing their crosiers like quarter-staves, it is a great sight for him everyway ! Not mockery, scorn, bitterness alone ; though there is enough of that too. But a true, loving, illuminating laugh mounts-up over the earnest visage ; not a loud laugh ; you would say, a laugh in the *eyes* most of all. An honest-hearted, brotherly man ; brother to the high, brother also to the low ; sincere in his sympathy with both. He had his pipe of Bourdeaux too, we find, in that old Edinburgh house of his ; a cheery social man, with faces that loved him ! They go far wrong who think this Knox was a gloomy, spasmodic, shrieking fanatic. Not at all : he is one of the solidest of men. Practical, cautious-hopeful, patient ; a most shrewd, observing, quietly discerning man. In fact, he has very much the type of character we assign to the Scotch at present : a certain sardonic taciturnity is in him ; insight enough ; and a stouter heart than he himself knows of. He has the power of holding his peace over man's things which do not vitally concern him,—“They ? what are they ?” But the thing which does vitally concern him, that thing he will speak of ; and in a tone the whole world shall be made to hear : all the more emphatic for his long silence.

This Prophet of the Scotch is to me no hateful man!—He had a sore fight of an existence; wrestling with Popes and Principalities; in defeat, contention, life-long struggle; rowing as a galley-slave, wandering as an exile. A sore fight: but he won it. “Have you hope?” they asked him in his last moment, when he could no longer speak. He lifted his finger, ‘pointed upwards with his finger,’ and so died. Honour to him! His works have not died. The letter of his work dies, as of all men’s; but the spirit of it never.

One word more as to the letter of Knox’s work. The unforgivable offence in him is, that he wished to set-up Priests over the head of Kings. In other words, he strove to make the Government of Scotland a *Theocracy*. This indeed is properly the sum of his offences, the essential sin; for which what pardon can there be? It is most true, he did, at bottom, consciously or unconsciously, mean a Theocracy, or Government of God. He did mean that Kings and Prime Ministers, and all manner of persons, in public or private, diplomatising or whatever else they might be doing, should walk according to the Gospel of Christ, and understand that this was their Law, supreme over all laws. He hoped once to see such a thing realised; and the Petition, *Thy Kingdom come*, no longer an empty word. He was sore grieved when he saw greedy worldly Barons clutch hold of the Church’s property; when he expostulated that it was not secular property, that it was spiritual property, and should be turned to *true* churchly uses, education, schools, worship;—and the Regent Murray had to answer, with a shrug of the shoulders, “It is a devout imagination!” This was Knox’s scheme of right and truth; this he zealously endeavoured after, to realise it. If we think his scheme of truth was too narrow, was not true, we may rejoice that he could not realise it; that it remained after two centuries of effort, unrealisable, and is a ‘devout imagination’ still. But how shall we blame *him* for struggling to realise it? Theocracy, Government of God, is precisely the thing to be struggled for! All Prophets, zealous Priests, are there for that purpose. Hildebrand wished a Theocracy; Cromwell wished it, fought for it; Mahomet attained it. Nay, is it not what all zealous men, whether called Priests, Prophets, or whatsoever else called, do

essentially wish, and must wish? That right and truth, or God's Law, reign supreme among men, this is the Heavenly Ideal (well named in Knox's time, and namable in all times, a revealed 'Will of God') towards which the Reformer will insist that all be more and more approximated. All true Reformers, as I said, are by the nature of them Priests, and strive for a Theocracy.

How far such Ideals can ever be introduced into Practice, and at what point our impatience with their non-introduction ought to begin, is always a question. I think we may say safely, Let them introduce themselves as far as they can contrive to do it! If they are the true faith of men, all men ought to be more or less impatient always where they are not found introduced. There will never be wanting Regent-Murrays enough to shrug their shoulders, and say, "A devout imagination!" We will praise the Hero-priest rather, who does what is in *him* to bring them in; and wears-out, in toil, calumny, contradiction, a noble life, to make a God's Kingdom of this Earth. The Earth will not become too godlike!

and so long as the wonderful art of Printing, or of ready-writing which we call Printing, subsists, he may be expected to continue, as one of the main forms of Heroism for all future ages. He is, in various respects, a very singular phenomenon.

He is new, I say; he has hardly lasted above a century in the world yet. Never, till about a hundred years ago, was there seen any figure of a Great Soul living apart in that anomalous manner; endeavouring to speak forth the inspiration that was in him by Printed Books, and find place and subsistence by what the world would please to give him for doing that. Much had been sold and bought, and left to make its own bargain in the marketplace; but the inspired wisdom of a Heroic Soul never till then, in that naked manner. He, with his copy-rights and copy-wrongs, in his squalid garret, in his rusty coat; ruling (for this is what he does), from his grave, after death, whole nations and generations who would, or would not, give him bread while living,—is a rather curious spectacle! Few shapes of Heroism can be more unexpected.

Also, the Hero from of old has had to cramp himself into strange shapes; the world knows not well at any time what to

LECTURE V.

THE HERO AS MAN OF LETTERS. JOHNSON, ROUSSEAU, BURNS.

[Tuesday, 19th May 1840.]

HERO-GODS, Prophets, Poets, Priests are forms of Heroism that belong to the old ages, make their appearance in the remotest times; some of them have ceased to be possible long since, and cannot any more show themselves in this world. The Hero as *Man of Letters*, again, of which class we are to speak today, is altogether a product of these new ages; and so long as the wondrous art of *Writing*, or of Ready-writing which we call *Printing*, subsists, he may be expected to continue, as one of the main forms of Heroism for all future ages. He is, in various respects, a very singular phenomenon.

He is new, I say; he has hardly lasted above a century in the world yet. Never, till about a hundred years ago, was there seen any figure of a Great Soul living apart in that anomalous manner; endeavouring to speak-forth the inspiration that was in him by Printed Books, and find place and subsistence by what the world would please to give him for doing that. Much had been sold and bought, and left to make its own bargain in the marketplace; but the inspired wisdom of a Heroic Soul never till then, in that naked manner. He, with his copy-rights and copy-wrongs, in his squalid garret, in his rusty coat; ruling (for this is what he does), from his grave, after death, whole nations and generations who would, or would not, give him bread while living,—is a rather curious spectacle! Few shapes of Heroism can be more unexpected.

Alas, the Hero from of old has had to cramp himself into strange shapes: the world knows not well at any time what to

do with him, so foreign is his aspect in the world ! It seemed absurd to us, that men, in their rude admiration, should take some wise great Odin for a god, and worship him as such ; some wise great Mahomet for one god-inspired, and religiously follow his Law for twelve centuries : but that a wise great Johnson, a Burns, a Rousseau, should be taken for some idle nondescript, extant in the world to amuse idleness, and have a few coins and applauses thrown him, that he might live thereby ; *this* perhaps, as before hinted, will one day seem a still absurder phasis of things !—Meanwhile, since it is the spiritual always that determines the material, this same Man-of-Letters Hero must be regarded as our most important modern person. He, such as he may be, is the soul of all. What he teaches, the whole world will do and make. The world's manner of dealing with him is the most significant feature of the world's general position. Looking well at his life, we may get a glance, as deep as is readily possible for us, into the life of those singular centuries which have produced him, in which we ourselves live and work.

There are genuine Men of Letters, and not genuine ; as in every kind there is a genuine and a spurious. If *Hero* be taken to mean genuine, then I say the Hero as Man of Letters will be found discharging a function for us which is ever honourable, ever the highest ; and was once well known to be the highest. He is uttering-forth, in such way as he has, the inspired soul of him ; all that a man, in any case, can do. I say *inspired* ; for what we call 'originality,' 'sincerity,' 'genius,' the heroic quality we have no good name for, signifies that. The Hero is he who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine and Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial : his being is in that ; he declares that abroad, by act or speech as it may be, in declaring himself abroad. His life, as we said before, is a piece of the everlasting heart of Nature herself : all men's life is,—but the weak many know not the fact, and are untrue to it, in most times ; the strong few are strong, heroic, perennial, because it cannot be hidden from them. The Man of Letters, like every Hero, is there to proclaim this in such sort as he can. Intrinsically it is the same function which the old generations named a man Pro-

phet, Priest, Divinity for doing ; which all manner of Heroes, by speech or by act, are sent into the world to do.

Fichte the German Philosopher delivered, some forty years ago at Erlangen, a highly remarkable Course of Lectures on this subject : '*Ueber das Wesen des Gelehrten*, On the Nature of the Literary Man.' Fichte, in conformity with the Transcendental Philosophy, of which he was a distinguished teacher, declares first : That all things which we see or work with in this Earth, especially we ourselves and all persons, are as a kind of vesture or sensuous Appearance : that under all there lies, as the essence of them, what he calls the 'Divine Idea of the World ;' this is the Reality which 'lies at the bottom of all Appearance.' To the mass of men no such Divine Idea is recognisable in the world ; they live merely, says Fichte, among the superficialities, practicalities and shows of the world, not dreaming that there is anything divine under them. But the Man of Letters is sent hither specially that he may discern for himself, and make manifest to us, this same Divine Idea : in every new generation it will manifest itself in a new dialect ; and he is there for the purpose of doing that. Such is Fichte's phraseology ; with which we need not quarrel. It is his way of naming what I here, by other words, am striving imperfectly to name ; what there is at present no name for : The unspeakable Divine Significance, full of splendour, of wonder and terror, that lies in the being of every man, of every thing,—the Presence of the God who made every man and thing. Mahomet taught this in his dialect ; Odin in his : it is the thing which all thinking hearts, in one dialect or another, are here to teach.

Fichte calls the Man of Letters, therefore, a Prophet, or as he prefers to phrase it, a Priest, continually unfolding the God-like to men : Men of Letters are a perpetual Priesthood, from age to age, teaching all men that a God is still present in their life ; that all 'Appearance,' whatsoever we see in the world, is but as a vesture for the 'Divine Idea of the World,' for 'that which lies at the bottom of Appearance.' In the true Literary Man there is thus ever, acknowledged or not by the world, a sacredness : he is the light of the world ; the world's Priest ;—guiding it, like a sacred Pillar of Fire, in its dark pilgrimage

through the waste of Time. Fichte discriminates with sharp zeal the *true* Literary Man, what we here call the *Hero* as Man of Letters, from multitudes of false unheroic. Whoever lives not wholly in this Divine Idea, or living partially in it, struggles not, as for the one good, to live wholly in it,—he is, let him live where else he like, in what pomps and prosperities he like, no Literary Man; he is, says Fichte, a ‘Bungler, *Stümper*.’ Or at best, if he belong to the prosaic provinces, he may be a ‘Hodman;’ Fichte even calls him elsewhere a ‘Nonentity,’ and has in short no mercy for him, no wish that *he* should continue happy among us! This is Fichte’s notion of the Man of Letters. It means, in its own form, precisely what we here mean.

In this point of view, I consider that, for the last hundred years, by far the notablest of all Literary Men is Fichte’s countryman, Goethe. To that man too, in a strange way, there was given what we may call a life in the Divine Idea of the World; vision of the inward divine mystery: and strangely, out of his Books, the world rises imaged once more as godlike, the workmanship and temple of a God. Illuminated all, not in fierce impure fire-splendour as of Mahomet, but in mild celestial radiance;—really a Prophecy in these most unprophetic times; to my mind, by far the greatest, though one of the quietest, among all the great things that have come to pass in them. Our chosen specimen of the Hero as Literary Man would be this Goethe. And it were a very pleasant plan for me here to discourse of his heroism: for I consider him to be a true Hero; heroic in what he said and did, and perhaps still more in what he did not say and did not do; to me a noble spectacle: a great heroic ancient man, speaking and keeping silence as an ancient Hero, in the guise of a most modern, high-bred, high-cultivated Man of Letters! We have had no such spectacle; no man capable of affording such, for the last hundred-and-fifty years.

But at present, such is the general state of knowledge about Goethe, it were worse than useless to attempt speaking of him in this case. Speak as I might, Goethe, to the great majority of you, would remain problematic, vague; no impression but a false one could be realised. Him we must leave to future times.

Johnson, Burns, Rousseau, three great figures from a prior time, from a far inferior state of circumstances, will suit us better here. Three men of the Eighteenth Century ; the conditions of their life far more resemble what those of ours still are in England, than what Goethe's in Germany were. Alas, these men did not conquer like him ; they fought bravely, and fell. They were not heroic bringers of the light, but heroic seekers of it. They lived under galling conditions ; struggling as under mountains of impediment, and could not unfold themselves into clearness, or victorious interpretation of that ' Divine Idea.' It is rather the *Tombs* of three Literary Heroes that I have to show you. There are the monumental heaps, under which three spiritual giants lie buried. Very mournful, but also great and full of interest for us. We will linger by them for a while.

Complaint is often made, in these times, of what we call the disorganised condition of society : how ill many arranged forces of society fulfil their work ; how many powerful forces are seen working in a wasteful, chaotic, altogether unarranged manner. It is too just a complaint, as we all know. But perhaps if we look at this of Books and the Writers of Books, we shall find here, as it were, the summary of all other disorganisation ;—a sort of *heart*, from which, and to which, all other confusion circulates in the world ! Considering what Book-writers do in the world, and what the world does with Book-writers, I should say, It is the most anomalous thing the world at present has to show.—We should get into a sea far beyond sounding, did we attempt to give account of this : but we must glance at it for the sake of our subject. The worst element in the life of these three Literary Heroes was, that they found their business and position such a chaos. On the beaten road there is tolerable travelling ; but it is sore work, and many have to perish, fashioning a path through the impassable !

Our pious Fathers, feeling well what importance lay in the speaking of man to men, founded churches, made endowments, regulations ; everywhere in the civilised world there is a Pulpit, environed with all manner of complex dignified appurtenances and furtherances, that therefrom a man with the tongue may, to best advantage, address his fellow-men. They felt that this

was the most important thing ; that without this there was no good thing. It is a right pious work, that of theirs ; beautiful to behold ! But now with the art of Writing, with the art of Printing, a total change has come over that business. The Writer of a Book, is not he a Preacher preaching not to this parish or that, on this day or that, but to all men in all times and places ? Surely it is of the last importance that *he* do his work right, whoever do it wrong ;—that the *eye* report not falsely, for then all the other members are astray ! Well ; how he may do his work, whether he do it right or wrong, or do it at all, is a point which no man in the world has taken the pains to think of. To a certain shopkeeper, trying to get some money for his books, if lucky, he is of some importance ; to no other man of any. Whence he came, whither he is bound, by what ways he arrived, by what he might be furthered on his course, no one asks. He is an accident in society. He wanders like a wild Ishmaelite, in a world of which he is as the spiritual light, either the guidance or the misguidance !

Certainly the Art of Writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised. Odin's *Runes* were the first form of the work of a Hero ; *Books*, written words, are still miraculous *Runes*, the latest form ! In Books lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time ; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream. Mighty fleets and armies, harbours and arsenals, vast cities, high-domed, many-engined,—they are precious, great : but what do they become ? Agamemnon, the many Agamemnons, Pericleses, and their Greece ; all is gone now to some ruined fragments, dumb mournful wrecks and blocks : but the Books of Greece ! There Greece, to every thinker, still very literally lives ; can be called-up again into life. No magic *Rune* is stranger than a Book. All that Mankind has done, thought, gained or been : it is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of Books. They are the chosen possession of men.

Do not Books still accomplish *miracles*, as *Runes* were fabled to do ? They persuade men. Not the wretchedest circulating-library novel, which foolish girls thumb and con in remote villages, but will help to regulate the actual practical

weddings and households of those foolish girls. So 'Celia' felt, so 'Clifford' acted : the foolish Theorem of Life, stamped into those young brains, comes out as a solid Practice one day. Consider whether any *Rune* in the wildest imagination of Mythologist ever did such wonders as, on the actual firm Earth, some Books have done ! What built St. Paul's Cathedral ? Look at the heart of the matter, it was that divine Hebrew Book,—the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four-thousand years ago, in the wildernesses of Sinai ! It is the strangest of things, yet nothing is truer. With the art of Writing, of which Printing is a simple, an inevitable and comparatively insignificant corollary, the true reign of miracles for mankind commenced. It related, with a wondrous new contiguity and perpetual closeness, the Past and Distant with the Present in time and place ; all times and all places with this our actual Here and Now. All things were altered for men ; all modes of important work of men : teaching, preaching, governing, and all else.

To look at Teaching, for instance. Universities are a notable, respectable product of the modern ages. Their existence too is modified, to the very basis of it, by the existence of Books. Universities arose while there were yet no Books procurable ; while a man, for a single Book, had to give an estate of land. That, in those circumstances, when a man had some knowledge to communicate, he should do it by gathering the learners round him, face to face, was a necessity for him. If you wanted to know what Abelard knew, you must go and listen to Abelard. Thousands, as many as thirty-thousand, went to hear Abelard and that metaphysical theology of his. And now for any other teacher who had also something of his own to teach, there was a great convenience opened : so many thousands eager to learn were already assembled yonder ; of all places the best place for him was that. For any third teacher it was better still ; and grew ever the better, the more teachers there came. It only needed now that the King took notice of this new phenomenon ; combined or agglomerated the various schools into one school ; gave it edifices, privileges, encouragements, and named it *Universitas*, or School of all Sciences : the University of Paris, in its essential characters, was there.

The model of all subsequent Universities ; which down even to these days, for six centuries now, have gone on to found themselves. Such, I conceive, was the origin of Universities.

It is clear, however, that with this simple circumstance, facility of getting Books, the whole conditions of the business from top to bottom were changed. Once invent Printing, you metamorphosed all Universities, or superseded them ! The Teacher needed not now to gather men personally round him, that he might *speak* to them what he knew : print it in a Book, and all learners far and wide, for a trifle, had it each at his own fireside, much more effectually to learn it !—Doubtless there is still peculiar virtue in Speech ; even writers of Books may still, in some circumstances, find it convenient to speak also,—witness our present meeting here ! There is, one would say, and must ever remain while man has a tongue, a distinct province for Speech as well as for Writing and Printing. In regard to all things this must remain ; to Universities among others. But the limits of the two have nowhere yet been pointed out, ascertained ; much less put in practice : the University which would completely take-in that great new fact, of the existence of Printed Books, and stand on a clear footing for the Nineteenth Century as the Paris one did for the Thirteenth, has not yet come into existence. If we think of it, all that a University, or final highest School can do for us, is still but what the first School began doing,—teach us to *read*. We learn to *read*, in various languages, in various sciences ; we learn the alphabet and letters of all manner of Books. But the place where we are to get knowledge, even theoretic knowledge, is the Books themselves ! It depends on what we read, after all manner of Professors have done their best for us. The true University of these days is a Collection of Books.

But to the Church itself, as I hinted already, all is changed, in its preaching, in its working, by the introduction of Books. The Church is the working recognised Union of our Priests or Prophets, of those who by wise teaching guide the souls of men. While there was no Writing, even while there was no Easy-writing or *Printing*, the preaching of the voice was the natural sole method of performing this. But now with Books !—He that can write a true Book, to persuade England, is not

he the Bishop and Archbishop, the Primate of England and of All England? I many a time say, the writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books, these *are* the real working effective Church of a modern country. Nay not only our preaching, but even our worship, is not it too accomplished by means of Printed Books? The noble sentiment which a gifted soul has clothed for us in melodious words, which brings melody into our hearts,—is not this essentially, if we will understand it, of the nature of worship? There are many, in all countries, who, in this confused time, have no other method of worship. He who, in any way, shows us better than we knew before that a lily of the fields is beautiful, does he not show it us as an effluence of the Fountain of all Beauty; as the *handwriting*, made visible there, of the great Maker of the Universe? He has sung for us, made us sing with him, a little verse of a sacred Psalm. Essentially so. How much more he who sings, who says, or in any way brings home to our heart the noble doings, feelings, darings and endurances of a brother man! He has verily touched our hearts as with a live coal *from the altar*. Perhaps there is no worship more authentic.

Literature, so far as it is Literature, is an 'apocalypse of Nature,' a revealing of the 'open secret.' It may well enough be named, in Fichte's style, a 'continuous revelation' of the Godlike in the Terrestrial and Common. The Godlike does ever, in very truth, endure there; is brought out, now in this dialect, now in that, with various degrees of clearness: all true gifted Singers and Speakers are, consciously or unconsciously, doing so. The dark stormful indignation of a Byron, so wayward and perverse, may have touches of it; nay the withered mockery of a French sceptic,—his mockery of the False, a love and worship of the True. How much more the sphere-harmony of a Shakspeare, of a Goethe; the cathedral-music of a Milton! They are something too, those humble genuine lark-notes of a Burns,—skylark, starting from the humble furrow, far overhead into the blue depths, and singing to us so genuinely there! For all true singing is of the nature of worship; as indeed all true *working* may be said to be,—whereof such *singing* is but the record, and fit melodious re-

presentation, to us. Fragments of a real 'Church Liturgy' and 'Body of Homilies,' strangely disguised from the common eye, are to be found weltering in that huge froth-ocean of Printed Speech we loosely call Literature! Books are our Church too.

Or turning now to the Government of men. Witenagemote, old Parliament, was a great thing. The affairs of the nation were there deliberated and decided; what we were to *do* as a nation. But does not, though the name Parliament subsists, the parliamentary debate go on now, everywhere and at all times, in a far more comprehensive way, *out* of Parliament altogether? Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a *Fourth Estate* more important far than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact,—very momentous to us in these times. Literature is our Parliament too. Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to Democracy: invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable. Writing brings Printing; brings universal everyday extempore Printing, as we see at present. Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garnitures: the requisite thing is, that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite. The nation is governed by all that has tongue in the nation: Democracy is virtually *there*. Add only, that whatsoever power exists will have itself, by and by, organised; working secretly under bandages, obscurations, obstructions, it will never rest till it get to work free, unencumbered, visible to all. Democracy virtually extant will insist on becoming palpably extant.—

On all sides, are we not driven to the conclusion that, of the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful and worthy are the things we call Books! Those poor bits of rag-paper with black ink on them,—from the Daily Newspaper to the sacred Hebrew Book, what have they not done, what are they not doing!—For indeed, whatever be the outward form of the thing (bits of paper, as

we say, and black ink), is it not verily, at bottom, the highest act of man's faculty that produces a Book? It is the *Thought* of man; the true thaumaturgic virtue; by which man works all things whatsoever. All that he does, and brings to pass, is the vesture of a Thought. This London City, with all its houses, palaces, steamengines, cathedrals, and huge immeasurable traffic and tumult, what is it but a Thought, but millions of Thoughts made into One;—a huge immeasurable Spirit of a THOUGHT, embodied in brick, in iron, smoke, dust, Palaces, Parliaments, Hackney Coaches, Katherine Docks, and the rest of it! Not a brick was made but some man had to *think* of the making of that brick.—The thing we called 'bits of paper with traces of black ink,' is the *purest* embodiment a Thought of man can have. No wonder it is, in all ways, the activist and noblest.

All this, of the importance and supreme importance of the Man of Letters in modern Society, and how the Press is to such a degree superseding the Pulpit, the Senate, the *Senatus Academicus* and much else, has been admitted for a good while; and recognised often enough, in late times, with a sort of sentimental triumph and wonderment. It seems to me, the Sentimental by and by will have to give place to the Practical. If Men of Letters *are* so incalculably influential, actually performing such work for us from age to age, and even from day to day, then I think we may conclude that Men of Letters will not always wander like unrecognised unregulated Ishmaelites among us! Whatsoever thing, as I said above, has virtual unnoticed power will cast-off its wrappages, bandages, and step-forth one day with palpably articulated, universally visible power. That one man wear the clothes, and take the wages, of a function which is done by quite another: there can be no profit in this; this is not right, it is wrong. And yet, alas, the *making* of it right,—what a business, for long times to come! Sure enough, this that we call Organisation of the Literary Guild is still a great way off, encumbered with all manner of complexities. If you asked me what were the best possible organisation for the Men of Letters in modern society; the arrangement of furtherance and regulation, grounded the most accurately on the actual facts of their position and of the world's

position,—I should beg to say that the problem far exceeded my faculty! It is not one man's faculty; it is that of many successive men turned earnestly upon it, that will bring-out even an approximate solution. What the best arrangement were, none of us could say. But if you ask, Which is the worst? I answer: This which we now have, that Chaos should sit umpire in it; this is the worst. To the best, or any good one, there is yet a long way.

One remark I must not omit, That royal or parliamentary grants of money are by no means the chief thing wanted! To give our Men of Letters stipends, endowments and all furtherance of cash, will do little towards the business. On the whole, one is weary of hearing about the omnipotence of money. I will say rather that, for a genuine man, it is no evil to be poor; that there ought to be Literary Men poor,—to show whether they are genuine or not! Mendicant Orders, bodies of good men doomed to *beg*, were instituted in the Christian Church; a most natural and even necessary development of the spirit of Christianity. It was itself founded on Poverty, on Sorrow, Contradiction, Crucifixion, every species of worldly Distress and Degradation. We may say, that he who has not known those things, and learned from them the priceless lessons they have to teach, has missed a good opportunity of schooling. To beg, and go barefoot, in coarse woollen cloak with a rope round your loins, and be despised of all the world, was no beautiful business;—nor an honourable one in any eye, till the nobleness of those who did so had made it honoured of some!

Begging is not in our course at the present time: but for the rest of it, who will say that a Johnson is not perhaps the better for being poor? It is needful for him, at all rates, to know that outward profit, that success of any kind is *not* the goal he has to aim at. Pride, vanity, ill-conditioned egoism of all sorts, are bred in his heart, as in every heart; need, above all, to be cast-out of his heart,—to be, with whatever pangs, torn-out of it, cast-forth from it, as a thing worthless. Byron, born rich and noble, made-out even less than Burns, poor and plebeian. Who knows but, in that same 'best possible organisation' as yet far off, Poverty may still enter as an important element? What if our Men of Letters, men setting-up to be

Spiritual Heroes, were still *then*, as they now are, a kind of 'involuntary monastic order;' bound still to this same ugly Poverty,—till they had tried what was in it too, till they had learned to make it too do for them! Money, in truth, can do much, but it cannot do all. We must know the province of it, and confine it there; and even spurn it back, when it wishes to get farther.

Besides, were the money-furtherances, the proper season for them, the fit assigner of them, all settled,—how is the Burns to be recognised that merits these? He must pass through the ordeal, and prove himself. *This* ordeal; this wild welter of a chaos which is called Literary Life: this too is a kind of ordeal! There is clear truth in the idea that a struggle from the lower classes of society, towards the upper regions and rewards of society, must ever continue. Strong men are born there, who ought to stand elsewhere than there. The manifold, inextricably complex, universal struggle of these constitutes, and must constitute, what is called the progress of society. For Men of Letters, as for all other sorts of men. How to regulate that struggle? There is the whole question. To leave it as it is, at the mercy of blind Chance; a whirl of distracted atoms, one cancelling the other; one of the thousand arriving saved, nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine lost by the way; your royal Johnson languishing inactive in garrets, or harnessed to the yoke of Printer Cave; your Burns dying broken-hearted as a Gauger; your Rousseau driven into mad exasperation, kindling French Revolutions by his paradoxes: this, as we said, is clearly enough the *worst* regulation. The *best*, alas, is far from us!

And yet there can be no doubt but it is coming; advancing on us, as yet hidden in the bosom of centuries: this is a prophecy one can risk. For so soon as men get to discern the importance of a thing, they do infallibly set about arranging it, facilitating, forwarding it; and rest not till, in some approximate degree, they have accomplished that. I say, of all Priesthoods, Aristocracies, Governing Classes at present extant in the world, there is no class comparable for importance to that Priesthood of the Writers of Books. This is a fact which he who runs may read,—and draw inferences from. "Literature will take care of itself," answered Mr. Pitt, when applied to for

some help for Burns. "Yes," adds Mr. Southey, "it will take care of itself; *and of you too*, if you do not look to it!"

The result to individual Men of Letters is not the momentous one; they are but individuals, an infinitesimal fraction of the great body; they can struggle on, and live or else die, as they have been wont. But it deeply concerns the whole society, whether it will set its *light* on high places, to walk thereby; or trample it under foot, and scatter it in all ways of wild waste (not without conflagration), as heretofore! Light is the one thing wanted for the world. Put wisdom in the head of the world, the world will fight its battle victoriously, and be the best world man can make it. I call this anomaly of a disorganic Literary Class the heart of all other anomalies, at once product and parent; some good arrangement for that would be as the *punctum saliens* of a new vitality and just arrangement for all. Already, in some European countries, in France, in Prussia, one traces some beginnings of an arrangement for the Literary Class; indicating the gradual possibility of such. I believe that it is possible; that it will have to be possible.

By far the most interesting fact I hear about the Chinese is one on which we cannot arrive at clearness, but which excites endless curiosity even in the dim state: this namely, that they do attempt to make their Men of Letters their Governors! It would be rash to say, one understood how this was done, or with what degree of success it was done. All such things must be very *unsuccessful*; yet a small degree of success is precious; the very attempt how precious! There does seem to be, all over China, a more or less active search everywhere to discover the men of talent that grow up in the young generation. Schools there are for every one: a foolish sort of training, yet still a sort. The youths who distinguish themselves in the lower school are promoted into favourable stations in the higher, that they may still more distinguish themselves,—forward and forward: it appears to be out of these that the Official Persons, and incipient Governors, are taken. These are they whom they *try* first, whether they can govern or not. And surely with the best hope: for they are the men that have already shown intellect. Try them: they have not governed or administered as yet; perhaps they cannot; but there is no doubt they *have*

some Understanding,—without which no man can ! Neither is Understanding a *tool*, as we are too apt to figure ; ‘it is a *hand* which can handle any tool.’ Try these men : they are of all others the best worth trying.—Surely there is no kind of government, constitution, revolution, social apparatus or arrangement, that I know of in this world, so promising to one’s scientific curiosity as this. The man of intellect at the top of affairs : this is the aim of all constitutions and revolutions, if they have any aim. For the man of true intellect, as I assert and believe always, is the noblehearted man withal, the true, just, humane and valiant man. Get *him* for governor, all is got ; fail to get him, though you had Constitutions plentiful as blackberries, and a Parliament in every village, there is nothing yet got !—

These things look strange, truly ; and are not such as we commonly speculate upon. But we are fallen into strange times ; these things will require to be speculated upon ; to be rendered practicable, to be in some way put in practice. These, and many others. On all hands of us, there is the announcement, audible enough, that the old Empire of Routine has ended ; that to say a thing has long been, is no reason for its continuing to be. The things which have been are fallen into decay, are fallen into incompetence ; large masses of mankind, in every society of our Europe, are no longer capable of living at all by the things which have been. When millions of men can no longer by their utmost exertion gain food for themselves, and ‘the third man for thirty-six weeks each year is short of third-rate potatoes,’ the things which have been must decidedly prepare to alter themselves !—I will now quit this of the organisation of Men of Letters.

Alas, the evil that pressed heaviest on those Literary Heroes of ours was not the want of organisation for Men of Letters, but a far deeper one ; out of which, indeed, this and so many other evils for the Literary Man, and for all men, had, as from their fountain, taken rise. That our Hero as Man of Letters had to travel without highway, companionless, through an inorganic chaos,—and to leave his own life and faculty lying there, as a partial contribution towards *pushing* some highway

through it : this, had not his faculty itself been so perverted and paralysed, he might have put-up with, might have considered to be but the common lot of Heroes. His fatal misery was the *spiritual paralysis*, so we may name it, of the Age in which his life lay ; whereby his life too, do what he might, was half-paralysed ! The Eighteenth was a *Sceptical* Century ; in which little word there is a whole Pandora's Box of miseries. Scepticism means not intellectual Doubt alone, but moral Doubt ; all sorts of *infidelity*, insincerity, spiritual paralysis. Perhaps, in few centuries that one could specify since the world began, was a life of Heroism more difficult for a man. That was not an age of Faith,—an age of Heroes ! The very possibility of Heroism had been, as it were, formally abnegated in the minds of all. Heroism was gone forever ; Triviality, Formulism and Commonplace were come forever. The 'age of miracles' had been, or perhaps had not been ; but it was not any longer. An effete world ; wherein Wonder, Greatness, Godhood could not now dwell ;—in one word, a godless world !

How mean, dwarfish are their ways of thinking, in this time,—compared not with the Christian Shakspeares and Miltons, but with the old Pagan Skalds, with any species of believing men ! The living TREE Igdrasil, with the melodious prophetic waving of its world-wide boughs, deep-rooted as Hela, has died-out into the clanking of a World-MACHINE. 'Tree' and 'Machine : ' contrast these two things. I, for my share, declare the world to be no machine ! I say that it does *not* go by wheel-and-pinion 'motives,' self-interests, checks, balances ; that there is something far other in it than the clank of spinning-jennies, and parliamentary majorities ; and, on the whole, that it is not a machine at all !—The old Norse Heathen had a truer notion of God's-world than these poor Machine-Sceptics : the old Heathen Norse were *sincere* men. But for these poor Sceptics there was no sincerity, no truth. Half-truth and hearsay was called truth. Truth, for most men, meant plausibility ; to be measured by the number of votes you could get. They had lost any notion that sincerity was possible, or of what sincerity was. How many Plausibilities asking, with unaffected surprise and the air of offended

virtue, What! am not I sincere? Spiritual Paralysis, I say, nothing left but a Mechanical life, was the characteristic of that century. For the common man, unless happily he stood *below* his century and belonged to another prior one, it was impossible to be a Believer, a Hero; he lay buried, unconscious, under these baleful influences. To the strongest man, only with infinite struggle and confusion was it possible to work himself half-loose; and lead as it were, in an enchanted, most tragical way, a spiritual death-in-life, and be a Half-Hero!

Scepticism is the name we give to all this; as the chief symptom, as the chief origin of all this. Concerning which so much were to be said! It would take many Discourses, not a small fraction of one Discourse, to state what one feels about that Eighteenth Century and its ways. As indeed this, and the like of this, which we now call Scepticism, is precisely the black malady and life-foe, against which all teaching and discoursing since man's life began has directed itself: the battle of Belief against Unbelief is the never-ending battle! Neither is it in the way of crimination that one would wish to speak. Scepticism, for that century, we must consider as the decay of old ways of believing, the preparation afar off for new better and wider ways,—an inevitable thing. We will not blame men for it; we will lament their hard fate. We will understand that destruction of old *forms* is not destruction of everlasting *substances*; that Scepticism, as sorrowful and hateful as we see it, is not an end but a beginning.

The other day speaking, without prior purpose that way, of Bentham's theory of man and man's life, I chanced to call it a more beggarly one than Mahomet's. I am bound to say, now when it is once uttered, that such is my deliberate opinion. Not that one would mean offence against the man Jeremy Bentham, or those who respect and believe him. Bentham himself, and even the creed of Bentham, seems to me comparatively worthy of praise. It is a determinate *being* what all the world, in a cowardly half-and-half manner, was tending to be. Let us have the crisis; we shall either have death or the cure. I call this gross, steamengine Utilitarianism an approach towards new Faith. It was a laying-down of cant; a saying to one-

self : " Well then, this world is a dead iron machine, the god of it Gravitation and selfish Hunger ; let us see what, by checking and balancing, and good adjustment of tooth and pinion, can be made of it ! " Benthamism has something complete, manful, in such fearless committal of itself to what it finds true ; you may call it Heroic, though a Heroism with its *eyes* put out ! It is the culminating point, and fearless ultimatum, of what lay in the half-and-half state, pervading man's whole existence in that Eighteenth Century. It seems to me, all deniers of Godhood, and all lip-believers of it, are bound to be Benthamites, if they have courage and honesty. Benthamism is an *eyeless* Heroism : the Human Species, like a hapless blinded Samson grinding in the Philistine Mill, clasps convulsively the pillars of its Mill ; brings huge ruin down, but ultimately deliverance withal. Of Bentham I meant to say no harm.

But this I do say, and would wish all men to know and lay to heart, that he who discerns nothing but Mechanism in the Universe has in the fatalest way missed the secret of the Universe altogether. That all Godhood should vanish out of men's conception of this Universe seems to me precisely the most brutal error,—I will not disparage Heathenism by calling it a Heathen error,—that men could fall into. It is not true ; it is false at the very heart of it. A man who thinks so will think *wrong* about all things in the world ; this original sin will vitiate all other conclusions he can form. One might call it the most lamentable of Delusions,—not forgetting Witchcraft itself ! Witchcraft worshipped at least a living Devil ; but this worships a dead iron Devil ; no God, not even a Devil !—Whatsoever is noble, divine, inspired, drops thereby out of life. There remains everywhere in life a despicable *caput-mortuum* ; the mechanical hull, all soul fled out of it. How can a man act heroically ? The ' Doctrine of Motives ' will teach him that it is, under more or less disguise, nothing but a wretched love of Pleasure, fear of Pain ; that Hunger, of applause, of cash, of whatsoever victual it may be, is the ultimate fact of man's life. Atheism, in brief ;—which does indeed frightfully punish itself. The man, I say, is become spiritually a paralytic man ; this godlike Universe a dead mechanical

steamengine, all working by motives, checks, balances, and I know not what ; wherein, as in the detestable belly of some Phalaris'-Bull of his own contriving, he the poor Phalaris sits miserably dying !

Belief I define to be the healthy act of a man's mind. It is a mysterious indescribable process, that of getting to believe ;—indescribable, as all vital acts are. We have our mind given us, not that it may cavil and argue, but that it may see into something, give us clear belief and understanding about something, whereon we are then to proceed to act. Doubt, truly, is not itself a crime. Certainly we do not rush out, clutch-up the first thing we find, and straightway believe that ! All manner of doubt, inquiry, *σκέψις* as it is named, about all manner of objects, dwells in every reasonable mind. It is the mystic working of the mind, on the object it is *getting* to know and believe. Belief comes out of all this, above ground, like the tree from its hidden *roots*. But now if, even on common things, we require that a man keep his doubts *silent*, and not babble of them till they in some measure become affirmations or denials ; how much more in regard to the highest things, impossible to speak-of in words at all ! That a man parade his doubt, and get to imagine that debating and logic (which means at best only the manner of *telling* us your thought, your belief or disbelief, about a thing) is the triumph and true work of what intellect he has : alas, this is as if you should *overturn* the tree, and instead of green boughs, leaves and fruits, show us ugly taloned roots turned-up into the air,—and no growth, only death and misery going-on !

For the Scepticism, as I said, is not intellectual only ; it is moral also ; a chronic atrophy and disease of the whole soul. A man lives by believing something ; not by debating and arguing about many things. A sad case for him when all that he can manage to believe is something he can button in his pocket, and with one or the other organ eat and digest ! Lower than that he will not get. We call those ages in which he gets so low the mournfulest, sickest and meanest of all ages. The world's heart is palsied, sick : how can any limb of it be whole ? Genuine Acting ceases in all departments of the world's work ; dextrous Similitude of Acting begins. The

world's wages are pocketed, the world's work is not done. Heroes have gone-out ; Quacks have come-in. Accordingly, what Century, since the end of the Roman world, which also was a time of scepticism, simulacra and universal decadence, so abounds with Quacks as that Eighteenth ? Consider them, with their tumid sentimental vapouring about virtue, benevolence,—the wretched Quack-squadron, Cagliostro at the head of them ! Few men were without quackery ; they had got to consider it a necessary ingredient and amalgam for truth. Chatham, our brave Chatham himself, comes down to the House, all wrapt and bandaged ; he 'has crawled out in great bodily suffering,' and so on ;—*forgets*, says Walpole, that he is acting the sick man ; in the fire of debate, snatches his arm from the sling, and oratorically swings and brandishes it ! Chatham himself lives the strangest mimetic life, half-hero, half-quack, all along. For indeed the world is full of dupes ; and you have to gain the *world's* suffrage ! How the duties of the world will be done in that case, what quantities of error, which means failure, which means sorrow and misery, to some and to many, will gradually accumulate in all provinces of the world's business, we need not compute

It seems to me, you lay your finger nere on the heart of the world's maladies, when you call it a Sceptical World. An insincere world ; a godless untruth of a world ! It is out of this, as I consider, that the whole tribe of social pestilences, French Revolutions, Chartisms, and what not, have derived their being,—their chief necessity to be. This must alter. Till this alter, nothing can beneficially alter. My one hope of the world, my inexpugnable consolation in looking at the miseries of the world, is that this is altering. Here and there one does now find a man who knows, as of old, that this world is a Truth, and no Plausibility and Falsity ; that he himself is alive, not dead or paralytic ; and that the world is alive, instinct with Godhood, beautiful and awful, even as in the beginning of days ! One man once knowing this, many men, all men, must by and by come to know it. It lies there clear, for whosoever will take the *spectacles* off his eyes and honestly look, to know ! For such a man the Unbelieving Century, with its unblessed Products, is already past : a new century is already come. The

old unblessed Products and Performances, as solid as they look, are Phantasms, preparing speedily to vanish. To this and the other noisy, very great-looking Simulacrum with the whole world huzzahing at its heels, he can say, composedly stepping aside: Thou art not *true*; thou art not extant, only semblant; go thy way!—Yes, hollow Formulism, gross Benthamism, and other unheroic atheistic Insincerity is visibly and even rapidly declining. An unbelieving Eighteenth Century is but an exception,—such as now and then occurs. I prophesy that the world will once more become *sincere*; a believing world; with *many* Heroes in it, a heroic world! It will then be a victorious world; never till then.

Or indeed what of the world and its victories? Men speak too much about the world. Each one of us here, let the world go how it will, and be victorious or not victorious, has he not a Life of his own to lead? One Life; a little gleam of Time between two Eternities; no second chance to us forevermore! It were well for *us* to live not as fools and simulacra, but as wise and realities. The world's being saved will not save us; nor the world's being lost destroy us. We should look to ourselves: there is great merit here in the 'duty of staying at home'! And, on the whole, to say truth, I never heard of 'worlds' being 'saved' in any other way. That mania of saving worlds is itself a piece of the Eighteenth Century with its windy sentimentalism. Let us not follow it too far. For the saving of the *world* I will trust confidently to the Maker of the world; and look a little to my own saving, which I am more competent to!—In brief, for the world's sake, and for our own, we will rejoice greatly that Scepticism, Insincerity, Mechanical Atheism, with all their poison-dews, are going, and as good as gone.—

Now it was under such conditions, in those times of Johnson, that our Men of Letters had to live. Times in which there was properly no truth in life. Old truths had fallen nigh dumb; the new lay yet hidden, not trying to speak. That Man's Life here below was a Sincerity and Fact, and would forever continue such, no new intimation, in that dusk of the world, had yet dawned. No intimation; not even any French Revolution,—which we define to be a Truth once more, though

a Truth clad in hellfire ! How different was the Luther's pilgrimage, with its assured goal, from the Johnson's, girt with mere traditions, suppositions, grown now incredible, unintelligible ! Mahomet's Formulas were of 'wood waxed and oiled,' and could be *burnt* out of one's way : poor Johnson's were far more difficult to burn.—The strong man will ever find *work*, which means difficulty, pain, to the full measure of his strength. But to make-out a victory, in those circumstances of our poor Hero as Man of Letters, was perhaps more difficult than in any. Not obstruction, disorganisation, Bookseller Osborne and Fourpence-halfpenny a day ; not this alone ; but the light of his own soul was taken from him. No landmark on the Earth ; and, alas, what is that to having no' loadstar in the Heaven ! We need not wonder that none of those Three men rose to victory. That they fought truly is the highest praise. With a mournful sympathy we will contemplate, if not three living victorious Heroes, as I said, the Tombs of three fallen Heroes ! They fell for us too ; making a way for us. There are the mountains which they hurled abroad in their confused War of the Giants ; under which, their strength and life spent, they now lie buried.

I have already written of these three Literary Heroes, expressly or incidentally ; what I suppose is known to most of you ; what need not be spoken or written a second time. They concern us here as the singular *Prophets* of that singular age ; for such they virtually were ; and the aspect they and their world exhibit, under this point of view, might lead us into reflections enough ! I call them, all three, Genuine Men more or less ; faithfully, for most part unconsciously, struggling, to be genuine, and plant themselves on the everlasting truth of things. This to a degree that eminently distinguishes them from the poor artificial mass of their contemporaries ; and renders them worthy to be considered as Speakers, in some measure, of the everlasting truth, as Prophets in that age of theirs. By Nature herself a noble necessity was laid on them to be so. They were men of such magnitude that they could not live on unrealities,—clouds, froth and all inanity gave-way under them : there was no footing for them but on firm earth ; no rest or regular motion for them, if they got not footing there. To

a certain extent, they were Sons of Nature once more in an age of Artifice ; once more, Original Men.

As for Johnson, I have always considered him to be, by nature, one of our great English souls. A strong and noble man ; so much left undeveloped in him to the last : in a kindlier element what might he not have been,—Poet, Priest, sovereign Ruler ! On the whole, a man must not complain of his ‘element,’ of his ‘time,’ or the like ; it is thriftless work doing so. His time is bad : well then, he is there to make it better !—Johnson’s youth was poor, isolated, hopeless, very miserable. Indeed, it does not seem possible that, in any the favourable outward circumstances, Johnson’s life could have been other than a painful one. The world might have had more of profitable *work* out of him, or less ; but his *effort* against the world’s work could never have been a light one. Nature, in return for his nobleness, had said to him, Live in an element of diseased sorrow. Nay, perhaps the sorrow and the nobleness were intimately and even inseparably connected with each other. At all events, poor Johnson had to go about girt with continual hypochondria, physical and spiritual pain. Like a Hercules with the burning Nessus’-shirt on him, which shoots-in on him dull incurable misery : the Nessus’-shirt not to be stript-off, which is his own natural skin ! In this manner *he* had to live. Figure him there, with his scrofulous diseases, with his great greedy heart, and unspeakable chaos of thoughts ; stalking mournful as a stranger in this Earth ; eagerly devouring what spiritual thing he could come at : school-languages and other merely grammatical stuff, if there were nothing better ! The largest soul that was in all England ; and provision made for it of ‘fourpence-halfpenny a day.’ Yet a giant invincible soul ; a true man’s. One remembers always that story of the shoes at Oxford : the rough, seamy-faced, rawboned College Servitor stalking about, in winter-season, with his shoes worn-out ; how the charitable Gentleman Commoner secretly places a new pair at his door ; and the rawboned Servitor, lifting them, looking at them near, with his dim eyes, with what thoughts,—pitches them out of window ! Wet feet, mud, frost, hunger or what you will ; but not beggary : we cannot stand beggary ! Rude stubborn self-help here ; a whole world of squalor, rudeness, con-

fused misery and want, yet of nobleness and manfulness withal. It is a type of the man's life, this pitching-away of the shoes. An original man ;—not a secondhand, borrowing or begging man. Let us stand on our own basis, at any rate ! On such shoes as we ourselves can get. On frost and mud, if you will, but honestly on that ;—on the reality and substance which Nature gives *us*, not on the semblance, on the thing she has given another than us !—

— And yet with all this rugged pride of manhood and self-help, was there ever soul more tenderly affectionate, loyally submissive to what was really higher than he ? Great souls are always loyally submissive, reverent to what is over them ; only small mean souls are otherwise. I could not find a better proof of what I said the other day, That the sincere man was by nature the obedient man ; that only in a World of Heroes was there loyal Obedience to the Heroic. The essence of *originality* is not that it be *new* : Johnson believed altogether in the old ; he found the old opinions credible for him, fit for him ; and in a right heroic manner lived under them. He is well worth study in regard to that. For we are to say that Johnson was far other than a mere man of words and formulas ; he was a man of truths and facts. He stood by the old formulas ; the happier was it for him that he could so stand : but in all formulas that *he* could stand by, there needed to be a most genuine substance. Very curious how, in that poor Paper-age, so barren, artificial, thick-quilted with Pedantries, Hearsays, the great Fact of this Universe glared in, forever wonderful, indubitable, unspeakable, divine-infernal, upon this man too ! How he harmonised his Formulas with it, how he managed at all under such circumstances : that is a thing worth seeing. A thing 'to be looked at with reverence, with pity, with awe.' That Church of St. Clement Danes, where Johnson still *worshipped* in the era of Voltaire, is to me a venerable place.

It was in virtue of his *sincerity*, of his speaking still in some sort from the heart of Nature, though in the current artificial dialect, that Johnson was a Prophet. Are not all dialects 'artificial' ? Artificial things are not all false ;—nay every true Product of Nature will infallibly *shape* itself ; we may say all artificial things are, at the starting of them, *true*. What

we call 'Formulas' are not in their origin bad ; they are indispensably good. Formula is *method*, *habitude* ; found wherever man is found. Formulas fashion themselves as Paths do, as beaten Highways, leading towards some sacred or high object, whither many men are bent. Consider it. One man, full of heartfelt earnest impulse, finds-out a way of doing somewhat,—were it of uttering his soul's reverence for the Highest, were it but of fitly saluting his fellow-man. An inventor was needed to do that, a *poet* ; he has articulated the dim-struggling thought that dwelt in his own and many hearts. This is his way of doing that ; these are his footsteps, the beginning of a 'Path.' And now see : the second man travels naturally in the footsteps of his foregoer, it is the *easiest* method. In the footsteps of his foregoer ; yet with improvements, with changes where such seem good ; at all events with enlargements, the Path ever *widening* itself as more travel it ;—till at last there is a broad Highway whereon the whole world may travel and drive. While there remains a City or Shrine, or any Reality to drive to, at the farther end, the Highway shall be right welcome ! When the City is gone, we will forsake the Highway. In this manner all Institutions, Practices, Regulated Things in the world have come into existence, and gone out of existence. Formulas all begin by being *full* of substance ; you may call them the *skin*, the articulation into shape, into limbs and skin, of a substance that is already there : *they* had not been there otherwise. Idols, as we said, are not idolatrous till they become doubtful, empty for the worshipper's heart. Much as we talk against Formulas, I hope no one of us is ignorant withal of the high significance of *true* Formulas ; that they were, and will ever be, the indispensablest furniture of our habitation in this world.— —

Mark, too, how little Johnson boasts of his 'sincerity.' He has no suspicion of his being particularly sincere,—of his being particularly anything ! A hard-struggling, weary-hearted man, or 'scholar' as he calls himself, trying hard to get some honest livelihood in the world, not to starve, but to live—without stealing ! A noble unconsciousness is in him. He does not 'engrave *Truth* on his watch-seal ;' no, but he stands by truth, speaks by it, works and lives by it. Thus it ever is. Think of

Johnson's unconscious
sincerity.

it once more. The man whom Nature has appointed to do great things is, first of all, furnished with that openness to Nature which renders him incapable of being *insincere*! To his large, open, deep-feeling heart Nature is a Fact: all hearsay is hearsay; the unspeakable greatness of this Mystery of Life, let him acknowledge it or not, nay even though he seem to forget it or deny it, is ever present to *him*,—fearful and wonderful, on this hand and on that. He has a basis of sincerity; unrecognised, because never questioned or capable of question. Mirabeau, Mahomet, Cromwell, Napoleon: all the Great Men I ever heard-of have this as the primary material of them. Innumerable commonplace men are debating, are talking everywhere their commonplace doctrines, which they have learned by logic, by rote, at secondhand: to that kind of man all this is still nothing. He must have truth; truth which *he* feels to be true. How shall he stand otherwise? His whole soul, at all moments, in all ways, tells him that there is no standing. He is under the noble necessity of being true. Johnson's way of thinking about this world is not mine, any more than Mahomet's was: but I recognise the everlasting element of heart-*sincerity* in both; and see with pleasure how neither of them remains ineffectual. Neither of them is as *chaff* sown; in both of them is something which the seed-field will *grow*.

Johnson was a Prophet to his people; preached a Gospel to them,—as all like him always do. The highest Gospel he preached we may describe as a kind of Moral Prudence: 'in a world where much is to be done, and little is to be known,' see how you will *do* it! A thing well worth preaching. 'A world where much is to be done, and little is to be known:' do not sink yourselves in boundless bottomless abysses of Doubt, of wretched god-forgetting Unbelief;—you were miserable then, powerless, mad: how could you *do* or work at all? Such Gospel Johnson preached and taught;—coupled, theoretically and practically, with this other great Gospel, 'Clear your mind of Cant!' Have no trade with Cant: stand on the cold mud in the frosty weather, but let it be in your own *real* torn shoes: 'that will be better for you,' as Mahomet says! I call this, I call these two things *joined together*, a great Gospel, the greatest perhaps that was possible at that time.

Johnson's Writings, which once had such currency and celebrity, are now, as it were, disowned by the young generation. It is not wonderful; Johnson's opinions are fast becoming obsolete: but his style of thinking and of living, we may hope, will never become obsolete. I find in Johnson's Books the indisputablest traces of a great intellect and great heart;—ever welcome, under what obstructions and perversions soever. They are *sincere* words, those of his; he means things by them. A wondrous buckram style,—the best he could get to then; a measured grandiloquence, stepping or rather stalking along in a very solemn way, grown obsolete now; sometimes a tumid *size* of phraseology not in proportion to the contents of it: all this you will put-up with. For the phraseology, tumid or not, has always *something within it*. So many beautiful styles and books, with *nothing* in them;—a man is a *malefactor* to the world who writes such! *They* are the avoidable kind!—Had Johnson left nothing but his *Dictionary*, one might have traced there a great intellect, a genuine man. Looking to its clearness of definition, its general solidity, honesty, insight and successful method, it may be called the best of all Dictionaries. There is in it a kind of architectural nobleness; it stands there like a great solid square-built edifice, finished, symmetrically complete: you judge that a true Builder did it.

One word, in spite of our haste, must be granted to poor Bozzy. He passes for a mean, inflated, gluttonous creature; and was so in many senses. Yet the fact of his reverence for Johnson will ever remain noteworthy. The foolish conceited Scotch Laird, the most conceited man of his time, approaching in such awestruck attitude the great dusty irascible Pedagogue in his mean garret there: it is a genuine reverence for Excellence; a *worship* for Heroes, at a time when neither Heroes nor worship were surmised to exist. Heroes, it would seem, exist always, and a certain worship of them! We will also take the liberty to deny altogether that of the witty Frenchman, that no man is a Hero to his valet-de-chambre. Or if so, it is not the Hero's blame, but the Valet's: that his soul, namely, is a mean *valet-soul*! He expects his Hero to advance in royal stage-trappings, with measured step, trains borne

behind him, trumpets sounding before him. It should stand rather, No man can be a *Grand-Monarque* to his valet-de-chambre. Strip your Louis Quatorze of his king-gear, and there is left nothing but a poor forked raddish with a head fantastically carved ;—admirable to no valet. The Valet does not know a Hero when he sees him ! Alas, no : it requires a kind of *Hero* to do that ;—and one of the world's wants, in *this* as in other senses, is for most part want of such.

On the whole, shall we not say, that Boswell's admiration was well bestowed ; that he could have found no soul in all England so worthy of bending down before ? Shall we not say, of this great mournful Johnson too, that he guided his difficult confused existence wisely ; led it *well*, like a right-valiant man ? That waste chaos of Authorship by trade ; that waste chaos of Scepticism in religion and politics, in life-theory and life-practice ; in his poverty, in his dust and dimness, with the sick body and the rusty coat : he made it do for him, like a brave man. Not wholly without a loadstar in the Eternal ; he had still a loadstar, as the brave all need to have : with his eye set on that, he would change his course for nothing in these confused vortices of the lower sea of Time. 'To the Spirit of Lies, bearing death and hunger, he would in no wise strike his flag.' Brave old Samuel : *ultimus Romanorum* !

Of Rousseau and his Heroism I cannot say so much. He is not what I call a strong man. A morbid, excitable, spasmodic man ; at best, intense rather than strong. He had not 'the talent of Silence,' an invaluable talent ; which few Frenchmen, or indeed men of any sort in these times, excel in ! The suffering man ought really 'to consume his own smoke ;' there is no good in emitting *smoke* till you have made it into *fire*,—which, in the metaphorical sense too, all smoke is capable of becoming ! Rousseau has not depth or width, not calm force for difficulty ; the first characteristic of true greatness. A fundamental mistake to call vehemence and rigidity strength ! A man is not strong who takes convulsion-fits ; though six men cannot hold him then. He that can walk under the heaviest weight without staggering, he is the strong man. We need

forever, especially in these loud-shrieking days, to remind ourselves of that. A man who cannot *hold his peace*, till the time come for speaking and acting, is no right man.

Poor Rousseau's face is to me expressive of him. A high but narrow contracted intensity in it: bony brows; deep, strait-set eyes, in which there is something bewildered-looking,—bewildered, peering with lynx-eagerness. A face full of misery, even ignoble misery, and also of the antagonism against that; something mean, plebeian there, redeemed only by *intensity*: the face of what is called a Fanatic,—a sadly *contracted* Hero! We name him here because, with all his drawbacks, and they are many, he has the first and chief characteristic of a Hero: he is heartily *in earnest*. In earnest, if ever man was; as none of these French Philosophes were. Nay, one would say, of an earnestness too great for his otherwise sensitive, rather feeble nature; and which indeed in the end drove him into the strangest incoherences, almost delirations. There had come, at last, to be a kind of madness in him: his Ideas *possessed* him like demons; hurried him so about, drove him over steep places!—

The fault and misery of Rousseau was what we easily name by a single word, *Egoism*; which is indeed the source and summary of all faults and miseries whatsoever. He had not perfected himself into victory over mere Desire; a mean Hunger, in many sorts, was still the motive principle of him. I am afraid he was a very vain man; hungry for the praises of men. You remember Genlis's experience of him. She took Jean Jacques to the Theatre; he bargaining for a strict incognito,—“*He would not be seen there for the world!*” The curtain did happen nevertheless to be drawn aside: the Pit recognised Jean Jacques, but took no great notice of him! He expressed the bitterest indignation; gloomed all evening, spake no other than surly words. The glib Countess remained entirely convinced that his anger was not at being seen, but at not being applauded when seen. How the whole nature of the man is poisoned; nothing but suspicion, self-isolation, fierce moody ways! He could not live with anybody. A man of some rank from the country, who visited him often, and used to sit with him, expressing all reverence and affection for him, comes one day

finds Jean Jacques full of the sourest unintelligible humour. "Monsieur," said Jean Jacques, with flaming eyes, "I know why you come here. You come to see what a poor life I lead; how little is in my poor pot that is boiling there. Well, look into the pot! There is half a pound of meat, one carrot and three onions; that is all: go and tell the whole world that, if you like, Monsieur!"—A man of this sort was far gone. The whole world got itself supplied with anecdotes, for light laughter, for a certain theatrical interest, from these perversions and contortions of poor Jean Jacques. Alas, to him they were not laughing or theatrical; too real to him! The contortions of a dying gladiator: the crowded amphitheatre looks-on with entertainment; but the gladiator is in agonies and dying.

And yet this Rousseau, as we say, with his passionate appeals to Mothers, with his *Contrat-social*, with his celebrations of Nature, even of savage life in Nature, did once more touch upon Reality, struggle towards Reality; was doing the function of a Prophet to his Time. As *he* could, and as the Time could! Strangely through all that defacement, degradation and almost madness, there is in the inmost heart of poor Rousseau a spark of real heavenly fire. Once more, out of the element of that withered mocking Philosophism, Scepticism and Persiflage, there has arisen in this man the ineradicable feeling and knowledge that this Life of ours is *true*; not a Scepticism, Theorem, or Persiflage, but a Fact, an awful Reality. Nature had made that revelation to him; had ordered him to speak it out. He got it spoken out; if not well and clearly, then ill and dimly,—as clearly as he could. Nay what are all errors and perversities of his, even those stealings of ribbons, aimless confused miseries and vagabondisms, if we will interpret them kindly, but the blinkard dazzlement and staggerings to and fro of a man sent on an errand he is too weak for, by a path he cannot yet find? Men are led by strange ways. One should have tolerance for a man, hope of him; leave him to try yet what he will do. While life lasts, hope lasts for every man.

Of Rousseau's literary talents, greatly celebrated still among his countrymen, I do not say much. His Books, like himself, are what I call unhealthy; not the good sort of Books. There is a sensuality in Rousseau. Combined with such an intellectual

gift as his, it makes pictures of a certain gorgeous attractiveness : but they are not genuinely poetical. Not white sunlight : something *operatic* ; a kind of rosepink, artificial bedizenment. It is frequent, or rather it is universal, among the French since his time. Madame de Staël has something of it ; St. Pierre ; and down onwards to the present astonishing convulsionary 'Literature of Desperation,' it is everywhere abundant. That same *rosepink* is not the right hue. Look at a Shakspeare, at a Goethe, even at a Walter Scott ! He who has once seen into this, has seen the difference of the True from the Sham-True, and will discriminate them ever afterwards.

We had to observe in Johnson how much good a Prophet, under all disadvantages and disorganisations, can accomplish for the world. In Rousseau we are called to look rather at the fearful amount of evil which, under such disorganisation, may accompany the good. Historically it is a most pregnant spectacle, that of Rousseau. Banished into Paris garrets, in the gloomy company of his own Thoughts and Necessities there ; driven from post to pillar ; fretted, exasperated till the heart of him went mad, he had grown to feel deeply that the world was not his friend nor the world's law. It was expedient, if anyway possible, that such a man should *not* have been set in flat hostility with the world. He could be cooped into garrets, laughed at as a maniac, left to starve like a wild-beast in his cage ;—but he could not be hindered from setting the world on fire. The French Revolution found its Evangelist in Rousseau. His semi-delirious speculations on the miseries of civilised life, the preferability of the savage to the civilised, and suchlike, helped well to produce a whole delirium in France generally. True, you may well ask, What could the world, the governors of the world, do with such a man ? Difficult to say what the governors of the world could do with him ! What he could do with them is unhappily clear enough,—*guillotine* a great many of them ! Enough now of Rousseau.

It was a curious phenomenon, in the withered, unbelieving, secondhand Eighteenth Century, that of a Hero starting up, among the artificial pasteboard figures and productions, in the

guise of a Robert Burns. Like a little well in the rocky desert places,—like a sudden splendour of Heaven in the artificial Vauxhall ! People knew not what to make of it. They took it for a piece of the Vauxhall fire-work ; alas, it *let* itself be so taken, though struggling half-blindly, as in bitterness of death, against that ! Perhaps no man had such a false reception from his fellow-men. Once more a very wasteful life-drama was enacted under the sun.

The tragedy of Burns's life is known to all of you. Surely we may say, if discrepancy between place held and place merited constitute perverseness of lot for a man, no lot could be more perverse than Burns's. Among those secondhand acting-figures, *mimes* for most part, of the Eighteenth Century, once more a giant Original Man ; one of those men who reach down to the perennial Deeps, who take rank with the Heroic among men : and he was born in a poor Ayrshire hut. The largest soul of all the British lands came among us in the shape of a hard-handed Scottish Peasant.

His Father, a poor toiling man, tried various things ; did not succeed in any ; was involved in continual difficulties. The Steward, Factor as the Scotch call him, used to send letters and threatenings, Burns says, 'which threw us all into tears.' The brave, hard-toiling, hard-suffering Father, his brave heroine of a wife ; and those children, of whom Robert was one ! In this Earth, so wide otherwise, no shelter for *them*. The letters 'threw us all into tears : ' figure it. The brave Father, I say always ;—a *silent* Hero and Poet ; without whom the son had never been a speaking one ! Burns's Schoolmaster came afterwards to London, learnt what good society was ; but declares that in no meeting of men did he ever enjoy better discourse than at the hearth of this peasant. And his poor 'seven acres of nursery-ground,'—not that, nor the miserable patch of clay-farm, nor anything he tried to get a living by, would prosper with him ; he had a sore unequal battle all his days. But he stood to it valiantly ; a wise, faithful, unconquerable man ;—swallowing-down how many sore sufferings daily into silence ; fighting like an unseen Hero,—nobody publishing newspaper paragraphs about his nobleness ; voting pieces of plate to him ! However, he was not lost : nothing is lost. Robert is there ;

the outcome of him,—and indeed of many generations of such as him.

This Burns appeared under every disadvantage : uninstructed, poor, born only to hard manual toil ; and writing, when it came to that, in a rustic special dialect, known only to a small province of the country he lived in. Had he written, even what he did write, in the general language of England, I doubt not he had already become universally recognised as being, or capable to be, one of our greatest man. That he should have tempted so many to penetrate through the rough husk of that dialect of his, is proof that there lay something far from common within it. He has gained a certain recognition, and is continuing to do so over all quarters of our wide Saxon world : wheresoever a Saxon dialect is spoken, it begins to be understood, by personal inspection of this and the other, that one of the most considerable Saxon men of the Eighteenth century was an Ayrshire Peasant named Robert Burns. Yes, I will say, here too was a piece of the right Saxon stuff : strong as the Harz-rock, rooted in the depths of the world ;—rock, yet with wells of living softness in it ! A wild impetuous whirlwind of passion and faculty slumbered quiet there ; such heavenly *melody* dwelling in the heart of it. A noble rough genuineness ; homely, rustic, honest ; true simplicity of strength ; with its lightning-fire, with its soft dewy pity ;—like the old Norse Thor, the Peasant-god !—

Burns's Brother Gilbert, a man of much sense and worth, has told me that Robert, in his young days, in spite of their hardship, was usually the gayest of speech ; a fellow of infinite frolic, laughter, sense and heart ; far pleasanter to hear there, stript cutting peats in the bog, or suchlike, than he ever afterwards knew him. I can well believe it. This basis of mirth (*'fond gaillard,'* as old Marquis Mirabeau calls it), a primal-element of sunshine and joyfulness, coupled with his other deep and earnest qualities, is one of the most attractive characteristics of Burns. A large fund of Hope dwells in him ; spite of his tragical history, he is not a mourning man. He shakes his sorrows gallantly aside ; bounds forth victorious over them. It is as the lion shaking 'dew-drops from his mane ;' as the swift-bounding horse, that *laughs* at the shaking of the spear.—But

indeed, Hope, Mirth, of the sort like Burns's are they not the outcome properly of warm generous affection, —such as is the beginning of all to every man?

You would think it strange if I called Burns the most gifted British soul we had in all that century of his : and yet I believe the day is coming when there will be little danger in saying so. His writings, all that he *did* under such obstructions, are only a poor fragment of him. Professor Stewart remarked very justly, what indeed is true of all Poets good for much, that his poetry was not any particular faculty ; but the general result of a naturally vigorous original mind expressing itself in that way. Burns's gifts, expressed in conversation, are the theme of all that ever heard him. All kinds of gifts : from the gracefulest utterances of courtesy, to the highest fire of passionate speech ; loud floods of mirth, soft wailings of affection, laconic emphasis, clear piercing insight ; all was in him. Witty duchesses celebrate him as a man whose speech 'led them off their feet.' This is beautiful : but still more beautiful that which Mr. Lockhart has recorded, which I have more than once alluded to, How the waiters and ostlers at inns would get out of bed, and come crowding to hear this man speak ! Waiters and ostlers :—they too were men, and here was a man ! I have heard much about his speech ; but one of the best things I ever heard of it was, last year, from a venerable gentleman long familiar with him. That it was speech distinguished by always *having something in it*. "He spoke rather little than much," this old man told me ; "sat rather silent in those early days, as in the company of persons above him ; and always when he did speak, it was to throw new light on the matter." I know not why any one should ever speak otherwise !—But if we look at his general force of soul, his healthy *robustness* everyway, the rugged downrightness, penetration, generous valour and manfulness that was in him, —where shall we readily find a better-gifted man ?

Among the great men of the Eighteenth Century, I sometimes feel as if Burns might be found to resemble Mirabeau more than any other. They differ widely in vesture ; yet look at them intrinsically. There is the same burly thick-necked strength of body as of soul ;—built, in both cases, on what the

old Marquis calls a *fond gaillard*. By nature, by course of breeding, indeed by nation, Mirabeau has much more of bluster ; a noisy, forward, unresting man. But the characteristic of Mirabeau too is veracity and sense, power of true *insight*, superiority of vision. The thing that he says is worth remembering. It is a flash of insight into some object or other : so do both these men speak. The same raging passions ; capable too in both of manifesting themselves as the tenderest noble affections. Wit, wild laughter, energy, directness, sincerity : these were in both. The types of the two men are not dissimilar. Burns too could have governed, debated in National Assemblies ; politicised, as few could. Alas, the courage which had to exhibit itself in capture of smuggling schooners in the Solway Frith ; in keeping *silence* over so much, where no good speech, but only inarticulate rage was possible : this might have bellowed forth Ushers de Brézé and the like ; and made itself visible to all men, in managing of kingdoms, in ruling of great ever-memorable epochs ! But they said to him reprovingly, his Official Superiors said, and wrote : ‘ You are to work, not think.’ Of your *thinking*-faculty, the greatest in this land, we have no need ; you are to gauge beer there ; for that only are *you* wanted. Very notable ;—and worth mentioning, though we know what is to be said and answered ! As if Thought, Power of Thinking, were not, at all times, in all places and situations of the world, precisely the thing that *was* wanted. The fatal man, is he not always the *unthinking* man, the man who cannot think and *see* ; but only grope, and hallucinate, and *missee* the nature of the thing he works with ? He missees it, *mistakes* it as we say ; takes it for one thing, and it *is* another thing,—and leaves him standing like a Futility there ! He is the fatal man ; unutterably fatal, put in the high places of men.—“ Why complain of this ? ” say some : “ Strength is mournfully denied its arena ; that was true from of old.” Doubtless ; and the worse for the *arena*, answer I ! *Complaining* profits little ; stating of the truth may profit. That a Europe, with its French Revolution just breaking out, finds no need of a Burns except for gauging beer,—is a thing I, for one, cannot *rejoice* at !—

Once more we have to say here, that the chief quality of

Burns is the *sincerity* of him. So in his Poetry, so in his Life. The Song he sings is not of fantasticalities ; it is of a thing felt, really there ; the prime merit of this, as of all in him, and of his Life generally, is truth. The Life of Burns is what we may call a great tragic sincerity. A sort of savage sincerity,—not cruel, far from that ; but wild, wrestling naked with the truth of things. In that sense, there is something of the savage in all great men.

Hero-worship,—Odin, Burns ? Well ; these Men of Letters too were not without a kind of Hero-worship : but what a strange condition has that got into now ! The waiters and ostlers of Scotch inns, prying about the door, eager to catch any word that fell from Burns, were doing unconscious reverence to the Heroic. Johnson had his Boswell for worshipper. Rousseau had worshippers enough ; princes calling on him in his mean garret ; the great, the beautiful doing reverence to the poor moonstruck man. For himself a most portentous contradiction ; the two ends of his life not to be brought into harmony. He sits at the tables of grandees ; and has to copy music for his own living. He cannot even get his music copied. “ By dint of dining out,” says he, “ I run the risk of dying by starvation at home.” For his worshippers too a most questionable thing ! If doing Hero-worship well or badly be the test of vital wellbeing or illbeing to a generation, can we say that *these* generations are very first-rate ?—And yet our heroic Men of Letters do teach, govern, are kings, priests, or what you like to call them ; intrinsically there is no preventing it by any means whatever. The world *has* to obey him who thinks and sees in the world. The world can alter the manner of that ; can either have it as blessed continuous summer sunshine, or as unblessed black thunder and tornado,—with unspeakable difference of profit for the world ! The manner of it is very alterable ; the matter and fact of it is not alterable by any power under the sky. Light ; or, failing that, lightning : the world can take its choice. Not whether we call an Odin god, prophet, priest, or what we call him ; but whether we believe the word he tells us : there it all lies. If it be a true word, we shall have to believe it ; believing it, we shall have to do it. What *name* or welcome we give him or it, is a point that concerns ourselves mainly.

It, the new Truth, new deeper revealing of the Secret of this Universe, is verily of the nature of a message from on high; and must and will have itself obeyed.—

My last remark is on that notablest phasis of Burns's history,—his visit to Edinburgh. Often it seems to me as if his demeanour there were the highest proof he gave of what a fund of worth and genuine manhood was in him. If we think of it, few heavier burdens could be laid on the strength of a man. So sudden; all common *Lionism*, which ruins innumerable men, was as nothing to this. It is as if Napoleon had been made a King of, not gradually, but at once from the Artillery Lieutenancy in the Regiment La Fère. Burns, still only in his twenty-seventh year, is no longer even a ploughman; he is flying to the West Indies to escape disgrace and a jail. This month he is a ruined peasant, his wages seven pounds a year, and these gone from him: next month he is in the blaze of rank and beauty, handing down jewelled Duchesses to dinner; the cynosure of all eyes! Adversity is sometimes hard upon a man; but for one man who can stand prosperity, there are a hundred that will stand adversity. I admire much the way in which Burns met all this. Perhaps no man one could point out, was ever so sorely tried, and so little forgot himself. Tranquil, unastonished; not abashed, not inflated, neither awkwardness nor affectation: he feels that *he* there is the man Robert Burns; that the 'rank is but the guinea-stamp;' that the celebrity is but the candle-light, which will show *what* man, not in the least make him a better or other man! Alas, it may readily, unless he look to it, make him a *worse* man; a wretched inflated wind-bag,—inflated till he *burst*, and become a *dead* lion; for whom, as some one has said, 'there is no resurrection of the body;' worse than a living dog!—Burns is admirable here.

And yet, alas, as I have observed elsewhere, these Lion-hunters were the ruin and death of Burns. It was they that rendered it impossible for him to live! They gathered round him in his Farm; hindered his industry; no place was remote enough from them. He could not get his *Lionism* forgotten, honestly as he was disposed to do so. He falls into discontents, into miseries, faults; the world getting ever more desolate for him; health, character, peace of mind all gone;—solitary

enough now. It is tragical to think of! These men came but to *see* him; it was out of no sympathy with him, nor no hatred to him. They came to get a little amusement: they got their amusement;—and the Hero's life went for it!

Richter says, in the Island of Sumatra there is a kind of 'Light-chafers,' large Fire-flies, which people stick upon spits, and illuminate the ways with at night. Persons of condition can thus travel with a pleasant radiance, which they much admire. Great honour to the Fire-flies! But—!—!

LECTURE VI.

THE HERO AS KING. CROMWELL, NAPOLEON: MODERN
REVOLUTIONISM.

[Friday, 22d May 1840.]

WE come now to the last form of Heroism; that which we call Kingship. The Commander over Men; he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of Great Men. He is practically the summary for us of *all* the various figures of Heroism; Priest, Teacher, whatever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to *command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to *do*. He is called *Rex*, Regulator, *Roi*: our own name is still better; King, *Könning*, which means *Can-ning*, Able-man.

Numerous considerations, pointing towards deep, questionable, and indeed unfathomable regions, present themselves here: on the most of which we must resolutely for the present forbear to speak at all. As Burke said that perhaps fair *Trial by Fury* was the soul of Government, and that all legislation, administration, parliamentary debating, and the rest of it, went on, in 'order to bring twelve impartial men into a jury-box;—so, by much stronger reason, may I say here, that the finding of your *Ableman* and getting him invested with the *symbols of ability*, with dignity, worship (*worth-ship*), royalty, kingship, or whatever we call it, so that *he* may actually have room to guide according to his faculty of doing it,—is the business, well or ill accomplished, of all social procedure whatsoever in this

world ! Hustings - speeches, Parliamentary motions, Reform Bills, French Revolutions, all mean at heart this ; or else nothing. Find in any country the Ablest Man that exists there ; raise *him* to the supreme place, and loyally reverence him : you have a perfect government for that country ; no ballot-box, parliamentary eloquence, voting, constitution-building, or other machinery whatsoever can improve it a whit. It is in the perfect state ; an ideal country. The Ablest Man ; he means also the truest-hearted, justest, the Noblest Man : what he *tells us to do* must be precisely the wisest, fittest, that we could anywhere or anyhow learn ;—the thing which it will in all ways behove us, with right loyal thankfulness, and nothing doubting, to do ! Our *doing* and life were then, so far as government could regulate it, well regulated ; that were the ideal of constitutions.

Alas, we know very well that Ideals can never be completely embodied in practice. Ideals must ever lie a very great way off ; and we will right thankfully content ourselves with any not intolerable approximation thereto ! Let no man, as Schiller says, too querulously ‘measure by a scale of perfection the meagre product of reality’ in this poor world of ours. We will esteem him no wise man ; we will esteem him a sickly, discontented, foolish man. And yet, on the other hand, it is never to be forgotten that Ideals do exist ; that if they be not approximated to at all, the whole matter goes to wreck ! Infallibly. No bricklayer builds a wall *perfectly* perpendicular, mathematically this is not possible ; a certain degree of perpendicularity suffices him ; and he, like a good bricklayer, who must have done with his job, leaves it so. And yet if he sway *too much* from the perpendicular ; above all, if he throw plummet and level quite away from him, and pile brick on brick heedless, just as it comes to hand— ! Such bricklayer, I think, is in a bad way. *He* has forgotten himself : but the Law of Gravitation does not forget to act on him ; he and his wall rush-down into confused welter of ruin !—

This is the history of all rebellions, French Revolutions, social explosions in ancient or modern times. You have put the too *Unable* Man at the head of affairs ! The too ignoble, unvaliant, fatuous man. You have forgotten that there is any rule, or natural necessity whatever, of putting the Able Man

there. Brick must lie on brick as it may and can. Unable Simulacrum of Ability, *quack*, in a word, must adjust himself with quack, in all manner of administration of human things;—which accordingly lie unadministered, fermenting into unmeasured masses of failure, of indigent misery: in the outward, and in the inward or spiritual, miserable millions stretch-out the hand for their due supply, and it is not there. The ‘law of gravitation’ acts; Nature’s laws do none of them forget to act. The miserable millions burst-forth into Sansculottism, or some other sort of madness: bricks and bricklayer lie as a fatal chaos!—

Much sorry stuff, written some hundred years ago or more, about the ‘Divine right of Kings,’ moulders unread now in the Public Libraries of this country. Far be it from us to disturb the calm process by which it is disappearing harmlessly from the earth, in those repositories! At the same time, not to let the immense rubbish go without leaving us, as it ought, some soul of it behind—I will say that it did mean something; something true, which it is important for us and all men to keep in mind. To assert that in whatever man you chose to lay hold of (by this or the other plan of clutching at him); and clapt a round piece of metal on the head of, and called King,—there straightway came to reside a divine virtue, so that *he* became a kind of god, and a Divinity inspired him with faculty and right to rule over you to all lengths: this,—what can we do with this but leave it to rot silently in the Public Libraries? But I will say withal, and that is what these Divine-right men meant, That in Kings, and in all human Authorities, and relations that men god-created can form among each other, there is verily either a Divine Right or else a Diabolic Wrong; one or the other of these two! For it is false altogether, what the last Sceptical Century taught us, that this world is a steam-engine. There is a God in this world; and a God’s-sanction, or else the violation of such, does look-out from all ruling and obedience, from all moral acts of men. There is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience. Woe to him that claims obedience when it is not due; woe to him that refuses it when it is! God’s law is in that, I say, however the Parchment-laws may run: there is a Divine Right or else a

Diabolic Wrong at the heart of every claim that one man makes upon another.

It can do none of us harm to reflect on this : in all the relations of life it will concern us ; in Loyalty and Royalty, the highest of these. I esteem the modern error, That all goes by self-interest and the checking and balancing of greedy knaveries, and that, in short, there is nothing divine whatever in the association of men, a still more despicable error, natural as it is to an unbelieving century, than that of a 'divine right' in people *called* Kings. I say, Find me the true *Könning*, King, or Able-man, and he *has* a divine right over me. That we knew in some tolerable measure how to find him, and that all men were ready to acknowledge his divine right when found : this is precisely the healing which a sick world is everywhere, in these ages, seeking after ! The true King, as guide of the practical, has ever something of the Pontiff in him,—guide of the spiritual, from which all practice has its rise. This too is a true saying, That the *King* is head of the *Church*.—But we will leave the Polemic stuff of a dead century to lie quiet on its bookshelves.

Certainly it is a fearful business, that of having your Able-man to *seek*, and not knowing in what manner to proceed about it ! That is the world's sad predicament in these times of ours. They are times of revolution, and have long been. The brick-layer with his bricks, no longer heedful of plummet or the law of gravitation, have toppled, tumbled, and it all welters as we see ! But the beginning of it was not the French Revolution ; that is rather the *end*, we can hope. It were truer to say, the *beginning* was three centuries farther back : in the Reformation of Luther. That the thing which still called itself Christian Church had become a Falsehood, and brazenly went about pretending to pardon men's sins for metallic coined money, and to do much else which in the everlasting truth of Nature it did *not* now do : here lay the vital malady. The inward being wrong, all outward went ever more and more wrong. Belief died away ; all was Doubt, Disbelief. The builder *cast away* his plummet ; said to himself, "What is gravitation ? Brick lies on brick there !" Alas, does it not still sound strange to many of us, the assertion that there *is* a God's-truth in the busi-

ness of god-created men; that all is not a kind of grimace, an 'expediency,' diplomacy, one knows not what!—

From that first necessary assertion of Luther's, "You, self-styled *Papa*, you are no Father in God at all; you are—a Chimera, whom I know not how to name in polite language!"—from that onwards to the shout which rose round Camille Desmoulins in the Palais-Royal, "*Aux armes!*" when the people had burst-up against *all* manner of Chimeras,—I find a natural historical sequence. That shout too, so frightful, half-infernal, was a great matter. Once more the voice of awakened nations;—starting confusedly, as out of nightmare, as out of death-sleep, into some dim feeling that Life was real; that God's-world was not an expediency and diplomacy! Infernal;—yes, since they would not have it otherwise. Infernal, since not celestial or terrestrial! Hollowness, insincerity *has* to cease; sincerity of some sort has to begin. Cost what it may, reigns of terror, horrors of French Revolution or what else, we have to return to truth. Here is a Truth, as I said: a Truth clad in hellfire, since they would not but have it so!—

A common theory among considerable parties of men in England and elsewhere used to be, that the French Nation had, in those days, as it were gone *mad*; that the French Revolution was a general act of insanity, a temporary conversion of France and large sections of the world into a kind of Bedlam. The Event had risen and raged; but was a madness and nonentity,—gone now happily into the region of Dreams and the Picturesque!—To such comfortable philosophers, the Three Days of July 1830 must have been a surprising phenomenon. Here is the French Nation risen again, in musketry and death-struggle, out shooting and being shot, to make that same mad French Revolution good! The sons and grandsons of those men, it would seem, persist in the enterprise: they do not disown it; they will have it made good; will have themselves shot, if it be not made good! To philosophers who had made-up their life-system on that 'madness' quietus, no phenomenon could be more alarming. Poor Niebuhr, they say, the Prussian Professor and Historian, fell broken-hearted in consequence; sickened, if we can believe it, and died of the Three Days! It was surely not a very heroic death;—little better

than Racine's, dying because Louis Fourteenth looked sternly on him once. The world had stood some considerable shocks, in its time ; might have been expected to survive the Three Days too, and be found turning on its axis after even them ! The Three Days told all mortals that the old French Revolution, mad as it might look, was not a transitory ebullition of Bedlam, but a genuine product of this Earth where we all live ; that it was verily a Fact, and that the world in general would do well everywhere to regard it as such.

Truly, without the French Revolution, one would not know what to make of an age like this at all. We will hail the French Revolution, as shipwrecked mariners might the sternest rock, in a world otherwise all of baseless sea and waves. A true Apocalypse, though a terrible one, to this false withered artificial time ; testifying once more that Nature is *preternatural* ; if not divine, then diabolic ; that Semblance is not Reality ; that it has to become Reality, or the world will take-fire under it,—burn *it* into what it is, namely Nothing ! Plausibility has ended ; empty Routine has ended ; much has ended. This, as with a Trump of Doom, has been proclaimed to all men. They are the wisest who will learn it soonest. Long confused generations before it be learned ; peace impossible till it be ! The earnest man, surrounded, as ever, with a world of inconsistencies, can await patiently, patiently strive to do *his* work, in the midst of that. Sentence of Death is written down in Heaven against all that ; sentence of Death is now proclaimed on the Earth against it : this he with his eyes may see. And surely, I should say, considering the other side of the matter, what enormous difficulties lie there, and how fast, fearfully fast, in all countries, the inexorable demand for solution of them is pressing on,—he may easily find other work to do than labouring in the Sansculottic province at this time of day !

To me, in these circumstances, that of 'Hero-worship' becomes a fact inexpressibly precious ; the most solacing fact one sees in the world at present. There is an everlasting hope in it for the management of the world. Had all traditions, arrangements, creeds, societies that men ever instituted, sunk away, this would remain. The certainty of Heroes being sent