necessary to introduce them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in breaking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson, Sandys,[1] and Holiday,[2] had fixed the judgement of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Fanshaw, Denham, Waller, and Cowley, had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In 1681, Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politicks with poetry, in the memorable satire called "Absalom and Achitophel,"[3] written against the faction which, by lord Shaftesbury's incitement, set the duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was applied to the support of publick principles, and in which therefore every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the

[1] Sandys (George), seventh and youngest son of the Archbishop of York (1577-1643). His works comprise *Sandys' Travels*, published 1615, fol.; of which there have been eight or ten editions; Trans. of *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 1632; *Paraphrase of the Psalms of David*, 1636, &c., &c. Warton thinks Sandys did more to polish and tune the English language than Denham and Waller, and his prose is thought finer than his verse.

[2] Barten Holyday, D.D. (1593-1661), translator of Juvenal and Persius, author of *A Survey of the World*, 1661, &c., &c.

[3] S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 195. This poem (Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 124) was read with such avidity that the first edition was sold in about a month; and the second was issued before the end of December. Two, if not three other editions of this piece were published in 1682, and in 1684 a sixth edition appeared in our author's Miscellanies. Malone, *Life*, p. 142. Cunningham adds that a seventh edition, augmented and revised, appeared in 1692, and a tenth in folio, 1701.

sale so large, that my father,[1] an old bookseller, told me, he had not known it equalled but by *Sacheverell's* trial.[2]

The reason of this general perusal Addison has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decypher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to enquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.[3]

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed in their turns to the shafts of satire, which, though neither so well

[1] Michael Johnson, bookseller, of Lichfield, who according to a tradition of the town, carried his boy Samuel on his shoulder to hear the renowned Sacheverell preach. See Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. p. 14.

[2] *Sacheverell's trial.* In the year 1709 the struggle was at its height between Harley and the adherents of Marlborough. The queen, favouring Harley, had been obliged to give way, and Harley had been dismissed from his office of Secretary of State. But he only waited a chance to return, having with him both the royal favour and the popular feeling. Just at this juncture Dr. Sacheverell preached, on Nov. 5, before the Lord Mayor and aldermen, a sermon, at St. Paul's, in which he attacked the ministry in the most violent terms. The sermon was printed and 40,000 copies sold in a few weeks. The ministry impeached him and he was tried in Westminster Hall. But this drew out such a great popular manifestation in his favour that the queen felt strong enough gradually to effect the changes in the ministry she had long desired. Johnson must intend to allude to the sale of the sermon when he speaks of the sale of the trial, for though the trial was printed, and contained the speech in defence spoken by Sacheverell, and supposed to have been composed for him by bishop Atterbury, there is no record, as in the case of the sermon, of any very enormous sale. Cf. *Life of Pope*, p. 166, l. 8, and note.—A. Milnes.

[3] "The greatest of his satires . . . . The spontaneous ease of expression, the rapid transitions, the general elasticity and movement, have never been excelled." Hallam, *Literature*, vol. iii. p. 473.

pointed nor perhaps so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One of these poems is called "Dryden's Satire on his Muse;" ascribed, though, as Pope says, falsely, to *Somers*,[1] who was afterwards Chancellor. The poem, whosoever it was, has much virulence, and some spriteliness. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of "Absalom and Achitophel" had two answers, now both forgotten; one called "Azaria and Hushai;" the other "Absalom senior." Of these hostile compositions, Dryden apparently imputes "Absalom senior" to *Settle*, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. "Azaria[2] and Hushai" was, as *Wood* says, imputed to him, though it is somewhat unlikely that he should write twice on the same occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical transactions.

The same year he published the "Medal,"[3] of which the subject is a medal struck on lord Shaftesbury's[4] escape from a prosecution, by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the same principles, and saw them both attacked by the same antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered "Absalom," appeared with equal courage in opposition to the "Medal," and published an

[1] Malone, however, inclines to the belief that it was written by Somers, then just making his appearance as a poet.

[2] Malone states that Azaria was by Samuel Pordage, a dramatic writer of that time.

[3] *The Medal*, A Satire, 1681-2. S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 411.

[4] Anthony Ashley Cooper (1621-1683), Lord Chancellor in 1672, was zealous for the exclusion of the Duke of York, afterwards James II., from the succession to the throne. The Court party had him tried for high treason in 1681, but he was acquitted.—Matt. Arnold. See *Life of Earl of Shaftesbury*, by W. D. Christie, 1871.

answer called "The Medal reversed,"[1] with so much success in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them; who died forgotten in an hospital; and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same, to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding; might, with truth, have had inscribed upon his stone,

"Here lies the Rival and Antagonist of Dryden."

Settle was, for this rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden under the name of *Doeg*, in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel,"[2] and was perhaps for his factious audacity made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the Mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much to have deserved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyrick on the virtues of judge Jefferies,[3] and what more could have been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments, or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles, or settle the dates would be tedious, with

[1] *The Medal Reversed, a Satyre against Persecution*, by the Author of *Azaria and Hushai*, Samuel Pordage (not Settle). Johnson does not notice the brutal attack on Dryden by Shadwell in *The Medal of John Bayes: A Satyr against Folly and Knavery*. 1682. 4to. See Malone, p. 165.

[2] The greater portion of the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* was written by Nahum Tate. Malone, vol. i. p. 173.

[3] The notorious Chief-Justice, who in the "Bloody Circuit" of 1685, hanged 350 rebels, sold 800 into slavery beyond the sea, and by his infamous sentences on women left his name a by-word for cruelty.

little use. It may be observed, that as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by some personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topick.

Soon after the accession of king James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himself a convert to popery. This at any other time might have passed with little censure. Sir *Kenelm Digby*[1] embraced popery; the two *Rainolds*[2] reciprocally converted one another; and *Chillingworth*[3] himself was a while so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties, or such motives, as may either unite them to the church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who perhaps never enquired why he was a protestant, should by an artful and experienced disputant be made a papist, overborn by the sudden violence of new and unexpected argu-

[1] *Vid. supr.* p. 6.

[2] Dr. John Rainolds (1549-1607), was one of the most learned and eminent divines of the sixteenth century. He was a scholar of Corpus Christi, Oxford, and afterwards Lecturer on Aristotle. Scaliger regrets his death as a loss to all Protestant Churches. Wood calls him "a man of infinite reading, and of a vast memory." William Rainolds, his brother, died in 1599. They were educated, one in the Church of Rome, the other in the Protestant communion, and were said to have converted each other in the course of disputation. See Hallam, *Lit. Eur.* vol. i. p. 554.

[3] Chillingworth (1602-1644). Falling into the hands of the Jesuits he became a Papist, but after a few years returned to the Church of England. Of the controversial works of this celebrated Royalist divine, the most important and the most popular was *The religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation*, the first edition being published in Oxford, 1638, in folio, the second in London within five months. Locke recommended the study of Chillingworth, as teaching both perspicuity and the right way of reasoning, and Tillotson called him "that incomparable person, the glory of the age and nation."

ments, or deceived by a representation which shews only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest.[1] He that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was then the state of popery; every artifice was used to shew it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is likewise an elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest. I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right than virtue to maintain it. But enquiries into the heart are not for man; we must now leave him to his Judge.

The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him to defend the controversial papers found in the strong-box of Charles the

[1] Mr. Peter Cunningham observes, that while Scott and Southey acquit Dryden of mercenary motives, Macaulay is painfully positive that his conversion was a mere money-matter.

Second,[1] and, what yet was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.[2]

With hopes of promoting popery, he was employed to translate Maimbourg's "History of the League;"[3] which he published with a large introduction. His name is likewise prefixed to the English[4] "Life of Francis Xavier;" but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud, which however seems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The version of Xavier's Life is commended by Brown,[5] as a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occasion of it is said to have been, that the Queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate Varillas's "History of Heresies;" and when *Burnet* published

[1] Dryden's share in the defence seems to have been one-third, namely, the defence of the paper by Anne Hyde, Duchess of York. See Preface to the *Hind and Panther*, S. S. *D.* vol. x. p. 114.

[2] Edward Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester (1635-1699), a famous divine, a colleague of Tillotson, and an opponent of Locke.

[3] *Histoire de la ligue*, by Louis Maimbourg, a celebrated Jesuit (1620-1686), the author of several religious histories. This one, translated by Dryden in 1684, during the lifetime, therefore, of Charles II., contains some original and curious pieces, amongst others the act of association of the Great Powers against the house of Bourbon. A specimen of this work is given (an account of the barricades of Paris). S. *D.* vol. xvii. This translation was dedicated to Charles II., and is said to have been undertaken at his express desire. See Malone, p. 185.

[4] Translated from the French of Dominique Bouhours (1628-1702), best known as the author of *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit*, which has often been reprinted.

[5] Thomas Brown, "of facetious memory," as Addison says, died 1704. His works "serious and comical" were published 1707, and reached a ninth edition in 1760. He himself published in 1702 *Miscellanea Aulica*, or a Collection of State Treatises never before published.

Remarks upon it, to have written an *Answer*;[1] upon which Burnet makes the following observation:

"I have been informed from England, that a gentleman, who is famous both for poetry and several other things, had spent three months in translating M. Varillas's History; but that, as soon as my Reflections appeared, he discontinued his labour, finding the credit of his author was gone. Now, if he thinks it is recovered by his Answer, he will perhaps go on with his translation; and this may be, for aught I know, as good an entertainment for him as the conversation that he had set on between the Hinds and Panthers, and all the rest of animals, for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough as an author: and this history and that poem are such extraordinary things of their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become likewise the translator of the worst history that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve both proportionably, he will hardly find that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion to chuse one of the worst. It is true, he had somewhat to sink from in matter of wit; but as for his morals, it is scarce possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three months labour; but in it he has done me all the honour that any man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be, that he would go on and finish his translation. By that it will appear, whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge in this matter, has, upon the seeing our debate, pronounced in M. Varillas's favour, or in mine. It is true, Mr. D. will suffer a little by it; but at least it will

[1] That the answer to Burnet was written by Varillas himself, is shown by the title and whole contents of the pamphlet by Burnet from which the following extract is taken.

serve to keep him in from other extravagancies; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it as he has done by his last employment."[1]

Having probably felt his own inferiority in theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtilty and harmony united are still feeble, when opposed to truth.

Actuated therefore by zeal for Rome, or hope of fame, he published the "Hind and Panther,"[2] a poem in which the church of Rome, figured by the *milk-white Hind*, defends her tenets against the church of England, represented by the *Panther*, a beast beautiful, but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking Theology, appears at once full of absurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the "City Mouse and Country Mouse," a parody, written by Montague, afterwards earl of Halifax,[3] and Prior,[3] who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.

The conversion of such a man, at such a time, was not likely to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious *Thomas Brown*, of which the two first were called "Reasons of Mr. Bayes's changing his religion:" and the third "The Reasons of Mr. Hains the player's

[1] Burnet's *Reply to Varillas's Answer*, pp. 138-240.

[2] *The Hind and the Panther, a Poem, In Three Parts.* Tonson, 1687, 8. S. *D.* vol. x. p. 85. Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 113. "You have a war in England between the Hind and the Panther. General Dryden is an expert captain; but I always thought him fitter for execution than for counsel. Who commands the Panther forces I know not. The author of the *Revolter*, while he endeavours to expose the morals of his enemy, exposes more his own dulness by his poetry. The gentleman who has answersed the Poem shows that the genius of the *Rehearsal* is not dead with the Duke of Bucks." Sir George Etherege: Letter quoted by P. Cunningham.

[3] *Vid. infr.* vol. ii. *Lives of Halifax and Prior.*

conversion and re-conversion." The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the publick attention.

In the two first dialogues *Bayes* is brought into the company of *Crites* and *Eugenius*, with whom he had formerly debated on dramatick poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. *Bayes* [1] and Mr. *Hains*.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow;* and therefore laid out his powers upon small jests or gross buffoonery, so that his performances have little intrinsick value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain, is disgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited. One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden *little Bayes. Ajax*, who happens to be mentioned, is *he that wore as many cowhides upon his shield as would have furnished half the king's army with shoe-leather.*

Being asked whether he has seen the "Hind and Panther," Crites answers: *Seen it! Mr.* Bayes, *why I can stir no where but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a band-box, when my laundress brings home my linen; sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunkmaker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancery-lane parcel. For your comfort too, Mr. Bayes, I have not only seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise the* "Worth of a

[1] "Little Bayes" was the nickname given to Dryden by the Duke of Buckingham in the *Rehearsal*. *Vid. supr.* p. 386.

Penny" to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in stewed pples, and penny custards.

The whole animation of these compositions arises from profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. *To ecure one's chastity*, says Bayes, *little more is necessary than leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which, to a ise man, is no greater a punishment than it would be to a anatic parson to be forbid* seeing *the* Cheats *and the* Committee; *or for my Lord Mayor and Aldermen to be interdicted the sight of the* London Cuckold.—This is the general train, and therefore I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions: *You began*, says Crites *to* Bayes, *with a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your Muse, which appeared first in a Tyrant's quarrel, should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpations of the* Hind.

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the Prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination, and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem, filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity; predictions of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of popish hope was blasted for ever by the Revolution. A papist now could be no longer Laureat. The revenue, which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of *Og*. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed; but seemed very angry that Shadwell succeeded him, and has therefore celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem

exquisitely satirical, called "Mac Flecknoe;"[1] of which the "Dunciad," as Pope himself declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior,[2] that Lord Dorset, when, as chamberlain, he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purse an allowance equal to the salary. This is no romantick or incredible act of generosity; an hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent, by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a public infliction; and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

During the short reign of king James he had written nothing for the stage,[3] being, in his opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might perhaps have been less lavish without inconvenience, for

[1] *Mac Flecknoe, or a Satire upon the True Blue Protestant Poet, J. S.*, by the Author of *Absalom and Achitophel*. This consisted of one and a half sheet, 4to, 1682, and was sold for twopence. See S. S. *D.* vol. x. p. 429; Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 224.

"'Mac Flecknoe' was published 4to, in 1682, and again in 1684, in Jonson's first Miscellany, and on both occasions while Dryden was himself Laureate. 'Mac Flecknoe' originated in Shadwell's two anonymous attacks on Dryden, 'The Medal of John Bayes,' 1682, 4to, and the 'The Tory Poets,' 1682, 4to. Dryden's dislike to Flecknoe had its origin, I suspect, in a pamphlet, signed R. F. (evidently Richard Flecknoe) written in vindication of Sir Robert Howard. See my paper on this subject in *Gents. Mag.* for December, 1850. This curious pamphlet was unknown to Johnson, Malone, and Scott."—P. CUNNINGHAM.

[2] In the Dedication of his Poems to the Earl of Dorset, Ald. *Prior*, vol. i. p. 14.

[3] Except the opera "Albion and Albanius," which was first played 6th June, 1685.

James was never said to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the publick, or perhaps expecting a second revolution, he produced "Don Sebastian" in 1690;[1] and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new version of Juvenal and Persius.[2] Of Juvenal he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires;[3] and of Persius the whole work.[4] On this occasion he introduced his two sons to the publick, as nurselings of the Muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface in the form of a dedication to Lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epic poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epick as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imagined a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The surprizes and terrors of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and

[1] This play was brought out with great pomp, but was at first coldly received. It is now considered the *chef d'œuvre* of Dryden's plays.
[2] *S. D.* vol. vii.
[3] *S. S. D.* vol. xiii. p. 125.
[4] *Ald. D.* vol. v. pp. 71-156.
[4] *Ald. D.* vol. v. pp. 161-207.

oppositions of pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes,[1] and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken, with this incurable defect, that in a contest between heaven and hell we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo[2] to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terror.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had address enough to surmount. In a war justice can be but on one side; and to entitle the hero to the protection of angels, he must fight in the defence of indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers, and enlarged our language, and might perhaps have contributed by pleasing instruction to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a publick stipend, was not likely in those times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us, nor had the nation yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore[3] with stealing; only, says he,[4] *the guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage.*

In 1694, he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Fresnoy's "Art of Painting" into English prose.[5] The preface, which he

[1] Boileau, *L'art poétique*, *chant* 3, l. 213.

[2] Tasso. *La Gerusalemme*, canto 18, st. 17.

[3] *Vid. infr. Life of Blackmore*, vol. ii.

[4] Preface to *Fables*, S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 242.

[5] Printed in 1695, with a *Parallel of Poetry and Painting*, by Dryden prefixed.

boasts to have written in twelve mornings, exhibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind stored like his no labour to produce them.

In 1697, he published[1] his version of the works of Virgil;[2] and that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the lord Clifford, the Georgics to the earl of Chesterfield, and the Eneid to the earl of Mulgrave. This œconomy of flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

This translation was censured by Milbourne, a clergyman, styled by Pope *the fairest of criticks*, because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His last work was his "Fables," published in 1699,[4] in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonson; by which he obliged himself, in consideration of three hundred pounds, to finish for the press ten thousand verses.[5]

In this volume is comprised the well-known ode on St. Cecilia's day,[6] which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he spent a fortnight in composing and cor-

[1] By subscription.

[2] S. S. *D.* vol. xiii. p. 274. Malone (p. 254) states that all the copies were dispersed in a very few months, and a second edition was issued in the following year.

[3] Luke Milbourne (1667-1720), Rector of Yarmouth, from which benefice he was said to have been turned out for writing libels on his parishioners. He was also Lecturer at Shoreditch. His works, beside the Notes on Dryden's *Virgil*, published 1698, were very miscellaneous, including thirty-one Sermons, and a Metrical translation of the Psalms.

[4] This date should be 1700.

[5] See Malone, p. 319.

[6] This ode was published separately in folio, 1697. It was written by Dryden for the annual celebration of St. Cecilia's Day in 1687, and set to music by Draghi, an eminent Italian composer. S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 169. Ald. *D.* vol. iii. p. 3.

recting. But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose "Equivoque," a poem of only three hundred forty-six lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it!

Part of this book of Fables is the first Iliad in English intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands Homer was to fall,[1] the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the first of May 1701, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died in Gerard-street of a mortification in his leg.[2]

There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit,[3] are thus related, as I find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary:

"Mr. Dryden dying on the Wednesday morning, Dr. Thomas Sprat, then bishop of Rochester and dean of Westminster, sent the next day to the lady Elizabeth Howard, Mr. Dryden's widow, that he would make a present of the ground, which was forty pounds, with all the other Abbey-fees. The lord Halifax likewise sent to the lady Elizabeth, and Mr. Charles Dryden her son, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman's private funeral, and afterwards bestow five hundred pounds on a monument in the Abbey; which, as they had no reason to refuse, they accepted. On the

[1] This, of course, alludes to Pope's translation of the *Iliad*.

[2] For announcements of his death, which took place May 1st, 1700, See Malone, p. 336.

[3] See Malone, p. 348, for an account of Mrs. Thomas' (Curll's Corinna), who was the writer of the "wild story." Her *Memoirs*, written by herself, are full of equally wonderful and credible relations.

Saturday following the company came: the corpse was put into a velvet hearse, and eighteen mourning coaches, filled with company, attended. When they were just ready to move, the lord Jefferies, son of the lord chancellor Jefferies, with some of his rakish companions coming by, asked whose funeral it was: and being told Mr. Dryden's, he said, 'What, shall Dryden, the greatest honour and ornament of the nation, be buried after this private manner! No, gentlemen, let all that loved Mr. Dryden, and honour his memory, alight and join with me in gaining my lady's consent to let me have the honour of his interment, which shall be after another manner than this; and I will bestow a thousand pounds on a monument in the Abbey for him.' The gentlemen in the coaches, not knowing of the bishop of Rochester's favour, nor of the lord Halifax's generous design (they both having, out of respect to the family, enjoined the lady Elizabeth and her son to keep their favour concealed to the world, and let it pass for their own expence) readily came out of the coaches, and attended lord Jefferies up to the lady's bedside, who was then sick; he repeated the purport of what he had before said; but she absolutely refusing, he fell on his knees, vowing never to rise till his request was granted. The rest of the company by his desire kneeled also; and the lady, being under a sudden surprise, fainted away. As soon as she recovered her speech, she cried, *No, no.* Enough, gentlemen, replied he; my lady is very good, she says, *Go, go.* She repeated her former words with all her strength, but in vain; for her feeble voice was lost in their acclamations of joy; and the lord Jefferies ordered the hearsemen to carry the corpse to Mr. Russel's, an undertaker's in Cheapside, and leave it there till he should send orders for the embalment, which, he added, should be after the royal manner. His directions were obeyed, the company dispersed, and lady Elizabeth and her son remained inconsolable. The next day

Mr. Charles Dryden waited on the lord Halifax and the bishop, to excuse his mother and himself, by relating the real truth. But neither his lordship nor the bishop would admit of any plea; especially the latter, who had the Abbey lighted, the ground opened, the choir attending, an anthem ready set, and himself waiting for some time without any corpse to bury. The undertaker, after three days expectance of orders for embalment without receiving any, waited on the lord Jefferies; who pretending ignorance of the matter, turned it off with an ill-natured jest, saying, That those who observed the orders of a drunken frolick deserved no better; that he remembered nothing at all of it; and that he might do what he pleased with the corpse. Upon this, the undertaker waited upon the lady Elizabeth and her son, and threatened to bring the corpse home, and set it before the door. They desired a day's respite, which was granted. Mr. Charles Dryden wrote a handsome letter to the lord Jefferies, who returned it with this cool answer, 'That he knew nothing of the matter, and would be troubled no more about it.' He then addressed the lord Halifax and the bishop of Rochester, who absolutely refused to do any thing in it. In this distress Dr. Garth sent for the corpse to the College of Physicians, and proposed a funeral by subscription, to which himself set a most noble example. At last a day, about three weeks after Mr. Dryden's decease, was appointed for the interment: Dr. Garth pronounced a fine Latin oration, at the College, over the corpse; which was attended to the Abbey by a numerous train of coaches. When the funeral was over, Mr. Charles Dryden sent a challenge to the lord Jefferies, who refusing to answering it, he sent several others, and went often himself; but could neither get a letter delivered, nor admittance to speak to him: which so incensed him, that he resolved, since his lordship refused to answer him like a gentleman, that he would watch an opportunity to meet,

and fight off-hand, though with all the rules of honour; which his lordship hearing, left the town: and Mr. Charles Dryden could never have the satisfaction of meeting him, though he sought it till his death with the utmost application."

This story I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; nor have I met with any confirmation, but in a letter of Farquhar,[1] and he only relates that the funeral of Dryden was tumultuary and confused.

Supposing the story true, we may remark that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the progress, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this time a young drunken Lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be justled out of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into a house, he would be sent roughly away; and what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe, that those who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for such an accident, have withdrawn their contributions.

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve[2] to his dramatick works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.[3]

[1] George Farquhar (1678-1707), author of several comedies, of which the most successful was the *Beaux Stratagem*. He was present at Dryden's funeral.

[2] Congreve's edition of *Dryden*, pub. 1717.

[3] The present monument, with bust by Schiemaker, was erected in 1731 by the widow of the Duke of Buckinghamshire in place of the tablet erected by the Duke in 1720. Globe ed. *Dryden*, p. lxxxii.

He married[1] the lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the earl of Berkshire,[2] with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to lord Somers, not very honourable to either party: by her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to pope Clement the XIth,[3] and visiting England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim across the Thames at Windsor.

John was author of a comedy called "The Husband his own Cuckold." He is said to have died at Rome. Henry[4] entered into some religious order. It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion, that he taught it to his sons. A man conscious of hypocritical profession in himself, is not likely to convert others; and as his sons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.

Of the person of Dryden[5] I know not any account; of

[1] Mr. Cunningham notes, "He was married (by licence) in the church of St. Swithin, by London Stone (as appears by the register of that church) on the 1st December, 1663. He is described as a parishioner of St. Clement Danes, about the age of thirty, and Lady Elizabeth as twenty-five. The poet's signature is written "Driden."

[2] Sister of Sir Robert Howard.

[3] He was Chamberlain of the Household to Pope Innocent XII. See Malone, p. 400.

[4] Erasmus Henry, born 1669. He studied at Douay, was ordained priest, 1694, joined the Dominicans, and became sub-prior of the convent of Holy Cross, Bornheim. In 1710 he succeeded to the baronetcy on the death of his cousin, Sir John Dryden, and died the same year.

[5] The earliest portrait of Dryden is the one now in the Picture Gallery at Oxford. The best likeness is said to be the portrait by Kneller at Bayfordbury Hall, Hertfordshire. This was painted for Jacob Tonson, as one of a series of the Kitcat Club, and engraved by Edelwick in 1700. For further details see Malone, p. 432, and Bell, p. 978.

Mr. Cunningham gives a note from a MS. Journal of Gray, the poet, respecting a portrait of Dryden by Riley at Bifrons, near Canterbury. "In a long wig—disagreeable face."

his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, ready to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere reconciliation with those that had offended him. His friendship, where he professed it, went beyond his professions. He was of a very easy, of very pleasing access; but somewhat slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others: he had that in his nature which abhorred intrusion into any society whatever. He was therefore less known, and consequently his character became more liable to misapprehensions and misrepresentations: he was very modest, and very easily to be discountenanced in his approaches to his equals or superiors. As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of every thing that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it; but then his communication was by no means pedantick, or imposed upon the conversation, but just such, and went so far as, by the natural turn of the conversation in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extreme ready, and gentle in his correction of the errors of any writer who thought fit to consult him, and full as ready and patient to admit of the reprehensions of others, in respect of his own oversights or mistakes."

To this account of Congreve[1] nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shewn in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His pla-

[1] In the Preface to his edition of Dryden's *Works*, published 1762-3.

cability and his friendship indeed were solid virtues; but courtesy and good-humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be collected as it can from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value: he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his character, and to have set a very high value on his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his conversation, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not submissive but indignant, with such reverence of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.

His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness: he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expresses with very little scruple his high opinion of his own powers; but his self-commendations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and is particularly charged with inciting Creech[1] to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural; the purpose was such as no man would confess; and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe?

He has been described as magisterially presiding over

[1] See Malone, p. 506.

the younger writers, and assuming the distribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whose judgement is incontestable may, without usurpation, examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine,[1] and not one of those whose spritely sayings diverted company; and one of his censurers makes him say,

> "Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;
> To writing bred, I knew not what to say."[2]

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language; his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. *His thoughts* when he wrote, *flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to chuse, and which to reject.* Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk, yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself.[3] But whatever

[1] *Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poetry.* S. S. *D.* vol. ii. p. 297.

[2] This is from the lampoon entitled *Dryden's Satire to his Muse*, which was generally ascribed to Lord Somers, though, as Pope believed, wrongfully.

[3] In his *Defence of the Essay of Dramatic Poetry.* Malone's *Dryden*, vol. i. part ii. p. 163.

was his character as a companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the duke of Ormond,[1] that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden consorted: who they were, Carte has not told; but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was indeed reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great; and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiours is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or laudable qualities. Caresses and preferments are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never been charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation; but if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness, and abject adulation; but they were probably like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity.—Such degradation of the dignity of genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to testify his repentance.

[1] *Life of James, Duke of Ormond*, by Thomas Carte, M.A. (1735-6), vol. ii. p. 554.

Of dramatick immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn.[1] When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself, nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expences, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endless variation; and when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him, whom he wished to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another stamp. Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastick homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention than mortified by the prostitution of his judgement. It is indeed not certain, that on these occasions his judgement much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others and of himself is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a sullen growl of resentment, or a querulous murmur of dis-

[1] In her play, *Feigned Courtesans*. Aphra Behn was the widow of a Dutch merchant (1642-1689). She became a political spy, but is best remembered for her novel *Oroonoko*, an appeal to Englishmen against slavery.

tress. He works are under-valued, his merit is unrewarded, and *he has few thanks to pay his stars that he was born among Englishmen.* To his criticks he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by shewing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting importance to names, which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not oft depart; his complaints are for the greater part general; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name. He condescended indeed to a controversy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling; and since Settle is sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to criticks, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included; they are, like other poems, effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled.

Of Collier,[1] Blackmore,[2] and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface to his Fables. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a

[1] Jeremy Collier (1650-1726). An eminent nonjuring divine and ecclesiastical historian. See Johnson's admirable description of his character in the *Life of Congreve*, vol. ii. His attack effected a great reformation in the theatre and was entitled, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage.* Lond. 1738. 8vo. Mr. Saintsbury, S. S. *D.* vol. i. p. 357, mentions "an excellent account of Collier's book, which has appeared in M. A. Beljame's *Le Public et les Hommes de Lettres en Angleterre au xviiième siècle.* Paris, 1881."

[2] *Vid. infr.* vol. ii.

playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness,[1] and the coarse-play *of his raillery*; and asserts that *in many places he has perverted by his glosses the meaning* of what he censures; but in other things he confesses that he is justly touched; and says, with great calmness and candour, *I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine that can be truly accused of obscenity, immorality, or profaneness, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, he will be glad of my repentance.* Yet, as our best dispositions are imperfect, he left standing in the same book a reflection on Collier of great asperity, and indeed of more asperity than wit.[2]

Blackmore he represents[3] as made his enemy by the poem of "Absalom and Achitophel," which *he thinks a little hard upon his fanatick patrons;* and charges him with borrowing the plan of his "Arthur" from the preface to Juvenal, *though he had*, says he,[4] *the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it to traduce me in a libel.*

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him was a "Satire upon Wit;"[5] in which, having lamented the exuberance of false wit and the deficiency of true, he proposes that all wit should be re-coined before it is current, and appoints masters of assay who shall reject all that is light or debased.

[1] Preface to the *Fables*, S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 243.

[2] Probably this refers to page 214 of the Preface, where "a religious lawyer" is charged with mixing truth with falsehood, and following the old rule of calumniating strongly that something may remain."

[3] S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 241.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 242.

[5] Mr. Peter Cunningham here notes "The first edition of Blackmore's Satire (folio, 1700) does not contain the softer couplet which Johnson says is in it; nor do I find the couplet in question in Blackmore's reprint of the *Satire* in his *Collection of Poems*, printed in 1718. 8vo. This error is repeated in Johnson's *Life of Blackmore, vid. infr.* vol. ii. p. 2.

"'Tis true, that when the coarse and worthless dross
Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loss;
Ev'n Congreve, Southern, manly Wycherley,
When thus refin'd, will grievous sufferers be;
Into the melting-pot when Dryden comes,
What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
How will he shrink, when all his lewd allay,
And wicked mixture, shall be purg'd away!"

Thus stands the passage in the last edition; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus:

"But what remains will be so pure, 'twill bear
Th' examination of the most severe."

Blackmore, finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not: a short extract will be sufficient. *He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood; if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall never be able to force himself upon me for an adversary; I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him.*[1]

As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy.[2]

Dryden indeed discovered, in many of his writings, an

[1] S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 240. [2] *Ibid.* p. 244.

affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unseasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry[1] that he calls the sacrificer in the Georgicks" the *holy butcher*:[2] the translation is indeed ridiculous; but Trapp's anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest; as if any reproach of the follies of paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden's dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine,[3] and I think by Brown,[4] to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination; but he denies, in the preface to his "Fables," that he ever designed to enter into the church; and such a denial he would not have hazarded, if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times, by venturing to be wicked as

[1] *Preface to the Æneis*, Trapp's *Virgil*, ed. 1731, vol. i. p. lxxxvii. "If Mr. Dryden took delight in abusing priests, and religion: Virgil did not."

[2] *Georgics*, book iii. S. S. *D.* vol. xiv. p. 94.

[3] *Langbaine*, ed. 1691, p. 171.

[4] "But you, I find, still continue your old humour, which we are to date from the year of Hegira, the loss of Eton, or since orders were refused you." Tom Brown, *Pref. 2nd Dial.*—P. CUNNINGHAM.

far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to Popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The persecution of criticks was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impossible not to detest the age which could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigences. Such outcries were surely never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expences no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the Laureate, to which king James added [1] the office of Historiographer, perhaps with some additional emoluments,[2] his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal, and they that trust her promises make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow.

Of his plays the profit was not great, and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By

[1] Dryden was created Historiographer in August, 1670. So that King James merely continued him in that office.

[2] Both Charles and James seem to have added some small pension to Dryden's salary, but he was often in want, and a touching letter is given by Malone, p. 179, in which he asks payment of half a year of salary, and urges his claim for some small employment to render his condition easy—he having three sons growing to man's estate. He adds, "'Tis enough for one age to have neglected Mr. Cowley, and starved Mr. Butler."

discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson,[1] I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers:

"I do hereby promise to pay John Dryden, Esq; or order, on the 25th of March, 1699, the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, in consideration of ten thousand verses, which the said John Dryden, Esq; is to deliver to me Jacob Tonson, when finished, whereof seven thousand five hundred verses, more or less, are already in the said Jacob Tonson's possession. And I do hereby farther promise, and engage myself, to make up the said sum of two hundred and fifty guineas three hundred pounds sterling to the said John Dryden, Esq; his executors, administrators, or assigns, at the beginning of the second impression of the said ten thousand verses.

"In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 20th day of March, $169\frac{8}{9}$.

"Jacob Tonson.

"Sealed and delivered, being first duly stampt, pursuant to the acts of parliament for that purpose, in the presence of

"Ben. Portlock.
"Will. Congreve."

"March 24th, 1698.

"Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonson the sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings, in pursuance

[1] There were two great-nephews of the famous Jacob Tonson, either of whom will answer to this description. Malone believes it referred to Jacob who died in 1767, and was the last commercial name of the family. Mr. Cunningham thinks that Richard, who died 1772, was meant, but though a partner with his brother Jacob, he had practically left the business, and was a country gentleman, and M.P. for Windsor.

of an agreement for ten thousand verses, to be delivered by me to the said Jacob Tonson, whereof I have already delivered to him about seven thousand five hundred, more or less; he the said Jacob Tonson being obliged to make up the foresaid sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings three hundred pounds, at the beginning of the second impression of the foresaid ten thousand verses;

"I say, received by me

"John Dryden.

"Witness Charles Dryden."

Two hundred and fifty guineas, at £1 1*s.* 6*d.* is £268 15*s.*

It is manifest from the dates of this contract, that it relates to the volume of "Fables," which contains about twelve thousand verses, and for which therefore the payment must have been afterwards enlarged.

I have been told of another letter[1] yet remaining, in which he desires Tonson to bring him money, to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse[2] in his exigencies but to his bookseller. The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race, the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke,[3] who in his

[1] Fifteen letters from Dryden to Tonson were printed by Malone, and thirty to other persons, vol. i. part ii.

[2] Mr. P. Cunningham was the first to discover that Dryden held the office of Collector of Customs in the port of London, and gives the date of the patent, 17th Dec. 1683.

[3] Malone states that Lord Bolingbroke in 1697, when Mr. St. John, furnished Granville with a Prologue to his *Heroic Love*, and in the same year wrote encomiastic verses on Dryden.

outh had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King,[1] of Oxford, that one day, when he visited Dryden, they heard, as they were conversing, another person entering the house. "This," said Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care not to depart before he goes away; for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and if you leave me unprotected, I must suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, besides the payment of the bookseller, cannot be known: Mr. Derrick, who consulted some of his relations,[2] was informed that his "Fables" obtained five hundred pounds from the dutchess of Ormond; a present not unsuitable to the magnificence of that splendid family; and he quotes Moyle,[3] as relating that forty pounds were paid by a musical society for the use of "Alexander's Feast."[4]

In those days the œconomy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain: of this disorder there is reason to believe that the Laureat sometimes felt the effects; for in one of his prefaces he complains of those, who, being intrusted with the distribution of the Prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found to whom he was personally known, one told me that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house,[5] the

[1] William King (1685-1763), Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford. He it was who, being then secretary to Lord Arran, Chancellor of Oxford, brought to Johnson, in 1755, the diploma of his Master of Arts degree.

[2] Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. i. pp. 86, 361.

[3] Walter Moyle (1672-1721), translated Xenophon's *Discourse upon Improving the State of Athens* to be prefixed to Davenant's *Discourses on the Public Revenues and Trade of England*.

[4] See Malone, p. 287, for this story.

[5] Will's coffee-house was in Bow Street, Covent Garden, No. 1, on the

appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.[1]

One of his opinions will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. He put great confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the Appendix to the "Life of Congreve" is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information, or character of veracity.[2] That he had the configurations of the horoscope in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint.

> "The utmost malice of the stars is past.—
> Now frequent *trines* the happier lights among,
> And *high-rais'd Jove*, from his dark prison freed,
> Those weights took off that on his planet hung,
> Will gloriously the new-laid works succeed."[3]

west side, at the corner of Russell Street. It was Dryden who made this house the great resort of the wits of his time. After his death Addison transferred his patronage to Button's the house opposite to Will's, and kept by an old servant of his. *Vid. infr. Life of Addison.*

[1] The two survivors were Colley Cibber and Owen McSwinney. See Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. iii. p. 113. Colley Cibber (1671-1757), an actor and successful writer of comedies. He was made Poet Laureate in 1757, but is remembered as the author of that interesting collection of theatrical anecdotes, the *Apology*, or Memoirs of his own Life.

Owen McSwinney (died 1754), manager of Drury Lane Theatre, and afterwards of the Queen's theatre in the Haymarket. He wrote one comedy, *The Mask*, and two operas.

[2] The writer was Mrs. Thomas, Pope's *Curll's Corinna*, the promulgator of the "wild story" about Dryden's funeral. *Vid. supr.* p. 406.

[3] *Annus Mirabilis.* Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 102.

He has elsewhere shewn his attention to the planetary powers; and in the preface to his "Fables"[1] has endeavoured obliquely to justify his superstition, by attributing the same to some of the Ancients. The latter, added to this narrative, leaves no doubt of his notions or practice.

So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestick manners of a man, whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critick and a poet.

Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.[2]

Two "Arts of English Poetry"[3] were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley; but Dryden's "Essay on Dramatick Poetry"[4] was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing.

[1] Preface to *Fables*, S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 218.

[2] "With this incomparable work should be read Johnson's exquisite parallel of Dryden and Pope, in the *Life* of the latter Poet (*vid. infr.* vol. iii.), in which 'the superiority of genius' is 'with some hesitation' attributed to Dryden." Malone, vol. i. p. 549.

[3] *A Discourse of English Poetrie*, together with the author's judgment, touching the Reformation of our English Verse, by William Webbe, Graduate, Lond. 1586. 4to. Reprinted in vol. ii. of *Ancient Critical Essays upon English Poets' Poesy*. Haslewood, 1815. 4to.

The *Arte of English Poesie*, by George Puttenham, 1589. 4to. Some copies have a woodcut portrait of Queen Elizabeth.

[4] *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*, published 1667. S. *D.* vol. xv. p. 293.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not perhaps find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the Ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of dramatick poems was not then generally understood. Audiences applauded by instinct, and poets perhaps often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it wanted before; or rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.

The dialogue on the Drama was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit, when his name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by custom, and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of

the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakspeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastick criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus,[1] on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon, by Demosthenes,[2] fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so extensive in its comprehension, and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the editors and admirers of Shakspeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.

In this, and in all his other essays on the same subject, the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of a poet; not a full collection of theorems, not a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the censor was not able to have committed;

[1] Longinus. A Greek by birth, born about A.D. 213. He travelled in the East, and was made Professor of Greek to Queen Zenobia, of Palmyra. He persuaded her to revolt against Rome, and when her city was taken by the Emperor Aurelian, Longinus was put to death, declaring in his last words, "This world is but a prison, and happy is he who gets out of it soonest." Of many works only one, attributed to him on somewhat doubtful authority, has been preserved, the treatise περὶ ὕψους (De Sublimitate), an enquiry into the causes and styles of sublimity in speaking and writing. Of him Pope says, *Essay on Criticism*, 675:—

> "Thee, bold Longinus, all the nine inspire,
> And bless their critic with a poet's fire:
> An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,
> With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just;
> Whose own example strengthens all his laws,
> And is himself the great Sublime he draws."

A. MILNES.

The reference is to Section 16 of *De Sublimitate*.

[2] See Kennedy's translation of the Orations of Demosthenes on the Crown and on the Embassy. *Bohn's Classical Library*, p. 80, ed. 1855.

but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgement, by his power of performance.

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed, was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer[1] and Dryden. It was said of a dispute between two mathematicians, "malim cum Scaligero errare, quam cum Clavio recte sapere;"[2] that *it was more eligible to go wrong with one than right with the other.* A tendency of the same kind every mind must feel at the perusal of Dryden's prefaces and Rymer's discourses. With Dryden we are wandering in quest of Truth; whom we find, if we find her at all, drest in the graces of elegance; and if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself; we are led only through fragrance and flowers: Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles; and Truth, if we meet her, appears repulsive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had studied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions, by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations; he poured out his knowledge with little labour; for of labour, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he

[1] *The Tragedies of the Last Age, considered by Thos. Rymer*, 1692. *A Short View of Tragedy, with Reflections on Shakespeare*, 1693.

[2] This appears to be merely an adaptation of Cicero's famous dictum, "Malo cum Platone errare, quam cum aliis recte sentire." *Cic. Tusc. Quæs.* i. 17.

Christopher Clavius (1537-1612) was a German Jesuit.

Joseph Juste Scaliger (1540-1609), author of the celebrated system of chronology, commentator on Varrus, Seneca, &c., son of the almost equally learned Julius Cæsar Scaliger.

was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His Criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things, and the structure of the human mind, he may doubtless be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp,[1] speaking of the praises which he bestows on Palamon and Arcite, says, "Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam *Chauceri*, pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo judice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, & in quo nunc occupatur."

He is therefore by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramatick rhyme is generally known. *Spence*,[2] in his remarks on Pope's "Odyssey," produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the "Eneid," in favour of translating

[1] There is a curious omission in this quotation. The passage runs thus: "Novimus quidem *Angli* judicium *Drydeni* popularis nostri de poemate quodam *Chauceri*, pulchro sane illo, et plurimum laudando; nimirum quod non modo vere Epicum sit, sed *Iliada* etiam, atque Æneida, æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore Viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam Critices normam exactas; illo judice, optimum est plerumque quod ille præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur." *Prælectiones Poeticæ*. Josephus Trapp. A. M. ed. sec. 1722, p. 386.

[2] *Essay on Pope's Odyssey*. 1727. Part I. pp. 121-2.

an epic poem into blank verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the "Iliad," some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any license to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself in his own sophistries. But when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; when he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comick poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by *Sewel*.* His comparison of the first line of Virgil[1] with the first of Statius is not happier.[2] Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius[3] mad if he had heard him thundering out

"Quæ superimposito moles geminata colosso."[4]

Statius perhaps heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggerations somewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one sounding line. Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was imprest into the service.

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard; he cited "Gorbuduc,"[5] which he had never seen; gives a false ac-

* Preface to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.—JOHNSON.

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[1] "Tityre, tu, palutæ recubans sub tegmine fagi."

[2] See S. S. *D.* vol. vi. p. 407.

[3] Publius Papinius Statius. A Latin poet of the first century after Christ, of whose chief work, the *Thebais*, there have been many editions and translations.

[4] This is the first line of the *Sylvæ* of Statius.

[5] Mr. Matt. Arnold observes that this tragedy by Sackville, after-

count of *Chapman's* versification;[1] and discovers, in the preface to his "Fables," that he translated the first book of the "Iliad," without knowing what was in the second.[2]

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden ever made any great advances in literature. As having distinguished himself at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge, it is not to be supposed, that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students; but his scholastick acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his Dialogue on the Drama, he pronounces with great confidence that the Latin tragedy of "Medea" is not Ovid's, because it is not sufficiently interesting and pathetick. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play, for one line is left us, is not there to be found.[3] There was therefore

wards Lord Buckhurst, is the earliest known in English. It was surreptitiously published in 1565. 4to.

In the Dedication to the *Rival Ladies*, S. S. *D.* vol. ii. p. 135, Dryden cites the play as an example of rhyme whereas it is written in blank verse, and speaks of "Queen Gorboduc" instead of King. Yet if Dryden had never seen this tragedy he might have remembered that it was King Gorboduc's niece, to whom the Hermit of Prague said, "That, that is, is." *Twelfth Night*, act iv. sc. 2.

[1] Dryden, in his *Account of the "Annus Mirabilis,"* refers to Chapman's translation of Homer as written "in Alexandrines or verses of six feet," whereas it is in lines of fourteen syllables. Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 47.

[2] Preface to *Fables*. S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 208.

[3] This sentence is far from clear, and it may therefore be well to recall

no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shews what he wanted; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much, it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence; yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way, to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books, or intentionally neglected them; but that

the fact that one line (Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* viii. c. 5), or perhaps two (see Seneca, *Suasor*, v. iii.), is all that remains to us of the lost tragedy of *Medea*, by Ovid, which is mentioned with praise by Tacitus (?) *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, c. 12, and again by Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* X. i. 98. Seneca's *Medea* is referred to by Quintilian *Inst. Or.* IX. ii. 8.

was carried out, by the impetuosity of his genius, to ore vivid and speedy instructors; and that his studies ere rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and stematical.

It must be confessed that he scarcely ever appears to nt book-learning but when he mentions books; and to im may be transferred the praise which he gives his aster Charles.

"His conversation, wit, and parts,
His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,
Were such, dead authors could not give,
But habitudes of those that live;
Who, lighting him, did greater lights receive:
He drain'd from all, and all they knew,
His apprehension quick, his judgement true:
That the most learn'd with shame confess
His knowledge more, his reading only less."[1]

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will t undertake to give it; the atoms of probability, of hich my opinion has been formed, lie scattered over all s works; and by him who thinks the question worth his tice, his works must be perused with very close attention. Criticism, either didactick or defensive, occupies almost l his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to s patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought dious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in hich the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The auses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled; ery word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into s proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what great, is splendid. He may be thought to mention

[1] *Threnodia Augustalis.* A Funeral Poem. Sacred to the happy emory of King Charles II. S. S. *D.* vol. x. p. 78. Ald. *D.* vol. ii. 105.

himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Every thing is excused by the play of images and the spriteliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seem careless, there is nothing harsh; and though, since his earlier works, more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.

He who writes much, will not easily escape a manner, such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always *another and the same*, he does not exhibit a second time the same elegancies in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously; for, being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features, cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.

From his prose,[1] however, Dryden derives only his accidental and secondary praise; the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts, and rugged metre, some advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham; they had shewn that long discourses in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets, and that verse consisted not only in the number but the arrangement of syllables.

[1] Mr. Cunningham observes that Gray thought the prose of Dryden almost equal to his poetry, and that Fox's admiration of it was excessive; he was indeed unwilling to use a word not found in Dryden.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do? Their works were not many, nor were their minds of very ample comprehension. More examples of more modes of composition were necessary for the establishment of regularity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation necessarily divides itself into diction scholastick and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and gross; and from a nice distinction of these different parts, arises a great part of the beauty of style. But if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion, and every man took for every purpose what chance might offer him.

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestick use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images: and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose, had been rarely attempted; we had few elegances or flowers of speech, the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have over-born the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be

considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of Ancient Writers; a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace almost word by word;[1] Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys,[2] whom Dryden calls the best versifier of the last age,[3] has struggled hard to comprise every book of his English Metamorphoses in the same number of verses with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to shew that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them.[4] Cowley saw that such *copyers* were a *servile race;* he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course.

[1] Ben Jonson (1574-1637), the great poet and dramatist, translated the *Ars Poeticæ* of Horace, and one or two of the *Odes*.

[2] *Vid. supr.* p. 391.

[3] Preface to *Fables*, S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 269.

[4] For Scott's Note on Holyday, *vid. infr.* p. 463.

Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. *Translation therefore*, says Dryden, *is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase.*[1]

All polished languages have different styles; the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from the translator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been English: rugged magnificence is not to be softened: hyperbolical ostentation is not to be repressed, nor sententious affectation to have its point blunted. A translator is to be like his author: it is not his business to excel him.

The reasonableness of these rules seems sufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by observing them were so happy, that I know not whether they were ever opposed but by Sir Edward Sherburne,[2] a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry; and who, being better qualified to give the meaning than the spirit of Seneca, has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will,

[1] On the distinction of metaprase, paraphrase and imitation, see the Preface to Ovid's *Epistles*. S. S. *D.* vol. xii. p. 16.

[2] Sir Edward Sherburne (1618-1702), a Catholic and Royalist poet. He was with the king at Edgehill. In 1648 he translated Seneca's *Medea*, and his answer to Lucullus's question "Why, good men suffer misfortunes, seeing there is a divine providence." In 1651 he published his Poems and translations. Chiefly noted for his studious life and his fine Library. He held some small office in the Ordinance, but fell into great poverty in consequence of political troubles.

or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigences in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life, are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have supplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased; and I know not how it will be proved, that if he had written less he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But as is said by his "Sebastian," [1]

> "What had been, is unknown; what is, appears."

We know that Dryden's several productions were so many successive expedients for his support; his plays were therefore often borrowed, and his poems were almost all occasional.

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He whose work is general and arbitrary, has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication, till he has satisfied his friends and himself; till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination; and polished away those faults which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of

[1] Act iv. sc. 3. S. S. *D.* vol. vii. p. 440.

his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often, that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the publick has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always considered as business for the Muse. But after so many inauguratory gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who says any thing not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphal chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegances and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation: the composition must be dispatched while conversation is yet busy, and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional composition may however secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwell [1] was the first publick event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroick stanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and though not always proper, shew a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth, and the diction, if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant [2] was perhaps at this time his favourite author

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 6.

[2] *Vid. supr.* p. 387.

though Gondibert never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification: there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verses on the Restoration, he says of the King's exile,

> "He, toss'd by Fate—
> Could taste no sweets of youth's desired age,
> But found his life too true a pilgrimage."[1]

And afterwards, to shew how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark:

> "Well might the ancient poets then confer
> On Night the honour'd name of *counsellor*,
> Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,
> We light alone in dark afflictions find."[2]

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elsewhere be easily found:[3]

> "'Twas Monk, whom Providence design'd to loose
> Those real bonds false freedom did impose.
> The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene,
> Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean,
> To see small clues draw vastest weights along,
> Not in their bulk, but in their order strong.
> Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore
> Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
> With ease such fond chimæras we pursue,
> As fancy frames for fancy to subdue:

[1] *Astræa Redux*, line 51; S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 35; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 13.

[2] *Ibid.* line 93; S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 37; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 17.

[3] *Ibid.* line 151; S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 40; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 19.

But, when ourselves to action we betake,
It shuns the mint like gold that chymists make;
How hard was then his task, at once to be
What in the body natural we see!
Man's Architect distinctly did ordain
The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,
Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense
The springs of motion from the seat of sense.
'Twas not the hasty product of a day,
But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.
He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,
Would let them play a-while upon the hook.
Our healthful food the stomach labours thus,
At first embracing what it straight doth crush.
Wise leaches will not vain receipts obtrude,
While growing pains pronounce the humours crude;
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill,
Till some safe crisis authorize their skill."

He had not yet learned, indeed he never learned well, to forbear the improper use of mythology. After having rewarded the heathen deities for their care,

"With *Alga* who the sacred altar strows?
To all the sea-gods Charles an offering owes;
A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain,
A ram to you, ye Tempests of the Main." [1]

He tells us, in the language of religion,

"Prayer storm'd the skies, and ravish'd Charles from thence,
As heaven itself is took by violence." [2]

And afterwards mentions one of the most awful passages of Sacred History.

Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted;

[1] *Astræa Redux*, line 119; S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 38; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 18.

[2] *Ibid.* line 143; S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 39; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 19.

"For by example most we sinn'd before,
And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with frailty bore."[1]

How far he was yet from thinking it necessary to found his sentiments on Nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles:

"The winds, that never moderation knew,
Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew;
Or, out of breath with joy, could not enlarge
Their straiten'd lungs.—[2]
It is no longer motion cheats your view;
As you meet it, the land approacheth you;
The land returns, and in the white it wears
The marks of penitence and sorrow bears."

I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed. A French poet read to Malherbe[3] some verses, in which he represents France as moving out of its place to receive the king. "Though this," said Malherbe, "was in my time, I do not remember it."

His poem on the "Coronation" has a more even tenour of thought. Some lines deserve to be quoted:

"You have already quench'd sedition's brand,
And zeal, that burnt it, only warms the land;
The jealous sects that durst not trust their cause
So far from their own will as to the laws,
Him for their umpire, and their synod take,
And their appeal alone to Cæsar make."[4]

Here may be found one particle of that old versification, of which, I believe, in all his works, there is not another:

[1] *Astræa Redux*, line 207; S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 44; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 21.

[2] *Ibid.* line 242; S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 46; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 23.

[3] François de Malherbe (1555-1628), a famous French poet, the first man, says the great critic, Boileau, who in France wrote verse with correctness.—Matt. Arnold.

[4] *To His Sacred Majesty, A Panegyric on His Coronation*, 1661. S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 57. Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 26.

"Nor is it duty, or our hope alone,
Creates that joy, but full *fruition*." [1]

In the verses to the lord chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeless at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though at last it gives the reader more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtle and comprehensive: [2]

In open prospect nothing bounds our eye,
Until the earth seems join'd unto the sky:
So in this hemisphere our outmost view
Is only bounded by our king and you:
Our sight is limited where you are join'd,
And beyond that no farther heaven can find.
So well your virtues do with his agree,
That, though your orbs of different greatness be,
Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd,
His to enclose, and yours to be enclos'd.
Nor could another in your room have been,
Except an emptiness had come between."

The comparison of the Chancellor to the Indies leaves all resemblance too far behind it:

"And as the Indies were not found before
Those rich perfumes which from the happy shore
The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,
Whose guilty sweetness first their world betray'd;
So by your counsels we are brought to view
A new and undiscover'd world in you." [3]

There is another comparison, for there is little else in

[1] Line 69. Mr. Milnes points out that this accent on the last syllable was customary in the sixteenth century, and supports his opinion by a reference to Ben Jonson's English Grammar, p. 55, ed. 1640.

[2] *To the Lord Chancellor Hyde. Presented on New Year's Day*, 1662. S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 63; Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 32.

[3] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 34.

the poem, of which, though perhaps it cannot be explained into plain prosaick meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obscurity, for its magnificence:

"How strangely active are the arts of peace,
Whose restless motions less than wars do cease:
Peace is not freed from labour, but from noise;
And war more force, but not more pains employs:
Such is the mighty swiftness of your mind,
That, like the earth's, it leaves out sense behind,
While you so smoothly turn and rowl our sphere,
That rapid motion does but rest appear.
For as in nature's swiftness, with the throng
Of flying orbs while ours is borne along,
All seems at rest to the deluded eye,
Mov'd by the soul of the same harmony:
So carry'd on by our unwearied care,
We rest in peace, and yet in motion share." [1]

To this succeed four lines, which perhaps afford Dryden's first attempt at those penetrating remarks on human nature, for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed:

"Let envy then those crimes within you see,
From which the happy never must be free;
Envy that does with misery reside,
The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride." [2]

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his powers; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmalleable thoughts; but, as a specimen of his abilities to unite the most unsociable matter, he has concluded with lines, of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning:

"Yet unimpair'd with labours, or with time,
Your age but seems to a new youth to climb.

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 35, lines 105-118. [2] *Ibid.* p. 35, line 119.

Thus heavenly bodies do our time beget,
And measure change, but share no part of it:
And still it shall without a weight increase,
Like this new year, whose motions never cease.
For since the glorious course you have begun
Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,
It must both weightless and immortal prove,
Because the centre of it is above."[1]

In the "Annus Mirabilis"[2] he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally quitted, perhaps from this experience of its inconvenience, for he complains of its difficulty. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the fire of London. Battles have always been described in heroick poetry; but a sea-sight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them; for they borrow everything from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life. Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder.[3] We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images: Waller had described a sea-sight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis, and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 36, lines 147-156.
[2] *The Year of Wonders*, 1666. An historical Poem. Ald. *D.* vol. i. 43. S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 79.
[3] Mr. Milnes points out that this statement is not correct. See Gaillard (1524-1585), *Œuvres*, tom. vi. p. 40 (ed. 1876).

description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of Waller's poem on the war with Spain; perhaps such a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on the civil war of Rome,[1] *Orbem jam totum*, &c.

Of the king collecting his navy, he says,

> "It seems as every ship their sovereign knows,
> His awful summons they so soon obey;
> So hear the scaly herds when Proteus blows,
> And so to pasture follow through the sea." [2]

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two first lines seriously, and that some wag had added the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed perhaps indecently hyperbolical, but certainly in a mode totally different?

> "To see this fleet upon the ocean move,
> Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies;
> And heaven, as if there wanted lights above,
> For tapers made two glaring comets rise." [3]

The description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very compleat specimen of the descriptions in this poem:

> "And now approach'd their fleet from India, fraught
> With all the riches of the rising sun:
> And precious sand from southern climates brought,
> The fatal regions where the war begun.

[1] The *Pharsalia* of Lucan, a Latin poet of the first century after Christ. —MATT. ARNOLD.

[2] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 55, line 57.

[3] *Ibid.* line 66.

Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,
  Their way-laid wealth to Norway's coast they bring:
Then first the North's cold bosom spices bore,
  And winter brooded on the eastern spring.

By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,
  Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert lie:
And round about their murdering cannon lay,
  At once to threaten and invite the eye.

Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,
  The English undertake th' unequal war:
Seven ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,
  Besiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.

These fight like husbands, but like lovers those:
  These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy:
And to such height their frantic passion grows,
  That what both love, both hazard to destroy:

Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball,
  And now their odours arm'd against them fly:
Some preciously by shatter'd porcelain fall,
  And some by aromatic splinters die.

And though by tempests of the prize bereft,
  In heaven's inclemency some ease we find:
Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour left,
  And only yielded to the seas and wind." [1]

In this manner is the sublime too often mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch seek a shelter for a wealthy fleet: this surely needed no illustration; yet they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind on the same occasion, but *like hunted castors;* and they might with strict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noses—their *perfumes* betrayed them. The *Husband* and the *Lover*, though of more dignity than the Castor, are images too domestick to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. i. pp. 57, 58.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry.

"The night comes on, we eager to pursue
The combat still, and they asham'd to leave:
'Till the last streaks of dying day withdrew,
And doubtful moonlight did our rage deceive.

In th' English fleet each ship resounds with joy,
And loud applause of their great leader's fame:
In firy dreams the Dutch they still destroy,
And, slumbering, smile at the imagin'd flame.

Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and done,
Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen lie;
Faint sweats all down their mighty members run,
(Vast bulks, which little souls but ill supply.)

In dreams they fearful precipices tread,
Or, shipwreck'd, labour to some distant shore:
Or, in dark churches, walk among the dead;
They wake with horror, and dare sleep no more."[1]

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak an universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge; and of this kind, certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion that a sea-fight ought to be described in the nautical language; *and certainly*, says he, *as those who in a logical disputation keep to general terms would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in any poetical description would veil their ignorance.*

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at last we learn as well what will please as what will profit.

[1] Verses 68-71. Ald. *D.* vol. i. pp. 65, 66.

In the battle, his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

"So here some pick out bullets from the side,
Some drive old *okum* thro' each *seam* and rift:
Their left-hand does the *calking-iron* guide,
The rattling *mallet* with the right they lift.

With boiling pitch another near at hand
(From friendly Sweden brought) the *seams instops*:
Which, well laid o'er, the salt-sea waves withstand,
And shake them from the rising beak in drops.

Some the *gall'd* ropes with dawby *marling* blind,
Or sear-cloth masts with strong *tarpawling* coats:
To try new *shrouds* one mounts into the wind,
And one below, their ease or stiffness notes." [1]

I suppose here is not one term which every reader does not wish away.

His digression to the original and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says, that by the help of the philosophers,

"Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,
By which remotest regions are allied.—" [2]

Which he is constrained to explain in a note, *By a more exact measure of longitude.* It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured science into poetry, and have shewn, by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel.

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 78. [2] *Ibid.* p. 81.

The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet; he watches the flame coolly from street to street, with now a reflection, and now a simile, till at last he meets the king, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention; as in the beginning:

> "The diligence of trades and noiseful gain
> And luxury more late asleep were laid;
> All was the night's, and in her silent reign
> No sound the rest of Nature did invade
> In this deep quiet—"[1]

The expression "All was the night's" is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,[2]

> "*Omnia noctis erant placida composta quiete*,"

that he might have concluded better,

> "*Omnia noctis erant*."

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated:

> "The ghosts of traytors from the bridge descend
> With bold fanatick spectres to rejoice;
> About the fire into a dance they bend,
> And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice."[3]

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 91, line 862.

[2] Mr. Christie points out that this line is not by Virgil, but by Varro, quoted by Seneca (*Controversies*, iii. 16) as excellent; and that, in the same passage of Seneca, Ovid is said to have made the remark attributed by Johnson to Seneca, while Virgil has, in the *Æneid* (viii. 26), two lines in imitation of Varro's. Globe ed. *Dryden*. Note on p. 74. *Annus Mirabilis*, v. 216.

[3] P. 92, line 890.

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city, is elegant and poetical, and, with an event which Poets cannot always boast, has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From this time, he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, *to which*, says he, *my genius never much inclined me*, merely as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme, he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of *Harte*,[1] who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of *Aureng Zeb*;[2] and according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote "Tyrannick Love,"[3] and the "State of Innocence,"[4] he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its effect upon the passions of an audience; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are therefore easily selected and retained. Thus the description of Night in the "Indian Emperor,"[5] and the rise and fall of

[1] Dr. Walter Harte (died 1774), was tutor to Lord Chesterfield's son, author of a *History of Gustavus Adolphus*, and many sermons and poems. He is remembered now only as having been intimate with Pope, and described by Johnson "as a scholar, and a man of the most companionable talents he had ever known." Boswell's *Johnson*, vol. ii. p. 120.

[2] S. S. *D.* vol. v. p. 179.

[3] *Tyrannic Love, or Royal Martyr*, S. S. *D.* vol. iii. p. 369.

[4] *The State of Innocence*, an opera. S. S. *D.* vol. v. p. 93.

[5] Act iii. sc. 2. S. S. *D.* vol. ii. p. 360.

empire in the "Conquest of Granada,"[1] are more frequently repeated than any lines in "All for Love,"[2] or "Don Sebastian."[3]

To search his plays for vigorous sallies, and sententious elegances, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance, or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatic labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts, but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a preface to the English Epistles of Ovid; one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the Earl of Mulgrave.

Absalom and Achitophel[4] is a work so well known, that particular criticism is superfluous. If it be considered as a poem political and controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellences of which the subject is susceptible; acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of sentiment, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers; and all these raised to such a height as can scarcely be found in any other English composition.

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject had likewise another inconvenience: it admitted little imagery or description, and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious; though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interposition of something that sooths the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

[1] S. S. *D.* vol. iv. p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. v. p. 305.
[3] *Ibid.* vol. ix. p. 195.
[4] Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 119.

As an approach to historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is therefore an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed out of many sects various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief, formidable for their numbers, and strong by their supports, while the king's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set forth to view; but when expectation is at the height, the king makes a speech, and

"Henceforth a series of new times began."[1]

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass, which vanishes at once into air, when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part,[2] written by *Tate*,[3] there is a long insertion, which, for poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

The "Medal,"[4] written upon the same principles with "Absalom and Achitophel," but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas, as a series of events, or multiplicity of agents. This poem therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood, yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensions to

[1] *Absalom and Achitophel*, line 1028. Ald. *D.* vol. i. p. 172.
[2] S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 317.
[3] Nahum Tate. See Malone, vol. i. p. 173.
[4] *The Medal, a Satire against Sedition*. 1682. S. S. *D.* vol. ix. p. 411.

mischief are such, that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured.

"Power was his aim: but, thrown from that pretence,
The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
And malice reconcil'd him to his Prince.
Him, in the anguish of his soul, he serv'd;
Rewarded faster still than he deserv'd:
Behold him now exalted into trust;
His counsels oft convenient, seldom just.
Ev'n in the most sincere advice he gave,
He had a grudging still to be a knave.
The frauds he learnt in his fanatic years,
Made him uneasy in his lawful gears:
At least as little honest as he cou'd:
And, like white witches, mischievously good.
To this first bias, longingly, he leans;
And rather would be great by wicked means."[1]

The "Threnodia,"[2] which, by a term I am afraid neither authorized nor analogical, he calls "Augustalis," is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity, it is neither magnificent nor pathetick. He seems to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. He is, he says, *petrified with grief*; but the marble sometimes relents, and trickles in a joke.

"The sons of art all med'cines try'd,
And every noble remedy apply'd;
With emulation each essay'd
His utmost skill; *nay more they pray'd:*
Was never losing game with better conduct play'd."[3]

He had been a little inclined to merriment before

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 57, line 50.
[2] *Threnodia Augustalis.* Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 93. [3] Lines 160-164.

upon the prayers of a nation for their dying sovereign, nor was he serious enough to keep heathen fables out of his religion.

"With him th' innumberable croud of armed prayers
Knock'd at the gates of heaven, and knock'd aloud;
The first well-meaning rude petitioners,
All for his life assail'd the throne,
All would have brib'd the skies by offering up their own.
So great a throng not heaven itself could bar;
'Twas almost borne by force *as in the giants war.*
The prayers, at least, for his reprieve were heard;
His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd." [1]

There is throughout the composition a desire of splendor without wealth. In the conclusion he seems too much pleased with the prospect of the new reign to have lamented his old master with much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt for want of skill either in lyrick or elegiack poetry. His poem *on the death* of Mrs. *Killigrew*,[2] is undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced. The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm. *Fervet immensusque ruit.*[3] All the stanzas indeed are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first ode for Cecilia's day,[4] which is lost in the splendor of the second,[5] there are passages which would have dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 93.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 279.
[3] *Horace, Odes*, IV. ii. 7.
[4] Ald. *D.* vol. iii. p. 3. Written for the festival, 1687. Mr. Saintsbury observes (S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 171) that "In Dryden's copy of *Spenser*, preserved at Trinity College, Cambridge, the note, '*Groundwork for a song on St. Cecilia's Day*,' is set against *F. Q.* VII. vii. 12."
[5] *Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Music*, an ode in honour of St. Cecilia's Day, was written for the festival in 1697. Ald. *D.* vol. iii. p. 12.

and elegant, though the word *diapason* is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another.

"From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
When nature underneath a heap of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
Arise ye more than dead.
Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And musick's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man." [1]

The conclusion is likewise striking, but it includes an image so awful in itself, that it can owe little to poetry; and I could wish the antithesis of *musick untuning* had found some other place.

"As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the bless'd above.
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And musick shall untune the sky." [2]

Of his skill in Elegy he has given a specimen in his "Eleonora," [3] of which the following lines discover their author.

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. iii. p. 3. [2] *Ibid.* p. 6.

[3] *Eleonora.* A Panegyrical Poem, dedicated to the memory of the late Countess of Abingdon, 1692. This lady was the daughter of Sir Henry Lee, of Ditchley, and wife of James Bertie, first Earl of Abingdon, and died May 31st, 1691. S. S. *D.* vol. xi. p. 128.

"Though all these rare endowments of the mind
Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,
The figure was with full perfection crown'd;
Though not so large an orb, as truly round:
As when in glory, through the public place,
The spoils of conquer'd nations were to pass,
And but one day for triumph was allow'd,
The consul was constrain'd his pomp to crowd;
And so the swift procession hurry'd on,
That all, though not distinctly, might be shown:
So in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,
She gave but glimpses of her glorious mind:
And multitudes of virtues pass'd along;
Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng,
Ambitious to be seen, and then make room
For greater multitudes that were to come.
Yet unemploy'd no minute slipp'd away;
Moments were precious in so short a stay.
The haste of heaven to have her was so great,
That some were single acts, though each compleat;
And every act stood ready to repeat." [1]

This piece, however, is not without its faults; there is so much likeness in the initial comparison, that there is no illustration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented.

"As when some great and gracious monarch dies,
Soft whispers, first, and mournful murmurs rise
Among the sad attendants; then the sound
Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,
Through town and country, till the dreadful blast
Is blown to distant colonies at last;
Who, then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain,
For his long life, and for his happy reign:
So slowly by degrees, unwilling fame
Did matchless Eleonora's fate proclaim,
Till publick as the loss the news became." [2]

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 292, lines 270-290.
[2] *Ibid.* lines 1-11.

This is little better than to say in praise of a shrub, that it is as green as a tree, or of a brook, that it waters a garden, as a river waters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know the lady whom he celebrates; the praise being therefore inevitably general, fixes no impression upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to love, nor much desire of imitation. Knowledge of the subject is to the poet, what durable materials are to the architect.

The "Religio Laici,"[1] which borrows its title from the "Religio Medici" of Browne,[2] is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion; in this, therefore, it might be hoped, that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But unhappily the subject is rather argumentative than poetical: he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation.

> "And this unpolish'd rugged verse I chose,
> As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose."[3]

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very properly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous; in which metre has neither weakened the force, nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; nor will it be easy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaick in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind, or not far distant from it, is the

[1] *Religio Laici, or a Layman's Faith*, vol. x. p. 1. Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 67.

[2] *Religio Medici.* London, 1642. Reprinted 1643, with the Observation of Sir Kenelm Digby. Sir Thomas Browne was a Physician of Norwich. He wrote also *Christian Morals* (of which Johnson published an edition, with a life of Browne), and other antiquarian and critical works.

[3] Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 92.

"Hind and Panther,"[1] the longest of all Dryden's original poems; an allegory intended to comprize and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious; for what can be more absurd than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council? He seems well enough skilled in the usual topicks of argument, endeavours to shew the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to ask, why since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where.

The *Hind* at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried; but walking home with the *Panther*, talks by the way of the *Nicene Fathers*, and at last declares herself to be the Catholic church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in the "City Mouse" and "Country Mouse" of *Montague* and *Prior*; and in the detection and censure of the incongruity of the fiction, chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whose judgment was perhaps a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may therefore reasonably infer, that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph.

[1] S. S. *D.* vol. x. p. 85. Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 113.

"A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest rang'd;
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.
Yet had she oft been chac'd with horns and hounds
And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds
Aim'd at her heart; was often forc'd to fly,
And doom'd to death, though fated not to die." [1]

These lines are lofty, elegant, and musical, notwithstanding the interruption of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety, than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, *to give the majestick turn of heroick poesy;* [2] and perhaps he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had not an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a Presbyterian, whose emblem is the *Wolf*, is not very heroically majestick.

"More haughty than the rest, the wolfish race
Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd face:
Never was so deform'd a beast of grace.
His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,
Close clapp'd for shame; but his rough crest he rears,
And pricks up his predestinating ears." [3]

His general character of the other sorts of beasts that never go to church, though spritely and keen, has, however, not much of heroick poesy,

"These are the chief; to number o'er the rest,
And stand like Adam naming every beast,
Were weary work; nor will the Muse describe
A slimy-born, and sun-begotten tribe;
Who, far from steeples and their sacred sound,
In fields their sullen conventicles found.

[1] Ald. *D.* vol. ii. p. 117.
[2] Preface to *The Hind and the Panther*, p. 117.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 125.

These gross, half-animated, lumps I leave;
Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive;
But if they think at all, 'tis sure no higher
Than matter, put in motion, may aspire;
Souls that can scarce ferment their mass of clay
So drossy, so divisible are they,
As would but serve pure bodies for allay:
Such souls as shards produce, such beetle things
As only buz to heaven with evening wings;
Strike in the dark, offending but by chance;
Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.
They know not beings, and but hate a name;
To them the Hind and Panther are the same." [1]

One more instance, and that taken from the narrative part, where style was more in his choice, will show how steadily he kept his resolution of heroick dignity.

"For when the herd, suffic'd, did late repair
To ferney heaths, and to their forest laire,
She made a mannerly excuse to stay,
Proffering the Hind to wait her half the way:
That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk
Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,
To chat awhile on their adventures past:
Nor had the grateful Hind so soon forgot
Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the plot.
Yet, wondering how of late she grew estrang'd,
Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,
She thought this hour th' occasion would present
To learn her secret cause of discontent,
Which well she hop'd, might be with ease redress'd,
Considering her a well-bred civil beast,
And more a gentlewoman than the rest.
After some common talk what rumours ran,
The lady of the spotted muff began." [2]

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced

[1] *Ald. D.* vol. ii. p. 130, lines 308-326.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 139, lines 554-572.

to diction more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation; the difference is not, however, very easily perceived: the first has familiar, and the two others have sonorous, lines. The original inconguity runs through the whole; the king is now *Cæsar*, and now the *Lyon*; and the name *Pan* is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controversy is embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions are made, are now become obscure, and perhaps there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably laboured with uncommon attention; and there are, indeed, few negligences in the subordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the subsequent unpopularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, has sunk it into neglect; but it may be usefully studied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument suffers little from the metre.

In the poem on "The Birth of the Prince of Wales,"[1] nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and that insensibility of the precipice on which the king was then standing, which the laureate apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from court, and made him again a play-wright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton,[2]

[1] S. S. *D.* vol. x. p. 287.

[2] Sir Robert Stapleton, (buried 1669 in Westminster Abbey) pub. *Juvenal*, 1647, and afterwards various translations and dramatic pieces;

and another by Holiday;[1] neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth, and Holiday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes. A new version was proposed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputation was such that no man was unwilling to serve the Muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given, when it is said to preserve the wit, but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except *Creech*,[2] who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is therefore perhaps possible to give a better representation of that great satirist, even in those parts which Dryden himself has translated, some passages excepted, which will never be excelled.

and, 1669, according to the books of the Stationers' Company, *The Royal Choice*.

[1] Dryden, in the *Essay on Satire*, after quoting Holyday, proceeds: "Thus far that learned critic, Barten Holyday, whose interpretation and illustrations of Juvenal are as excellent as the verse of his translation and his English are lame and pitiful." And Scott notes: "The learned Barten Holyday was born at Oxford, in the end of the sixteenth century." Wood says he was second to none for his poetry and sublime fancy, and brings in witness his "smooth translation of rough Persius," made before he was twenty years of age. He wrote a play called *Technogamia, or the Marriage of the Arts*, which was acted at Christchurch College before James I., and, though extremely dull and pedantic, was ill-received by his majesty. Holyday's version of *Juvenal* was not published till after his death, when, in 1673, it was inscribed to the dean and canons of Christchurch. As he had adopted the desperate resolution of comprising every Latin line within an English one, the modern reader has often reason to complain with the embarrassed gentleman in the *Critic*, "that the interpreter is the harder to be understood of the two." S. S. *D.* vol. xiii. p. 96.

[2] Thomas Creech (1659-1700), translator and editor of *Lucretius*, &c.

With Juvenal [1] was published Persius,[2] translated wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all the other productions of Dryden it may have shining parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effect of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry,that one of these satires is an exercise of the school. Dryden says that he once translated it at school; but not that he preserved or published the juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook perhaps the most arduous work of its kind, a translation of Virgil, for which he had shewn how well he was qualified by his version of the Pollio,[3] and two episodes, one of Nisus and Euryalus, the other of Mezentius and Lausus.

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the discriminative excellence of Homer is elevation and comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil is grace and splendor of diction. The beauties of Homer are therefore difficult to be lost, and those of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunk of sentiment is safe by its solidity, but the blossoms of elocution easily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which he can best adorn: the translator must, at all hazards, follow his original, and express thoughts which perhaps he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the "Georgick" and the "Eneid" should be much delighted with any version.

[1] S. S. *D.* vol. xiii. Ald. *D.* vol. v. pp. 71, 161.

[2] Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. Printed in Tonson's *First Miscellany*, 1684.

[3] Printed in Tonson's *Second Miscellany*, 1685.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, and another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the publick were not disappointed. He produced, says Pope,[1] *the most noble and spirited translation*[2] *that I know in any language.* It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends, and, for the most part, to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the Preface, Pastorals, and Georgicks; and, as he professes, to give his antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals, and the first Georgick. The world has forgotten his book; but since his attempt has given him a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism, by inserting his remarks[3] on the invocation before the first Georgick, and of his poetry, by annexing his own version.

Ver. 1. "*What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn,*
The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn—It's *unlucky,*
they say, *to stumble at the threshold,* but what has a *plenteous harvest* to do here? *Virgil* would not pretend to prescribe *rules* for *that* which depends not on the *husbandman's* care, but the *disposition of Heaven* altogether. Indeed, the

[1] In the Preface to the *Iliad.*

[2] For Wordsworth's opinion of it, see Lockhart's *Life of Scott,* vol. ii. p. 80.

[3] *Notes on Dryden's Virgil,* Lond. 1698, by Luke Milbourne, author of other works, now forgotten.

plenteous crop depends somewhat on the *good method of tillage*, and where the *land's* ill manur'd, the *corn*, without a miracle, can be but *indifferent;* but the *harvest* may be *good*, which is its *properest* epithet, tho' the *husbandman's skill* were never so *indifferent*. The next *sentence* is *too literal*, and *when to plough* had been *Virgil's* meaning, and intelligible to every body; and *when to sow the corn* is a needless *addition*."

Ver. 3. "*The care of sheep, of oxen, and of kine, And when to geld the lambs, and sheer the swine*, would as well have fallen under the *cura boum, qui cultus habendo sit pecori*, as Mr. *D's deduction* of particulars."

Ver. 5. "*The birth and genius of the frugal bee, I sing* Mæcenas, *and I sing to thee.*—But where did *experientia* ever signify *birth and genius?* or what ground was there for such a *figure* in this place? How much more manly is Mr. *Ogylby's* version!

> "'What makes rich grounds, in what celestial signs,
> 'Tis good to plough, and marry elms with vines.
> What best fits cattle, what with sheep agrees,
> And several arts improving frugal bees,
> I sing, *Mæcenas*.'

Which four lines, tho' faulty enough, are yet much more to the purpose than Mr. *D's* six."

Ver. 22. "*From fields and mountains to my song repair.* For *patrium linquens nemus, saltusque Lycæi*—Very well explained!"

Ver. 23, 24. "*Inventor* Pallas, *of the fattening oil, Thou founder of the plough, and ploughman's toil!* Written as if *these* had been *Pallas's invention. The ploughman's toil's* impertinent."

Ver. 25. "—*The shroud-like cypress*—Why *shroud-like?* Is a *cypress* pulled up by the *roots*, which the *sculpture* in the *last Eclogue* fills *Silvanus's* hand with, so very like a *shroud?* Or did not Mr. *D.* think of that kind of *cypress*