Prefaces and Prologues to Famous Books by Charles W. Eliot

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[Illustration: Hippolyte Adolphe Taine From the etching by Asher B. Durand.]

THE HARVARD CLASSICS EDITED BY CHARLES W. ELIOT LL.D.

PREFACES AND PROLOGUES TO FAMOUS BOOKS

WITH INTRODUCTIONS, NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

[Illustration]

"DR. ELIOT'S FIVE-FOOT SHELF OF BOOKS"
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_INTRODUCTORY NOTE_
No part of a book is so intimate as the Preface. Here, after the long labor of the work is over, the author descends from his platform, and speaks with his reader as man to man, disclosing his hopes and fears, seeking sympathy for his difficulties, offering defence or defiance, according to his temper, against the criticisms which he anticipates. It thus happens that a personality which has been veiled by a formal method throughout many chapters, is suddenly seen face to face in the Preface; and this alone, if there were no other reason, would justify a volume of Prefaces.

But there are other reasons why a Preface may be presented apart from its parent work, and may, indeed, be expected sometimes to survive it. The Prologues and Epilogues of Caxton were chiefly prefixed to translations which have long been superseded; but the comments of this frank and enthusiastic pioneer of the art of printing in England not only tell us of his personal tastes, but are in a high degree illuminative of the literary habits and standards of western Europe in the fifteenth century. Again, modern research has long ago put Raleigh's "History of the World" out of date; but his eloquent Preface still gives us a rare picture of the attitude of an intelligent Elizabethan, of the generation which colonised America, toward the past, the present, and the future worlds. Bacon's "Great Restoration" is no longer a guide to scientific method; but his prefatory statements as to his objects and hopes still offer a lofty inspiration.

And so with the documents here drawn from the folios of Copernicus and
Calvin, with the criticism of Dryden and Wordsworth and Hugo, with
Dr. Johnson's Preface to his great Dictionary, with the astounding
manifesto of a new poetry from Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass"--each
of them has a value and significance independent now of the work which
it originally introduced, and each of them presents to us a man._

PREFACES AND EPILOGUES

BY WILLIAM CAXTON[A]

THE RECUYELL OF THE HISTORIES OF TROY

TITLE AND PROLOGUE TO BOOK I

Here beginneth the volume entitled and named the Recuyell of the
Histories of Troy, composed and drawn out of divers books of Latin
into French by the right venerable person and worshipful man, Raoul le
Feure, priest and chaplain unto the right noble, glorious, and mighty
prince in his time, Philip, Duke of Burgundy, of Brabant, etc. in the
year of the Incarnation of our Lord God a thousand four hundred sixty
and four, and translated and drawn out of French into English by
William Caxton, mercer, of the city of London, at the commandment of
the right high, mighty, and virtuous Princess, his redoubted Lady,
Margaret, by the grace of God Duchess of Burgundy, of Lotrylk, of
Brabant, etc.; which said translation and work was begun in Bruges
in the County of Flanders, the first day of March, the year of the
Incarnation of our said Lord God a thousand four hundred sixty and
eight, and ended and finished in the holy city of Cologne the 19th day
of September, the year of our said Lord God a thousand four hundred
sixty and eleven, etc.

And on that other side of this leaf followeth the prologue.

When I remember that every man is bounden by the commandment and
counsel of the wise man to eschew sloth and idleness, which is
mother and nourisher of vices, and ought to put myself unto virtuous
occupation and business, then I, having no great charge of occupation,
following the said counsel took a French book, and read therein many
strange and marvellous histories, wherein I had great pleasure and
delight, as well for the novelty of the same as for the fair language
of French, which was in prose so well and compendiously set and
written, which methought I understood the sentence and substance of
every matter. And for so much as this book was new and late made and
drawn into French, and never had seen it in our English tongue, I
thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into
our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume
of England as in other lands, and also for to pass therewith the time,
and thus concluded in myself to begin this said work. And forthwith
took pen and ink, and began boldly to run forth as blind Bayard
in this present work, which is named "The Recuyell of the Trojan
Histories." And afterward when I remembered myself of my simpleness
and unperfectness that I had in both languages, that is to wit in
French and in English, for in France was I never, and was born and
learned my English in Kent, in the Weald, where I doubt not is
spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England; and have
continued by the space of 30 years for the most part in the countries
of Brabant, Flanders, Holland, and Zealand. And thus when all these
things came before me, after that I had made and written five or six
quires I fell in despair of this work, and purposed no more to have
continued therein, and those quires laid apart, and in two years after
laboured no more in this work, and was fully in will to have left it,
till on a time it fortuned that the right high, excellent, and right
virtuous princess, my right redoubted Lady, my Lady Margaret, by
the grace of God sister unto the King of England and of France,
my sovereign lord, Duchess of Burgundy, of Lotryk, of Brabant, of
Limburg, and of Luxembourg, Countess of Flanders, of Artois, and of
Burgundy, Palatine of Hainault, of Holland, of Zealand and of Namur,
Marquesse of the Holy Empire, Lady of Frisia, of Salins and of
Mechlin, sent for me to speak with her good Grace of divers matters,
among the which I let her Highness have knowledge of the foresaid
beginning of this work, which anon commanded me to show the said five
or six quires to her said Grace; and when she had seen them anon she
found a default in my English, which she commanded me to amend, and
moreover commanded me straitly to continue and make an end of the
residue then not translated; whose dreadful commandment I durst in no
wise disobey, because I am a servant unto her said Grace and receive
of her yearly fee and other many good and great benefits, (and also
hope many more to receive of her Highness), but forthwith went and
laboured in the said translation after my simple and poor cunning,
also nigh as I can following my author, meekly beseeching the
bounteous Highness of my said Lady that of her benevolence list to
accept and take in gree this simple and rude work here following; and
if there be anything written or said to her pleasure, I shall think my
labour well employed, and whereas there is default that she arette it
to the simpleness of my cunning which is full small in this behalf;
and require and pray all them that shall read this said work to
correct it, and to hold me excused of the rude and simple translation.

And thus I end my prologue.

[Footnote A: William Caxton (1422?-1491), merchant and translator,
learned the art of printing on the Continent, probably at Bruges or
Cologne. He translated "The Recuyell of the Histories of Troy" between
1469 and 1471, and, on account of the great demand for copies, was led
to have it printed--the first English book to be reproduced by this
means. The date was about 1474; the place, probably Bruges. In
1476, Caxton came back to England, and set up a press of his own at
Westminster. In 1477, he issued the first book known to have been
printed in England, "The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers."
The following Prefaces and Epilogues from Caxton's own pen show his
attitude towards some of the more important of the works that issued
from his press.]

EPILOGUE TO BOOK II

Thus endeth the second book of the Recule of the Histories of Troy.
Which bookes were late translated into French out of Latin by the
labour of the venerable person Raoul le Feure, priest, as afore
is said; and by me indigne and unworthy, translated into this rude
English by the commandment of my said redoubted Lady, Duchess of
Burgundy. And for as much as I suppose the said two books be not had
before this time in our English language, therefore I had the better
will to accomplish this said work; which work was begun in Bruges
and continued in Ghent and finished in Cologne, in the time of the
troubulous world, and of the great divisions being and reigning, as
well in the royaumes of England and France as in all other places
universally through the world; that is to wit the year of our Lord a
thousand four hundred seventy one. And as for the third book, which
treateth of the general and last destruction of Troy, it needeth
not to translate it into English, for as much as that worshipful and
religious man, Dan John Lidgate, monk of Bury, did translate it but
late; after whose work I fear to take upon me, that am not worthy to
bear his penner and ink-horn after him, to meddle me in that work.
But yet for as much as I am bound to contemplate my said Lady's good
grace, and also that his work is in rhyme and as far as I know it is
not had in prose in our tongue, and also, peradventure, he translated
after some other author than this is; and yet for as much as divers
men be of divers desires, some to read in rhyme and metre and some
in prose; and also because that I have now good leisure, being in
Cologne, and have none other thing to do at this time; in eschewing
of idleness, mother of all vices, I have delibered in myself for the
contemplation of my said redoubted lady to take this labour in hand,
by the sufferance and help of Almighty God; whom I meekly supplye to
give me grace to accomplish it to the pleasure of her that is causer
thereof, and that she receive it in gree of me, her faithful, true,
and most humble servant etc.

EPILOGUE TO BOOK III

Thus end I this book, which I have translated after mine Author as
nigh as God hath given me cunning, to whom be given the laud and
praising. And for as much as in the writing of the same my pen is
worn, my hand weary and not steadfast, mine eyne dimmed with overmuch
looking on the white paper, and my courage not so prone and ready to
labour as it hath been, and that age creepeth on me daily and feebleth
all the body, and also because I have promised to divers gentlemen and
to my friends to address to them as hastily as I might this said book,
therefore I have practised and learned at my great charge and dispense
to ordain this said book in print, after the manner and form as ye may
here see, and is not written with pen and ink as other books be, to
the end that every man may have them at once. For all the books of
this story, named "The Recule of the Histories of Troy" thus imprinted
as ye here see, were begun in one day and also finished in one day,
which book I have presented to my said redoubted Lady, as afore
is said. And she hath well accepted it, and largely rewarded me,
wherefore I beseech Almighty God to reward her everlasting bliss after
this life, praying her said Grace and all them that shall read this
book not to disdain the simple and rude work, neither to reply against
the saying of the matters touched in this book, though it accord not
unto the translation of others which have written it. For divers men
have made divers books which in all points accord not, as Dictes,
Dares, and Homer. For Dictes and Homer, as Greeks, say and write favorably for the Greeks, and give to them more worship than to the Trojans; and Dares writeth otherwise than they do. And also as for the proper names, it is no wonder that they accord not, for some one name in these days have divers equivocations after the countries that they dwell in; but all accord in conclusion the general destruction of that noble city of Troy, and the death of so many noble princes, as kings, dukes, earls, barons, knights, and common people, and the ruin irreparable of that city that never since was re-edified; which may be example to all men during the world how dreadful and jeopardous it is to begin a war and what harms, losses, and death followeth. Therefore the Apostle saith: "All that is written is written to our doctrine," which doctrine for the common weal I beseech God may be taken in such place and time as shall be most needful in increasing of peace, love, and charity; which grant us He that suffered for the same to be crucified on the rood tree. And say we all Amen for charity!

DICTES AND SAYINGS OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

FIRST EDITION (1477). EPILOGUE

Here endeth the book named _The Dictes or Sayings of the Philosophers_, imprinted by me, William Caxton, at Westminster, the year of our Lord 1477. Which book is late translated out of French into English by the noble and puissant Lord Lord Antony, Earl of Rivers, Lord of Scales and of the Isle of Wight, defender and director
of the siege apostolic for our holy father the Pope in this royaume of England, and governor of my Lord Prince of Wales. And it is so that at such time as he had accomplished this said work, it liked him to send it to me in certain quires to oversee, which forthwith I saw, and found therein many great, notable, and wise sayings of the philosophers, according unto the books made in French which I had often before read; but certainly I had seen none in English until that time. And so afterward I came unto my said Lord, and told him how I had read and seen his book, and that he had done a meritorious deed in the labour of the translation thereof into our English tongue, wherein he had deserved a singular laud and thanks, &c. Then my said Lord desired me to oversee it, and where I should find fault to correct it; whereon I answered unto his Lordship that I could not amend it, but if I should so presume I might apaire it, for it was right well and cunningly made and translated into right good and fair English. Notwithstanding, he willed me to oversee it, and shewed me divers things, which, as seemed to him, might be left out, as divers letters, missives sent from Alexander to Darius and Aristotle, and each to other, which letters were little appertinent unto dictes and sayings aforesaid, forasmuch as they specify of other matters. And also desired me, that done, to put the said book in imprint. And thus obeying his request and commandment, I have put me in devoir to oversee this his said book, and behold as nigh as I could how it accordeth with the original, being in French. And I find nothing discordant therein, save only in the dictes and sayings of Socrates, wherein I find that my said Lord hath left out certain and divers conclusions touching women. Whereof I marvel that my Lord hath not written them, ne what hath moved him so to do, ne what cause he had at
that time; but I suppose that some fair lady hath desired him to leave it out of his book; or else he was amorous on some noble lady, for whose love he would not set it in his book; or else for the very affection, love, and good will that he hath unto all ladies and gentlewomen, he thought that Socrates spared the sooth and wrote of women more than truth; which I cannot think that so true a man and so noble a philosopher as Socrates was should write otherwise than truth. For if he had made fault in writing of women, he ought not, ne should not, be believed in his other dictes and sayings. But I perceive that my said Lord knoweth verily that such defaults be not had ne found in the women born and dwelling in these parts ne regions of the world. Socrates was a Greek, born in a far country from hence, which country is all of other conditions than this is, and men and women of other nature than they be here in this country. For I wot well, of whatsoever condition women be in Greece, the women of this country be right good, wise, pleasant, humble, discreet, sober, chaste, obedient to their husbands, true, secret, steadfast, ever busy, and never idle, attemperate in speaking, and virtuous in all their works--or at least should be so. For which causes so evident my said Lord, as I suppose, thought it was not of necessity to set in his book the sayings of his author Socrates touching women. But forasmuch as I had commandment of my said Lord to correct and amend where I should find fault, and other find I none save that he hath left out these dictes and sayings of the women of Greece, therefore in accomplishing his commandment--forasmuch as I am not certain whether it was in my Lord's copy or not, or else, peradventure, that the wind had blown over the leaf at the time of translation of his book--I purpose to write those same sayings of that Greek Socrates, which wrote of the women of Greece and nothing of them
of this royaume, whom, I suppose, he never knew; for if he had, I dare
plainly say that he would have reserved them specially in his said
dictes. Always not presuming to put and set them in my said Lord's
book but in the end apart in the rehearsal of the works, humbly
requiring all them that shall read this little rehearsal, that if they
find any fault to arette it to Socrates, and not to me, which writeth
as hereafter followeth.

Socrates said that women be the apparels to catch men, but they take
none but them that will be poor or else them that know them not.
And he said that there is none so great empechement unto a man as
ignorance and women. And he saw a woman that bare fire, of whom he
said that the hotter bore the colder. And he saw a woman sick, of whom
he said that the evil resteth and dwelleth with the evil. And he saw
a woman brought to the justice, and many other women followed her
weeping, of whom he said the evil be sorry and angry because the evil
shall perish. And he saw a young maid that learned to write, of whom
he said that men multiplied evil upon evil. And he said that the
ignorance of a man is known in three things, that is to wit, when he
hath no thought to use reason; when he cannot refrain his covetise;
and when he is governed by the counsel of women, in that he knoweth
that they know not. And he said unto his disciples: "Will ye that I
enseign and teach you how ye shall now escape from all evil?" And they
answered, "Yea." And then he said to them, "For whatsoever thing that
it be, keep you and be well ware that ye obey not women." Who answered
to him again, "And what sayest thou by our good mothers, and of our
sisters?" He said to them, "Suffice you with that I have said to you,
for all be semblable in malice." And he said, "Whosoever will acquire
and get science, let him never put him in the governance of a woman."

And he saw a woman that made her fresh and gay, to whom he said, "Thou
resemblest the fire; for the more wood is laid to the fire the more
will it burn, and the greater is the heat." And on a time one asked
him what him semed of women; he answered that the women resemble a
tree called Edelfla, which is the fairest tree to behold and see
that may be, but within it is full of venom. And they said to him and
demanded wherefore he blamed so women? and that he himself had
not come into this world, ne none other men also, without them. He
answered, "The woman is like unto a tree named Chassoygnet, on which
tree there be many things sharp and pricking, which hurt and prick
them that approach unto it; and yet, nevertheless, that same tree
bringeth forth good dates and sweet." And they demanded him why he
fled from the women? And he answered, "Forasmuch as I see them flee
and eschew the good and commonly do evil." And a woman said to him,
"Wilt thou have any other woman than me?" And he answered to her, "Art
not ashamed to offer thyself to him that demandeth nor desireth thee
not?"

So, these be the dictes and sayings of the philosopher Socrates, which
he wrote in his book; and certainly he wrote no worse than afore
is rehearsed. And forasmuch as it is accordant that his dictes and
sayings should be had as well as others', therefore I have set it in
the end of this book. And also some persons, peradventure, that have
read this book in French would have arette a great default in me that
I had not done my devoir in visiting and overseeing of my Lord's
book according to his desire. And some other also, haply, might have
supposed that Socrates had written much more ill of women than here
afore is specified, wherefore in satisfying of all parties, and also
for excuse of the said Socrates, I have set these said dictes and
sayings apart in the end of this book, to the intent that if my said
lord or any other person, whatsoever he or she be that shall read or
hear it, that if they be not well pleased withal, that they with a pen
race it out, or else rend the leaf out of the book. Humbly requiring
and beseeching my said lord to take no displeasure on me so presuming,
but to pardon whereas he shall find fault; and that it please him to
take the labour of the imprinting in gree and thanks, which gladly
have done my diligence in the accomplishing of his desire and
commandment; in which I am bounden so to do for the good reward that
I have received of his said lordship; whom I beseech Almighty God to
increase and to continue in his virtuous disposition in this world,
and after this life to live everlastingly in Heaven. Amen.

GOLDEN LEGEND.

FIRST EDITION (1483). PROLOGUE

The Holy and blessed doctor Saint Jerome saith this authority, "Do
always some good work to the end that the devil find thee not Idle."
And the holy doctor Saint Austin saith in the book of the labour of
monks, that no man strong or mighty to labour ought to be idle; for
which cause when I had performed and accomplished divers works and
histories translated out of French into English at the request of
certain lords, ladies, and gentlemen, as the Recuyel of the History of
Troy, the Book of the Chess, the History of Jason, the history of
the Mirror of the World, the 15 books of Metamorphoses in which be
contained the fables of Ovid, and the History of Godfrey of Boulogne
in the conquest of Jerusalem, with other divers works and books, I
ne wist what work to begin and put forth after the said works to-fore
made. And forasmuch as idleness is so much blamed, as saith Saint
Bernard, the mellifluous doctor, that she is mother of lies and
step-dame of virtues, and it is she that overthroweth strong men into
sin, quencheth virtue, nourisheth pride, and maketh the way ready to
go to hell; and John Cassiodorus saith that the thought of him that is
idle thinketh on none other thing but on licorous meats and viands for
his belly; and the holy Saint Bernard aforesaid saith in an epistle,
when the time shall come that it shall behove us to render and give
accounts of our idle time, what reason may we render or what answer
shall we give when in idleness is none excuse; and Prosper saith that
whosoever liveth in idleness liveth in manner of a dumb beast. And
because I have seen the authorities that blame and despise so much
idleness, and also know well that it is one of the capital and deadly
sins much hateful unto God, therefore I have concluded and firmly
purposed in myself no more to be idle, but will apply myself to labour
and such occupation as I have been accustomed to do. And forasmuch as
Saint Austin aforesaid saith upon a psalm that good work ought not to
be done for fear of pain, but for the love of righteousness, and that
it be of very and sovereign franchise, and because me-seemeth to be
a sovereign weal to incite and exhort men and women to keep them from
sloth and idleness, and to let to be understood to such people as be
not lettered the nativities, the lives, the passions, the miracles, and the death of the holy saints, and also some other notorious deeds and acts of times past, I have submitted myself to translate into English the legend of Saints, which is called _Legenda Aurea_ in Latin, that is to say, the _Golden Legend_; for in like wise as gold is most noble above all other metals, in like wise is this legend holden most noble above all other works. Against me here might some persons say that this legend hath been translated before, and truth it is; but forasmuch as I had by me a legend in French, another in Latin, and the third in English, which varied in many and divers places, and also many histories were comprised in the two other books which were not in the English books; and therefore I have written one out of the said three books, which I have ordered otherwise than the said English legend is, which was so to-fore made, beseeching all them that shall see or hear it read to pardon me where I have erred or made fault, which, if any be, is of ignorance and against my will; and submit it wholly of such as can and may, to correct it, humbly beseeching them so to do, and in so doing they shall deserve a singular laud and merit; and I shall pray for them unto Almighty God that He of His benign grace reward them, etc., and that it profit to all them that shall read or hear it read, and may increase in them virtue, and expel vice and sin, that by the example of the holy saints amend their living here in this short life, that by their merits they and I may come to everlasting life and bliss in Heaven. Amen.

CATON (1483)
Here beginneth the prologue of proem of the book called _Caton_, which book hath been translated into English by Master Benet Burgh, late Archdeacon of Cochester, and high canon of St. Stephen's at Westminster, which ful craftily hath made it in ballad royal for the erudition of my lord Bousher, son and heir at that time to my lord the Earl of Essex. And because of late came to my hand a book of the said Cato in French, which rehearseth many a fair learning and notable examples, I have translated it out of French into English, as all along hereafter shall appear, which I present unto the city of London.

Unto the noble, ancient, and renowned city, the city of London, in England, I, William Caxton, citizen and conjury of the same, and of the fraternity and fellowship of the mercery, owe of right my service and good will, and of very duty am bounden naturally to assist, aid, and counsel, as far forth as I can to my power, as to my mother of whom I have received my nurture and living, and shall pray for the good prosperity and policy of the same during my life. For, as me seemeth, it is of great need, because I have known it in my young age much more wealthy, prosperous, and richer, than it is at this day. And the cause is that there is almost none that intendeth to the common weal, but only every man for his singular profit Oh! when I remember the noble Romans, that for the common weal of the city of Rome they spent not only their moveable goods but they put their bodies and lives in jeopardy and to the death, as by many a noble example we may
see in the acts of Romans, as of the two noble Scipios, African and
Asian, Actilius, and many others. And among all others the noble Cato,
author and maker of this book, which he hath left for to remain ever
to all the people for to learn in it and to know how every man ought
to rule and govern him in this life, as well for the life temporal as
for the life spiritual. And as in my judgement it is the best book for
to be taught to young children in school, and also to people of every
age, it is full convenient if it be well understood And because I
see that the children that be born within the said city increase, and
profit not like their fathers and elders, but for the most part after
that they be come to their perfect years of discretion and ripeness of
age, how well that their fathers have left to them great quantity of
goods yet scarcely among ten two thrive, [whereas] I have seen and
know in other lands in divers cities that of one name and lineage
successively have endured prosperously many heirs, yea, a five or six
hundred years, and some a thousand; and in this noble city of
London it can unneth continue unto the third heir or scarcely to the
second,--O blessed Lord, when I remember this I am all abashed; I
cannot judge the cause, but fairer ne wiser ne better spoken children
in their youth be nowhere than there be in London, but at their full
ripening there is no kernel ne good corn found, but chaff for the most
part. I wot well there be many noble and wise, and prove well and be
better and richer than ever were their fathers. And to the end that
many might come to honour and worship, I intend to translate this
said book of Cato, in which I doubt not, and if they will read it and
understand they shall much the better con rule themselves thereby; for
among all other books this is a singular book, and may well be called
the regiment or governance of the body and soul.
There was a noble clerk named Pogius of Florence, and was secretary to Pope Eugene and also to Pope Nicholas, which had in the city of Florence a noble and well-stuffed library which all noble strangers coming to Florence desired to see; and therein they found many noble and rare books. And when they had asked of him which was the best book of them all, and that he reputed for best, he said that he held Cato glosed for the best book of his library. Then since that he that was so noble a clerk held this book for the best, doubtless it must follow that this is a noble book and a virtuous, and such one that a man may eschew all vices and ensue virtue. Then to the end that this said book may profit unto the hearers of it, I beseech Almighty God that I may achieve and accomplish it unto his laud and glory, and to the erudition and learning of them that be ignorant, that they may thereby profit and be the better. And I require and beseech all such that find fault or error, that of their charity they correct and amend it, and I shall heartily pray for them to Almighty God, that he reward them.

AESOP. (1483)

EPILOGUE

Now then I will finish all these fables with this tale that followeth, which a worshipful priest and a parson told me lately. He said that there were dwelling in Oxford two priests, both masters of art, of whom that one was quick and could put himself forth, and that other
was a good simple priest. And so it happened that the master that was pert and quick, was anon promoted to a benefice or twain, and after to prebends and for to be a dean of a great prince's chapel, supposing and weening that his fellow the simple priest should never have been promoted, but be alway an Annual, or at the most a parish priest. So after long time that this worshipful man, this dean, came riding into a good parish with a ten or twelve horses, like a prelate, and came into the church of the said parish, and found there this good simple man sometime his fellow, which came and welcomed him lowly; and that other bade him "good morrow, master John," and took him slightly by the hand, and asked him where he dwelt. And the good man said, "In this parish." "How," said he, "are ye here a soul priest or a parish priest?" "Nay, sir," said he, "for lack of a better, though I be not able ne worthy, I am parson and curate of this parish." And then that other availed his bonnet and said, "Master parson, I pray you to be not displeased; I had supposed ye had not been beneficed; but master," said he, "I pray you what is this benefice worth to you a year?"
"Forsooth," said the good simple man, "I wot never, for I make never accounts thereof how well I have had it four or five years." "And know ye not," said he, "what it is worth? it should seem a good benefice."
"No, forsooth," said he, "but I wot well what it shall be worth to me." "Why," said he, "what shall it be worth?" "Forsooth," said he, "if I do my true diligence in the cure of my parishioners in preaching and teaching, and do my part longing to my cure, I shall have heaven therefore; and if their souls be lost, or any of them by my default, I shall be punished therefore, and hereof am I sure." And with that word the rich dean was abashed, and thought he should do the better and take more heed to his cures and benefices than he had done. This was
a good answer of a good priest and an honest. And herewith I
finished this book, translated and printed by me, William Caxton, at
Westminster in the Abbey, and finished the 26th day of March, the year
of our Lord 1484, and the first year of the reign of King Richard the
Third.

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES

Second Edition. (1484)

PROEM

Great thanks, laud, and honour ought to be given unto the clerks,
poets, and historiographs that have written many noble books of
wisdom of the lives, passions, and miracles of holy saints, of
histories of noble and famous acts and faites, and of the chronicles
since the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present
time, by which we be daily informed and have knowledge of many things
of whom we should not have known if they had not left to us their
monuments written. Among whom and in especial before all others, we
ought to give a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher
Geoffrey Chaucer, the which for his ornate writing in our tongue may
well have the name of a laureate poet. For to-fore that he by labour
embellished, ornated, and made fair our English, in this realm was had
rude speech and incongruous, as yet it appeareth by old books, which
at this day ought not to have place ne be compared among, ne to, his
beauteous volumes and ornate writings, of whom he made many books and
treatises of many a noble history, as well in metre as in rhyme and
prose; and them so craftily made that he comprehended his matters in
short, quick, and high sentences, eschewing prolixity, casting away
the chaff of superfluity, and shewing the picked grain of sentence
uttered by crafty and sugared eloquence; of whom among all others of
his books I purpose to print, by the grace of God, the book of the
tales of Canterbury, in which I find many a noble history of every
state and degree; first rehearsing the conditions and the array of
each of them as properly as possible is to be said. And after their
tales which be of nobleness, wisdom, gentleness, mirth and also of
very holiness and virtue, wherein he finisheth this said book, which
book I have diligently overseen and duly examined, to that end it be
made according unto his own making. For I find many of the said books
which writers have abridged it, and many things left out; and in some
place have set certain verses that he never made ne set in his book;
of which books so incorrect was one brought to me, 6 years past, which
I supposed had been very true and correct; and according to the same I
did so imprint a certain number of them, which anon were sold to many
and divers gentlemen, of whom one gentleman came to me and said that
this book was not according in many place unto the book that Geoffrey
Chaucer had made. To whom I answered that I had made it according to
my copy, and by me was nothing added ne minished. Then he said he knew
a book which his father had and much loved, that was very true and
according unto his own first book by him made; and said more, if
I would imprint it again he would get me the same book for a copy,
howbeit he wist well that his father would not gladly depart from it.
To whom I said, in case that he could get me such a book, true and
correct, yet I would once endeavour me to imprint it again for to
satisfy the author, whereas before by ignorance I erred in hurting and
defaming his book in divers places, in setting in some things that he
never said ne made, and leaving out many things that he made which
be requisite to be set in it. And thus we fell at accord, and he full
gently got of his father the said book and delivered it to me, by
which I have corrected my book, as hereafter, all along by the aid of
Almighty God, shall follow; whom I humbly beseech to give me grace and
aid to achieve and accomplish to his laud, honour, and glory; and
that all ye that shall in this book read or hear, will of your charity
among your deeds of mercy remember the soul of the said Geoffrey
Chaucer, first author and maker of this book. And also that all we
that shall see and read therein may so take and understand the good
and virtuous tales, that it may so profit unto the health of our souls
that after this short and transitory life we may come to everlasting
life in Heaven. Amen.

BY WILLIAM CAXTON

MALORY'S KING ARTHUR. (1485)

PROLOGUE

After that I had accomplished and finished divers histories, as well
of contemplation as of other historical and worldly acts of great
conquerors and princes, and also certain books of ensamples and
doctrine, many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England
came and demanded me many and oft times wherefore that I have not done
made and printed the noble history of the Saint Graal, and of the most
renowned Christian King, first and chief of the three best Christian
and worthy, Arthur, which ought most to be remembered among us
Englishmen before all other Christian Kings. For it is notoryly known
through the universal world that there be nine worthy and the best
that ever were; that is to wit three Paynims, three Jews, and three
Christian men. As for the Paynims, they were to-fore the Incarnation
of Christ, which were named--the first, Hector of Troy, of whom the
history is come both in ballad and in prose--the second, Alexander
the Great; and the third, Julius Caesar, Emperor of Rome, of whom the
histories be well known and had. And as for the three Jews, which also
were before the Incarnation of our Lord of whom the first was Duke
Joshua, which brought the children of Israel into the land of behest;
the second, David, King of Jerusalem; and the third Judas Maccabaeus;
of these three the Bible rehearseth all their noble histories and
acts. And since the said Incarnation have been three noble Christian
men, installed and admitted through the universal world into the
number of the nine best and worthy, of whom was first the noble
Arthur, whose noble acts I purpose to write in this present book here
following. The second was Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, of whom
the history is had in many places both in French and English; and the
third and last was Godfrey of Boulogne, of whose acts and life I made
a book unto the excellent prince and king of noble memory, King Edward
the Fourth. The said noble gentlemen instantly required me to print
the history of the said noble king and conqueror, King Arthur, and of
his knights, with the history of the Saint Graal, and of the death and
ending of the said Arthur, affirming that I ought rather to print his acts and noble feats than of Godfrey of Boulogne or any of the other eight, considering that he was a man born within this realm, and king and emperor of the same; and that there be in French divers and many noble volumes of his acts, and also of his knights. To whom I answered that divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur, and that all such books as be made of him be but feigned and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention, ne remember him nothing ne of his knights; whereto they answered, and one in special said, that in him that should say or think that there was never such a king called Arthur, might well be aretted great folly and blindness; for he said that there were many evidences of the contrary. First ye may see his sepulchre in the monastery of Glastonbury; and also in 'Polychronicon,' in the fifth book, the sixth chapter, and in the seventh book, the twenty-third chapter, where his body was buried, and after found and translated into the said monastery. Ye shall see also in the history of Boccaccio, in his book 'De casu principum,' part of his noble acts and also of his fall. Also Galfridus in his British book recounteth his life, and in divers places of England many remembrances be yet of him, and shall remain perpetually, and also of his knights. First in the Abbey of Westminster at Saint Edward's shrine remaineth the print of his seal in red wax closed in beryl, in which is written 'Patricius Arthurus, Britanniae Galliae Germaniae Daciae Imperator.' Item, in the castle of Dover ye may see Gawain's skull and Caradoc's mantle; at Winchester the round table; in other places Lancelot's sword, and many other things. Then all these things considered, there can no man reasonably gainsay but here was a king of this land named Arthur; for in all places, Christian and heathen, he
is reputed and taken for one of the nine worthy, and the first of the
three Christian men. And also he is more spoken of beyond the sea;
more books made of his noble acts than there be in England, as well
in Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and Greek as in French; and yet of record
remain in witness of him in Wales in the town of Camelot the great
stones and marvellous works of iron lying under the ground, and royal
vaults, which divers now living hath seen. Wherefore it is a marvel
why he is no more renowned in his own country, save only it accordeth
to the word of God, which saith that no man is accepted for a prophet
in his own country. Then all these things aforesaid alleged, I could
not well deny but that there was such a noble king named Arthur, and
reputed one of the nine worthy, and first and chief of the Christian
men; and many noble volumes be made of him and of his noble knights in
French, which I have seen and read beyond the sea, which be not had
in our maternal tongue, but in Welsh be many, and also in French, and
some in English, but nowhere nigh all. Wherefore such as have lately
been drawn out briefly into English, I have, after the simple cunning
that God hath sent to me, under the favour and correction of all noble
lords and gentlemen, emprised to imprint a book of the noble histories
of the said King Arthur and of certain of his knights, after a copy
unto me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Mallory did take out of
certain books of French and reduced it into English. And I according
to my copy have down set it in print, to the intent that noble men
may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous
deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to
honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to
shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies and all
other estates, of what estate or degree they be of, that shall see and
read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest
acts in their remembrance and to follow the same, wherein they shall
find many joyous and pleasant histories and noble and renowned acts
of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry. For herein may be seen
noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardyhood, love,
friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue and sin. Do after the good
and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown.
And for to pass the time this book shall be pleasant to read in;
but for to give faith and believe that all is true that is contained
herein, ye be at your liberty. But all is written for our doctrine,
and for to beware that we fall not to vice ne sin, but to exercise and
follow virtue, by which we may come and attain to good fame and renown
in this life, and after this short and transitory life to come unto
everlasting bliss in heaven; the which He grant us that reigneth in
Heaven, the Blessed Trinity. Amen.

Then to proceed forth in this said book which I direct unto all noble
princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen, that desire
to read or hear read of the noble and joyous history of the great
conqueror and excellent king, King Arthur, sometime King of this noble
realm then called Britain, I, William Caxton, simple person, present
this book following which I have emprised to imprint. And treateth
of the noble acts, feats of arms, of chivalry, prowess, hardyhood,
humanity, love, courtesy, and very gentleness, with many wonderful
histories and adventures. And for to understand briefly the contents
of this volume, I have divided it into 21 books, and every book
chaptered, as hereafter shall by God's grace follow. The first book
The twentieth book treateth of the piteous death of Arthur, and containeth 22 chapters. The twenty-first book treateth of his last departing, and how Sir Lancelot came to revenge his death, and containeth 13 chapters. The sum is 21 books, which contain the sum of five hundred and seven chapters, as more plainly shall follow hereafter.

ENEYDOS (1490)

PROLOGUE

After divers work made, translated, and achieved, having no work in hand, I sitting in my study whereas lay many divers pamphlets and books, happened that to my hand came a little book in French, which lately was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France, which book is named _Aeneidos_, made in Latin by that noble poet and great clerk, Virgil Which book I saw over, and read therein how, after the general destruction of the great Troy, Aeneas departed, bearing his old father Anchises upon his shoulders, his little son Iulus on his hand, his wife with much other people following, and how he shipped and departed, with all the history of his adventures that he had ere he came to the achievement of his conquest of Italy, as all along shall be shewed in his present book. In which book I had great pleasure because of the fair and honest terms and words in French; which I never saw before like, ne none so pleasant ne so well ordered; which book as seemed to me should be much requisite to noble men to
see, as well for the eloquence as the histories. How well that many
hundred years past was the said book of _Aeneidos_, with other works,
made and learned daily in schools, especially in Italy and other
places; which history the said Virgil made in metre. And when I had
advised me in this said book, I delibered and concluded to translate
it into English; and forthwith took a pen and ink and wrote a leaf or
twain, which I oversaw again to correct it. And when I saw the fair
and strange terms therein, I doubted that it should not please some
gentlemen which late blamed me, saying that in my translations I had
over curious terms, which could not be understood of common people,
and desired me to use old and homely terms in my translations. And
fain would I satisfy every man, and so to do took an old book and read
therein, and certainly the English was so rude and broad that I could
not well understood it. And also my Lord Abbot of Westminster did do
show to me lately certain evidences written in old English, for to
reduce it into our English now used. And certainly it was written in
such wise that it was more like to Dutch than English, I could not
reduce ne bring it to be understood. And certainly our language now
used varieth far from that which was used and spoken when I was born.
For we Englishmen be born under the domination of the moon, which is
never steadfast but ever wavering, waxing one season and waneth and
decreaseth another season. And that common English that is spoken in
one shire varieth from another, insomuch that in my days happened that
certain merchants were in a ship in Thames for to have sailed over the
sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they tarried at Foreland, and
went to land for to refresh them. And one of them named Sheffield, a
mercier, came into a house and asked for meat, and especially he asked
after eggs; and the good wife answered that she could speak no French,
and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, but
would have had eggs, and she understood him not. And then at last
another said, that he would have "eyren"; then the goodwife said
that she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now
write, eggs or eyren? Certainly it is hard to please every man because
of diversity and change of language. For in these days every man that
is in any reputation in his country will utter his communication and
matters in such manners and terms that few men shall understand them.
And some honest and great clerks have been with me and desired me
to write the most curious terms that I could find; and thus between
plain, rude and curious I stand abashed. But in my judgment the common
terms that be daily used be lighter to be understood than the old and
ancient English. And forasmuch as this present book is not for a rude
uplandish man to labour therein ne read it, but only for a clerk and
a noble gentleman that feeleth and understandeth in feats of arms, in
love and in noble chivalry. Therefore in a mean between both I have
reduced and translated this said book into our English, not over-rude
ne curious; but in such terms as shall be understood, by God's grace,
according to my copy. And if any man will intermit in reading of it,
and findeth such terms that he cannot understand, let him go read
and learn Virgil of the pistles of Ovid, and there he shall see and
understand lightly all, if he have a good reader and informer. For
this book is not for every rude and uncunning man to see, but to
clerks and very gentlemen that understand gentleness and science. Then
I pray all them that shall read in this little treatise to hold me for
excused for the translating of it, for I acknowledge myself ignorant
of cunning to emprise on me so high and noble a work. But I pray
Master John Skelton, late created poet laureate in the University of
Oxenford, to oversee and correct this said book, and to address and expound, wherever shall be found fault, to them that shall require it.

For him I know for sufficient to expound and English every difficulty that is therein; for he hath lately translated the Epistles of Tully, and the book of Diodorus Siculus, and divers other works out of Latin into English, not in rude and old language, but in polished and ornate terms craftily, as he that hath read Virgil, Ovid, Tully, and all the other noble poets and orators to me unknown. And also he hath read the nine Muses, and understands their musical sciences, and to whom of them each, science is appropred. I suppose he hath drunken of Helicon's well. Then I pray him and such others to correct, add, or minish whereas he or they shall find fault; for I have but followed my copy in French as nigh as to me is possible. And if any word be said therein well, I am glad; and if otherwise, I submit my said book to their correction. Which book I present unto the high born, my to-comeing natural and sovereign lord Arthur, by the grace of God Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester, first-begotten son and heir unto our most dread natural and sovereign lord and most Christian King, Henry the VII., by the grace of God King of England and of France, and lord of Ireland; beseeching his noble Grace to receive it in thank of me his most humble subject and servant. And I shall pray unto Almighty God for his prosperous increasing in virtue, wisedom, and humanity, that he may be equal with the most renowned of all his noble progenitors; and so to live in this present life that after this transitory life he and we all may come to everlasting life in Heaven. Amen.
DEDICATION OF THE INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

BY JOHN CALVIN (1536)[A]

To His Most Christian Majesty, FRANCIS, King of the French, and his Sovereign, John Calvin wisheth peace and salvation in Christ.

When I began this work, Sire, nothing was further from my thoughts than writing a book which would afterwards be presented to your Majesty. My intention was only to lay down some elementary principles, by which inquirers on the subject of religion might be instructed in the nature of true piety. And this labour I undertook chiefly for my countrymen, the French, of whom I apprehended multitudes to be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but saw very few possessing any real knowledge of him. That this was my design, the book itself proves by its simple method and unadorned composition. But when I perceived that the fury of certain wicked men in your kingdom had grown to such a height, as to leave no room in the land for sound doctrine, I thought I should be usefully employed, if in the same work I delivered my instructions to them, and exhibited my confession to you, that you may know the nature of that doctrine, which is the object of such unbounded rage to those madmen who are now disturbing the country with fire and sword. For I shall not be afraid to acknowledge, that this treatise contains a summary of that very doctrine, which, according to their clamours, deserves to be punished with imprisonment, banishment,
proscription, and flames, and to be exterminated from the face of the earth. I well know with what atrocious insinuations your ears have been filled by them, in order to render our cause most odious in your esteem; but your clemency should lead you to consider that, if accusation be accounted a sufficient evidence of guilt, there will be an end of all innocence in words and actions. If any one, indeed, with a view to bring odium upon the doctrine which I am endeavouring to defend, should allege that it has long ago been condemned by the general consent, and suppressed by many judicial decisions, this will be only equivalent to saying, that it has been sometimes violently rejected through the influence and power of its adversaries, and sometimes insidiously and fraudulently oppressed by falsehoods, artifices, and calumnies. Violence is displayed, when sanguinary sentences are passed against it without the cause being heard; and fraud, when it is unjustly accused of sedition and mischief. Lest any one should suppose that these our complaints are unfounded, you yourself, Sire, can bear witness of the false calumnies with which you hear it daily traduced; that its only tendency is to wrest the sceptres of kings out of their hands, to overturn all the tribunals and judicial proceedings, to subvert all order and governments, to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the people, to abrogate all laws, to scatter all properties and possessions, and, in a word, to involve every thing in total confusion. And yet you hear the smallest portion of what is alleged against it; for such horrible things are circulated amongst the vulgar, that, if they were true, the whole world would justly pronounce it and its abettors worthy of a thousand fires and gibbets. Who, then, will wonder at its becoming the object of public odium, where credit is given to such most iniquitous
accusations? This is the cause of the general consent and conspiracy
to condemn us and our doctrine. Hurried away with this impulse,
those who sit in judgment pronounce for sentences the prejudices they
brought from home with them; and think their duty fully discharged if
they condemn none to be punished but such as are convicted by their
own confession, or by sufficient proofs. Convicted of what crime?
Of this condemned doctrine, they say. But with what justice is it
condemned? Now, the ground of defence was not to abjure the doctrine
itself, but to maintain its truth. On this subject, however, not a
word is allowed to be uttered.

Wherefore I beseech you, Sire,—and surely it is not an unreasonable
request,—to take upon yourself the entire cognizance of this cause,
which has hitherto been confusedly and carelessly agitated, without
any order of law, and with outrageous passion rather than judicial
gravity. Think not that I am now meditating my own individual defence,
in order to effect a safe return to my native country; for, though I
feel the affection which every man ought to feel for it, yet, under
the existing circumstances, I regret not my removal from it. But I
plead the cause of all the godly, and consequently of Christ himself,
which, having been in these times persecuted and trampled on in all
ways in your kingdom, now lies in a most deplorable state; and this
indeed rather through the tyranny of certain Pharisees, than with your
knowledge. How this comes to pass is foreign to my present purpose to
say; but it certainly lies in a most afflicted state. For the
ungodly have gone to such lengths, that the truth of Christ, if not
vanquished, dissipated, and entirely destroyed, is buried, as it
were, in ignoble obscurity, while the poor, despised church is either
destroyed by cruel massacres, or driven away into banishment, or
menaced and terrified into total silence. And still they continue
their wonted madness and ferocity, pushing violently against the wall
already bent, and finishing the ruin they have begun. In the meantime,
no one comes forward to plead the cause against such furies. If there
be any persons desirous of appearing most favourable to the truth,
they only venture an opinion, that forgiveness should be extended to
the error and imprudence of ignorant people. For this is the language
of these moderate men, calling that error and imprudence which they
know to be the certain truth of God, and those ignorant people, whose
understanding they perceive not to have been so despicable to Christ,
but that he has favoured them with the mysteries of his heavenly
wisdom. Thus all are ashamed of the Gospel. But it shall be yours,
Sire, not to turn away your ears or thoughts from so just a defence,
especially in a cause of such importance as the maintenance of God's
glory unimpaired in the world, the preservation of the honor of divine
truth, and the continuance of the kingdom of Christ uninjured
among us. This is a cause worthy of your attention, worthy of your
cognizance, worthy of your throne. This consideration constitutes true
royalty, to acknowledge yourself in the government of your kingdom to
be the minister of God. For where the glory of God is not made the
end of the government, it is not a legitimate sovereignty, but a
usurpation. And he is deceived who expects lasting prosperity in that
kingdom which is not ruled by the sceptre of God, that is, his holy
word; for that heavenly oracle cannot fail, which declares that "where
there is no vision, the people perish,"[1] Nor should you be seduced
from this pursuit by a contempt of our meanness. We are fully
conscious to ourselves how very mean and abject we are, being
miserable sinners before God, and accounted most despicable by men;
being, (if you please) the refuse of the world, deserving of the
vilest appellations that can be found; so that nothing remains for
us to glory in before God, but his mercy alone, by which, without any
merit of ours, we have been admitted to the hope of eternal salvation,
and before men nothing but our weakness, the slightest confession of
which is esteemed by them as the greatest disgrace. But our doctrine
must stand, exalted above all the glory, and invincible by all the
power of the world; because it is not ours, but the doctrine of the
living God, and of his Christ, whom the Father hath constituted King,
that he may have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river even to
the ends of the earth, and that he may rule in such a manner, that the
whole earth, with its strength of iron and with its splendour of gold
and silver, smitten by the rod of his mouth, may be broken to pieces
like a potter's vessel,[2] for thus do the prophets foretell the
magnificence of his kingdom.

Our adversaries reply, that our pleading the word of God is a false
pretence, and that we are nefarious corrupters of it. But that this is
not only a malicious calumny, but egregious impudence, by reading our
confession, you will, in your wisdom, be able to judge. Yet something
further is necessary to be said, to excite your attention, or at least
to prepare your mind for this perusal. Paul's direction, that every
prophecy be framed "according to the analogy of faith,"[3] has fixed
an invariable standard by which all interpretation of Scripture ought
to be tried. If our principles be examined by this rule of faith,
the victory is ours. For what is more consistent with faith than to
acknowledge ourselves naked of all virtue, that we may be clothed by
God; empty of all good, that we may be filled by him; slaves to sin,
that we may be liberated by him; blind, that we may be enlightened by
him; lame, that we may be guided; weak, that we may be supported by
him; to divest ourselves of all ground of glorying, that he alone may
be eminently glorious, and that we may glory in him? When we advance
these and similar sentiments, they interrupt us with complaints that
this is the way to overturn, I know not what blind light of nature,
pretended preparations, free will, and works meritorious of eternal
salvation, together with all their supererogations; because they
cannot bear that the praise and glory of all goodness, strength,
righteousness, and wisdom, should remain entirely with God. But we
read of none being reproved for having drawn too freely from the
fountain of living waters; on the contrary, they are severely
upbraided who have "hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can
hold no water."[4] Again, what is more consistent with faith, than
to assure ourselves of God being a propitious Father, where Christ is
acknowledged as a brother and Mediator? than securely to expect all
prosperity and happiness from Him, whose unspeakable love towards us
went so far, that "he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up
for us?"[5] than to rest in the certain expectation of salvation and
eternal life, when we reflect upon the Father's gift of Christ, in
whom such treasures are hidden? Here they oppose us, and complain
that this certainty of confidence is chargeable with arrogance and
presumption. But as we ought to presume nothing of ourselves, so we
should presume every thing of God; nor are we divested of vain glory
for any other reason than that we may learn to glory in the Lord.
What shall I say more? Review, Sire, all the parts of our cause, and consider us worse than the most abandoned of mankind, unless you clearly discover that we thus "both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God,"[6] because we believe that "this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."[7] For this hope some of us are bound in chains, others are lashed with scourges, others are carried about as laughing-stocks, others are outlawed, others are cruelly tortured, others escape by flight; but we are all reduced to extreme perplexities, execrated with dreadful curses, cruelly slandered and treated with the greatest indignities. Now, look at our adversaries, (I speak of the order of priests, at whose will and directions others carry on these hostilities against us,) and consider a little with me by what principles they are actuated. The true religion, which is taught in the Scriptures, and ought to be universally maintained, they readily permit both themselves and others to be ignorant of, and to treat with neglect and contempt. They think it unimportant what any one holds or denies concerning God and Christ, provided he submits his mind with an implicit faith (as they call it) to the judgment of the Church. Nor are they much affected, if the glory of God happens to be violated with open blasphemies, provided no one lift a finger against the primacy of the Apostolic See, and the authority of their holy Mother Church. Why, therefore, do they contend with such extreme bitterness and cruelty for the mass, purgatory, pilgrimages, and similar trifles, and deny that any piety can be maintained without a most explicit faith, so to speak, in these things; whereas they prove none of them from the word of God? Why, but because their belly is their God, their kitchen is their religion; deprived of which they consider themselves
no longer as Christians, or even as men. For though some feast
themselves in splendour, and others subsist on slender fare, yet all
live on the same pot, which, without this fuel, would not only cool,
but completely freeze. Every one of them, therefore, who is most
sollicitous for his belly, is found to be a most strenuous champion
for their faith. Indeed, they universally exert themselves for the
preservation of their kingdom, and the repletion of their bellies; but
not one of them discovers the least indication of sincere zeal.

Nor do their attacks on our doctrine cease here; they urge every topic
of accusation and abuse to render it an object of hatred or suspicion.
They call it novel, and of recent origin,--they cavil at it as
doubtful and uncertain,--they inquire by what miracles it is
confirmed,--they ask whether it is right for it to be received
contrary to the consent of so many holy fathers, and the custom of the
highest antiquity,--they urge us to confess that it is schismatical
in stirring up opposition against the Church, or that the Church
was wholly extinct for many ages, during which no such thing was
known.--Lastly, they say all arguments are unnecessary; for that its
nature may be determined by its fruits, since it has produced such
a multitude of sects, so many factious tumults, and such great
licentiousness of vices. It is indeed very easy for them to insult a
deserted cause with the credulous and ignorant multitude; but, if we
had also the liberty of speaking in our turn, this acrimony,
which they now discover in violently foaming against us with equal
licentiousness and impunity, would presently cool.
In the first place, their calling it novel is highly injurious to God, whose holy word deserves not to be accused of novelty. I have no doubt of its being new to them, to whom Jesus Christ and the Gospel are equally new. But those who know the antiquity of this preaching of Paul, "that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification,"[8] will find no novelty among us. That it has long been concealed, buried, and unknown, is the crime of human impiety. Now that the goodness of God has restored it to us, it ought at least to be allowed its just claim of antiquity.

From the same source of ignorance springs the notion of its being doubtful and uncertain. This is the very thing which the Lord complains of by his prophet; that "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib,"[9] but that his people know not him. But however they may laugh at its uncertainty, if they were called to seal their own doctrine with their blood and lives, it would appear how much they value it. Very different is our confidence, which dreads neither the terrors of death, nor even the tribunal of God.

Their requiring miracles of us is altogether unreasonable; for we forge no new Gospel, but retain the very same whose truth was confirmed by all the miracles ever wrought by Christ and the apostles. But they have this peculiar advantage above us, that they can confirm their faith by continual miracles even to this day. But the truth is, they allege miracles which are calculated to unsettle a mind otherwise well established, they are so frivolous and ridiculous, or vain and
false. Nor, if they were ever so preternatural, ought they to have any
weight in opposition to the truth of God, since the name of God ought
to be sanctified in all places and at all times, whether by miraculous
events, or by the common order of nature. This fallacy might
perhaps be more specious, if the Scripture did not apprize us of the
legitimate end and use of miracles. For Mark informs us, that the
miracles which followed the preaching of the apostles were wrought
testimony to the word of his grace," when "signs and wonders" were
"done by the hands" of the apostles. Very similar to which is the
assertion of the apostle, that "salvation was confirmed" by the
preaching of the Gospel, "God also bearing witness with signs, and
wonders, and divers miracles."[12] But those things which we are told
were seals of the Gospel, shall we pervert to undermine the faith of
the Gospel? Those things which were designed to be testimonials of the
truth, shall we accommodate to the confirmation of falsehood? It
is right, therefore, that the doctrine, which, according to the
evangelist, claims the first attention, be examined and tried in
the first place; and if it be approved, then it ought to derive
confirmation from miracles. But it is the characteristic of sound
doctrine, given by Christ, that it tends to promote, not the glory of
men, but the glory of God.[13] Christ having laid down this proof of
a doctrine, it is wrong to esteem those as miracles which are directed
to any other end than the glorification of the name of God alone. And
we should remember that Satan has his wonders, which, though they
are juggling tricks rather than real miracles, are such as delude the
ignorant and inexperienced. Magicians and enchanters have always
been famous for miracles; idolatry has been supported by astonishing
miracles; and yet we admit them not as proofs of the superstition of
magicians or idolaters. With this engine also the simplicity of
the vulgar was anciently assailed by the Donatists, who abounded in
miracles. We therefore give the same answer now to our adversaries as
Augustine[14] gave to the Donatists, that our Lord hath cautioned us
against these miracle-mongers by his prediction, that there should
arise false prophets, who, by various signs and lying wonders, "should
deceive (if possible) the very elect."[15] And Paul has told us, that
the kingdom of Antichrist would be "with all power, and signs, and
lying wonders."[16] But these miracles (they say) are wrought, not by
idols, or sorcerers, or false prophets, but by saints; as if we were
ignorant, that it is a stratagem of Satan to "transform" himself "into
an angel of light."[17] At the tomb of Jeremiah,[18] who was buried
in Egypt, the Egyptians formerly offered sacrifices and other divine
honours. Was not this abusing God's holy prophet to the purposes of
idolatry? Yet they supposed this veneration of his sepulchre to be
rewarded with a cure for the bite of serpents. What shall we say, but
that it has been, and ever will be, the most righteous vengeance
of God to "send those who receive not the love of the truth strong
delusions, that they should believe a lie?"[19] We are by no means
without miracles, and such as are certain, and not liable to cavils.
But those under which they shelter themselves are mere illusions of
Satan, seducing the people from the true worship of God to vanity.

Another calumny is their charging us with opposition to the
fathers,—I mean the writers of the earlier and purer ages,—as if
those writers were abettors of their impiety; whereas, if the contest
were to be terminated by this authority, the victory in most parts of
the controversy—to speak in the most modest terms—would be on our
side. But though the writings of those fathers contain many wise and
excellent things, yet in some respects they have suffered the common
fate of mankind; these very dutiful children reverence only their
errors and mistakes, but their excellences they either overlook, or
conceal, or corrupt; so that it may truly be said to be their only
study to collect dross from the midst of gold. Then they overwhelm us
with senseless clamours, as despisers and enemies of the fathers. But
we do not hold them in such contempt, but that, if it were consistent
with my present design, I could easily support by their suffrages most
of the sentiments that we now maintain. But while we make use of their
writings, we always remember that “all things are ours,” to serve us,
not to have dominion over us, and that “we are Christ's”[20] alone,
and owe him universal obedience. He who neglects this distinction will
have nothing decided in religion; since those holy men were ignorant
of many things, frequently at variance with each other, and sometimes
even inconsistent with themselves. There is great reason, they say,
for the admonition of Solomon, “not to transgress or remove the
ancient landmarks, which our fathers have set.”[21] But the same rule
is not applicable to the bounding of fields, and to the obedience
of faith, which ought to be ready to “forget her own people and her
father's house.”[22] But if they are so fond of allegorizing, why do
they not explain the apostles, rather than any others, to be those
fathers, whose appointed landmarks it is so unlawful to remove? For
this is the interpretation of Jerome, whose works they have received
into their canons. But if they insist on preserving the landmarks of
those whom they understand to be intended, why do they at pleasure so
freely transgress them themselves? There were two fathers,[23] of whom one said, that our God neither eats nor drinks, and therefore needs neither cups nor dishes; the other, that sacred things require no gold, and that gold is no recommendation of that which is not purchased with gold. This landmark therefore is transgressed by those who in sacred things are so much delighted with gold, silver, ivory, marble, jewels, and silks, and suppose that God is not rightly worshipped, unless all things abound in exquisite splendour, or rather extravagant profusion. There was a father[24] who said he freely partook of flesh on a day when others abstained from it, because he was a Christian. They transgress the landmarks therefore when they curse the soul that tastes flesh in Lent. There were two fathers,[25] of whom one said, that a monk who labors not with his hands is on a level with a cheat or a robber; and the other, that it is unlawful for monks to live on what is not their own, notwithstanding their assiduity in contemplations, studies, and prayers; and they have transgressed this landmark by placing the idle and distended carcasses of monks in cells and brothels, to be pampered on the substance of others. There was a father[26] who said, that to see a painted image of Christ, or of any other saint, in the temples of Christians, is a dreadful abomination. Nor was this merely the sentence of an individual; it was also decreed by an ecclesiastical council, that the object of worship should not be painted on the walls. They are far from confining themselves within these landmarks, for every corner is filled with images. Another father[27] has advised that, after having discharged the office of humanity towards the dead by the rites of sepulture, we should leave them to their repose. They break through these landmarks by inculcating a constant solicitude for the dead.
There was one of the fathers[28] who asserted that the substance of bread and wine in the eucharist ceases not, but remains, just as the substance of the human nature remains in the Lord Christ united with the divine. They transgress this landmark therefore by pretending that, on the words of the Lord being recited, the substance of bread and wine ceases, and is transubstantiated into his body and blood. There were fathers[29] who, while they exhibited to the universal Church only one eucharist, and forbade all scandalous and immoral persons to approach it, at the same time severely censured all who, when present, did not partake of it. How far have they removed these landmarks, when they fill not only the churches, but even private houses, with their masses, admit all who choose to be spectators of them, and every one the more readily in proportion to the magnitude of his contribution, however chargeable with impurity and wickedness! They invite none to faith in Christ and a faithful participation of the sacraments; but rather for purposes of gain bring forward their own work instead of the grace and merit of Christ. There were two fathers,[30] of whom one contended that the use of Christ's sacred supper should be wholly forbidden to those who, content with partaking of one kind, abstained from the other; the other strenuously maintained that Christian people ought not to be refused the blood of their Lord, for the confession of whom they are required to shed their own. These landmarks also they have removed, in appointing, by an inviolable law, that very thing which the former punished with excommunication, and the latter gave a powerful reason for disapproving. There was a father[31] who asserted the temerity of deciding on either side of an obscure subject, without clear and evident testimonies of Scripture. This landmark they forgot when
they made so many constitutions, canons, and judicial determinations, without any authority from the word of God. There was a father[32] who upbraided Montanus with having, among other heresies, been the first imposer of laws for the observance of fasts. They have gone far beyond this landmark also, in establishing fasts by the strictest laws. There was a father[33] who denied that marriage ought to be forbidden to the ministers of the Church, and pronounced cohabitation with a wife to be real chastity; and there were fathers who assented to his judgment. They have transgressed these landmarks by enjoining on their priests the strictest celibacy. There was a father who thought that attention should be paid to Christ only, of whom it is said, "Hear ye him," and that no regard should be had to what others before us have either said or done, only to what has been commanded by Christ, who is preeminent over all. This landmark they neither prescribe to themselves, nor permit to be observed by others, when they set up over themselves and others any masters rather than Christ. There was a father[34] who contended that the Church ought not to take precedence of Christ, because his judgment is always according to truth; but ecclesiastical judges, like other men, may generally be deceived. Breaking down this landmark also, they scruple not to assert, that all the authority of the Scripture depends on the decision of the Church. All the fathers, with one heart and voice, have declared it execrable and detestable for the holy word of God to be contaminated with the subtleties of sophists, and perplexed by the wrangles of logicians. Do they confine themselves within these landmarks, when the whole business of their lives is to involve the simplicity of the Scripture in endless controversies, and worse than sophistical wrangles? so that if the fathers were now restored to life, and heard this art of wrangling,
which they call speculative divinity, they would not suspect the 
dispute to have the least reference to God. But if I would enumerate 
all the instances in which the authority of the fathers is insolently 
rejected by those who would be thought their dutiful children, my 
address would exceed all reasonable bounds. Months and years would be 
insufficient for me. And yet such is their consummate and incorrigible 
impudence, they dare to censure us for presuming to transgress the 
ancient landmarks.

Nor can they gain any advantage against us by their argument from 
custom; for, if we were compelled to submit to custom, we should have 
to complain of the greatest injustice. Indeed, if the judgments of men 
were correct, custom should be sought among the good. But the fact 
is often very different. What appears to be practiced by many soon 
obtains the force of a custom. And human affairs have scarcely ever 
been in so good a state as for the majority to be pleased with things 
of real excellence. From the private vices of multitudes, therefore, 
has arisen public error, or rather a common agreement of vices, which 
these good men would now have to be received as law. It is evident to 
all who can see, that the world is inundated with more than an ocean 
of evils, that it is overrun with numerous destructive pests, that 
every thing is fast verging to ruin, so that we must altogether 
despair of human affairs, or vigorously and even violently oppose such 
immense evils. And the remedy is rejected for no other reason, but 
because we have been accustomed to the evils so long. But let public 
error be tolerated in human society; in the kingdom of God nothing but 
his eternal truth should he heard and regarded, which no succession of
years, no custom, no confederacy, can circumscribe. Thus Isaiah once
taught the chosen people of God: "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all to
whom this people shall say, A confederacy:" that is, that they should
not unite in the wicked consent of the people; "nor fear their fear,
nor be afraid," but rather "sanctify the Lord of hosts," that he might
"be their fear and their dread."[35] Now, therefore, let them, if
they please, object against us past ages and present examples; if
we "sanctify the Lord of hosts," we shall not be much afraid. For,
whether many ages agree in similar impiety, he is mighty to take
vengeance on the third and fourth generation; or whether the whole
world combine in the same iniquity, he has given an example of the
fatal end of those who sin with a multitude, by destroying all men
with a deluge, and preserving Noah and his small family, in order that
his individual faith might condemn the whole world. Lastly, a corrupt
custom is nothing but an epidemical pestilence, which is equally fatal
to its objects, though they fall with a multitude. Besides, they ought
to consider a remark, somewhere made by Cyprian,[36] that persons who
sin through ignorance, though they cannot be wholly exculpated, may
yet be considered in some degree excusable; but those who obstinately
reject the truth offered by the Divine goodness, are without any
excuse at all.

Nor are we so embarrassed by their dilemma as to be obliged to
confess, either that the Church was for some time extinct, or that
we have now a controversy with the Church. The Church of Christ has
lived, and will continue to live, as long as Christ shall reign at
the right hand of the Father, by whose hand she is sustained, by whose
protection she is defended, by whose power she is preserved in safety. 
For he will undoubtedly perform what he once promised, to be with his 
people "even to the end of the world."[37] We have no quarrel against 
the Church, for with one consent we unite with all the company of the 
faithful in worshipping and adoring the one God and Christ the Lord, 
as he has been adored by all the pious in all ages. But our opponents 
deviate widely from the truth when they acknowledge no Church but what 
is visible to the corporeal eye, and endeavour to circumscribe it 
by those limits within which it is far from being included. Our 
controversy turns on the two following points:--first, they contend 
that the form of the Church is always apparent and visible; secondly, 
they place that form in the see of the Roman Church and her order of 
prelates. We assert, on the contrary, first, that the Church may exist 
without any visible form; secondly, that its form is not contained 
in that external splendour which they foolishly admire, but is 
distinguished by a very different criterion, _viz_, the pure preaching 
of God's word, and the legitimate administration of the sacraments. 
They are not satisfied unless the Church can always be pointed out 
with the finger. But how often among the Jewish people was it so 
disorganized, as to have no visible form left? What splendid form 
do we suppose could be seen, when Elias deplored his being left 
alone?[38] How long, after the coming of Christ, did it remain without 
any external form? How often, since that time, have wars, seditions, 
and heresies, oppressed and totally obscured it? If they had lived 
at that period, would they have believed that any Church existed? Yet 
Elias was informed that there were "left seven thousand" who had "not 
bowed the knee to Baal." Nor should we entertain any doubt of Christ's 
having always reigned on earth ever since his ascension to heaven. But
if the pious at such periods had sought for any form evident to their senses, must not their hearts have been quite discouraged? Indeed it was already considered by Hilary in his day as a grievous error, that people were absorbed in foolish admiration of the episcopal dignity, and did not perceive the dreadful mischiefs concealed under that disguise. For this is his language:

"One thing I advise you--beware of Antichrist, for you have an improper attachment to walls; your veneration for the Church of God is misplaced on houses and buildings; you wrongly introduce under them the name of peace. Is there any doubt that they will be seats of Antichrist? I think mountains, woods, and lakes, prisons and whirlpools, less dangerous; for these were the scenes of retirement or banishment in which the prophets prophesied." But what excites the veneration of the multitude in the present day for their horned bishops, but the supposition that those are the holy prelates of religion whom they see presiding over great cities? Away, then, with such stupid admiration. Let us rather leave it to the Lord, since he alone "knoweth them that are his," sometimes to remove from human observation all external knowledge of his Church. I admit this to be a dreadful judgment of God on the earth; but if it be deserved by the impiety of men, why do we attempt to resist the righteous vengeance of God? Thus the Lord punished the ingratitude of men in former ages; for, in consequence of their resistance to his truth, and extinction of the light he had given them, he permitted them to be blinded by sense, deluded by absurd falsehoods, and immerged in profound darkness, so that there was no appearance of the true Church left; yet, at the same time, in the midst of darkness and errors, he preserved his scattered and concealed people from total destruction. Nor is this to be wondered at; for he
knew how to save in all the confusion of Babylon, and the flame of
the fiery furnace. But how dangerous it is to estimate the form of the
Church by I know not what vain pomp, which they contend for; I shall
rather briefly suggest than state at large, lest I should protract
this discourse to an excessive length. The Pope, they say, who holds
the Apostolic see, and the bishops anointed and consecrated by him,
provided they are equipped with mitres and crosiers, represent the
Church, and ought to be considered as the Church. Therefore they
cannot err. How is this?--Because they are pastors of the Church, and
consecrated to the Lord. And did not the pastoral character belong to
Aaron, and the other rulers of Israel? Yet Aaron and his sons, after
their designation to the priesthood, fell into error when they made
the golden calf.[41] According to this mode of reasoning, why should
not the four hundred prophets, who lied to Ahab, have represented the
Church?[42] But the Church remained on the side of Micaiah, solitary
and despised as he was, and out of his mouth proceeded the truth. Did
not those prophets exhibit both the name and appearance of the Church,
who with united violence rose up against Jeremiah, and threatened and
boasted, "the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from
the wise, nor the word from the prophet?"[48] Jeremiah is sent singly
against the whole multitude of prophets, with a denunciation from the
Lord, that the "law shall perish from the priest, counsel from the
wise, and the word from the prophet."[44] And was there not the like
external respectability in the council convened by the chief priests,
scribes, and Pharisees, to consult about putting Christ to death?[45]
Now, let them go and adhere to the external appearance, and thereby
make Christ and all the prophets schismatics, and, on the other hand,
make the ministers of Satan instruments of the Holy Spirit. But if
they speak their real sentiments, let them answer me sincerely, what
nation or place they consider as the seat of the Church, from the time
when, by a decree of the council of Basil, Eugenius was deposed and
degraded from the pontificate, and Amadeus substituted in his place.
They cannot deny that the council, as far as relates to external
forms, was a lawful one, and summoned not only by one pope, but by
two. There Eugenius was pronounced guilty of schism, rebellion, and
obstinacy, together with all the host of cardinals and bishops who had
joined him in attempting a dissolution of the council. Yet afterwards,
assisted by the favour of princes, he regained the quiet possession of
his former dignity. That election of Amadeus, though formally made by
the authority of a general and holy synod, vanished into smoke; and he
was appeased with a cardinal's hat, like a barking dog with a morsel.
From the bosom of those heretics and rebels have proceeded all the
popes, cardinals, bishops, abbots, and priests ever since. Here they
must stop. For to which party will they give the title of the Church?
Will they deny that this was a general council, which wanted nothing
to complete its external majesty, being solemnly convened by two papal
bulls, consecrated by a presiding legate of the Roman see, and well
regulated in every point of order, and invariably preserving the
same dignity to the last? Will they acknowledge Eugenius to be
a schismatic, with all his adherents, by whom they have all been
consecrated? Either, therefore, let them give a different definition
of the form of the Church, or, whatever be their number, we shall
account them all schismatics, as having been knowingly and voluntarily
ordained by heretics. But if it had never been ascertained before,
that the Church is not confined to external pomps they would
themselves afford us abundant proof of it, who have so long
superciliously exhibited themselves to the world under the title of 
the Church, though they were at the same time the deadly plagues of 
it. I speak not of their morals, and those tragical exploits with 
which all their lives abound, since they profess themselves to be 
Pharisees, who are to be heard and not imitated. I refer to the very 
doctrine itself, on which they found their claim to be considered 
as the Church. If you devote a portion of your leisure, Sire, to the 
perusal of our writings, you will clearly discover that doctrine to be 
a fatal pestilence of souls, the firebrand, ruin, and destruction of 
the Church.

Finally, they betray great want of candour, by invidiously repeating 
what great commotions, tumults, and contentions, have attended the 
preaching of our doctrine, and what effects it produces in many 
persons. For it is unfair to charge it with those evils which ought to 
be attributed to the malice of Satan. It is the native property of the 
Divine word, never to make its appearance without disturbing Satan, 
and rousing his opposition. This is a most certain and unequivocal 
criterion by which it is distinguished from false doctrines, which 
are easily broached when they are heard with general attention, and 
received with applauses by the world. Thus, in some ages, when all 
things were immerged in profound darkness, the prince of this world 
amused and diverted himself with the generality of mankind, and, like 
another Sardanapalus, gave himself up to his ease and pleasures in 
perfect peace; for what would he do but amuse and divert himself, 
in the quiet and undisturbed possession of his kingdom? But when the 
light shining from above dissipated a portion of his darkness—when
that Mighty One alarmed and assaulted his kingdom—then he began
to shake off his wonted torpor, and to hurry on his armour. First,
indeed, he stirred up the power of men to suppress the truth by
violence at its first appearance; and when this proved ineffectual, he
had recourse to subtlety. He made the Catabaptists, and other infamous
characters, the instruments of exciting dissensions and doctrinal
controversies, with a view to obscure and finally to extinguish it.
And now he continues to attack it both ways; for he endeavours to root
up this genuine seed by means of human force, and at the same time
tries every effort to choke it with his tares, that it may not grow
and produce fruit. But all his attempts will be vain, if we attend to
the admonitions of the Lord, who hath long ago made us acquainted
with his devices, that we might not be caught by him unawares, and has
armed us with sufficient means of defence against all his assaults.
But to charge the word of God with the odium of seditions, excited
against it by wicked and rebellious men, or of sects raised by
imposters,—is not this extreme malignity? Yet it is not without
example in former times. Elias was asked whether it was not he "that
troubled Israel."[46] Christ was represented by the Jews as guilty
of sedition.[47] The apostles were accused of stirring up popular
commotions.[48] Wherein does this differ from the conduct of those
who, at the present day, impute to us all the disturbances, tumults,
and contentions, that break out against us? But the proper answer to
such accusations has been taught us by Elias, that the dissemination
of errors and the raising of tumults is not chargeable on us, but on
those who are resisting the power of God. But as this one reply is
sufficient to repress their temerity, so, on the other hand, we must
meet the weakness of some persons, who are frequently disturbed with
such offences, and become unsettled and wavering in their minds.

Now, that they may not stumble and fall amidst this agitation and perplexity, let them know that the apostles in their day experienced the same things that now befall us. There were "unlearned and unstable" men, Peter says, who "wrested" the inspired writings of Paul "to their own destruction."[49] There were despisers of God, who, when they heard that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound," immediately concluded, Let us "continue in sin, that grace may abound." When they heard that the faithful were "not under the law," they immediately croaked, "We will sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace."[50] There were some who accused him as an encourager of sin. Many false apostles crept in, to destroy the churches he had raised. "Some preached" the gospel "of envy and strife, not in sincerity," maliciously "supposing to add affliction to his bonds."[51] In some places the Gospel was attended with little benefit. "All were seeking their own, not the things of Jesus Christ."[52] Others returned "like dogs to their vomit, and like swine to their wallowing in the mire."[53] Many perverted the liberty of the spirit into the licentiousness of the flesh. Many insinuated themselves as brethren, who afterwards brought the pious into dangers. Various contentions were excited among the brethren themselves. What was to be done by the apostles in such circumstances? Should they not have dissembled for a time, or rather have rejected and deserted that Gospel which appeared to be the nursery of so many disputes, the cause of so many dangers, the occasion of so many offences? But in such difficulties as these, their minds were relieved by this reflection that Christ is the "stone of stumbling and rock of offence,"[54] "set for the fall and rising again of many, and for a sign which shall be
spoken against;"[55] and armed with this confidence, they proceeded boldly through all the dangers of tumults and offences. The same consideration should support us, since Paul declares it to be the perpetual character of the Gospel, that it is a "savour of death unto death in them that perish,"[56] although it was rather given us to be the "savour of life unto life," and "the power of God to" the "salvation" of the faithful;[57] which we also should certainly experience it to be, if we did not corrupt this eminent gift of God by our ingratitude, and prevert to our destruction what ought to be a principal instrument of our salvation.

But I return to you, Sire. Let not your Majesty be at all moved by those groundless accusations with which our adversaries endeavour to terrify you; as that the sole tendency and design of this new Gospel--for so they call it--is to furnish a pretext for seditions, and to gain impunity for all crimes. "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace;"[58] nor is "the Son of God," who came to "destroy the works of the devil, the minister of sin."[59] And it is unjust to charge us with such motives and designs, of which we have never given cause for the least suspicion. Is it probable that we are meditating the subversion of kingdoms?--we, who were never heard to utter a factious word, whose lives were ever known to be peaceable and honest while We lived under your government, and who, even now in our exile, cease not to pray for all prosperity to attend yourself and your kingdom! Is it probable that we are seeking an unlimited license to commit crimes with impunity? in whose conduct, though many things may be blamed, yet there is nothing worthy of such severe reproach!
Nor have we, by Divine Grace, profited so little in the Gospel,
but that our life may be an example to our detractors of chastity,
liberality, mercy, temperance, patience, modesty, and every other
virtue. It is an undeniable fact, that we sincerely fear and worship
God, whose name we desire to be sanctified both by our life and by
our death; and envy itself is constrained to bear testimony to the
innocence and civil integrity of some of us, who have suffered the
punishment of death for that very thing which ought to be accounted
their highest praise. But if the Gospel be made a pretext for tumults,
which has not yet happened in your kingdom; if any persons make the
liberty of divine grace an excuse for the licentiousness of their
vices, of whom I have known many.--there are laws and legal penalties,
by which they may be punished according to their deserts; only let not
the Gospel of God be reproached for the crimes of wicked men. You have
now, Sire, the virulent iniquity of our calumniators laid before you
in a sufficient number of instances, that you may not receive their
accusations with too credulous an ear.--I fear I have gone too much
into the detail, as this preface already approaches the size of a full
apology; whereas I intended it not to contain our defence, but only to
prepare your mind to attend to the pleading of our cause; for, though
you are now averse and alienated from us, and even inflamed against
us, we despair not of regaining your favour, if you will only once
read with calmness and composure this our confession, which we intend
as our defence before your Majesty. But, on the contrary, if your ears
are so preoccupied with the whispers of the malevolent, as to leave
no opportunity for the accused to speak for themselves, and if those
outrageous furies, with your connivance, continue to persecute with
imprisonments, scourges, tortures, confiscations, and flames, we
shall indeed, like sheep destined to the slaughter, be reduced to the
greatest extremities. Yet shall we in patience possess our souls, and
wait for the mighty hand of the Lord, which undoubtedly will in time
appear, and show itself armed for the deliverance of the poor from
their affliction, and for the punishment of their despisers, who
now exult in such perfect security. May the Lord, the King of kings,
establish your throne with righteousness, and your kingdom with
equity. _Basil, 1st August, 1536._

[Footnote A: John Calvin was born at Noyon, Picardy, France, in 1509,
and died at Geneva in 1564. He joined the Reformation about 1528,
and, having been banished from Paris, took refuge in Switzerland.
The "Institutes," published at Basle in 1536, contain a comprehensive
statement of the beliefs of that school of Protestant theology which
bears Calvin's name; and in this "Dedication" we have Calvin's own
summing up of the essentials of his creed.]

[Footnote 1: Prov. xxix. 18.]

[Footnote 2: Daniel ii. 34. Isaiah xi. 4. Psalm ii. 9.]

[Footnote 3 Rom. xii. 6.]

[Footnote 4: Jer. ii. 13.]
[Footnote 16: 2 Thess. ii. 9.]

[Footnote 17: 2 Cor. xi. 14.]

[Footnote 18: Hierom. in praef. Jerem.]

[Footnote 19: 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.]

[Footnote 20: i Cor. iii. 21, 23]

[Footnote 21: Prov xxii. 28.]

[Footnote 22: Psalm xlv. 10.]


[Footnote 24: Spiridion. Trip. Hist. lib. 1, c. 10.]

[Footnote 25: Trip. Hist. lib. 8, c. 1. August. de Opere Mon. c. 17.]

[Footnote 26: Epiph. Epist. ab Hier. vers. Con. Eliber. c. 36.]
[Footnote 27: Amb de Abra. lib 1, c. 7.]


[Footnote 29: Chrys. in 1 Cap. Ephes. Calix. Papa de Cons. dist. 2.]

[Footnote 30: Gelas. can. Comperimus de Cons. dist. 2. Cypr. Epist. 2, lib. 1, de Laps.]

[Footnote 31: August. lib. 2, de Pec. Mer. cap. ult.]

[Footnote 32: Apollon de quo Eccl. Hist. lib. 5, cap. 11, 12.]


[Footnote 35: Isaiah viii. 12, 13.]

[Footnote 37: Matt. xxviii. 20.]

[Footnote 38: i Kings xix. 14, 18.]

[Footnote 39: Contr. Auxent.]

[Footnote 40: 2 Tim. ii. 19.]

[Footnote 41: Exod. xxxii. 4.]

[Footnote 42: i Kings xxii. 6, 11-23.]

[Footnote 43: Jer. xviii. 18.]

[Footnote 44: Jer. iv. 9.]

[Footnote 45: Matt. xxvi. 3, 4.]

[Footnote 46: 1 Kings xviii. 17.]

[Footnote 47: Luke xxiii. 2, 5.]
The design of the Author in these Christian Institutes is twofold, relating, First to the knowledge of God, as the way to attain a blessed immortality; and, in connection with and subservience to this, Secondly, to the knowledge of ourselves.

In the prosecution of this design, he strictly follows the method of the Apostles' Creed, as being most familiar to all Christians. For as the Creed consists of four parts, the first relating to God the Father, the second to the Son, the third to the Holy Spirit, the fourth to the Church; so the Author distributes the whole of this work into Four Books, corresponding respectively to the four parts of the Creed; as will clearly appear from the following detail:--

I. The first article of the Creed relates to God the Father, and to the creation, conservation, and government of all things, which are included in his omnipotence.

So the first book is on the knowledge of God, considered as the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe at large, and every thing contained in it. It shows both the nature and tendency of
the true knowledge of the Creator—that this is not learned in the schools, but that every man from his birth is self-taught it—Yet that the depravity of men is so great as to corrupt and extinguish this knowledge, partly by ignorance, partly by wickedness; so that it neither leads him to glorify God as he ought, nor conducts him to the attainment of happiness—And though this internal knowledge is assisted by all the creatures around, which serve as a mirror to display the Divine perfections, yet that man does not profit by it—Therefore, that to those, whom it is God's will to bring to an intimate and saving knowledge of himself, he gives his written word; which introduces observations on the sacred Scripture—That he has therein revealed himself; that not the Father only, but the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united, is the Creator of heaven and earth; whom neither the knowledge innate by nature, nor the very beautiful mirror displayed to us in the world, can, in consequence of our depravity, teach us to know so as to glorify him. This gives occasion for treating of the revelation of God in the Scripture, of the unity of the Divine Essence, and the trinity of Persons.—To prevent man from attributing to God the blame of his own voluntary blindness, the Author shows the state of man at his creation, and treats of the image of God, freewill, and the primative integrity of nature.—Having finished the subject of creation, he proceeds to the conservation and government of all things, concluding the first book with a full discussion of the doctrine of divine providence.

II. But since man is fallen by sin from the state in which he was created, it is necessary to come to Christ. Therefore it follows in
the Creed, "And in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord," &c.

So in the second book of the Institutes our Author treats of the knowledge of God as the Redeemer in Christ; and having shown the fall of man, leads him to Christ the Mediator. Here he states the doctrine of original sin—that man possesses no inherent strength to enable him to deliver himself from sin and the impending curse, but that, on the contrary, nothing can proceed from him, antecedently to reconciliation and renovation, but what is deserving of condemnation—Therefore, that, man being utterly lost in himself, and incapable of conceiving even a good thought by which he may restore himself, or perform actions acceptable to God, he must seek redemption out of himself, in Christ—That the Law was given for this purpose, not to confine its observers to itself, but to conduct them to Christ; which gives occasion to introduce an exposition of the Moral Law—That he was known, as the Author of salvation, to the Jews under the Law, but more fully under the Gospel, in which he is manifested to the world.—Hence follows the doctrine of the similarity and difference of the Old and New Testament, of the Law and Gospel.—It is next stated, that, in order to the complete accomplishment of salvation, it was necessary for the eternal Son of God to become man, and that he actually assumed a real human nature:—it is also shown how these two natures constitute one person—That the office of Christ, appointed for the acquisition and application of complete salvation by his merit and efficacy, is sacerdotal, regal, and prophetical—Next follows the manner in which Christ executed his office, or actually performed the part of a Mediator, being an exposition of the Articles respecting
his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.--Lastly, the Author shows the truth and propriety of affirming that Christ merited the grace of God and salvation for us.

III. As long as Christ is separate from us, he profits us nothing. Hence the necessity of our being ingrafted into him, as branches into a vine. Therefore the doctrine concerning Christ is followed, in the third part of the Creed, by this clause, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," as being the bond of union between us and Christ.

So in the third book our Author treats of the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Christ--and consequently of faith, by which we embrace Christ, with his twofold benefit, free righteousness, which he imputes to us, and regeneration, which he commences within us, by bestowing repentance upon us.--And to show that we have not the least room to glory in such faith as is unconnected with the pursuit of repentance, before proceeding to the full discussion of justification, he treats at large of repentance and the continual exercise of it, which Christ, apprehended by faith, produces in us by his Spirit--He next fully discusses the first and chief benefit of Christ when united to us by the Holy Spirit that is, justification--and then treats of prayer, which resembles the hand that actually receives those blessings to be enjoyed, which faith knows, from the word of promise, to be laid up with God for our use.--But as all men are not united to Christ, the sole Author of salvation, by the Holy Spirit, who creates and preserves faith in us, he treats of God's eternal election; which is the cause that we, in whom he foresaw no good but what he intended
freely to bestow, have been favored with the gift of Christ, and united to God by the effectual call of the Gospel. Lastly, he treats of complete regeneration, and the fruition of happiness; that is, the final resurrection, towards which our eyes must be directed, since in this world the felicity of the pious, in respect of enjoyment, is only begun.

IV. But as the Holy Spirit does not unite all men to Christ, or make them partakers of faith, and on those to whom he imparts it he does not ordinarily bestow it without means, but employs for this purpose the preaching of the Gospel and the use of the sacraments, with the administration of all discipline, therefore it follows in the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," whom, although involved in eternal death, yet, in pursuance of the gratuitous election, God has freely reconciled to himself in Christ, and made partakers of the Holy Spirit, that, being ingrafted into Christ, they may have communion with him as their head, whence flows a perpetual remission of sins, and a full restoration to eternal life.

So in the fourth book our Author treats of the Church--then of the means used by the Holy Spirit in effectually calling from spiritual death, and preserving the church--the word and sacraments--baptism and the Lord's supper--which are as it were Christ's regal sceptre, by which he commences his spiritual reign in the Church by the energy of his Spirit, and carries it forwards from day to day during the present life, after the close of which he perfects it without those means.
And as political institutions are the asylums of the Church in this life, though civil government is distinct from the spiritual kingdom of Christ, our Author instructs us respecting it as a signal blessing of God, which the Church ought to acknowledge with gratitude of heart, till we are called out of this transitory state to the heavenly inheritance, where God will be all in all.

This is the plan of the Institutes, which may be comprised in the following brief summary:--

Man, created originally upright, being afterwards ruined, not partially, but totally, finds salvation out of himself, wholly in Christ; to whom being united by the Holy Spirit, freely bestowed, without any regard of future works, he enjoys in him a twofold benefit, the perfect imputation of righteousness, which attends him to the grave, and the commencement of sanctification, which he daily increases, till at length he completes it at the day of regeneration or resurrection of the body, so that in eternal life and the heavenly inheritance his praises are celebrated for such stupendous mercy.

DEDICATION OF THE REVOLUTIONS OF THE HEAVENLY BODIES

BY NICOLAUS COPERNICUS (1543)[A]
TO POPE PAUL III

I can easily conceive, most Holy Father, that as soon as some people learn that in this book which I have written concerning the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, I ascribe certain motions to the Earth, they will cry out at once that I and my theory should be rejected. For I am not so much in love with my conclusions as not to weigh what others will think about them, and although I know that the meditations of a philosopher are far removed from the judgment of the laity, because his endeavor is to seek out the truth in all things, so far as this is permitted by God to the human reason, I still believe that one must avoid theories altogether foreign to orthodoxy. Accordingly, when I considered in my own mind how absurd a performance it must seem to those who know that the judgment of many centuries has approved the view that the Earth remains fixed as center in the midst of the heavens, if I should, on the contrary, assert that the Earth moves; I was for a long time at a loss to know whether I should publish the commentaries which I have written in proof of its motion, or whether it were not better to follow the example of the Pythagoreans and of some others, who were accustomed to transmit the secrets of Philosophy not in writing but orally, and only to their relatives and friends, as the letter from Lysis to Hipparchus bears witness. They did this, it seems to me, not as some think, because of a certain selfish reluctance to give their views to the world, but in order that the noblest truths, worked out by the careful study of great men, should not be despised by those who are vexed at the idea of taking great pains with any forms of literature except such as
would be profitable, or by those who, if they are driven to the study of Philosophy for its own sake by the admonitions and the example of others, nevertheless, on account of their stupidity, hold a place among philosophers similar to that of drones among bees. Therefore, when I considered this carefully, the contempt which I had to fear because of the novelty and apparent absurdity of my view, nearly induced me to abandon utterly the work I had begun.

My friends, however, in spite of long delay and even resistance on my part, withheld me from this decision. First among these was Nicolaus Schonberg, Cardinal of Capua, distinguished in all branches of learning. Next to him comes my very dear friend, Tidemann Giese, Bishop of Culm, a most earnest student, as he is, of sacred and, indeed, of all good learning. The latter has often urged me, at times even spurring me on with reproaches, to publish and at last bring to the light the book which had lain in my study not nine years merely, but already going on four times nine. Not a few other very eminent and scholarly men made the same request, urging that I should no longer through fear refuse to give out my work for the common benefit of students of Mathematics. They said I should find that the more absurd most men now thought this theory of mine concerning the motion of the Earth, the more admiration and gratitude it would command after they saw in the publication of my commentaries the mist of absurdity cleared away by most transparent proofs. So, influenced by these advisors and this hope, I have at length allowed my friends to publish the work, as they had long besought me to do.
But perhaps Your Holiness will not so much wonder that I have ventured
to publish these studies of mine, after having taken such pains in
elaborating them that I have not hesitated to commit to writing my
views of the motion of the Earth, as you will be curious to hear
how it occurred to me to venture, contrary to the accepted view of
mathematicians, and well-nigh contrary to common sense, to form a
conception of any terrestrial motion whatsoever. Therefore I would not
have it unknown to Your Holiness, that the only thing which induced
me to look for another way of reckoning the movements of the heavenly
bodies was that I knew that mathematicians by no means agree in their
investigations thereof. For, in the first place, they are so much in
doubt concerning the motion of the sun and the moon, that they can
not even demonstrate and prove by observation the constant length of
a complete year; and in the second place, in determining the motions
both of these and of the five other planets, they fail to employ
consistently one set of first principles and hypotheses, but use
methods of proof based only upon the apparent revolutions and motions.
For some employ concentric circles only; others, eccentric circles and
epicyles; and even by these means they do not completely attain the
desired end. For, although those who have depended upon concentric
circles have shown that certain diverse motions can be deduced from
these, yet they have not succeeded thereby in laying down any sure
principle, corresponding indisputably to the phenomena. These, on the
other hand, who have devised systems of eccentric circles, although
they seem in great part to have solved the apparent movements
by calculations which by these eccentrics are made to fit, have
nevertheless introduced many things which seem to contradict the first
principles of the uniformity of motion. Nor have they been able to
discover or calculate from these the main point, which is the shape of
the world and the fixed symmetry of its parts; but their procedure
has been as if someone were to collect hands, feet, a head, and other
members from various places, all very fine in themselves, but not
proportionate to one body, and no single one corresponding in its turn
to the others, so that a monster rather than a man would be formed
from them. Thus in their process of demonstration which they term a
"method," they are found to have omitted something essential, or to
have included something foreign and not pertaining to the matter in
hand. This certainly would never have happened to them if they had
followed fixed principles; for if the hypotheses they assumed were
not false, all that resulted therefrom would be verified indubitably.
Those things which I am saying now may be obscure, yet they will be
made clearer in their proper place.

Therefore, having turned over in my mind for a long time this
uncertainty of the traditional mathematical methods of calculating
the motions of the celestial bodies, I began to grow disgusted that
no more consistent scheme of the movements of the mechanism of the
universe, set up for our benefit by that best and most law abiding
Architect of all things, was agreed upon by philosophers who otherwise
investigate so carefully the most minute details of this world.
Wherefore I undertook the task of rereading the books of all the
philosophers I could get access to, to see whether any one ever was of
the opinion that the motions of the celestial bodies were other than
those postulated by the men who taught mathematics in the schools. And
I found first, indeed, in Cicero, that Niceta perceived that the Earth moved; and afterward in Plutarch I found that some others were of this opinion, whose words I have seen fit to quote here, that they may be accessible to all:--

"Some maintain that the Earth is stationary, but Philolaus the Pythagorean says that it revolves in a circle about the fire of the ecliptic, like the sun and moon. Heraklides of Pontus and Ekphantus the Pythagorean make the Earth move, not changing its position, however, confined in its falling and rising around its own center in the manner of a wheel."

Taking this as a starting point, I began to consider the mobility of the Earth; and although the idea seemed absurd, yet because I knew that the liberty had been granted to others before me to postulate all sorts of little circles for explaining the phenomena of the stars, I thought I also might easily be permitted to try whether by postulating some motion of the Earth, more reliable conclusions could be reached regarding the revolution of the heavenly bodies, than those of my predecessors.

And so, after postulating movements, which, farther on in the book, I ascribe to the Earth, I have found by many and long observations that if the movements of the other planets are assumed for the circular motion of the Earth and are substituted for the revolution of each star, not only do their phenomena follow logically therefrom, but
the relative positions and magnitudes both of the stars and all their orbits, and of the heavens themselves, become so closely related that in none of its parts can anything be changed without causing confusion in the other parts and in the whole universe. Therefore, in the course of the work I have followed this plan: I describe in the first book all the positions of the orbits together with the movements which I ascribe to the Earth, in order that this book might contain, as it were, the general scheme of the universe. Thereafter in the remaining books, I set forth the motions of the other stars and of all their orbits together with the movement of the Earth, in order that one may see from this to what extent the movements and appearances of the other stars and their orbits can be saved, if they are transferred to the movement of the Earth. Nor do I doubt that ingenious and learned mathematicians will sustain me, if they are willing to recognize and weigh, not superficially, but with that thoroughness which Philosophy demands above all things, those matters which have been adduced by me in this work to demonstrate these theories. In order, however, that both the learned and the unlearned equally may see that I do not avoid anyone's judgment, I have preferred to dedicate these lucubrations of mine to Your Holiness rather than to any other, because, even in this remote corner of the world where I live, you are considered to be the most eminent man in dignity of rank and in love of all learning and even of mathematics, so that by your authority and judgment you can easily suppress the bites of slanderers, albeit the proverb hath it that there is no remedy for the bite of a sycophant. If perchance there shall be idle talkers, who, though they are ignorant of all mathematical sciences, nevertheless assume the right to pass judgment on these things, and if they should dare to criticise and attack this
theory of mine because of some passage of scripture which they have falsely distorted for their own purpose, I care not at all; I will even despise their judgment as foolish. For it is not unknown that Lactantius, otherwise a famous writer but a poor mathematician, speaks most childishly of the shape of the Earth when he makes fun of those who said that the Earth has the form of a sphere. It should not seem strange then to zealous students, if some such people shall ridicule us also. Mathematics are written for mathematicians, to whom, if my opinion does not deceive me, our labors will seem to contribute something to the ecclesiastical state whose chief office Your Holiness now occupies; for when not so very long ago, under Leo X, in the Lateran Council the question of revising the ecclesiastical calendar was discussed, it then remained unsettled, simply because the length of the years and months, and the motions of the sun and moon were held to have been not yet sufficiently determined. Since that time, I have given my attention to observing these more accurately, urged on by a very distinguished man, Paul, Bishop of Fossombrone, who at that time had charge of the matter. But what I may have accomplished herein I leave to the judgment of Your Holiness in particular, and to that of all other learned mathematicians; and lest I seem to Your Holiness to promise more regarding the usefulness of the work than I can perform, I now pass to the work itself.

[Footnote A: Nicolaus Copernicus was born in 1473 at Thorn in West Prussia, of a Polish father and a German mother. He attended the university of Cracow and Bologna, lectured on astronomy and mathematics at Rome, and later studied medicine at Padua and canon law]
at Ferrara. He was appointed canon of the cathedral of Frauenburg, and in this town he died in 1543, having devoted the latter part of his life largely to astronomy.

The book which was introduced by this dedication laid the foundations of modern astronomy. At the time when it was written, the earth was believed by all to be the fixed centre of the universe; and although many of the arguments used by Copernicus were invalid and absurd, he was the first modern to put forth the heliocentric theory as "a better explanation." It remained for Kepler, Galileo, and Newton, to establish the theory on firm grounds.

PREFACE TO THE HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND

BY JOHN KNOX (C. 1566)[A]

To the gentill readar, grace and peace from God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the perpetuall encrease of the Holy Spreit.

It is not unknownen, Christeane Reader, that the same clud of ignorance, that long hath darkened many realmes under this accurssed kingdome of that Romane Antichrist, hath also overcovered this poore Realme; that idolatrie hath bein manteined, the bloode of innocentis hath bene shed, and Christ Jesus his eternall treuth hath bene abhorred, detested, and blasphemed. But that same God that caused
light to schyne out of darknes, in the multitud of his mercyes, hath
of long tyme opened the eis of some evin within this Realme, to see
the vanitie of that which then was universally embrased for trew
religioun; and hes gevin unto them strenth to oppone[1] thame selfis
unto the same: and now, into these our last and moist[2] corrupt
dayis, hath maid his treuth so to triumphs amonges us, that, in
despyte of Sathan, hipochrisye is disclosed, and the trew wyrshipping
of God is manifested to all the inhabitantis of this realme who
eis Sathan blyndis not, eyther by thair fylthy lustes, or ellis by
ambioun, and insatiable covetousness, which mack them repung to[3]
the power of God working by his worde.

And becaus we ar not ignorant what diverse bruittis[4] war dispersed
of us, the professoures of Jesus Christ within this realme, in
the begynnyng of our interprise, ordour was tackin, that all our
proceidingis should be committed to register; as that thei war, by
such as then paynfullie travailed boith by toung and pen; and so was
collected a just volume, (as after will appeir,) conteanyng thingis
done frome the fyftie-awght[5] year of God, till the arrivall of the
Quenis Majestic[6] furth of France, with the which the Collectour and
Wittar for that tyme was content, and never mynded[7] further to have
travailled in that kynd of writting. But, after invocation of the
name of God, and after consultatioun with some faythfull, what was
thought by thame expedient to advance Goddis glorie, and to edifie
this present generatioun, and the posteritie to come, it was
concluded, that faythfull rehersall should be maid of such personages
as God had maid instruments of his glorie, by opponyng of thame selfis
to manifest abuses, superstition, and idolatry; and albeit there be
no great number, yet ar the mo then the Collectour wold have looked
for at the beginnyng, and thairfoir is the volume somewhat enlarged
abuif his expectation: And yit, in the beginnyng, mon[8] we crave
of all the gentill Readaris, not to look[9] of us such ane History
as shall expresse all thingis that have occurred within this Realme,
during the tyme of this terrible conflict that lies bene betuix the
sanctes[10] of God and these bloody wolves who clame to thame selves
the titill of clargie, and to have authentic ower the saules of men;
for, with the Pollicey,[11] mynd we to meddill no further then it hath
Religioun mixed with it. And thairfoir albeit that many thingis which
wer don be omitted, yit, yf we invent no leys,[12] we think our selves
blamless in that behalf. Of one other (thing) we mon[8] foirwarne
the discreet Readaris, which is, that thei be not offended that the
sempill treuth be spokin without partialitie; for seing that of men we
neyther hunt for reward, nor yitt for vane glorie, we litill pass
by the approbatioun of such as seldom judge well of God and of his
workis. Lett not thairfoar the Readir wonder, albeit that our style
vary and speik diverslie of men, according as thei have declared
thameselves sometymes ennemymes and sometymes freindis, sometymes
fervent, sometymes cold, sometymes constant, and sometymes changeable
in the cause of God and of his holy religioun: for, in this our
simplicitie, we suppoise that the Godlie shall espy our purpose, which
is, that God may be praised for his mercy schawin,[13] this present
age may be admonished to be thankfull for Goddis benefittis offered,
and the posteritie to cum may be instructed how wonderouslie hath the
light of Christ Jesus prevailed against darkness in this last and
most corrupted age.
[Footnote A: John Knox (1505-1571), the leader of the Scottish
Reformation and its historian, was educated at Glasgow University; was
pastor to English congregations at Frankfort-on-Maine and at Geneva,
where he met Calvin; returned to Scotland in 1559; and from that time
till his death was active in the establishment of the Presbyterian
organization, through which his powerful personality has continued
to influence the Scottish national character to the present day. His
preface, which is printed here in the original Scottish spelling,
gives some indication of the sternness, not to say virulence, of his
temper towards the Roman Church.]
PREFATORY LETTER TO SIR WALTER RALEIGH ON THE FAERIE QUEENE

BY EDMUND SPENSER (1589)[A]

A LETTER OF THE AUTHORS EXPONDING HIS WHOLE INTENTION IN THE COURSE
OF THIS WORKE: WHICH FOR THAT IT GIVETH GREAT LIGHT TO THE READER, FOR
THE BETTER UNDERSTANDING IS HEREUNTO ANNEXED
To the Right Noble, and Valorous, Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight, Lord
Wardein of the Stanneryes, and Her Majesties Liefetenaunt of the
County of Cornewayll

Sir, knowing how doubtfully all allegories may be construed, and this
booke of mine, which I have entituled the _Faery Queene_, being a
continued allegory, or darke conceit, I have thought good, as well for
avoyding of gealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your
better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded,) to
discover unto you the general intention and meaning, which in the
whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any
particular purposes or by accidents therein occasioned. The generall
dead therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble
person in vertuous and gentle discipline: which for that I conceived
shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, being coloured with an
historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read,
rather for variety of matter then for profile of the ensample, I chose
the historye of King Arthure, as most fitte for the excellency of
his person, being made famous by many mens former workes, and also
furthest from the daunger of envy, and suspition of present time. In
which I have followed all the antique poets historicall: first Homere,
who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good
governour and a vertuous man, the one in his Ilias, the other in his
Odysseis; then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person
of AEneas; after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando; and
lately Tasso dissevered them againe, and formed both parts in two
persons, namely that part which they in philosophy call Ethic, or

twofe of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo; the other named

Polite in his Godfredo. By eample of which excellente poets, I

labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of

a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues, as

Aristotle hath devised, the which is the purpose of these first
twelve booke: which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be perhaps
encoraged to frame the other part of politicke vertues in his person,
after that hee came to be king. To some, I know, this methode will
seeme displeasaunt, which had rather have good discipline delivered
plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, then
thus clowdily enwrapped in allegoricall devises. But such, me seeme,
should be satsisfied with the use of these dayes, seeing all things
accounted by their showes, and nothing esteemed of, that is not
delightfull and pleasing to commune sence. For this cause is Xenophon
preferred before Plato, for that the one, in the exquisite depth of
his judgement, formed a commone welth such as it should be, but the
other in the person of Cyrus and the Persians fashioned a governement,
such as might best be: so much more profitable and gratious is
doctrine by ensample, then by rule. So have I laboured to doe in
the person of Arthure: whome I conceive, after his long education by
Timon, to whom he was by Merlin delivered to be brought up, so soone
as he was borne of the Lady Igrayne, to have seen in a dream or
vision the Faery Queen, with whose excellent beauty ravished, he
awaking resolved to seeke her out, and so being by Merlin armed, and
by Timon throughly instructed, he went to seeke her forth in Faerye
Land. In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but
in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of
our soveraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery Land. And yet, in some places els, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royall queene or empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belphoebe, fashioning her name according to your owne excellent conceipt of Cynthia, (Phaebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana.) So in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which vertue, for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and conteineth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deedes of Arthure applyable to that vertue which I write of in that booke. But of the xii. other vertues I make xii. other knights the patrones, for the more variety of the history: of which these three bookes contayn three. The first of the Knight of the Redcrosse, in whome I expresse holynes: The seconde of Sir Guyon, in whome I sette forth temperaunce: The third of Britomartis, a lady knight, in whome I picture chastity. But because the beginning of the whole worke seemeth abrupte and as depending upon other antecedents, it needs that ye know the occasion of these three knights severall adventures. For the methode of a poet historical is not such as of an historiographer. For an historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions; but a poet thrusteth into the middest, even where it most concerneth him, and there recoursing to the thinges forepaste, and divining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing analysis of all.

The beginning therefore of my history, if it were to be told by an
historiographer, should be the twelfth booke, which is the last; where
I devise that the Faery Queene kept her annuall feaste xii. dayes,
upon which xii. severall dayes, the occasions of the xii. several
adventures hapned, which being undertaken by xii. severall knights,
are in these xii. books severally handled and discoursed. The first
was this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented him selfe
a tall clownish younge man, who, falling before the Queen of Faries,
desired a boon (as the manner then was) which during that feast she
might not refuse: which was that hee might have the atchievement of
any adventure, which during that feast should happen: that being
graunted, he rested him on the floore, unfitte through his rusticity
for a better place. Soone after entred a faire ladye in mourning
weedes, riding on a white asse, with a dwarfe behind her leading a
warlike steed, that bore the armes of a knight, and his speare in the
dwarfs hand. Shee, falling before the Queene of Faeries, complayned
that her father and mother, an ancient king and queene, had bene by an
huge dragon many years shut up in a brasen castle, who thence suffred
them not to yssew: and therefore besought the Faery Queene to assygnge
her some one of her knights to take on him that exployt. Presently
that clownish person, upstarting, desired that adventure: whereat the
Queene much wondering, and the lady much gainsaying, yet he earnestly
importuned his desire. In the end the lady told him, that unlesse that
armour which she brought would serve him (that is, the armour of a
Christian man specified by Saint Paul, vi. Ephes.), that he could not
succeed in that enterprise: which being forthwith put upon him with
dewe furnitures thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in al that
company, and was well liked of the lady. And eftesoones taking on him
knighthood, and mounting on that straunge courser, he went forth with
her on that adventure: where beginneth the first booke vz.

A gentle knight was pricking on the playne, &c.

The second day ther came in a palmer bearing an infant with bloody hands, whose parents he complained to have bene slayn by an enchaunteresse called Acrasia: and therfore craved of the Faery Queene, to appoint him some knight to performe that adventure; which being assigned to Sir Guyon, he presently went forth with that same palmer: which is the beginning of the second booke and the whole subject thereof. The third day there came in a groome, who complained before the Faery Queene, that a vile enchaunter, called Busirane, had in hand a most faire lady, called Amoretta, whom he kept in most grievous torment, because she would not yield him the pleasure of her body. Whereupon Sir Scudamour, the lover of that lady, presently tooke on him that adventure. But being unable to performe it by reason of the hard enchauntments, after long sorrow, in the end met with Britomartis, who succoured him, and reskewed his love.

But by occasion hereof, many other adventures are intermedled, but rather as accidents then intendments: as the love of Britomart, the overthrow of Marinell, the misery of Florimell, the vertuousnes of Belphoebe, the lasciviousnes of Hellenora, and many the like.

Thus much, Sir, I have briefly overronne, to direct your understanding to the wel-head of the history, that from thence gathering the whole
intention of the conceit, ye may, as in a handfull, gripe al the
discourse, which otherwise may happily seeme tedious and confused. So
humbly craving the continuance of your honourable favour towards me,
and th' eternall establishment of your happines, I humbly take leave.


[Footnote A: Edmund Spenser was born in London about 1552, and died
there in 1599. He was the greatest of the non-dramatic poets of the
age of Elizabeth; and the "Faerie Queene" is the longest and most
famous of his works. The first three books were published in 1590, the
second three in 1596; of the remaining six which he had planned some
fragments were issued after his death. The poem is a combination of
allegory and romance; and in this prefatory letter to Raleigh the
poet himself explains the plan of the work and its main allegorical
signification.]

PREFACE TO THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD

BY SIR WALTER RALEIGH (1614)[A]

How unfit and how unworthy a choice I have made of myself, to
undertake a work of this mixture, mine own reason, though exceeding
weak, hath sufficiently resolved me. For had it been begotten then
with my first dawn of day, when the light of common knowledge began to
open itself to my younger years, and before any wound received either from Fortune or Time, I might yet well have doubted that the darkness of Age and Death would have covered over both It and Me, long before the performance. For, beginning with the Creation, I have proceeded with the History of the World; and lastly purposed (some few sallies excepted) to confine my discourse with this our renowned Island of Great Britain. I confess that it had better sorted with my disability, the better part of whose times are run out in other travails, to have set together (as I could) the unjointed and scattered frame of our English affairs, than of the universal in whom, had there been no other defect (who am all defect) than the time of the day, it were enough, the day of a tempestuous life, drawn on to the very evening ere I began. But those inmost and soul-piercing wounds, which are ever aching while uncured; with the desire to satisfy those few friends, which I have tried by the fire of adversity, the former enforcing, the latter persuading; have caused me to make my thoughts legible, and myself the subject of every opinion, wise or weak.

To the world I present them, to which I am nothing indebted: neither have others that were, (Fortune changing) sped much better in any age. For prosperity and adversity have evermore tied and untied vulgar affections. And as we see it in experience, that dogs do always bark at those they know not, and that it is their nature to accompany one another in those clamors: so it is with the inconsiderate multitude; who wanting that virtue which we call honesty in all men, and that especial gift of God which we call charity in Christian men, condemn without hearing, and wound without offence given: led thereunto by
uncertain report only; which his Majesty truly acknowledged for the author of all lies. "Blame no man," saith Siracides, "before thou have inquired the matter: understand first, and then reform righteously. 'Rumor, res sine teste, sine judice, maligna, fallax'; Rumor is without witness, without judge, malicious and deceivable." This vanity of vulgar opinion it was, that gave St. Augustine argument to affirm, that he feared the praise of good men, and detested that of the evil. And herein no man hath given a better rule, than this of Seneca; "Conscientiae satisfaciamus: nihil in famam laboremus, sequatur vel mala, dum bene merearis." "Let us satisfy our own consciences, and not trouble ourselves with fame: be it never so ill, it is to be despised so we deserve well."

For myself, if I have in anything served my Country, and prized it before my private, the general acceptation can yield me no other profit at this time, than doth a fair sunshine day to a sea-man after shipwreck; and the contrary no other harm, than an outrageous tempest after the port attained. I know that I lost the love of many, for my fidelity towards Her,[1] whom I must still honor in the dust; though further than the defence of her excellent person, I never persecuted any man. Of those that did it, and by what device they did it, He that is the Supreme Judge of all the world, hath taken the account: so as for this kind of suffering, I must say With Seneca, "Mala opinio, bene parta, delectat."[2] As for other men; if there be any that have made themselves fathers of that fame which hath been begotten for them, I can neither envy at such their purchased glory, nor much lament mine own mishap in that kind; but content myself to say with Virgil, "Sic
vos non vobis,"[3] in many particulars. To labor other satisfaction,
were an effect of frenzy, not of hope, seeing it is not truth, but
opinion, that can travel the world without a passport. For were it
otherwise; and were there not as many internal forms of the mind, as
there are external figures of men; there were then some possibility to
persuade by the mouth of one advocate, even equity alone.

But such is the multiplying and extensive virtue of dead earth, and
of that breath-giving life which God hath cast upon time and dust, as
that among those that were, of whom we read and hear; and among those
that are, whom we see and converse with; everyone hath received a
several picture of face, and everyone a diverse picture of mind;
everyone a form apart, everyone a fancy and cogitation differing:
there being nothing wherein Nature so much triumpheth as in
dissimilitude. From whence it cometh that there is found so great
diversity of opinions; so strong a contrariety of inclinations;
so many natural and unnatural; wise, foolish, manly, and childish
affections and passions in mortal men. For it is not the visible
fashion and shape of plants, and of reasonable creatures, that makes
the difference of working in the one, and of condition in the other;
but the form internal.

And though it hath pleased God to reserve the art of reading men's
thoughts to himself: yet, as the fruit tells the name of the tree; so
do the outward works of men (so far as their cogitations are acted)
give us whereof to guess at the rest. Nay, it were not hard to express
the one by the other, very near the life, did not craft in many,
fear in the most, and the world's love in all, teach every capacity, according to the compass it hath, to qualify and make over their inward deformities for a time. Though it be also true, "Nemo potest diu personam ferre fictam: cito in naturam suam residunt, quibus veritas non subest": "No man can long continue masked in a counterfeit behavior: the things that are forced for pretences having no ground of truth, cannot long dissemble their own natures." Neither can any man (saith Plutarch) so change himself, but that his heart may be sometimes seen at his tongue's end.

In this great discord and dissimilitude of reasonable creatures, if we direct ourselves to the multitude; "omnis honestae rei malus judex est vulgus": "The common people are evil judges of honest things, and whose wisdom (saith Ecclesiastes) is to be despised": if to the better sort, every understanding hath a peculiar judgment, by which it both censureth other men, and valueth itself. And therefore unto me it will not seem strange, though I find these my worthless papers torn with rats: seeing the slothful censurers of all ages have not spared to tax the Reverend Fathers of the Church, with ambition; the severest men to themselves, with hypocrisy; the greatest lovers of justice, with popularity; and those of the truest valor and fortitude, with vain-glory. But of these natures which lee in wait to find fault, and to turn good into evil, seeing Solomon complained long since: and that the very age of the world renders it every day after other more malicious; I must leave the professors to their easy ways of reprehension, than which there is nothing of more facility.
To me it belongs in the first part of this Preface, following the common and approved custom of those who have left the memories of time past to after ages, to give, as near as I can, the same right to history which they have done. Yet seeing therein I should but borrow other men's words, I will not trouble the Reader with the repetition. True it is that among many other benefits for which it hath been honored, in this one it triumpheth over all human knowledge, that it hath given us life in our understanding, since the world itself had life and beginning, even to this day: yea, it hath triumphed over time, which besides it nothing but eternity hath triumphed over: for it hath carried our knowledge over the vast and devouring space of many thousands of years, and given so fair and piercing eyes to our mind; that we plainly behold living now (as if we had lived then) that great world, "Magni Dei sapiens opus," "The wise work (saith Hermes) of a great God," as it was then, when but new to itself. By it (I say) it is, that we live in the very time when it was created: we behold how it was governed: how it was covered with waters, and again repeopled: how kings and kingdoms have flourished and fallen, and for what virtue and piety God made prosperous; and for what vice and deformity he made wretched, both the one and the other. And it is not the least debt which we owe unto history, that it hath made us acquainted with our dead ancestors; and, out of the depth and darkness of the earth, delivered us their memory and fame. In a word, we may gather out of history a policy no less wise than eternal; by the comparison and application of other men's fore-passed miseries with our own like errors and ill deservings. But it is neither of examples the most lively instruction, nor the words of the wisest men, nor the
terror of future torments, that hath yet so wrought in our blind and 
stupified minds, as to make us remember, that the infinite eye and 
wisdom of God doth pierce through all our pretences; as to make us 
remember, that the justice of God doth require none other accuser than 
our own consciences: which neither the false beauty of our apparent 
actions, nor all the formality, which (to pacify the opinions of men) 
we put on, can in any, or the least kind, cover from his knowledge. 
And so much did that heathen wisdom confess, no way as yet qualified 
by the knowledge of a true God. If any (saith Euripides) "having 
in his life committed wickedness, thinks he can hide it from the 
everlasting gods, he thinks not well."

To repeat God's judgments in particular, upon those of all degrees, 
which have played with his mercies would require a volume apart: for 
the sea of examples hath no bottom. The marks, set on private men, 
are with their bodies cast into the earth; and their fortunes, written 
only in the memories of those that lived with them: so as they who 
succeed, and have not seen the fall of others, do not fear their own 
faults. God's judgments upon the greater and greatest have been left 
to posterity; first, by those happy hands which the Holy Ghost hath 
guided; and secondly, by their virtue, who have gathered the acts and 
ends of men mighty and remarkable in the world. Now to point far off, 
and to speak of the conversion of angels into devils; for ambition: or 
of the greatest and most glorious kings, who have gnawn the grass of 
the earth with beasts for pride and ingratitude towards God: or of 
that wise working of Pharaoh, when he slew the infants of Israel, 
er they had recovered their cradles: or of the policy of Jezebel, in
covering the murder of Naboth by a trial of the Elders, according to
the Law, with many thousands of the like: what were it other, than to
make an hopeless proof, that far-off examples would not be left to the
same far-off respects, as heretofore? For who hath not observed, what
labor, practice, peril, bloodshed, and cruelty, the kings and princes
of the world have undergone, exercised, taken on them, and committed;
to make themselves and their issues masters of the world? And yet
hath Babylon, Persia, Syria, Macedon, Carthage, Rome, and the rest,
no fruit, no flower, grass, nor leaf, springing upon the face of
the earth, of those seeds: no, their very roots and ruins do hardly
remain. "Omnia quae manu hominum facta sunt, vel manu hominum
evertuntur, vel stando et durando deficiunt": "All that the hand of
man can make, is either overturned by the hand of man, or at length
by standing and continuing consumed." The reasons of whose ruins, are
diversely given by those that ground their opinions on second causes.
All kingdoms and states have fallen (say the politicians) by outward
and foreign force, or by inward negligence and dissension, or by a
third cause arising from both. Others observe, that the greatest have
sunk down under their own weight; of which Livy hath a touch: "eo
crevit, ut magnitudine laboret sua";[4] Others, That the divine
providence (which Cratippus objected to Pompey) hath set _down_ the
date and period of every estate, before their first foundation and
erection. But hereof I will give myself a day over to resolve.

For seeing the first hooks of the following story, have undertaken the
discourse of the first kings and kingdoms: and that it is impossible
for the short life of a Preface, to travel after, and overtake far-off
antiquity, and to judge of it; I will, for the present, examine
what profit hath been gathered by our own Kings, and their neighbour
princes: who having beheld, both in divine and human letters, the
success of infidelity, injustice, and cruelty; have (notwithstanding)
planted after the same pattern.

True it is, that the judgments of all men are not agreeable; nor
(which is more strange) the affection of any one man stirred up alike
with examples of like nature: but every one is touched most, with that
which most nearly seemeth to touch his own private, or otherwise best
suiteth with his apprehension. But the judgments of God are forever
unchangeable: neither is He wearied by the long process of time, and
won to give His blessing in one age, to that which He hath cursed in
another. Wherefor those that are wise, or whose wisdom if it be not
great, yet is true and well grounded, will be able to discern the
bitter fruits of irreligious policy, as well among those examples that
are found in ages removed far from the present, as in those of latter
times. And that it may no less appear by evident proof, than by
asseveration, that ill doing hath always been attended with ill
success; I will here, by way of preface, run over some examples, which
the work ensuing hath not reached.

Among our kings of the Norman race, we have no sooner passed over the
violence of the Norman Conquest, than we encounter with a singular and
most remarkable example of God's justice, upon the children of Henry
the First. For that King, when both by force, craft, and cruelty, he
had dispossessed, overreached, and lastly made blind and destroyed his
elder brother Robert Duke of Normandy, to make his own sons lords
of this land: God cast them all, male and female, nephews and nieces
(Maud excepted) into the bottom of the sea, with above a hundred and
fifty others that attended them; whereof a great many were noble and
of the King dearly beloved.

To pass over the rest, till we come to Edward the Second; it is
certain, that after the murder of that King, the issue of blood then
made, though it had some times of stay and stopping, did again break
out, and that so often and in such abundance, as all our princes of
the masculine race (very few excepted) died of the same disease. And
although the young years of Edward the Third made his knowledge of
that horrible fact no more than suspicious; yet in that he afterwards
caused his own uncle, the Earl of Kent, to die, for no other offence
than the desire of his brother's redemption, whom the Earl as then
supposed to be living; the King making that to be treated in
his uncle, which was indeed treason in himself, (had his uncle's
intelligence been true) this I say made it manifest, that he was
not ignorant of what had past, nor greatly desirous to have had it
otherwise, though he caused Mortimer to die for the same.

This cruelty the secret and unsearchable judgment of God revenged on
the grandchild of Edward the Third: and so it fell out, even to the
last of that line, that in the second or third descent they were all
buried under the ruins of those buildings, of which the mortar had
been tempered with innocent blood. For Richard the Second, who saw
both his Treasurers, his Chancellor, and his Steward, with divers
others of his counsellors, some of them slaughtered by the people,
others in his absence executed by his enemies, yet he always
took himself for over-wise to be taught by examples. The Earls of
Huntingdon and Kent, Montagu and Spencer, who thought themselves as
great politicians in those days as others have done in these: hoping
to please the King, and to secure themselves, by the murder of
Gloucester; died soon after, with many other their adherents, by the
like violent hands; and far more shamefully than did that duke. And
as for the King himself (who in regard of many deeds, unworthy of his
greatness, cannot be excused, as the disavowing himself by breach of
faith, charters, pardons, and patents): he was in the prime of his
youth deposed, and murdered by his cousin-german and vassal, Henry of
Lancaster, afterwards Henry the Fourth.

This King, whose title was weak, and his obtaining the Crown
traitorous; who brake faith with the lords at his landing, protesting
to intend only the recovery of his proper inheritance, brake faith
with Richard himself; and brake faith with all the kingdom in
Parliament, to whom he swore that the deposed King should live. After
that he had enjoyed this realm some few years, and in that time
had been set upon all sides by his subjects, and never free from
conspiracies and rebellions: he saw (if souls immortal see and discern
anythings after the bodies' death) his grandchild Henry the Sixth,
and his son the Prince, suddenly and without mercy, murdered; the
possession of the Crown (for which he had caused so much blood to
be poured out) transferred from his race, and by the issues of
his enemies worn and enjoyed: enemies, whom by his own practice he
supposed that he had left no less powerless, than the succession of
the Kingdom questionless; by entailing the same upon his own issues
by Parliament. And out of doubt, human reason could have judged no
otherwise, but that these cautious provisions of the father, seconded
by the valor and signal victories of his son Henry the Fifth, had
buried the hopes of every competitor, under the despair of all
reconquest and recovery. I say, that human reason might so have
judged, were not this passage of Casaubon also true; "Dies, hora,
momentum, evertendis dominationibus sufficit, quae adamantinis
credebantur radicibus esse fundatae:" "A day, an hour, a moment, is
enough to overturn the things, that seemed to have been founded and
rooted in adamant."

Now for Henry the Sixth, upon whom the great storm of his
grandfather's grievous faults fell, as it formerly had done upon
Richard the grandchild of Edward: although he was generally esteemed
for a gentle and innocent prince, yet as he refused the daughter of
Armagnac, of the House of Navarre, the greatest of the Princes
of France, to whom he was affianced (by which match he might have
defended his inheritance in France) and married the daughter of Anjou,
(by which he lost all that he had in France) so in condescending to
the unworthy death of his uncle of Gloucester, the main and strong
pillar of the House of Lancaster; he drew on himself and this kingdom
the greatest joint-loss and dishonor, that ever it sustained since the
Norman Conquest. Of whom it may truly be said which a counsellor of
his own spake of Henry the Third of France, "Qu'il estait tme fort
gentile Prince; mais son reigne est advenu en une fort mauvais
temps: "He was a very gentle Prince; but his reign happened in a very unfortunate season."

It is true that Buckingham and Suffolk were the practicers and contrivers of the Duke's death: Buckingham and Suffolk, because the Duke gave instructions to their authority, which otherwise under the Queen had been absolute; the Queen in respect of her personal wound, "spretaeque injuria formae,"[5] because Gloucester dissuaded her marriage. But the fruit was answerable to the seed; the success to the counsel. For after the cutting down of Gloucester, York grew up so fast, as he dared to dispute his right both by arguments and arms; in which quarrel, Suffolk and Buckingham, with the greatest number of their adherents, were dissolved. And although for his breach of oath by sacrament, it pleased God to strike down York: yet his son the Earl of March, following the plain path which his father had trodden out, despoiled Henry the father, and Edward the son, both of their lives and kingdom. And what was the end now of that politic lady the Queen, other than this, that she lived to behold the wretched ends of all her partakers: that she lived to look on, while her husband the King, and her only son the Prince, were hewn in sunder; while the Crown was set on his head that did it. She lived to see herself despoiled of her estate, and of her moveables: and lastly, her father, by rendering up to the Crown of France the Earldom of Provence and other places, for the payment of fifty thousand crowns for her ransom, to become a stark beggar. And this was the end of that subtility, which Siracides calleth "fine" but "unrighteous:" for other fruit hath it never yielded since the world was.
And now it came to Edward the Fourth’s turn (though after many difficulties) to triumph. For all the plants of Lancaster were rooted up, one only Earl of Richmond excepted: whom also he had once bought of the Duke of Brittany, but could not hold him. And yet was not this of Edward such a plantation, as could any way promise itself stability. For this Edward the King (to omit more than many of his other cruelties) beheld and allowed the slaughter which Gloucester, Dorset, Hastings, and others, made of Edward the Prince in his own presence; of which tragical actors, there was not one that escaped the judgment of God in the same kind And he, which (besides the execution of his brother Clarence, for none other offence than he himself had formed in his own imagination) instructed Gloucester to kill Henry the Sixth, his predecessor; taught him also by the same art to kill his own sons and successors, Edward and Richard. For those kings which have sold the blood of others at a low rate; have but made the market for their own enemies, to buy of theirs at the same price.

To Edward the Fourth succeeded Richard the Third, the greatest master in mischief of all that fore-went him: who although, for the necessity of his tragedy, he had more parts to play, and more to perform in his own person, than all the rest; yet he so well fitted every affection that played with him, as if each of them had but acted his own interest. For he wrought so cunningly upon the affections of Hastings and Buckingham, enemies to the Queen and to all her kindred, as he easily allured them to condescend, that Rivers and Grey, the King’s maternal uncle and half brother, should (for the first) be severed
from him: secondly, he wrought their consent to have them imprisoned:
and lastly (for the avoiding of future inconvenience) to have their
heads severed from their bodies. And having now brought those his
chief instruments to exercise that common precept which the Devil hath
written on every post, namely, to depress those whom they had grieved,
and destroy those whom they had depressed; he urged that argument
so far and so forcibly, as nothing but the death of the young King
himself, and of his brother, could fashion the conclusion. For he
caused it to be hammered into Buckingham's head, that, whencesoever the
King or his brother should have able years to exercise their power,
they would take a most severe revenge of that cureless wrong, offered
to their uncle and brother, Rivers and Grey.

But this was not his manner of reasoning with Hastings, whose fidelity
to his master's sons was without suspect: and yet the Devil, who never
dissuades by impossibility, taught him to try him. And so he did. But
when he found by Catesby, who sounded him, that he was not fordable;
he first resolved to kill him sitting in council: wherein having
failed with his sword, he set the hangman upon him, with a weapon
of more weight. And because nothing else could move his appetite,
he caused his head to be stricken off, before he ate his dinner. A
greater judgment of God than this upon Hastings, I have never observed
in any story. For the selfsame day that the Earl Rivers, Grey, and
others, were (without trial of law, of offence given) by Hastings'
advice executed at Pomfret: I say Hastings himself in the same day,
and (as I take it) in the same hour, in the same lawless manner had
his head stricken off in the Tower of London. But Buckingham lived a
while longer; and with an eloquent oration persuaded the Londoners
to elect Richard for their king. And having received the Earldom of
Hereford for reward, besides the high hope of marrying his daughter
to the King's only son; after many grievous vexations of mind, and
unfortunate attempts, being in the end betrayed and delivered up
by his trustiest servant; he had his head severed from his body at
Salisbury, without the trouble of any of his Peers. And what success
had Richard himself after all these mischiefs and murders, policies,
and counter-policies to Christian religion: and after such time
as with a most merciless hand he had pressed out the breath of his
nephews and natural lords; other than the prosperity of so short a
life, as it took end, ere himself could well look over and discern
it? The great outcry of innocent blood, obtained at God's hands the
effusion of his; who became a spectacle of shame and dishonor, both to
his friends and enemies.

This cruel King, Henry the Seventh cut off; and was therein (no doubt)
the immediate instrument of God's justice. A politic Prince he was if
ever there were any, who by the engine of his wisdom, beat down and
overturned as many strong oppositions both before and after he wore
the Crown, as ever King of England did: I say by his wisdom, because
as he ever left the reins of his affections in the hands of his
profit, so he always weighed his undertakings by his abilities,
leaving nothing more to hazard than so much as cannot be denied it in
all human actions. He had well observed the proceedings of Louis the
Eleventh, whom he followed in all that was royal or royal-like, but
he was far more just, and begun not their processes whom he hated or
feared by the execution, as Louis did.

He could never endure any mediation in rewarding his servants, and therein exceeding wise; for whatsoever himself gave, he himself received back the thanks and the love, knowing it well that the affections of men (purchased by nothing so readily as by benefits) were trains that better became great kings, than great subjects. On the contrary, in whatsoever he grieved his subjects, he wisely put it off on those, that he found fit ministers for such actions. Howsoever the taking off of Stanley's head, who set the Crown on his, and the death of the young Earl of Warwick, son to George, Duke of Clarence, shows, as the success also did, that he held somewhat of the errors of his ancestors; for his possession in the first line ended in his grandchildren, as that of Edward the Third and Henry the Fourth had done.

Now for King Henry the Eighth; if all the pictures and patterns of a merciless prince were lost in the world, they might all again be painted to the life, out of the story of this king. For how many servants did he advance in haste (but for what virtue no man could suspect) and with the change of his fancy ruined again; no man knowing for what offence? To how many others of more desert gave he abundant flowers from whence to gather honey, and in the end of harvest burnt them in the hive? How many wives did he cut off, and cast off, as his fancy and affection changed? How many princes of the blood (whereof some of them for age could hardly crawl towards the block) with a world of others of all degrees (of whom our common chronicles have
kept the account) did he execute? Yea, in his very death-bed, and when he was at the point to have given his account to God for the abundance of blood already spilt, he imprisoned the Duke of Norfolk the father; and executed the Earl of Surrey the son; the one, whose deservings he knew not how to value, having never omitted anything that concerned his own honor, and the King's service; the other never having committed anything worthy of his least displeasure: the one exceeding valiant and advised; the other no less valiant than learned, and of excellent hope. But besides the sorrows which he heaped upon the fatherless and widows at home: and besides the vain enterprises abroad, wherein it is thought that he consumed more treasure than all our victorious kings did in their several conquests; what causeless and cruel wars did he make upon his own nephew King James the First? What laws and wills did he devise to cut off, and cut down those branches, which sprang from the same root that himself did? And in the end (notwithstanding these his so many irreligious provisions) it pleased God to take away all his own, without increase; though, for themselves in their several kinds, all princes of eminent virtue. For these words of Samuel to Agag King of the Amalekites, have been verified upon many others: "As thy sword hath made other women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among other women." And that blood which the same King Henry affirmed, that the cold air of Scotland had frozen up in the North, God hath diffused by the sunshine of his grace: from whence his Majesty now living, and long to live, is descended. Of whom I may say it truly, "That if all the malice of the world were infused into one eye: yet could it not discern in his life, even to this day, any one of these foul spots, by which the consciences of all the forenamed princes (in effect) have been
defiled; nor any drop of that innocent blood on the sword of his justice, with which the most that fore-went him have stained both their hands and fame." And for this Crown of England; it may truly he avowed: that he hath received it even from the hand of God, and hath stayed the time of putting it on, howsoever he were provoked to hasten it: that he never took revenge of any man, that sought to put him beside it: that he refused the assistance of Her enemies, that wore it long, with as great glory as ever princess did: that his Majesty entered not by a breach, nor by blood; but by the ordinary gate, which his own right set open; and into which, by a general love and obedience, he was received. And howsoever his Majesty's preceding title to this Kingdom was preferred by many princes (witness the Treaty at Cambray in the year 1559) yet he never pleased to dispute it, during the life of that renowned lady his predecessor; no, notwithstanding the injury of not being declared heir, in all the time of her long reign.

Neither ought we to forget, or neglect our thankfulness to God for the uniting of the northern parts of Britain to the south, to wit, of Scotland to England, which though they were severed but by small brooks and banks, yet by reason of the long continued war, and the cruelties exercised upon each other, in the affections of the nations, they were infinitely severed. This I say is not the least of God's blessings which his Majesty hath brought with him unto this land: no, put all our petty grievances together, and heap them up to their height, they will appear but as a molehill compared with the mountain of this concord. And if all the historians since then have
acknowledged the uniting of the Red Rose, and the White, for the
greatest happiness (Christian Religion excepted), that ever this
kingdom received from God, certainly the peace between the two lions
of gold and gules, and the making them one, doth by many degrees
exceed the former; for by it, besides the sparing of our British
blood, heretofore and during the difference, so often and abundantly
shed, the state of England is more assured, the kingdom more
enabled to recover her ancient honor and rights, and by it made more
invincible, than by all our former alliances, practises, policies, and
conquests. It is true that hereof we do not yet find the effect.
But had the Duke of Parma in the year 1588, joined the army which he
commanded, with that of Spain, and landed it on the south coast; and
had his Majesty at the same time declared himself against us in the
North: it is easy to divine what had become of the liberty of England,
certainly we would then without murmur have bought this union at far
greater price than it hath since cost us. It is true, that there was
never any common weal or kingdom in the world, wherein no man had
cause to lament. Kings live in the world, and not above it. They are
not infinite to examine every man's cause, or to relieve every man's
wants. And yet in the latter (though to his own prejudice), his
Majesty hath had more comparison of other men's necessities, than of
his own coffers. Of whom it may he said, as of Solomon,[6] "Dedit Deus
Solomon! latitudinem cordis": Which if other men do not understand
with Pineda, to be meant by liberality, but by "latitude of
knowledge"; yet may it be better spoken of His Majesty, than of
any king that ever England had; who as well in divine, as human
understanding, hath exceeded all that fore-went him, by many degrees.
I could say much more of the King's majesty, without flattery: did I
not fear the imputation of presumption, and withal suspect, that it
might befall these papers of mine (though the loss were little) as
it did the pictures of Queen Elizabeth, made by unskilful and common
painters, which by her own commandment were knocked in pieces and
cast into the fire. For ill artists, in setting out the beauty of the
external; and weak writers, in describing the virtues of the internal;
do often leave to posterity, of well formed faces a deformed
memory; and of the most perfect and princely minds, a most defective
representation. It may suffice, and there needs no other discourse; if
the honest reader but compare the cruel and turbulent passages of our
former kings, and of other their neighbor-princes (of whom for that
purpose I have inserted this brief discourse) with his Majesty's
temperate, revengeless and liberal disposition: I say, that if the
honest reader weigh them justly, and with an even hand; and withal but
bestow every deformed child on his true parent; he shall find, that
there is no man that hath so just cause to complain, as the King
himself hath. Now as we have told the success of the trumperies and
cruelties of our own kings, and other great personages: so we find,
that God is everywhere the same God. And as it pleased him to punish
the usurpation, and unnatural cruelty of Henry the First, and of our
third Edward, in their children for many generations: so dealt He
with the sons of Louis Debonnaire, the son of Charles the Great, or
Charlemagne. For after such time as Debonnaire of France, had torn
out the eyes of Bernard his nephew, the son of Pepin the eldest son
of Charlemagne, and heir of the Empire, and then caused him to die in
prison, as did our Henry to Robert his eldest brother: there followed
nothing but murders upon murders, poisoning, imprisonments, and civil war; till the whole race of that famous Emperor was extinguished. And though Debonnaire, after he had rid himself of his nephew by a violent death; and of his bastard brothers by a civil death (having inclosed them with sure guard, all the days of their lives, within a monastery) held himself secure from all opposition: yet God raised up against him (which he suspected not) his own sons, to vex him, to invade him, to take him prisoner, and to depose him; his own sons, with whom (to satisfy their ambition) he had shared his estate, and given them crowns to wear, and kingdoms to govern, during his own life. Yea his eldest son, Lothair (for he had four, three by his first wife, and one by his second; to wit, Lothair, Pepin, Louis, and Charles), made it the cause of his deposition, that he had used violence towards his brothers and kinsmen; and that he had suffered his nephew (whom he might have delivered) to be slain. "Eo quod," saith the text,[7] "fratribus, et propinquis violentiam intulerit, et nepotem suum, quern ipse liberate poterat, interfici permiserit": "Because he used violence to his brothers and kinsmen, and suffered his nephew to be slain whom he might have delivered."

Yet did he that which few kings do; namely, repent him of his cruelty. For, among many other things which he performed in the General Assembly of the States, it follows: "Post haec autem palam se errasse confessus, et imitatus Imperatoris Theodosii exemplum, poenitentiam spontaneam suscepit, tarn de his, quam quae in Bernardum proprium nepotem gesserat": "After this he did openly confess himself to have erred, and following the example of the Emperor Theodosius, he
underwent voluntary penance, as well for his other offences, as for that which he had done against Bernard his own nephew."

This he did; and it was praise-worthy. But the blood that is unjustly spilt, is not again gathered up from the ground by repentance. These medicines, ministered to the dead, have but dead rewards.

This king, as I have said, had four sons. To Lothair his eldest he gave the Kingdom of Italy; as Charlemagne, his father, had done to Pepin, the father of Bernard, who was to succeed him in the Empire. To Pepin the second son he gave the Kingdom of Aquitaine: to Louis, the Kingdom of Bavaria: and to Charles, whom he had by a second wife called Judith, the remainder of the Kingdom of France. But this second wife, being a mother-in-law[8] to the rest, persuaded Debonnaire to cast his son Pepin out of Aquitaine, thereby to greaten Charles, which, after the death of his son Pepin, he prosecuted to effect, against his grandchild bearing the same name. In the meanwhile, being invaded by his son Louis of Bavaria, he dies for grief.

Debonnaire dead, Louis of Bavaria, and Charles afterwards called the Bald, and their nephew Pepin, of Aquitaine, join in league against the Emperor Lothair their eldest brother. They fight near to Auxerre the most bloody battle that ever was stroken in France: in which, the marvellous loss of nobility, and men of war, gave courage to the Saracens to invade Italy; to the Huns to fall upon Almaine; and the Danes to enter upon Normandy. Charles the Bald by treason seizeth upon
his nephew Pepin, kills him in a cloister: Carloman rebels against
his father Charles the Bald, the father burns out the eyes of his son
Carloman; Bavaria invades the Emperor Lothair his brother, Lothair
quits the Empire, he is assailed and wounded to the heart by his own
conscience, for his rebellion against his father, and for his other
cruelties, and dies in a monastery. Charles the Bald, the uncle,
 oppreseth his nephews the sons of Lothair, he usurpeth the Empire to
the prejudice of Louis of Bavaria his elder brother; Bavaria's armies
and his son Carloman are beaten, he dies of grief, and the usurper
Charles is poisoned by Zedechias a Jew, his physician, his son Louis
le Begue dies of the same drink. Begue had Charles the Simple and two
bastards, Louis and Carloman; they rebel against their brother, but
the eldest breaks his neck, the younger is slain by a wild boar; the
son of Bavaria had the same ill destiny, and brake his neck by a fall
out of a window in sporting with his companions. Charles the Gross
becomes lord of all that the sons of Debonnaire held in Germany;
wherewith not contented, he invades Charles the Simple: but
being-forsaken of his nobility, of his wife, and of his understanding,
he dies a distracted beggar. Charles the Simple is held in wardship by
Eudes, Mayor of the Palace, then by Robert the brother of Eudes: and
lastly, being taken by the Earl of Vermandois; he is forced to die in
the prison of Peron, Louis the son of Charles the Simple breaks his
neck in chasing a wolf, and of the two sons of this Louis, the one
dies of poison, the other dies in the prison of Orleans; after whom
Hugh Capet, of another race, and a stranger to the French, makes
himself king.
These miserable ends had the issues of Debonnaire, who after he had once apparelled injustice with authority, his sons and successors took up the fashion, and wore that garment so long without other provision, as when the same was torn from their shoulders, every man despised them as miserable and naked beggars. The wretched success they had (saith a learned Frenchman) shows, "que en ceste mort il y avait plus du fait des hommes que de Pieu, ou de la justice": "that in the death of that Prince, to wit, of Bernard the son of Pepin, the true heir of Charlemagne, men had more meddling than either God or justice had."

But to come nearer home; it is certain that Francis the First, one of the worthiest kings (except for that fact) that ever Frenchmen had, did never enjoy himself, after he had commended the destruction of the Protestants of Mirandol and Cabrieres, to the Parliament of Provence, which poor people were thereupon burnt and murdered; men, women, and children. It is true that the said King Francis repented himself of the fact, and gave charge to Henry his son, to do justice upon the murderers, threatening his son with God's judgments, if he neglected it. But this unseasonable care of his, God was not pleased to accept for payment. For after Henry himself was slain in sport by Montgomery, we all may remember what became of his four sons, Francis, Charles, Henry, and Hercules. Of which although three of them became kings, and were married to beautiful and virtuous ladies: yet were they, one after another, cast out of the world, without stock or seed. And notwithstanding their subtility, and breach of faith; with all their massacres upon those of the religion,[9] and great effusion of blood, the crown was set on his head, whom they all labored to dissolve; the
Protestants remain more in number than ever they were, and hold to this day more strong cities than ever they had.

Let us now see if God be not the same God in Spain, as in England and France. Towards whom we will look no further back than to Don Pedro of Castile: in respect of which Prince, all the tyrants of Sicil, our Richard the Third, and the great Ivan Vasilowich of Moscow, were but petty ones: this Castilian, of all Christian and heathen kings, having been the most merciless. For, besides those of his own blood and nobility, which he caused to be slain in his own court and chamber, as Sancho Ruis, the great master of Calatrava, Ruis Gonsales, Alphonso Tello, and Don John of Arragon, whom he cut in pieces and cast into the streets, denying him Christian burial: I say, besides these, and the slaughter of Gomes Mauriques, Diego Peres, Alphonso Gomes, and the great commander of Castile; he made away the two infants of Arragon his cousin germans, his brother Don Frederick, Don John de la Cerde, Albuquerques, Nugnes de Guzman, Cornel, Cabrera, Tenorio, Mendes de Toledo, Guttieri his great treasurer and all his kindred; and a world of others. Neither did he spare his two youngest brothers, innocent princes: whom after he had kept in close prison from their cradles, till one of them had lived sixteen years, and the other fourteen, he murdered them there. Nay, he spared not his mother, nor his wife the Lady Blanche of Bourbon. Lastly, as he caused the Archbishop of Toledo, and the Dean to be killed of purpose to enjoy their treasures; so did he put to death Mahomet Aben Alhamar, King of Barbary, with thirty-seven of his nobility, that came unto him for succor, with a great sum of money, to levy (by his favor) some companies of soldiers
to return withal. Yea, he would needs assist the hangman with his
own hand, in the execution of the old king; in so much as Pope Urban
declareth him an enemy both to God and man. But what was his end?
Having been formerly beaten out of his kingdom, and reestablished by
the valor of the English nation, led by the famous Duke of Lancaster:
he was stabbed to death by his younger brother the Earl of Astramara,
who dispossessed all his children of their inheritance; which, but for
the father's injustice and cruelty, had never been in danger of any
such thing.

If we can parallel any man with this king, it must be Duke John of
Burgogne, who, after his traitorous murder of the Duke of Orleans,
caused the Constable of Armagnac, the Chancellor of France, the
Bishops of Constance, Bayeux, Eureux, Senlis, Saintes, and other
religious and reverend Churchmen, the Earl of Gran Pre, Hector of
Chartres, and (in effect) all the officers of justice, of the Chamber
of Accounts, Treasury, and Request, (with sixteen hundred others to
accompany them) to be suddenly and violently slain. Hereby, while he
hoped to govern, and to have mastered France, he was soon after struck
with an axe in the face, in the presence of the Dauphin; and, without
any leisure to repent his misdeeds, presently[10] slain. _These were
the lovers of other men's miseries: and misery found them out_.

Now for the kings of Spain, which lived both with Henry the Seventh,
Henry the Eighth, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth; Ferdinand of
Arragon was the first: and the first that laid the foundation of the
present Austrian greatness. For this King did not content himself
to hold Aragon by the usurpation of his ancestor; and to fasten
thereunto the Kingdom of Castile and Leon, which Isabel his wife held
by strong hand, and his assistance, from her own niece the daughter
of the last Henry: but most cruelly and crafily, without all color
or pretence of right, he also cast his own niece out of the Kingdom
of Navarre, and, contrary to faith, and the promise that he made to
restore it, fortified the best places, and so wasted the rest, as
there was no means left for any army to invade it. This King, I say,
that betrayed also Ferdinand and Frederick, Kings of Naples, princes
of his own blood, and by double alliance tied unto him; sold them
to the French: and with the same army, sent for their succor under
Gonsalvo, cast them out; and shared their kingdom with the French,
whom afterwards he most shamefully betrayed.

This wise and politic King, who sold Heaven and his own honor, to make
his son, the Prince of Spain, the greatest monarch of the world; saw
him die in the flower of his years; and his wife great with child,
with her untimely birth, at once and together buried. His eldest
daughter married unto Don Alphonso, Prince of Portugal, beheld her
first husband break his neck in her presence; and being with child
by her second, died with it. A just judgment of God upon the race of
John, father to Alphonso, now wholly extinguished; who had not only
left many disconsolate mothers in Portugal, by the slaughter of their
children; but had formerly slain with his own hand, the son and only
comfort of his aunt the Lady Beatrix, Duchess of Viseo.

The second daughter of Ferdinand, married to the Arch-Duke Philip,
turned fool, and died mad and deprived.[11] His third daughter,
bestowed on King Henry the Eighth, he saw cast off by the King: the
mother of many troubles in England; and the mother of a daughter, that
in her unhappy zeal shed a world of innocent blood; lost Calais to the
French; and died heartbroken without increase. To conclude, all those
kingdoms of Ferdinand have masters of a new name; and by a strange
family are governed and possessed.

Charles the Fifth, son to the Arch-Duke Philip, in whose vain
enterprises upon the French, upon the Almains, and other princes
and states, so many multitudes of Christian soldiers, and renowned
captains were consumed; who gave the while a most perilous entrance to
the Turks, and suffered Rhodes, the Key of Christendom, to be taken;
was in conclusion chased out of France, and in a sort out of Germany;
and left to the French, Mentz, Toule, and Verdun, places belonging
to the Empire, stole away from Insurg; and scaled the Alps by
torchlight, pursued by Duke Maurice; having hoped to swallow up all
those dominions wherein he concocted nothing save his own disgraces.
And having, after the slaughter of so many millions of men, no one
foot of ground in either: he crept into a cloister, and made himself
a pensioner of an hundred thousand ducats by the year, to his son
Philip, from whom he very slowly received his mean and ordinary
maintenance.

His son again King Philip the Second, not satisfied to hold Holland
and Zeeland, (wrested by his ancestors from Jacqueline their lawful
Princess) and to possess in peace many other provinces of the
Netherlands: persuaded by that mischievous Cardinal of Granvile, and other Romish tyrants; not only forgot the most remarkable services done to his father the Emperor by the nobilities of those countries, not only forgot the present made him upon his entry, of forty millions of florins, called the “Novaile aide”; nor only forgot that he had twice most solemnly sworn to the General States, to maintain and preserve their ancient rights, privileges, and customs, which they had enjoyed under their thirty and five earls before him, Conditional Princes of those provinces: but beginning first to constrain them, and enthrall them by the Spanish Inquisition, and then to impoverish them by many new devised and intolerable impositions; he lastly, by strong hand and main force, attempted to make himself not only an absolute monarch over them, like unto the kings and sovereigns of England and France; but Turk-like to tread under his feet all their natural and fundamental laws, privileges, and ancient rights. To effect which, after he had easily obtained from the Pope a dispensation of his former oaths (which dispensation was the true cause of the war and bloodshed since then;) and after he had tried what he could perform, by dividing of their own nobility, under the government of his base sister Margaret of Austria, and the Cardinal Granvile; he employed that most merciless Spaniard Don Ferdinand Alvarez of Toledo, Duke of Alva, followed with a powerful army of strange nations: by whom he first slaughtered that renowned captain, the Earl of Egmont, Prince of Gavare: and Philip Montmorency, Earl of Horn: made away Montigue, and the Marquis of Bergues, and cut off in those six years (that Alva governed) of gentlemen and others, eighteen thousand and six hundred, by the hands of the hangman, besides all his other barbarous murders and massacres. By whose ministry when he could not yet bring his
affairs to their wished ends, having it in his hope to work that
by subtility, which he had failed to perform by force; he sent for
governor his bastard brother Don John of Austria, a prince of great
hope, and very gracious to those people. But he, using the same papal
advantage that his predecessors had done, made no scruple to take oath
upon the Holy Evangelists, to observe the treaty made with the General
States; and to discharge the Low Countries of all Spaniards, and other
strangers therein garrisoned: towards whose pay and passport, the
Netherlands strained themselves to make payment of six hundred
thousand pounds. Which monies received, he suddenly surprised the
citadels of Antwerp and Nemours: not doubting (being unsuspected by
the states) to have possessed himself of all the mastering places
of those provinces. For whatsoever he overtly pretended, he held
in secret a contrary counsel with the Secretary Escovedo, Rhodus,
Barlemont, and others, ministers of the Spanish tyranny, formerly
practised, and now again intended. But let us now see the effect and
end of this perjury and of all other the Duke's cruelties. First, for
himself, after he had murdered so many of the nobility; executed (as
aforesaid) eighteen thousand and six hundred in six years, and most
cruelly slain man, woman, and child, in Mechlin, Zutphen, Naerden,
and other places: notwithstanding his Spanish vaunt, that he would
suffocate the Hollanders in their own butter-barrels, and milk-tubs;
he departed the country no otherwise accompanied, than with the curse
and detestation of the whole nation; leaving his master's affairs in a
tenfold worse estate, than he found them at his first arrival. For
Don John, whose haughty conceit of himself overcame the greatest
difficulties; though his judgment were over-weak to manage the least:
what wonders did his fearful breach of faith bring forth, other than
the King his brother's jealousy and distrust, with the untimely death
that seized him, even in the flower of his youth? And for Escovedo his
sharp-witted secretary, who in his own imagination had conquered for
his master both England and the Netherlands; being sent into Spain
upon some new project, he was at the first arrival, and before any
access to the King, by certain ruffians appointed by Anthony Peres
(though by better warrant than his) rudely murdered in his own
lodging. Lastly, if we consider the King of Spain's carriage, his
counsel and success in this business, there is nothing left to the
memory of man more remarkable. For he hath paid above an hundred
millions, and the lives of above four hundred thousand Christians,
for the loss of all those countries; which, for beauty, gave place to
none; and for revenue, did equal his West Indies: for the loss of a
nation which most willingly obeyed him; and who at this day, after
forty years war, are in despite of all his forces become a free
estate, and far more rich and powerful than they were, when he first
began to impoverish and oppress them.

Oh, by what plots, by what forswearings, betrayings, oppressions,
imprisonments, tortures, poisonings, and under what reasons of state,
and politic subtlety, have these fore-named kings, both strangers,
and of our own nation, pulled the vengeance of God upon themselves,
upon theirs, and upon their prudent ministers! and in the end have
brought those things to pass for their enemies, and seen an effect so
directly contrary to all their own counsels and cruelties; as the
one could never have hoped for themselves; and the other never have
succeeded; if no such opposition had ever been made. God hath said it
and performed it ever: "Perdam sapientiam sapientum"; "I will destroy
the wisdom of the wise."

But what of all this? and to what end do we lay before the eyes of
the living, the fall and fortunes of the dead: seeing the world is
the same that it hath been; and the children of the present time, will
still obey their parents? It is in the present time that all the wits
of the world are exercised. To hold the times we have, we hold all
things lawful: and either we hope to hold them forever; or at least we
hope that there is nothing after them to be hoped for. For as we are
content to forget our own experience, and to counterfeit the ignorance
of our own knowledge, in all things that concern ourselves; or
persuade ourselves, that God hath given us letters patents to pursue
all our irreligious affections, with a "non obstante"[12] so we
neither look behind us what hath been, nor before us what shall be. It
is true, that the quantity which we have, is of the body: we are by
it joined to the earth: we are compounded of earth; and we inhabit
it. The Heavens are high, far off, and unsearchable: we have sense and
feeling of corporal things; and of eternal grace, but by revelation.
No marvel then that our thoughts are also earthly: and it is less to
be wondered at, that the words of worthless men can not cleanse them:
seeing their doctrine and instruction, whose understanding the Holy
Ghost vouchsafed to inhabit, have not performed it. For as the Prophet
Isaiah cried out long ago, "Lord, who hath believed our reports?" And
out of doubt, as Isaiah complained then for himself and others: so are
they less believed, every day after other. For although religion, and
the truth thereof be in every man's mouth, yea, in the discourse of
every woman, who for the greatest number are but idols of vanity: what
is it other than an universal dissimulation? We profess that we know
God: but by works we deny him. For beatitude doth not consist in the
knowledge of divine things, but in a divine life: for the Devils know
them better than men. "Beatitudo non est divinorum cognitio, sed vita
divina." And certainly there is nothing more to be admired, and more
to be lamented, than the private contention, the passionate dispute,
the personal hatred, and the perpetual war, massacres, and murders for
religion among Christians: the discourse whereof hath so occupied the
world, as it hath well near driven the practice thereof out of the
world. Who would not soon resolve, that took knowledge but of the
religious disputations among men, and not of their lives which
dispute, that there were no other thing in their desires, than the
purchase of Heaven; and that the world itself were but used as it
ought, and as an inn or place, wherein to repose ourselves in passing
on towards our celestial habitation? when on the contrary, besides the
discourse and outward profession, the soul hath nothing but hypocrisy.
We are all (in effect) become comedians in religion: and while we act
in gesture and voice, divine virtues, in all the course of our lives
we renounce our persons, and the parts we play. For Charity, Justice,
and Truth have but their being _in terms_, like the philosopher's
_Materia prima_.

Neither is it that wisdom, which Solomon defineth to be the
"Schoolmistress of the knowledge of God," that hath valuation in the
world: it is enough that we give it our good word: but the same which is
altogether exercised in the service of the world as the gathering of
riches chiefly, by which we purchase and obtain honor, with the many respects which attend it. These indeed be the marks, which (when we have bent our consciences to the highest) we all shoot at. For the obtaining whereof it is true, that the care is our own; the care our own in this life, the peril our own in the future: and yet when we have gathered the greatest abundance, we ourselves enjoy no more thereof, than so much as belongs to one man. For the rest, he that had the greatest wisdom and the greatest ability that ever man had, hath told us that this is the use: “When goods increase (saith Solomon) they also increase that eat them; and what good cometh to the owners, but the beholding thereof with their eyes?” As for those that devour the rest, and follow us in fair weather: they again forsake us in the first tempest of misfortune, and steer away before the sea and wind; leaving us to the malice of our destinies. Of these, among a thousand examples, I will take but one out of Master Danner, and use his own words: "Whilst the Emperor Charles the Fifth, after the resignation of his estates, stayed at Flushing for wind, to carry him his last journey into Spain; he conferred on a time with Seldius, his brother Ferdinand's Ambassador, till the deep of the night. And when Seldius should depart, the Emperor calling for some of his servants, and nobody answering him (for those that attended upon him, were some gone to their lodgings, and all the rest asleep), the Emperor took up the candle himself, and went before Seldius to light him down the stairs; and so did, notwithstanding all the resistance that Seldius could make. And when he was come to the stair's foot, he said thus unto him: “Seldius, remember this of Charles the Emperor, when he shall be dead and gone, that him, whom thou hast known in thy time environed with so many mighty armies and guards of soldiers, thou hast also seen alone, abandoned, and forsaken, yea even of his own domestical
servants, &c. I acknowledge this change of Fortune to proceed from the mighty hand of God, which I will by no means go about to withstand."

But you will say, that there are some things else, and of greater regard than the former. The first is the reverend respect that is held of great men, and the honor done unto them by all sorts of people. And it is true indeed: provided, that an inward love for their justice and piety accompany the outward worship given to their places and power; without which what is the applause of the multitude, but as the outcry of an herd of animals, who without the knowledge of any true cause, please themselves with the noise they make? For seeing it is a thing exceeding rare, to distinguish Virtue and Fortune: the most impious (if prosperous) have ever been applauded; the most virtuous (if unprosperous) have ever been despised. For as Fortune's man rides the horse, so Fortune herself rides the man; who when he is descended and on foot, the man taken from his beast, and Fortune from the man, a base groom beats the one, and a bitter contempt spurns at the other, with equal liberty.

The second is the greatening of our posterity, and the contemplation of their glory whom we leave behind us. Certainly, of those which conceive that their souls departed take any comfort therein, it may be truly said of them, which Lactantius spake of certain heathen philosophers, "quod sapientes sunt in re stulta."[13] For when our spirits immortal shall be once separate from our mortal bodies, and disposed by God; there remaineth in them no other joy of their posterity which succeed, than there doth of pride in that stone, which
sleepeth in the wall of the king's palace; nor any other sorrow for
their poverty, than there doth of shame in that, which beareth up a
beggar's cottage. "Nesciunt mortui, etiam sancti, quid agunt
vivi, etiam eorum filii, quia animae mortuorum rebus viventium non
intersunt": "The dead, though holy, know nothing of the living, no,
not of their own children: for the souls of those departed, are not
conversant with their affairs that remain."[14] And if we doubt of St.
Augustine, we can not of Job; who tells us, "That we know not if our
sons shall be honorable: neither shall we understand concerning
them, whether they shall be of low degree." Which Ecclesiastes also
confirmeth: "Man walketh in a shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain:
he heapeth up riches, and can not tell who shall gather them. The
living (saith he) know that they shall die, but the dead know nothing
at all: for who can show unto man what shall be after him under the
sun?" He therefore accounteth it among the rest of worldly vanities,
to labor and travail in the world; not knowing after death whether
a fool or a wise man should enjoy the fruits thereof: "which made me
(saith he) endeavor even to abhor mine own labor." And what can other
men hope, whose blessed or sorrowful estates after death God hath
reserved? man's knowledge lying but in his hope, seeing the Prophet
Isaiah confesseth of the elect, "That Abraham is ignorant of us, and
Israel knows us not." But hereof we are assured, that the long and
dark night of death (of whose following day we shall never behold the
dawn till his return that hath triumphed over it), shall cover us
over till the world be no more. After which, and when we shall again
receive organs glorified and incorruptible, the seats of angelical
affections, in so great admiration shall the souls of the blessed be
exercised, as they can not admit the mixture of any second or less
joy; nor any return of foregone and mortal affection towards friends, kindred, or children. Of whom whether we shall retain any particular knowledge, or in any sort distinguish them, no man can assure us; and the wisest men doubt. But on the contrary, if a divine life retain any of those faculties which the soul exercised in a mortal body, we shall not at that time so divide the joys of Heaven, as to cast any part thereof on the memory of their felicities which remain in the world. No, be their estates greater than ever the world gave, we shall (by the difference known unto us) even detest their consideration. And whatsoever comfort shall remain of all forepast, the same will consist in the charity which we exercised living; and in that piety, justice, and firm faith, for which it pleased the infinite mercy of God to accept of us, and receive us. Shall we therefore value honor and riches at nothing? and neglect them, as unnecessary and vain? Certainly no. For that infinite wisdom of God, which hath distinguished his angels by degrees; which hath given greater and less light and beauty to heavenly bodies; which hath made differences between beasts and birds; created the eagle and the fly, the cedar and the shrub; and among stones, given the fairest tincture to the ruby, and the quickest light to the diamond; hath also ordained kings, dukes, or leaders of the people, magistrates, judges, and other degrees among men. And as honor is left to posterity, for a mark and ensign of the virtue and understanding of their ancestors: so (seeing Siracides preferreth death before beggary: and that titles, without proportionable estates, fall under the miserable succor of other men's pity) I account it foolishness to condemn such a care: provided, that worldly goods be well gotten, and that we raise not our own buildings out of other men's ruins. For, as Plato doth first prefer the
perfection of bodily health; secondly, the form and beauty; and thirdly, "Divitias nulla fraude quaesitas":[15] so Jeremiah cries, "Woe unto them that erect their houses by unrighteousness, and their chambers without equity": and Isaiah the same, "Woe to those that spoil and were not spoiled." And it was out of the true wisdom of Solomon, that he commandeth us, "not to drink the wine of violence; not to lie in wait for blood, and not to swallow them up alive, whose riches we covet: for such are the ways (saith he) of everyone that is greedy of gain."

And if we could afford ourselves but so much leisure as to consider, that he which hath most in the world, hath, in respect of the world, nothing in it: and that he which hath the longest time lent him to live in it, hath yet no proportion at all therein, setting it either by that which is past, when we were not, or by that time which is to come, in which we shall abide forever: I say, if both, to wit, our proportion in the world, and our time in the world, differ not much from that which is nothing; it is not out of any excellency of understanding, that we so much prize the one, which hath (in effect) no being: and so much neglect the other, which hath no ending: coveting those mortal things of the world, as if our souls were therein immortal; and neglecting those things which are immortal, as if ourselves after the world were but mortal.

But let every man value his own wisdom, as he pleaseth. Let the rich man think all fools, that cannot equal his abundance: the revenger esteem all negligent, that have not trodden down their opposites; the
politician, all gross that cannot merchandise their faith: yet when we
once come in sight of the port of death, to which all winds drive us,
and when by letting fall that fatal anchor, which can never be weighed
again, the navigation of this life takes end; then it is, I say, that
our own cogitations (those sad and severe cogitations, formerly beaten
from us by our health and felicity) return again, and pay us to the
uttermost for all the pleasing passages of our lives past. It is then
that we cry out to God for mercy; then when our selves can no longer
exercise cruelty to others; and it is only then, that we are strucken
through the soul with this terrible sentence, "That God will not be
mocked." For if according to St. Peter, "The righteous scarcely be
saved: and that God spared not his angels"; where shall those appear,
who, having served their appetites all their lives, presume to think,
that the severe commandments of the all-powerful God were given but
in sport; and that the short breath, which we draw when death presseth
us, if we can but fashion it to the sound of mercy (without any kind
of satisfaction or amends) is sufficient? "O quam multi," saith
a reverend father, "cum hac spe ad aeternos labores et bella
descendunt!"[16] I confess that it is a great comfort to our friends,
to have it said, that we ended well; for we all desire (as Balaam
did) "to die the death of the righteous." But what shall we call a
disesteeming, an opposing, or (indeed) a mocking of God: if those men
do not oppose Him, disesteem Him, and mock Him, that think it enough
for God, to ask Him forgiveness at leisure, with the remainder and
last drawing of a malicious breath? For what do they otherwise,
that die this kind of well-dying, but say unto God as followeth?
"We beseech Thee, O God, that all the falsehoods, forswearings, and
treacheries of our lives past, may be pleasing unto Thee; that Thou
wilt for our sakes (that have had no leisure to do anything for Thine)
change Thy nature (though impossible,) and forget to be a just God;
that Thou wilt love injuries and oppressions, call ambition wisdom,
and charity foolishness. For I shall prejudice my son (which I am
resolved not to do) if I make restitution; and confess myself to have
been unjust (which I am too proud to do) if I deliver the oppressed."
Certainly, these wise worldlings have either found out a new God,
or made one: and in all likelihood such a leaden one, as Louis the
Eleventh wore in his cap; which when he had caused any that he feared,
or hated, to be killed, he would take it from his head and kiss it:
beseeching it to pardon him this one evil act more, and it should be
the last; which (as at other times) he did, when by the practice of a
cardinal and a falsified sacrament, he caused the Earl of Armagnac to
be stabbed to death: mockeries indeed fit to be used towards a leaden,
but not towards the ever-living God. But of this composition are all
devout lovers of the world, that they fear all that is dureless[17]
and ridiculous: they fear the plots and practises of their
opposites,[18] and their very whisperings: they fear the opinions
of men, which beat but upon shadows: they flatter and forsake the
prosperous and unprosperous, be they friends or kings: yea they dive
under water, like ducks, at every pebblestone, that is but thrown
toward them by a powerful hand: and on the contrary, they show an
obstinate and giant-like valor, against the terrible judgments of
the all-powerful God, yea they show themselves gods against God, and
slaves towards men; towards men whose bodies and consciences are alike
rotten.
Now for the rest: If we truly examine the difference of both conditions; to wit, of the rich and mighty, whom we call fortunate; and of the poor and oppressed, whom we account wretched we shall find the happiness of the one, and the miserable estate of the other, so tied by God to the very instant, and both so subject to interchange (witness the sudden downfall of the greatest princes, and the speedy uprising of the meanest persons) as the one hath nothing so certain, whereof to boast; nor the other so uncertain, whereof to bewail itself. For there is no man so assured of his honor, of his riches, health, or life; but that he may be deprived of either, or all, the very next hour or day to come. "Quid vesper vehat, incertum est," "What the evening will bring with it, it is uncertain." "And yet ye cannot tell (saith St. James) what shall be tomorrow. Today he is set up, and tomorrow he shall not be found; for he is turned into dust, and his purpose perisheth." And although the air which compasseth adversity be very obscure; yet therein we better discern God, than in that shining light which environeth worldly glory; through which, for the clearness thereof, there is no vanity which escapeth our sight. And let adversity seem what it will; to happy men ridiculous, who make themselves merry at other men's misfortunes; and to those under the cross, grievous: yet this is true, that for all that is past, to the very instant, the portions remaining are equal to either. For be it that we have lived many years, "and (according to Solomon) in them all we rejoiced;" or be it that we have measured the same length of days and therein have evermore sorrowed: yet looking back from our present being, we find both the one and the other, to wit, the joy and the woe, sailed out of sight; and death, which doth pursue us and hold us in chase, from our infancy, hath gathered it. "Quicquid aetatis
retro est, mors tenet.” “Whatsoever of our age is past, death holds it.” So as whosoever he be, to whom Fortune hath been a servant, and the Time a friend; let him but take the account of his memory (for we have no other keeper of our pleasures past), and truly examine what it hath reserved either beauty and youth, or foregone delights; what it hath saved, that it might last, of his dearest affections, or of whatever else the amorous springtime gave his thoughts of contentment, then unvaluable; and he shall find that all the art which his elder years have, can draw no other vapor out of these dissolutions, than heavy, secret, and sad sighs. He shall find nothing remaining, but those sorrows, which grow up after our fast-springing youth; overtake it, when it is at a stand; and overtopped it utterly, when it begins to wither: in so much as looking back from the very instant time, and from our now being, the poor, diseased, and captive creature, hath as little sense of all his former miseries and pains, as he, that is most blessed in common opinions, hath of his fore-passed pleasure and delights. For whatsoever is cast behind us, is just nothing: and what is to come, deceitful hope hath it: “Omnia quae eventura sunt, in incerto jacent.”[19] Only those few black swans, I must except: who having had the grace to value worldly vanities at no more than their own price; do, by retaining the comfortable memory of a well acted life, behold death without dread, and the grave without fear; and embrace both, as necessary guides to endless glory.

For myself, this is my consolation, and all that I can offer to others, that the sorrows of this life are but of two sorts: whereof the one hath respect to God, the other, to the world. In the first we
complain to God against ourselves, for our offences against Him; and
confess, "Et Tu Justus es in omnibus quae venerunt super nos." "And
Thou, O Lord, are just in all that hath befallen us." In the second we
complain to ourselves against God: as if he had done us wrong, either
in not giving us worldly goods and honors, answering our appetites: or
for taking them again from us having had them; forgetting that humble
and just acknowledgment of Job, "the Lord hath given, and the Lord
hath taken." To the first of which St. Paul hath promised blessedness;
to the second, death. And out of doubt he is either a fool, or
ungrateful to God, or both, that doth not acknowledge, how mean soever
his estate be, that the same is yet far greater than that which God
oweth him: or doth not acknowledge, how sharp soever his afflictions
be, that the same are yet far less, than those which are due unto
him. And if an heathen wise man call the adversities of the world
but "tributa vivendi," "the tributes of living;" a wise Christian man
ought to know them, and bear them, but as the tributes of offending.
He ought to bear them manlike, and resolvedly; and not as those
whining soldiers do, "qui gementes sequuntur imperatorem."[20]

For seeing God, who is the author of all our tragedies, hath written
out for us and appointed us all the parts we are to play: and hath
not, in their distribution, been partial to the most mighty princes of
the world: that gave unto Darius the part of the greatest emperor, and
the part of the most miserable beggar, a beggar begging water of an
enemy, to quench the great drought of death: that appointed Bajazet
to play the Grand Signior of the Turks in the morning, and in the same
day the footstool of Tamerlane (both which parts Valerian had also
played, being taken by Sapores): that made Belisarius play the most victorious captain, and lastly the part of a blind beggar: of which examples many thousands may be produced: why should other men, who are but as the least worms, complain of wrong? Certainly there is no other account to be made of this ridiculous world, than to resolve, that the change of fortune on the great theatre, is but as the change of garments on the less. For when on the one and the other, every man wears but his own skin, the players are all alike. Now, if any man out of weakness prize the passages of this world otherwise (for saith Petrarch, "Magni ingenii est revocare mentem a sensibus"[21]) it is by reason of that unhappy phantasy of ours, which forgeth in the brains of man all the miseries (the corporal excepted) whereunto he is subject. Therein it is, that misfortunes and adversity work all that they work. For seeing Death, in the end of the play, takes from all whatsoever Fortune or Force takes from any one; it were a foolish madness in the shipwreck of worldly things, where all sinks but the sorrow, to save it. That were, as Seneca saith, "Fortunae succumbere, quod tristius est omni fato:” "To fall under Fortune, of all other the most miserable destiny."

But it is now time to sound a retreat; and to desire to be excused of this long pursuit: and withal, that the good intent, which hath moved me to draw the picture of time past (which we call History) in so large a table, may also be accepted in place of a better reason.

The examples of divine providence, everywhere found (the first divine histories being nothing else but a continuation of such examples) have
persuaded me to fetch my beginning from the beginning of all things: to wit, Creation. For though these two glorious actions of the Almighty be so near, and (as it were) linked together, that the one necessarily implieth the other: Creation inferring Providence (for what father forsaketh the child that he hath begotten?) and Providence pre-supposing Creation: yet many of those that have seemed to excel in worldly wisdom, have gone about to disjoin this coherence; the epicure denying both Creation and Providence, but granting the world had a beginning; the Aristotelian granting Providence, but denying both the creation and the beginning.

Now although this doctrine of faith, touching the creation in time (for by faith we understand, that the world was made by the word of God), be too weighty a work for Aristotle's rotten ground to bear up, upon which he hath (notwithstanding) founded the defences and fortresses of all his verbal doctrine: yet that the necessity of infinite power, and the world's beginning, and the impossibility of the contrary even in the judgment of natural reason, wherein he believed, had not better informed him; it is greatly to be marvelled at. And it is no less strange, that those men which are desirous of knowledge (seeing Aristotle hath failed in this main point; and taught little other than terms in the rest) have so retrenched their minds from the following and overtaking of truth, and so absolutely subjected themselves to the law of those philosophical principles; as all contrary kind of teaching, in the search of causes, they have condemned either for phantastical, or curious. Both doth it follow, that the positions of heathen philosophers are undoubted grounds and
principles indeed, because so called? Or that _ipsi dixerunt_, doth
make them to be such? Certainly no. But this is true, that where
natural reason hath built anything so strong against itself, as the
same reason can hardly assail it, much less batter it down: the same
in every question of nature, and infinite power, may be approved for
a fundamental law of human knowledge. For saith Charron in his book of
wisdom, "Toute proposition humaine a autant d'auteurite quel'autre,
si la raison n'on fait la difference;" "Every human proposition hath
equal authority, if reason make not the difference," the rest being
but the fables of principles. But hereof how shall the upright and
impartial judgment of man give a sentence, where opposition and
examination are not admitted to give in evidence? And to this purpose
it was well said of Lactantius, "Sapientiam sibi adimunt, qui sine
ullo judicio inventa maiorum probant, et ab aliis pecudum more
ducuntur:" "They neglect their own wisdom, who without any judgment
approve the invention of those that forewent them; and suffer
themselves after the manner of beasts, to be led by them;" by the
advantage of which sloth and dullness, ignorance is now become so
powerful a tyrant, as it hath set true philosophy, physics, and
divinity in a pillory; and written over the first, "Contra negantem
principia;"[22] over the second, "Virtus specifica;"[23] over the
third, "Ecclesta Romana."[24]

But for myself, I shall never be persuaded, that God hath shut up all
light of learning within the lanthorn of Aristotle's brains: or that
it was ever said unto him, as unto Esdras, "_Accendam in corde tuo
Lucernam intellectus_;"[25] that God hath given invention but to the
heathen, and that they only invaded nature, and found the strength and bottom thereof; the same nature having consumed all her store, and left nothing of price to after-ages. That these and these be the causes of these and these effects, time hath taught us; and not reason: and so hath experience without art. The cheese-wife knoweth it as well as the philosopher, that sour rennet doth coagulate her milk into a curd. But if we ask a reason of this cause, why the sourness doth it? whereby it doth it? and the manner how? I think that there is nothing to be found in vulgar philosophy, to satisfy this and many other like vulgar questions. But man to cover his ignorance in the least things, who can not give a true reason for the grass under his feet, why it should be green rather than red, or of any other color; that could never yet discover the way and reason of nature's working, in those which are far less noble creatures than himself; who is far more noble than the heavens themselves: "Man (saith Solomon) that can hardly discern the things that are upon the earth, and with great labor find out the things that are before us"; that hath so short a time in the world, as he no sooner begins to learn, than to die; that hath in his memory but borrowed knowledge; in his understanding, nothing truly; that is ignorant of the essence of his own soul, and which the wisest of the naturalists (if Aristotle be he) could never so much as define, but by the action and effect, telling us what it works (which all men knew as well as he) but not what it is, which neither he, nor any else, doth know, but God that created it; ("For though I were perfect, yet I know not my soul," saith Job). Man, I say, that is but an idiot in the next cause of his own life, and in the cause of all actions of his life, will (notwithstanding) examine the art of God in creating the world; of God, who (saith Job) "is so
excellent as we know him not"; and examine the beginning of the work, which had end before mankind had a beginning of being. He will disable God's power to make a world, without matter to make it of. He will rather give the motes of the air for a cause; cast the work on necessity or chance; bestow the honor thereof on nature; make two powers, the one to be the author of the matter, the other of the form; and lastly, for want of a workman, have it eternal: which latter opinion Aristotle, to make himself the author of a new doctrine, brought into the world: and his Sectators[26] have maintained it; "parati ac conjurati, quos sequuntur, philosophorum animis invictis opiniones tueri."[27] For Hermes, who lived at once with, or soon after Moses, Zoroaster, Musaeus, Orpheus, Linus, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Melissus, Pherecydes, Thales, Cleanthes, Pythagoras, Plato, and many other (whose opinions are exquisitely gathered by Steuchius Eugubinus) found in the necessity of invincible reason, "One eternal and infinite Being," to be the parent of the universal. "Horum omnium sententia quamvis sit incerta, eodem tamen spectat, ut Providentiam unam esse consentiant: sive enim natura, sive aether, sive ratio, sive mens, sive fatalis necessitas, sive divina lex; idem est quod a nobis dicitur Deus": "All these men's opinions (saith Lactantius) though uncertain, come to this; That they agree upon one Providence; whether the same be nature, or light, or reason, or understanding, or destiny, or divine ordinance, that it is the same which we call God." Certainly, as all the rivers in the world, though they have divers risings, and divers runnings; though they sometimes hide themselves for a while under ground, and seem to be lost in sea-like lakes; do at last find, and fall into the great ocean: so after all the searches that human capacity hath, and after all
philosophical contemplation and curiosity; in the necessity of this
infinite power, all the reason of man ends and dissolves itself.

As for the others; the first touching those which conceive the matter
of the world to have been eternal, and that God did not create
the world "Exnihilo,"[28] but "ex materia praexistente";[29] the
supposition is so weak, as is hardly worth the answering. For
(saith Eusebius) "Mihi videntur qui hoc dicunt, fortunam quoque Deo
annectere," "They seem unto me, which affirm this, to give part of the
work to God, and part to Fortune"; insomuch as if God had not found
this first matter by chance, He had neither been author nor father,
nor creator, nor lord of the universal. For were the matter or chaos
eternal, it then follows, that either this supposed matter did fit
itself to God, or God accommodate Himself to the matter. For the
first, it is impossible, that things without sense could proportion
themselves to the workman's will. For the second: it were horrible to
conceive of God, that as an artificer He applied himself, according to
the proportion of matter which He lighted upon.

But let it be supposed, that this matter hath been made by any power,
not omnipotent, and infinitely wise; I would gladly learn how it came
to pass, that the same was proportionable to his intention, that was
omnipotent and infinitely wise; and no more, nor no less, than served
to receive the form of the universal. For, had it wanted anything of
what was sufficient; then must it be granted, that God created out of
nothing so much new matter, as served to finish the work of the world:
or had there been more of this matter than sufficed, then God did
dissolve and annihilate whatsoever remained and was superfluous. And this must every reasonable soul confess, that it is the same work of God alone, to create anything out of nothing, and by the same art and power, and by none other, can those things, or any part of that eternal matter, be again changed into nothing; by which those things, that once were nothing, obtained a beginning of being.

Again, to say that this matter was the cause of itself; this, of all other, were the greatest idiotism. For, if it were the cause of itself at any time; then there was also a time when itself was not: at which time of not being, it is easy enough to conceive, that it could neither procure itself, nor anything else. For to be, and not to be, at once, is impossible. "Nihil autem seipsum praecedit, neque; seipsum componit corpus": "There is nothing that doth precede itself, neither do bodies compound themselves."

For the rest, those that feign this matter to be eternal, must of necessity confess, that infinite cannot be separate from eternity. And then had infinite matter left no place for infinite form, but that the first matter was finite, the form which it received proves it. For conclusion of this part, whosoever will make choice, rather to believe in eternal deformity, or in eternal dead matter, than in eternal light and eternal life: let eternal death be his reward. For it is a madness of that kind, as wanteth terms to express it. For what reason of man (whom the curse of presumption hath not stupefied) hath doubted, that infinite power (of which we can comprehend but a kind of shadow, "quia comprehensio est intra terminos, qui infinito repugnant"[30]) hath
anything wanting in itself, either for matter of form; yea for as many
worlds (if such had been God's will) as the sea hath sands? For where
the power is without limitation, the work hath no other limitation,
than the workman's will. Yea reason itself finds it more easy for
infinite power to deliver from itself a finite world, without the help
of matter prepared; than for a finite man, a fool and dust, to change
the form of matter made to his hands. They are Dionysius his words,
"Deus in una existentia omnia praehabet"[31] and again, "Esse omnium
est ipsa divinitas, omne quod vides, et quod non vides",[32] to wit,
"causaliter",[33] or in better terms, "non tanquam forma, sed tanquam
causa universalis"[34] Neither hath the world universal closed up all
of God "For the most part of his works (saith Siracides) are hid".
Neither can the depth of his wisdom be opened, by the glorious work of
the world, which never brought to knowledge all it can, for then were
his infinite power bounded and made finite. And hereof it comes, That
we seldom entitle God the all-showing, or the all-willing, but the
Almighty, that is, infinitely able.

But now for those, who from that ground, "that out of nothing, nothing
is made," infer the world's eternity, and yet not so savage therein,
as those are, which give an eternal being to dead matter, it is true
if the word (nothing) be taken in the affirmative, and the making,
imposed upon natural agents and finite power; that out of nothing,
nothing is made. But seeing their great doctor Aristotle himself
confesseth, "quod omnes antiqui decreverunt quasi quodam return
principium, ipsumque infinitum" "That all the ancient decree a kind
of beginning, and the same to be infinite"; and a little after, more
largely and plainly, "Principium eius est nullum, sed ipsum omnium
cernit esse principium, ac omnia complecti ac regere",[35] it is
strange that this philosopher, with his followers, should rather make
choice out of falsehood, to conclude falsely, than out of truth, to
resolve truly. For if we compare the world universal, and all the
unmeasureable orbs of Heaven, and those marvellous bodies of the sun,
moon, and stars, with "ipsum infinitum": it may truly be said of them
all, which himself affirms of his imaginary "Materia prima,"[36] that
they are neither "quid, quale," nor "quantum "; and therefore to bring
finite (which hath no proportion with infinite) out of infinite ("qui
destruit omnem proportionem"[37]) is no wonder in God's power. And
therefore Anaximander, Melissus, and Empedocles, call the world
universal, but "particulam universitatis" and "infinitatis," a parcel
of that which is the universality and the infinity insel; and Plato,
but a shadow of God. But the other to prove the world's eternity,
urgeth this maxim, "that, a sufficient and effectual cause being
granted, an answerable effect thereof is also granted": inferring that
God being forever a sufficient and effectual cause of the world, the
effect of the cause should also have been forever; to wit, the world
universal. But what a strange mockery is this in so great a master,
to confess a sufficient and effectual cause of the world, (to wit,
an almighty God) in his antecedent; and the same God to be a God
restrained in his conclusion; to make God free in power, and bound in
will; able to effect, unable to determine; able to make all things,
and yet unable to make choice of the time when? For this were
impiously to resolve of God, as of natural necessity; which hath
neither choice, nor will, nor understanding; which cannot but work
matter being present: as fire, to burn things combustible. Again he
thus disputeth, that every agent which can work, and doth not work, if it afterward work, it is either thereto moved by itself, or by somewhat else: and so it passeth from power to act. But God (saith he) is immovable, and is neither moved by himself, nor by any other: but being always the same, doth always work. Whence he concludeth, if the world were caused by God, that he was forever the cause thereof: and therefore eternal. The answer to this is very easy, for that God's performing in due time that which he ever determined at length to perform, doth not argue any alteration or change, but rather constancy in him. For the same action of his will, which made the world forever, did also withhold the effect to the time ordained. To this answer, in itself sufficient, others add further, that the pattern or image of the world may be said to be eternal: which the Platonics call "spirituales mundum"[38] and do in this sort distinguish the idea and creation in time. "Spiritualis ille mundus, mundi huius exemplar, primumque Dei opus, vita aequali est architecto, fuit semper cum illo, eritque semper. Mundus autem corporalis, quod secundum opus est Dei, decedit iam ab opifice ex parte una, quia non fuit semper: retinet alteram, quia sit semper futurus": "That representative, or the intentional world (say they) the sampler of this visible world, the first work of God, was equally ancient with the architect; for it was forever with him, and ever shall be. This material world, the second work or creature of God, doth differ from the worker in this, that it was not from everlasting, and in this it doth agree, that it shall be forever to come." The first point, that it was not forever, all Christians confess: the other they understand no otherwise, than that after the consummation of this world, there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth, without any new creation of matter. But of these things
we need not here stand to argue; though such opinions be not unworthy the propounding, in this consideration, of an eternal and unchangeable cause, producing a changeable and temporal effect. Touching which point Proclus the Platonist disputeth, that the compounded essence of the world (and because compounded, therefore dissipable) is continued, and knit to the Divine Being, by an individual and inseparable power, flowing from Divine unity; and that the world's natural appetite of God showeth, that the same proceedeth from a good and understanding divine; and that this virtue, by which the world is continued and knit together, must be infinite, that it may infinitely and everlastingly continue and preserve the same. Which infinite virtue, the finite world (saith he) is not capable of, but receiveth it from the divine infinite, according to the temporal nature it hath, successively every moment by little and little; even as the whole material world is not altogether: but the abolished parts are departed by small degrees, and the parts yet to come, do by the same small degrees succeed; as the shadow of a tree in a river seemeth to have continued the same a long time in the water, but it is perpetually renewed, in the continual ebbing and flowing thereof.

But to return to them, which denying that ever the world had any beginning, withal deny that ever it shall have any end, and to this purpose affirm, that it was never heard, never read, never seen, no not by any reason perceived, that the heavens have ever suffered corruption; or that they appear any way the older by continuance; or in any sort otherwise than they were; which had they been subject to final corruption, some change would have been discerned in so long a
time. To this it is answered, that the little change as yet perceived, doth rather prove their newness, and that they have not continued so long; than that they will continue forever as they are. And if conjectural arguments may receive answer by conjectures; it then seemeth that some alteration may be found. For either Aristotle, Pliny, Strabo, Beda, Aquinas, and others, were grossly mistaken; or else those parts of the world lying within the burnt zone, were not in elder times habitable, by reason of the sun's heat, neither were the seas, under the equinoctial, navigable. But we know by experience, that those regions, so situate, are filled with people, and exceeding temperate; and the sea, over which we navigate, passable enough. We read also many histories of deluges: and how in the time of Phaeton, divers places in the world were burnt up, by the sun's violent heat.

But in a word, this observation is exceeding feeble. For we know it for certain, that stone walls, of matter mouldering and friable, have stood two, or three thousand years; that many things have been digged up out of the earth, of that depth, as supposed to have been buried by the general flood; without any alteration either of substance or figure: yea it is believed, and it is very probable, that the gold which is daily found in mines, and rocks, under ground, was created together with the earth.

And if bodies elementary, and compounded, the eldest times have not invaded and corrupted: what great alteration should we look for in celestial and quint-essential bodies? And yet we have reason to think, that the sun, by whose help all creatures are generate, doth not
in these latter ages assist nature, as heretofore. We have neither giants, such as the eldest world had; nor mighty men, such as the elder world had; but all things in general are reputed of less virtue which from the heavens receive virtue. Whence, if the nature of a preface would permit a larger discourse, we might easily fetch store of proof; as that this world shall at length have end, as that once it had beginning.

And I see no good answer that can be made to this objection: if the world were eternal, why not all things in the world eternal? If there were no first, no cause, no father, no creator, no incomprehensible wisdom, but that every nature had been alike eternal; and man more rational than every other nature: why had not the eternal reason of man provided for his eternal being in the world? For if all were equal why not equal conditions to all? Why should heavenly bodies live forever; and the bodies of men rot and die?

Again, who was it that appointed the earth to keep the center, and gave order that it should hang in the air: that the sun should travel between the tropics, and never exceed those bounds, nor fail to perform that progress once in every year: the moon to live by borrowed light; the fixed stars (according to common opinion) to be fastened like nails in a cartwheel; and the planets to wander at their pleasure? Or if none of these had power over other: was it out of charity and love, that the sun by his perpetual travel within these two circles, hath visited, given light unto, and relieved all parts
of the earth, and the creatures therein, by turns and times? Out of
doubt, if the sun have of his own accord kept this course in all
eternity, he may justly be called eternal charity and everlasting
love. The same may be said of all the stars; who being all of them
most large and clear fountains of virtue and operation, may also, be
called eternal virtues: the earth may be called eternal patience; the
moon, an eternal borrower and beggar; and man of all other the most
miserable, eternally mortal. And what were this, but to believe again
in the old play of the gods? Yea in more gods by millions, than ever
Hesiodus dreamed of. But instead of this mad folly, we see it well
enough with our feeble and mortal eyes; and the eyes of our reason
discern it better; that the sun, moon, stars, and the earth, are
limited bounded, and constrained: themselves they have not constrained
nor could. "Omne determinatum causam habet aliquam efficientem, quae
illud determinaverit:" "Everything bounded hath some efficient cause,
by which it is bounded."

Now for Nature; as by the ambiguity of this name, the school of
Aristotle hath both commended many errors unto us, and sought also
thereby to obscure the glory of the high moderator of all things,
shining in the creation, and in the governing of the world: so if the
best definition be taken out of the second of Aristotle's "Physics,"
or "primo de Coelo," or out of the fifth of his "Metaphysics"; I
say that the best is but nominal, and serving only to difference the
beginning of natural motion from artificial: which yet the Academics
open better, when they call it "a seminary strength, infused into
matter by the soul of the world": who give the first place to
Providence, the second to Fate, and but the third to Nature.

"Providentia" (by which they understand God) "dux et caput; Fatum, medium ex providentia prodiens; Natura postremum"[39] But be it what he will, or be it any of these (God excepted) or participating of all: yet that it hath choice or understanding (both which are necessarily in the cause of all things) no man hath avowed. For this is unanswerable of Lactantius, "Is autem facit aliquid, qui aut voluntatem faciendi habet, aut scientiam:" "He only can be said to be the doer of a thing, that hath either will or knowledge in the doing it."

But the will and science of Nature, are in these words truly expressed by Ficinus: "Potest ubique Natura, vel per diversa media, vel ex diversis materiis, diversa facere: sublatas vero mediorum materiatumque diversitate, vel unicum, vel similimum operatur, neque potest quando adest materia non operari"; "It is the power of Nature by the diversity of means, or out of diversity of matter, to produce divers things: but taking away the diversity of means, and the diversity of matter, it then works but one or the like work; neither can it but work, matter being present." Now if Nature made choice of diversity of matter, to work all these variable works of heaven and earth, it had then both understanding and will; it had counsel to begin; reason to dispose; virtue and knowledge to finish, and power to govern: without which all things had been but one and the same: all of the matter of heaven; or all of the matter of earth. And if we grant Nature this will, and this understanding, this course, reason, and power: "Cur Natura potius quam Deus nominetur?" "Why should we then call such a
cause rather Nature, than God?" "God, of whom all men have notion, and give the first and highest place to divine power": "Omnes homines notionem deorum habent, omnesque summun locum divino cuidam numini assignant." And this I say in short; that it is a true effect of true reason in man (were there no authority more binding than reason) to acknowledge and adore the first and most sublime power. "Vera philosophia, est ascensus ab his quae fluunt, et oriuntur, et occidunt, ad ea quae vera sunt, et semper eadem": "True philosophy, is an ascending from the things which flow, and arise, and fall, to the things that are forever the same."

For the rest; I do also account it not the meanest, but an impiety monstrous, to confound God and Nature; be it but in terms. For it is God, that only disposeth of all things according to His own will, and maketh of one earth, vessels of honor and dishonor. It is Nature that can dispose of nothing, but according to the will of the matter wherein it worketh. It is God that commandeth all: it is Nature that is obedient to all: it is God that doth good unto all, knowing and loving the good He doth: It is Nature, that secondarily doth also good, but it neither knoweth nor loveth the good it doth. It is God, that hath all things in Himself: Nature, nothing in itself. It is God, which is the Father, and hath begotten all things: it is Nature, which is begotten by all things, in which it liveth and laboreth; for by itself it existeth not. For shall we say, that it is out of affection to the earth, that heavy things fall towards it? Shall we call it reason, which doth conduct every river into the salt sea? Shall we term it knowledge in fire, that makes it to consume combustible
matter? If it be affection, reason, and knowledge in these; by the same affection, reason, and knowledge it is, that Nature worketh.

And therefore seeing all things work as they do, (call it by Form, or Nature, or by what you please) yet because they work by an impulsion, which they cannot resist, or by a faculty, infused by the supremest power; we are neither to wonder at, nor to worship, the faculty that worketh, nor the creature wherein it worketh. But herein lies the wonder: and to him is the worship due, who hath created such a nature in things, and such a faculty, as neither knowing itself, the matter wherein it worketh, nor the virtue and power which it hath; do yet work all things to their last and uttermost perfection. And therefore every reasonable man, taking to himself for a ground that which is granted by all antiquity, and by all men truly learned that ever the world had; to wit; that there is a power infinite, and eternal (which also necessity doth prove unto us, without the help of faith, and reason; without the force of authority) all things do as easily follow which have been delivered by divine letters, as the waters of a running river do successfully pursue each other from the first fountains.

This much I say it is, that reason itself hath taught us: and this is the beginning of knowledge. "Sapientia praecedit, Religio sequitur:
quia prius est Deum scire, consequens colere"; "Sapience goes before, Religion follows: because it is first to know God, and then to worship Him." This sapience Plato calleth "absoluti boni scientiam," "the science of the absolute good": and another "scientiam rerum primarum, sempiternarum, perpetuarum"[40] For "faith (saith Isidore) is not
extorted by violence; but by reason and examples persuaded": "fides nequaquam vi extorquetur, sed ratione et exemplis suadetur." I confess it, that to inquire further, as to the essence of God, of His power, of His art, and by what means He created the world: or of His secret judgment, and the causes, is not an effect of reason. "Sed cum ratione insaniunt," but "they grow mad with reason," that inquire after it. For as it is no shame, nor dishonor (saith a French author) "de faire arrest au but qu'on nasceu surpasser," "for a man to rest himself there where he finds it impossible to pass on further": so whatsoever is beyond, and out of the reach of true reason, it acknowledged it to be so; as understanding itself not to be infinite, but according to the name and nature it hath, to be a teacher, that best knows the end of his own art. For seeing both reason and necessity teach us (reason, which is "pars divini spiritus in corpus humanum mersi"[41]) that the world was made by a power infinite; and yet how it was made, it cannot teach us: and seeing the same reason and necessity make us know, that the same infinite power is everywhere in the world; and yet how everywhere, it cannot inform us: our belief hereof is not weakened, but greatly strengthened, by our ignorance, because it is the same reason that tells us, that such a nature cannot be said to be God, that can be in all conceived by man.

I have already been over-long, to make any large discourse either of the parts of the following story, or in mine own excuse: especially in the excuse of this or that passage; seeing the whole is exceeding weak and defective. Among the grossest, the unsuitable division of the books, I could not know how to excuse, had I not been directed to
enlarge the building after the foundation was laid, and the first part finished. All men know that there is no great art in the dividing evenly of these things, which are subject to number and measure. For the rest, it suits well enough with a great many books of this age, which speak too much, and yet say little; "Ipsi nobis furto subducimur"; "We are stolen away from ourselves," setting a high price on all that is our own. But hereof, though a late good writer make complaint, yet shall it not lay hold on me, because I believe as he doth; that who so thinks himself the wisest man, is but a poor and miserable ignorant. Those that are the best men of war against all the vanities and fooleries of the world, do always keep the strongest guards against themselves, to defend them from themselves; from self-love, self-estimation, and self-opinion.

Generally concerning the order of the work, I have only taken counsel from the argument. For of the Assyrians, which after the downfall of Babel take up the first part, and were the first great kings of the world, there came little to the view of posterity: some few enterprises, greater in fame than faith, of Ninus and Semiramis, excepted.

It was the story of the Hebrews, of all before the Olympiads, that overcame the consuming disease of time, and preserved itself, from the very cradle and beginning to this day: and yet not so entire, but that the large discourses thereof (to which in many Scriptures we are referred) are nowhere found. The fragments of other stories, with the actions of those kings and princes which shot up here and there in the
same time, I am driven to relate by way of digression: of which we may say with Virgil: “Apparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto”; “They appear here and there floating in the great gulf of time.”

To the same first ages do belong the report of many inventions therein found, and from them derived to us; though most of the authors’ names have perished in so long a navigation. For those ages had their laws; they had diversity of government; they had kingly rule; nobility; policy in war; navigation, and all, or the most of needful trades. To speak therefore of these (seeing in a general history we should have left a great deal of nakedness, by their omission) it cannot properly be called a digression. True it is, that I have made also many others: which if they shall be laid to my charge, I must cast the fault into the great heap of human error. For seeing we digress in all the ways of our lives: yea, seeing the life of man is nothing else but digression; I may the better be excused, in writing their lives and actions. I am not altogether ignorant in the laws of history and of the kinds.

The same hath been taught by many, but no man better, and with greater brevity, than by that excellent learned gentleman, Sir Francis Bacon. Christian laws are also taught us by the prophets and apostles; and every day preached unto us. But we still make large digressions: yea, the teachers themselves do not (in all) keep the path which they point out to others.
For the rest, after such time as the Persians had wrested the Empire
from the Chaldeans, and had raised a great monarchy, producing actions
of more importance than were elsewhere to be found; it was agreeable
to the order of the story, to attend this Empire; whilst it so
flourished, that the affairs of the nations adjoining had reference
thereunto. The like observance was to be used towards the fortunes of
Greece, when they again began to get ground upon the Persians; as also
towards the affairs of Rome, when the Romans grew more mighty than the
Greeks.

As for the Medes, the Macedonians, the Sicilians, the Carthaginians,
and other nations who resisted the beginnings of the former empires,
and afterwards became but parts of their composition and enlargement;
it seemed best to remember what was known of them from their several
beginnings, in such times and places as they in their flourishing
estates opposed those monarchies, which in the end swallowed them up.
And herein I have followed the best geographers: who seldom give
names to those small brooks, whereof many, joined together, make great
rivers: till such times as they become united, and run in main stream
to the ocean sea. If the phrase be weak, and the style not everywhere
like itself: the first shows their legitimation and true parent; the
second will excuse itself upon the variety of matter. For Virgil, who
wrote his _Eclogues_, "gracili avena,"[42] used stronger pipes, when
he sounded the wars of Aeneas. It may also be laid to my charge, that
I use divers Hebrew words in my first book, and elsewhere: in which
language others may think and I myself acknowledge it, that I am
altogether ignorant: but it is true, that some of them I find in
Montanus, others in Latin characters in S. Senensis; and of the rest I have borrowed the interpretation of some of my friends. But say I had been beholding to neither, yet were it not to be wondered at, having had an eleven years’ leisure, to attain the knowledge of that, or of any other tongue; howsoever, I know that it will be said by many, that I might have been more pleasing to the reader, if I had written the story of mine own times, having been permitted to draw water as near the well-head as another. To this I answer, that whosoever in writing a modern history, shall follow truth too near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth. There is no mistress or guide, that hath led her followers and servants into greater miseries. He that goes after her too far off, loseth her sight, and loseth himself: and he that walks after her at a middle distance: I know not whether I should call that kind of course, temper,[43] or baseness. It is true, that I never travelled after men’s opinions, when I might have made the best use of them: and I have now too few days remaining, to imitate those, that either out of extreme ambition, or of extreme cowardice, or both, do yet (when death hath them on his shoulders) flatter the world, between the bed and the grave. It is enough for me (being in that state I am) to write of the eldest times: wherein also why may it not be said, that in speaking of the past, I point at the present, and tax the vices of those that are yet living, in their persons that are long since dead; and have it laid to my charge? But this I cannot help, though innocent. And certainly, if there be any, that finding themselves spotted like the tigers of old time, shall find fault with me for painting them over anew, they shall therein accuse themselves justly, and me falsely.
For I protest before the Majesty of God, that I malice no man under
the sun. Impossible I know it is to please all; seeing few or none are
so pleased with themselves, or so assured of themselves, by reason of
their subjection to their private passions, but that they seem divers
persons in one and the same day. Seneca hath said it, and so do I:
"Unus mihi pro populo erat";[44] and to the same effect Epicurus, "Hoc
go non multis sed tibi";[45] or (as it hath since lamentably fallen
out) I may borrow the resolution of an ancient philosopher, "Satis
est unus, satis est nullus."[46] For it was for the service of that
inestimable Prince Henry, the successive hope, and one of the greatest
of the Christian world, that I undertook this work. It pleased him to
peruse some part thereof, and to pardon what was amiss. It is now left
to the world without a master: from which all that is presented, hath
received both blows and thanks: "Eadem probamus, eadem reprehendimus:
hic exitus est omnis judicii, in quolis secundum plures datur."[47]
But these discourses are idle. I know that as the charitable will
judge charitably: so against those, "Qui gloriantur in malitia,"[48]
my present adversity hath disarmed me, I am on the ground already,
and therefore have not far to fall: and for rising again, as in the
natural privation there is no recession to habit; so it is seldom seen
in the privation politic. I do therefore forbear to style my readers
gentle, courteous, and friendly, thereby to beg their good opinions,
or to promise a second and third volume (which I also intend) if the
first receive grace and good acceptance. For that which is already
done, may be thought enough, and too much: and it is certain, let us
claw the reader with never so many courteous phrases, yet shall we
evermore be thought fools, that write foolishly. For conclusion, all
the hope I have lies in this, that I have already found more ungentle
and uncourteous readers of my love towards them, and well-deserving of
them, than ever I shall do again. For had it been otherwise, I should
hardly have had this leisure, to have made myself a fool in print.

[Footnote A: A sketch of the life of Raleigh will be found prefixed to
his "Discovery of Guiana" in the volume of "Voyages and Travels". His "History of the World" was written during his imprisonment in
the Tower of London, which lasted from 1603 to 1616. The Preface
is interesting not only as a fine piece of Elizabethan prose but as
exhibiting the attitude toward history, and the view of the relation
of history to religion and philosophy, which characterized one who
represented with exceptional vigor the typical Elizabethan man of
action and who was also a man of thought and imagination.]

[Footnote 1: Queen Elizabeth]

[Footnote 2: "An ill opinion, honorably acquired, is pleasing."]

[Footnote 3: "So you not to yourselves."]

[Footnote 4: "He increased, with the result that he is oppressed by
his greatness."]

[Footnote 5: "The insult done in scorning her beauty."
Footnote 6: "God gave to Solomon largeness of heart."--1 Kings iv. 89.

Footnote 7: Step. Pasquiere, Recherches, lib. v. cap. i.

Footnote 8: Step-mother.

Footnote 9: i.e., Protestantism

Footnote 10: Instantly.

Footnote 11: Dispossessed.

Footnote 12: "Nothing hindering."

Footnote 13: "That they are wise in a foolish matter."--Lactantius, _De falsa sapientia_, 3, 29.

Footnote 14: Augustine, _De cura pro morte_.

Footnote 15: "Wealth acquired without fraud."
[Footnote 16: "O how many go down with this hope to endless labors and wars."

[Footnote 17: Transient.]

[Footnote 18: Opponents.]

[Footnote 19: "Everything which is to come lies in uncertainty."

[Footnote 20: "Who follow their commander with groans."

[Footnote 21: "It takes great genius to call back the mind from the senses."

[Footnote 22: "Against him who denies the principles."

[Footnote 23: "Specific virtue, or power."

[Footnote 24: "The Roman Church."

[Footnote 25: "I shall light a lamp of understanding in thine heart."--IV. Esdras xiv. 25.]
Footnote 26: Followers.

Footnote 27: "Prepared and sworn to protect with unconquered minds the opinions of the philosophers whom they follow."

Footnote 28: "Out of nothing."

Footnote 29: "Out of pre-existing matter."

Footnote 30: "Because comprehension is between limits, which are opposed to infinity."

Footnote 31: "God exhibits all things in one existence"

Footnote 32: "The essence of all things, visible and invisible, is divinity itself"

Footnote 33: "Causally."

Footnote 34: "Not as form, but as universal cause"

Footnote 35: "It [i.e., the infinite] has no beginning, but itself is
perceived to be the beginning of all things, and to embrace and govern all things."

[Footnote 36: “Primal matter.”]

[Footnote 37: “Which destroys all proportion.”]

[Footnote 38: “The spiritual world.”]

[Footnote 39: “Providence, leader and head; Fate, in the middle and proceeding from Providence; Nature, last.”]

[Footnote 40: “The science of things first, eternal, perpetual.”]

[Footnote 41: “Part of the divine spirit immersed in the human body.”]

[Footnote 42: “With delicate pipe.”]

[Footnote 43: Moderation]

[Footnote 44: “To me one man stood for the people.”]

[Footnote 45: “I [have done] this not for many, but for thee.”]
FRANCIS OF VERULAM REASONED THUS WITH HIMSELF,

AND JUDGED IT TO BE FOR THE INTEREST OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS THAT THEY SHOULD BE MADE ACQUAINTED WITH HIS THOUGHTS

Being convinced that the human intellect makes its own difficulties,

not using the true helps which are at man's disposal soberly and judiciously; whence follows manifold ignorance of things, and by reason of that ignorance mischiefs innumerable; he thought all trial should be made, whether that commerce between the mind of man and the
nature of things, which is more precious than anything on earth, or
at least than anything that is of the earth, might by any means be
restored to its perfect and original condition, or if that may not be,
yet reduced to a better condition than that in which it now is. Now
that the errors which have hitherto prevailed, and which will prevail
forever, should (if the mind be left to go its own way), either by
the natural force of the understanding or by help of the aids and
instruments of Logic, one by one correct themselves, was a thing not
to be hoped for: because the primary notions of things which the mind
readily and passively imbibes, stores up, and accumulates (and it is
from them that all the rest flow) are false, confused, and overhastily
abstracted from the facts; nor are the secondary and subsequent
notions less arbitrary and inconstant; whence it follows that the
entire fabric of human reason which we employ in the inquisition of
nature, is badly put together and built up, and like some magnificent
structure without any foundation. For while men are occupied in
admiring and applauding the false powers of the mind, they pass by and
throw away those true powers, which, if it be supplied with the proper
aids and can itself be content to wait upon nature instead of vainly
affecting to overrule her, are within its reach. There was but one
course left, therefore,—to try the whole thing anew upon a better
plan, and to commence a total reconstruction of sciences, arts, and
all human knowledge, raised upon the proper foundations. And this,
though in the project and undertaking it may seem a thing infinite and
beyond the powers of man, yet when it comes to be dealt with it will
be found sound and sober, more so than what has been done hitherto.
For of this there is some issue; whereas in what is now done in the
matter of science there is only a whirling round about, and perpetual
agitation, ending where it began. And although he was well aware how solitary an enterprise it is, and how hard a thing to win faith and credit for, nevertheless he was resolved not to abandon either it or himself; nor to be deterred from trying and entering upon that one path which is alone open to the human mind. For better it is to make a beginning of that which may lead to something, than to engage in a perpetual struggle and pursuit in courses which have no exit. And certainly the two ways of contemplation are much like those two ways of action, so much celebrated, in this— that the one, arduous and difficult in the beginning, leads out at last into the open country; while the other, seeming at first sight easy and free from obstruction, leads to pathless and precipitous places.

Moreover, because he knew not how long it might be before these things would occur to any one else, judging especially from this, that he has found no man hitherto who has applied his mind to the like, he resolved to publish at once so much as he has been able to complete. The cause of which haste was not ambition for himself, but solicitude for the work; that in case of his death there might remain some outline and project of that which he had conceived, and some evidence likewise of his honest mind and inclination towards the benefit of the human race. Certain it is that all other ambition whatsoever seemed poor in his eyes compared with the work which he had in hand; seeing that the matter at issue is either nothing, or a thing so great that it may well be content with its own merit, without seeking other recompence.
[Footnote A: A sketch of Bacon's life will be found prefixed to his "Essays" in another volume of the Harvard Classics. His "Instauratio Magna" or "Great Renewal," the great work by which he hoped to create a scientific revolution and deliver mankind from Aristotelianism, was left far from complete; but the nature of his scheme and the scale on which it was planned are indicated in these Prefaces, which are typical both of the man and of the age in which he lived.]

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

TO THE INSTAURATIO MAGNA

TO OUR MOST GRACIOUS AND MIGHTY PRINCE AND LORD

JAMES

BY THE GRACE OF GOD OF GREAT BRITAIN, FRANCE AND IRELAND KING,
DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, ETC.

_Most Gracious and Mighty King_,

Your Majesty may perhaps accuse me of larceny, having stolen from your affairs so much time as was required for this work. I know not what to say for myself. For of time there can be no restitution, unless it be
that what has been abstracted from your business may perhaps go to the
memory of your name and the honour of your age; if these things are
indeed worth anything. Certainly they are quite new; totally new in
their very kind: and yet they are copied from a very ancient model;
even the world itself and the nature of things and of the mind. And to
say truth, I am wont for my own part to regard this work as a child of
time rather than of wit; the only wonder being that the first notion
of the thing, and such great suspicions concerning matters long
established, should have come into any man's mind. All the rest
follows readily enough. And no doubt there is something of accident
(as we call it) and luck as well in what men think as in what they do
or say. But for this accident which I speak of, I wish that if
there be any good in what I have to offer, it may be ascribed to
the infinite mercy and goodness of God, and to the felicity of your
Majesty's times; to which as I have been an honest and affectionate
servant in my life, so after my death I may yet perhaps, through the
kindling of this new light in the darkness of philosophy, be the means
of making this age famous to posterity; and surely to the times of the
wisest and most learned of kings belongs of right the regeneration
and restoration of the sciences. Lastly, I have a request to make--a
request no way unworthy of your Majesty, and which especially concerns
the work in hand; namely, that you who resemble Solomon in so many
things--in the gravity of your judgments, in the peacefulness of your
reign, in the largeness of your heart, in the noble variety of the
books which you have composed--would further follow his example
in taking order for the collecting and perfecting of a Natural and
Experimental History, true and severe (unincumbered with literature
and book-learning), such as philosophy may be built upon.--such, in
fact, as I shall in its proper place describe: that so at length,
after the lapse of so many ages, philosophy and the sciences may no
longer float in air, but rest on the solid foundation of experience
of every kind, and the same well examined and weighed. I have provided
the machine, but the stuff must be gathered from the facts of nature.
May God Almighty long preserve your Majesty!

Your Majesty's
Most bounden and devoted Servant,
FRANCIS VERULAM,
Chancellor.

PREFACE

TO THE INSTAURATIO MAGNA

_That the state of knowledge is not prosperous nor greatly advancing;
and that a way must be opened for the human understanding entirely
different from any hitherto known, and other helps provided, in order
that the mind may exercise over the nature of things the authority
which properly belongs to it._

It seems to me that men do not rightly understand either their store
or their strength, but overrate the one and underrate the other. Hence
it follows, that either from an extravagant estimate of the value of
the arts which they possess, they seek no further; or else from too
mean an estimate of their own powers, they spend their strength in
small matters and never put it fairly to the trial in those which
go to the main. These are as the pillars of fate set in the path of
knowledge: for men have neither desire nor hope to encourage them
to penetrate further. And since opinion of store is one of the chief
causes of want, and satisfaction with the present induces neglect
of provision for the future, it becomes a thing not only useful, but
absolutely necessary, that the excess of honour and admiration with
which our existing stock of inventions is regarded be in the very
entrance and threshold of the work, and that frankly and without
circumlocution, stripped off, and men be duly warned not to exaggerate
or make too much of them. For let a man look carefully into all that
variety of books with which the arts and sciences abound, he will
find everywhere endless repetitions of the same thing, varying in the
method of treatment, but not new in substance, insomuch that the whole
stock, numerous as it appears at first view, proves on examination to
be but scanty. And for its value and utility it must be plainly avowed
that that wisdom which we have derived principally from the Greeks is
but like the boyhood of knowledge, and has the characteristic property
of boys; it can talk, but it cannot generate; for it is fruitful of
controversies but barren of works. So that the state of learning as
it now is appears to be represented to the life in the old fable of
Scylla, who had the head and face of a virgin, but her womb was hung
round with barking monsters, from which she could not be delivered.
For in like manner the sciences to which we are accustomed have
certain general positions which are specious and flattering; but
as soon as they come to particulars, which are as the parts of
generation, when they should produce fruit and works, then arise
ccontentions and barking disputations, which are the end of the matter
and all the issue they can yield. Observe also, that if sciences of
this kind had any life in them, that could never have come to pass
which has been the case now for many ages—that they stand almost at
a stay, without receiving any augmentations worthy of the human race;
insomuch that many times not only what was asserted once is asserted
still, but what was a question once is a question still, and instead
of being resolved by discussion is only fixed and fed; and all the
tradition and succession of schools is still a succession of masters
and scholars, not of inventors and those who bring to further
perfection the things invented. In the mechanical arts we do not find
it so; they, on the contrary, as having in them some breath of life,
are continually growing and becoming more perfect. As originally
invented they are commonly rude, clumsy, and shapeless; afterwards
they acquire new powers and more commodious arrangements and
constructions; in so far that men shall sooner leave the study and
pursuit of them and turn to something else, than they arrive at the
ultimate perfection of which they are capable. Philosophy and the
intellectual sciences, on the contrary, stand like statues, worshiped
and celebrated, but not moved or advanced. Nay, they sometimes
flourish most in the hands of the first author, and afterwards
degenerate. For when men have once made over their judgments to
others' keeping, and (like those senators whom they called _Pedarii_)
have agreed to support some one person's opinion, from that time
they make no enlargement of the sciences themselves, but fall to
the servile office of embellishing certain individual authors and
increasing their retinue. And let it not be said that the sciences
have been growing gradually till they have at last reached their full stature, and so (their course being completed) have settled in the works of a few writers; and that there being now no room for the invention of better, all that remains is to embellish and cultivate those things which have been invented already. Would it were so! But the truth is that this appropriating of the sciences has its origin in nothing better than the confidence of a few persons and the sloth and indolence of the rest. For after the sciences had been in several parts perhaps cultivated and handled diligently, there has risen up some man of bold disposition, and famous for methods and short ways which people like, who has in appearance reduced them to an art, while he has in fact only spoiled all that the others had done. And yet this is what posterity like, because it makes the work short and easy, and saves further inquiry, of which they are weary and impatient. And if any one take this general acquiescence and consent for an argument of weight, as being the judgment of Time, let me tell him that the reasoning on which he relies is most fallacious and weak. For, first, we are far from knowing all that in the matter of sciences and arts has in various ages and places been brought to light and published; much less, all that has been by private persons secretly attempted and stirred, so neither the births nor the miscarriages of Time are entered in our records. Nor, secondly, is the consent itself and the time it has continued a consideration of much worth. For however various are the forms of civil politics, there is but one form of polity in the sciences; and that always has been and always will be popular. Now the doctrines which find most favour with the populace are those which are either contentious and pugnacious, or specious and empty; such, I say, as either entangle assent or tickle it. And
therefore no doubt the greatest wits in each successive age have been
forced out of their own course, men of capacity and intellect above
the vulgar having been fain, for reputation’s sake, to bow to the
judgment of the time and the multitude; and thus if any contemplations
of a higher order took light anywhere, they were presently blown out
by the winds of vulgar opinions. So that Time is like a river, which
has brought down to us things light and puffed up, while those which
are weighty and solid have sunk. Nay, those very authors who have
usurped a kind of dictatorship in the sciences and taken upon them to
lay down the law with such confidence, yet when from time to time they
come to themselves again, they fall to complaints of the subtlety
of nature, the hiding-places of truth, the obscurity of things,
the entanglement of causes, the weakness of the human mind; wherein
nevertheless they show themselves never the more modest, seeing that
they will rather lay the blame upon the common condition of man
and nature than upon themselves. And then whatever any art fails to
attain, they ever set it down upon the authority of that art itself as
impossible of attainment; and how can art be found guilty when it is
judge in its own cause? So it is but a device for exempting ignorance
from ignominy. Now for those things which are delivered and received,
this is their condition: barren of works, full of questions; in point
of enlargement slow and languid; carrying a show of perfection in
the whole, but in the parts ill filled up; in selection popular, and
unsatisfactory even to those who propound them; and therefore fenced
round and set forth with sundry artifices. And if there be any who
have determined to make trial for themselves, and put their own
strength to the work of advancing the boundaries of the sciences,
yet have they not ventured to cast themselves completely loose from
received opinions or to seek their knowledge at the fountain; but they
think they have done some great thing if they do but add and introduce
into the existing sum of science something of their own; prudently
considering with themselves that by making the addition they can
assert their liberty, while they retain the credit of modesty by
assenting to the rest. But these mediocrities and middle ways so
much praised, in deferring to opinions and customs, turn to the great
detriment of the sciences. For it is hardly possible at once to admire
an author and to go beyond him; knowledge being as water, which
will not rise above the level from which it fell. Men of this kind,
therefore, amend some things, but advance little; and improve the
condition of knowledge, but do not extend its range. Some, indeed,
there have been who have gone more boldly to work, and taking it all
for an open matter and giving their genius full play, have made a
passage for themselves and their own opinions by pulling down and
demolishing former ones; and yet all their stir has but little
advanced the matter; since their aim has been not to extend philosophy
and the arts in substance and value, but only to change doctrines and
transfer the kingdom of opinions to themselves; whereby little has
indeed been gained, for though the error be the opposite of the other,
the causes of erring are the same in both. And if there have been any
who, not binding themselves either to other men's opinions or to their
own, but loving liberty, have desired to engage others along with
themselves in search, these, though honest in intention, have been
weak in endeavour. For they have been content to follow probable
reasons, and are carried round in a whirl of arguments, and in the
promiscuous liberty of search have relaxed the severity of inquiry.
There is none who has dwelt upon experience and the facts of nature
as long as is necessary. Some there are indeed who have committed
themselves to the waves of experience, and almost turned mechanics;
yet these again have in their very experiments pursued a kind of
wandering inquiry, without any regular system of operations. And
besides they have mostly proposed to themselves certain petty tasks,
taking it for a great matter to work out some single discovery;--a
course of proceeding at once poor in aim and unskilful in design. For
no man can rightly and successfully investigate the nature of anything
in the thing itself; let him vary his experiments as laboriously as he
will, he never comes to a resting-place, but still finds something to
seek beyond. And there is another thing to be remembered; namely,
that all industry in experimenting has begun with proposing to itself
certain definite works to be accomplished, and has pursued them
with premature and unseasonable eagerness; it has sought, I say,
experiments of Fruit, not experiments of Light; not Imitating the
divine procedure, which In its first day's work created light only and
assigned to it one entire day; on which day it produced no material
work, but proceeded to that on the days following. As for those who
have given the first place to Logic, supposing that the surest helps
to the sciences were to be found in that, they have indeed most truly
and excellently perceived that the human intellect left to its own
course is not to be trusted; but then the remedy is altogether too
weak for the disease; nor is it without evil in itself. For the
Logic which is received, though it be very properly applied to civil
business and to those arts which rest in discourse and opinion, is not
nearly subtle enough to deal with nature; and in offering at what it
cannot master, has done more to establish and perpetuate error than to
open the way to truth.
Upon the whole therefore, it seems that men have not been happy hitherto either in the trust which they have placed in others or in their own industry with regard to the sciences; especially as neither the demonstrations nor the experiments as yet known are much to be relied upon. But the universe to the eye of the human understanding is framed like a labyrinth; presenting as it does on every side so many ambiguities of way, such deceitful resemblances of objects and signs, natures so irregular in their lines, and so knotted and entangled. And then the way is still to be made by the uncertain light of the sense, sometimes shining out, sometimes clouded over, through the woods of experience and particulars; while those who offer themselves for guides are (as was said) themselves also puzzled, and increase the number of errors and wanderers. In circumstances so difficult neither the natural force of man’s judgment nor even any accidental felicity offers any chance of success. No excellence of wit, no repetition of chance experiments, can overcome such difficulties as these. Our steps must be guided by a clue, and the whole way from the very first perception of the senses must be laid out upon a sure plan. Not that I would be understood to mean that nothing whatever has been done in so many ages by so great labours. We have no reason to be ashamed of the discoveries which have been made, and no doubt the ancients proved themselves in everything that turns on wit and abstract meditation, wonderful men. But as in former ages when men sailed only by observation of the stars, they could indeed coast along the shores of the old continent or cross a few small and mediterranean seas; but before the ocean could be traversed and the new world discovered, the
use of the mariner's needle, as a more faithful and certain guide,

had to be found out; in like manner the discoveries which have been

hitherto made in the arts and sciences are such as might be made by

practice, meditation, observation, argumentation,--for they lay near

to the senses, and immediately beneath common notions; but before we

can reach the remoter and more hidden parts of nature, it is necessary

that a more perfect use and application of the human mind and

intellect be introduced.

For my own part at least, in obedience to the everlasting love of

truth, I have committed myself to the uncertainties and difficulties

and solitudes of the ways, and relying on the divine assistance have

upheld my mind both against the shocks and embattled ranks of opinion,

and against my own private and inward hesitations and scruples, and

against the fogs and clouds of nature, and the phantoms flitting about

on every side; in the hope of providing at last for the present and

future generations guidance more faithful and secure. Wherein if I

have made any progress, the way has been opened to me by no other

means than the true and legitimate humiliation of the human spirit.

For all those who before me have applied themselves to the invention

of arts have but cast a glance or two upon facts and examples and

experience, and straightway proceeded, as if invention were nothing

more than an exercise of thought, to invoke their own spirits to give

them oracles. I, on the contrary, dwelling purely and constantly among

the facts of nature, withdraw my intellect from them no further than

may suffice to let the images and rays of natural objects meet in a

point, as they do in the sense of vision; whence it follows that the
strength and excellency of the wit has but little to do in the matter. And the same humility which I use in inventing I employ likewise in teaching. For I do not endeavour either by triumphs of confutation, or pleadings of antiquity, or assumption of authority, or even by the veil of obscurity, to invest these inventions of mine with any majesty; which might easily be done by one who sought to give lustre to his own name rather than light to other men's minds. I have not sought (I say) nor do I seek either to force or ensnare men's judgments, but I lead them to things themselves and the concordances of things, that they may see for themselves what they have, what they can dispute, what they can add and contribute to the common stock. And for myself, if in anything I have been either too credulous or too little awake and attentive, or if I have fallen off by the way and left the inquiry incomplete, nevertheless I so present these things naked and open, that my errors can be marked and set aside before the mass of knowledge be further infected by them; and it will be easy also for others to continue and carry on my labours. And by these means I suppose that I have established for ever a true and lawful marriage between the empirical and the rational faculty, the unkind and ill-starred divorce and separation of which has thrown into confusion all the affairs of the human family.

Wherefore, seeing that these things do not depend upon myself, at the outset of the work I most humbly and fervently pray to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, that remembering the sorrows of mankind and the pilgrimage of this our life wherein we wear out days few and evil, they will vouchsafe through my hands to endow the human
family with new mercies. This likewise I humbly pray, that things
human may not interfere with things divine, and that from the opening
of the ways of sense and the increase of natural light there may arise
in our minds no incredulity or darkness with regard to the divine
mysteries; but rather that the understanding being thereby purified
and purged of fancies and vanity, and yet not the less subject and
entirely submissive to the divine oracles, may give to faith that
which is faith's. Lastly, that knowledge being now discharged of that
venom which the serpent infused into it, and which makes the mind
of man to swell, we may not be wise above measure and sobriety, but
cultivate truth in charity.

And now having said my prayers I turn to men; to whom I have certain
salutary admonitions to offer and certain fair requests to make. My
first admonition (which was also my prayer) is that men confine the
sense within the limits of duty in respect to things divine: for the
sense is like the sun, which reveals the face of earth, but seals and
shuts up the face of heaven. My next, that in flying from this evil
they fall not into the opposite error, which they will surely do if
they think that the inquisition of nature is in any part interdicted
or forbidden. For it was not that pure and uncorrupted natural
knowledge whereby Adam gave names to the creatures according to their
propriety, which gave occasion to the fall. It was the ambitious and
proud desire of moral knowledge to judge of good and evil, to the end
that man may revolt from God and give laws to himself, which was
the form and manner of the temptation. Whereas of the sciences which
regard nature, the divine philosopher declares that "it is the glory
of God to conceal a thing, but it is the glory of the King to find
a thing out,” Even as though the divine nature took pleasure in the
innocent and kindly sport of children playing at hide and seek, and
vouchsafed of his kindness and goodness to admit the human spirit
for his playfellow at that game. Lastly, I would address one general
admonition to all; that they consider what are the true ends of
knowledge, and that they seek it not either for pleasure of the mind,
or for contention, or for superiority to others, or for profit, or
fame, or power, or any of these inferior things; but for the benefit
and use of life; and that they perfect and govern it in charity. For
it was from lust of power that the angels fell, from lust of knowledge
that man fell; but of charity there can be no excess, neither did
angel or man ever come in danger by it.

The requests I have to make are these. Of myself I say nothing; but in
behalf of the business which is in hand I entreat men to believe that
it is not an opinion to be held, but a work to be done; and to be well
assured that I am labouring to lay the foundation, not of any sect
or doctrine, but of human utility and power. Next, I ask them to deal
fairly by their own interests, and laying aside all emulations and
prejudices in favour of this or that opinion, to join in consultation
for the common good; and being now freed and guarded by the securities
and helps which I offer from the errors and impediments of the way, to
come forward themselves and take part in that which remains to be done
Moreover, to be of good hope, nor to imagine that this Instauration
of mine is a thing infinite and beyond the power of man, when it is in
fact the true end and termination of infinite error, and seeing also
that it is by no means forgetful of the conditions of mortality and humanity, (for it does not suppose that the work can be altogether completed within one generation, but provides for its being taken up by another), and finally that it seeks for the sciences not arrogantly in the little cells of human wit, but with reverence in the greater world. But it is the empty things that are vast things solid are most contracted and lie in little room. And now I have only one favour more to ask (else injustice to me may perhaps imperil the business itself)—that men will consider well how far, upon that which I must needs assert (if I am to be consistent with myself), they are entitled to judge and decide upon these doctrines of mine, inasmuch as all that premature human reasoning which anticipates inquiry, and is abstracted from the facts rashly and sooner than is fit, is by me rejected (so far as the inquisition of nature is concerned), as a thing uncertain, confused, and ill built up, and I cannot be fairly asked to abide by the decision of a tribunal which is itself on its trial.

THE PLAN OF THE INSTAURATIO MAGNA

The work is in six Parts:--

1. _The Divisions of the Sciences_.

2. _The New Organon; or Directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature_.

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3. _The Phenomena of the Universe; or a Natural and Experimental History for the foundation of Philosophy_.

4. _The Ladder of the Intellect_.

5. _The Forerunners; or Anticipations of the New Philosophy_.

6. _The New Philosophy; or Active Science_.

_The Arguments of the several Parts_.

It being part of my design to set everything forth, as far as may be, plainly and perspicuously (for nakedness of the mind is still, as nakedness of the body once was, the companion of innocence and simplicity), let me first explain the order and plan of the work. I distribute it into six parts.

The first part exhibits a summary or general description of the knowledge which the human race at present possesses. For I thought it good to make some pause upon that which is received; that thereby the old may be more easily made perfect and the new more easily approached. And I hold the improvement of that which we have to be as
much an object as the acquisition of more. Besides which it will make me the better listened to; for "He that is ignorant (says the proverb) receives not the words of knowledge, unless thou first tell him that which is in his own heart." We will therefore make a coasting voyage along the shores of the arts and sciences received; not without importing into them some useful things by the way.

In laying out the divisions of the sciences however, I take into account not only things already invented and known, but likewise things omitted which ought to be there. For there are found in the intellectual as in the terrestrial globe waste regions as well as cultivated ones. It is no wonder therefore if I am sometimes obliged to depart from the ordinary divisions. For in adding to the total you necessarily alter the parts and sections; and the received divisions of the sciences are fitted only to the received sum of them as it stands now.

With regard to those things which I shall mark down as omitted, I intend not merely to set down a simple title or a concise argument of that which is wanted. For as often as I have occasion to report anything as deficient, the nature of which is at all obscure, so that men may not perhaps easily understand what I mean or what the work is which I have in my head, I shall always (provided it be a matter of any worth) take care to subjoin either directions for the execution of such work, or else a portion of the work itself executed by myself as a sample of the whole: thus giving assistance in every case either by work or by counsel. For if it were for the sake of my reputation only
and other men's interests were not concerned in it, I would not have
any man think that in such cases merely some light and vague notion
has crossed my mind, and that the things which I desire and offer at
are no better than wishes; when they are in fact things which men may
certainly command if they will, and of which I have formed in my own
mind a clear and detailed conception. For I do not propose merely to
survey these regions in my mind, like an augur taking auspices, but to
enter them like a general who means to take possession.—So much for
the first part of the work.

* * * * *

Having thus coasted past the ancient arts, the next point is to equip
the intellect for passing beyond. To the second part therefore belongs
the doctrine concerning the better and more perfect use of human
reason in the inquisition of things, and the true helps of the
understanding: that thereby (as far as the condition of mortality and
humanity allows) the intellect may be raised and exalted, and made
capable of overcoming the difficulties and obscurities of nature. The
art which I introduce with this view (which I call _Interpretation of
Nature_) is a kind of logic; though the difference between it and
the ordinary logic is great; indeed immense. For the ordinary
logic professes to contrive and prepare helps and guards for the
understanding, as mine does; and in this one point they agree. But
mine differs from it in three points especially; viz. in the end aimed
at; in the order of demonstration; and in the starting point of the
inquiry.
For the end which this science of mine proposes is the invention not of arguments but of arts; not of things in accordance with principles, but of principles themselves; not of probable reasons, but of designations and directions for works. And as the intention is different, so accordingly is the effect; the effect of the one being to overcome an opponent in argument, of the other to command nature in action.

In accordance with this end is also the nature and order of the demonstrations. For in the ordinary logic almost all the work is spent about the syllogism. Of induction the logicians seem hardly to have taken any serious thought, but they pass it by with a slight notice, and hasten on to the formulae of disputation. I on the contrary reject demonstration by syllogism, as acting too confusedly, and letting nature slip out of its hands. For although no one can doubt that things which agree in a middle term agree with one another (which is a proposition of mathematical certainty), yet it leaves an opening for deception; which is this. The syllogism consists of propositions; propositions of words; and words are the tokens and signs of notions. Now if the very notions of the mind (which are as the soul of words and the basis of the whole structure) be improperly and over-hastily abstracted from facts, vague not sufficiently definite, faulty in short in many ways, the whole edifice tumbles. I therefore reject the syllogism; and that not only as regards principles (for to principles the logicians themselves do not apply it) but also as regards middle propositions; which, though obtainable no doubt by the syllogism,
are, when so obtained, barren of works, remote from practice, and altogether unavailable for the active department of the sciences.

Although therefore I leave to the syllogism and these famous and boasted modes of demonstration their jurisdiction over popular arts and such as are matter of opinion (in which department I leave all as it is), yet in dealing with the nature of things I use induction throughout, and that in the minor propositions as well as the major. For I consider induction to be that form of demonstration which upholds the sense, and closes with nature, and comes to the very brink of operation, if it does not actually deal with it.

Hence it follows that the order of demonstration is likewise inverted. For hitherto the proceeding has been to fly at once from the sense and particulars up to the most general propositions, as certain fixed poles for the argument to turn upon, and from these to derive the rest by middle terms a short way, no doubt, but precipitate, and one which will never lead to nature, though it offers an easy and ready way to disputation. Now my plan is to proceed regularly and gradually from one axiom to another, so that the most general are not reached till the last but then when you do come to them you find them to be not empty notions, but well defined, and such as nature would really recognise as her first principles, and such as lie at the heart and marrow of things.

But the greatest change I introduce is in the form itself of induction and the judgment made thereby. For the induction of which the logicians speak, which proceeds by simple enumeration, is a puerile
thing, concludes at hazard, is always liable to be upset by a
contradictory instance, takes into account only what is known and
ordinary, and leads to no result.

Now what the sciences stand in need of is a form of induction which
shall analyse experience and take it to pieces, and by a due process
of exclusion and rejection lead to an inevitable conclusion. And
if that ordinary mode of judgment practised by the logicians was so
laborious, and found exercise for such great wits how much more labour
must we be prepared to bestow upon this other, which is extracted not
merely out of the depths of the mind, but out of the very bowels of
nature.

Nor is this all. For I also sink the foundations of the sciences
deeper and firmer; and I begin the inquiry nearer the source than men
have done heretofore; submitting to examination those things which
the common logic takes on trust. For first, the logicians borrow the
principles of each science from the science itself; secondly, they
hold in reverence the first notions of the mind; and lastly, they
receive as conclusive the immediate informations of the sense, when
well disposed. Now upon the first point, I hold that true logic
ought to enter the several provinces of science armed with a higher
authority than belongs to the principles of those sciences themselves,
and ought to call those putative principles to account until they
are fully established. Then with regard to the first notions of the
intellect; there is not one of the impressions taken by the intellect
when left to go its own way, but I hold it for suspected, and no
way established, until it has submitted to a new trial and a fresh
judgment has been thereupon pronounced. And lastly, the information
of the sense itself I sift and examine in many ways. For certain it
is that the senses deceive; but then at the same time they supply the
means of discovering their own errors; only the errors are here, the
means of discovery are to seek.

The sense fails in two ways. Sometimes it gives no information,
sometimes it gives false information. For first, there are very many
things which escape the sense, even when best disposed and no way
obstructed; by reason either of the subtlety of the whole body, or
the minuteness of the parts, or distance of place, or slowness or else
swiftness of motion, or familiarity of the object, or other causes.
And again when the sense does apprehend a thing its apprehension is
not much to be relied upon. For the testimony and information of the
sense has reference always to man, not to the universe; and it is a
great error to assert that the sense is the measure of things.

To meet these difficulties, I have sought on all sides diligently and
faithfully to provide helps for the sense--substitutes to supply its
failures, rectifications to correct its errors; and this I endeavour
to accomplish not so much by instruments as by experiments. For the
subtlety of experiments is far greater than that of the sense itself,
even when assisted by exquisite instruments; such experiments, I mean,
as are skilfully and artificially devised for the express purpose
of determining the point in question. To the immediate and proper
perception of the sense therefore I do not give much weight; but I
contrive that the office of the sense shall be only to judge of the experiment, and that the experiment itself shall judge of the thing. And thus I conceive that I perform the office of a true priest of the sense (from which all knowledge in nature must be sought, unless men mean to go mad) and a not unskilful interpreter of its oracles; and that while others only profess to uphold and cultivate the sense, I do so in fact. Such then are the provisions I make for finding the genuine light of nature and kindling and bringing it to bear. And they would be sufficient of themselves, if the human intellect were even, and like a fair sheet of paper with no writing on it. But since the minds of men are strangely possessed and beset, so that there is no true and even surface left to reflect the genuine rays of things, it is necessary to seek a remedy for this also.

Now the idols, or phantoms, by which the mind is occupied are either adventitious or innate. The adventitious come into the mind from without; namely, either from the doctrines and sects of philosophers, or from perverse rules of demonstration. But the innate are inherent in the very nature of the intellect, which is far more prone to error than the sense is. For let men please themselves as they will in admiring and almost adoring the human mind, this is certain: that as an uneven mirror distorts the rays of objects according to its own figure and section, so the mind, when it receives impressions of objects through the sense, cannot be trusted to report them truly, but in forming its notions mixes up its own nature with the nature of things.
And as the first two kinds of idols are hard to eradicate, so idols of this last kind cannot be eradicated at all. All that can be done is to point them out, so that this insidious action of the mind may be marked and reproved (else as fast as old errors are destroyed new ones will spring up out of the ill complexion of the mind itself, and so we shall have but a change or errors, and not a clearance); and to lay it down once for all as a fixed and established maxim, that the intellect is not qualified to judge except by means of induction, and induction in its legitimate form. This doctrine then of the expurgation of the intellect to qualify it for dealing with truth, is comprised in three refutations: the refutation of the Philosophies; the refutation of the Demonstrations; and the refutation of the Natural Human Reason. The explanation of which things, and of the true relation between the nature of things and the nature of the mind, is as the strewing and decoration of the bridal chamber of the Mind and the Universe, the Divine Goodness assisting; out of which marriage let us hope (and be this the prayer of the bridal song) there may spring helps to man, and a line and race of inventions that may in some degree subdue and overcome the necessities and miseries of humanity. This is the second part of the work.

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But I design not only to indicate and mark out the ways, but also to enter them. And therefore the third part of the work embraces the Phenomena of the Universe; that is to say, experience of every kind,
and such a natural history as may serve for a foundation to build
philosophy upon. For a good method of demonstration or form of
interpreting nature may keep the mind from going astray or stumbling,
but it is not any excellence of method that can supply it with the
material of knowledge. Those however who aspire not to guess and
divine, but to discover and know; who propose not to devise mimic and
fabulous worlds of their own, but to examine and dissect the nature
of this very world itself; must go to facts themselves for
everything. Nor can the place of this labour and search and
worldwide perambulation be supplied by any genius or meditation or
argumentation; no, not if all men's wits could meet in one. This
therefore we must have, or the business must be for ever abandoned.
But up to this day such has been the condition of men in this matter,
that it is no wonder if nature will not give herself into their hands.

For first, the information of the sense itself, sometimes failing,
sometimes false; observation, careless, irregular, and led by chance;
tradition, vain and fed on rumour; practice, slavishly bent upon its
work; experiment, blind, stupid, vague, and prematurely broken off;
lastly, natural history, trivial and poor;--all these have contributed
to supply the understanding with very bad materials for philosophy and
the sciences.

Then an attempt is made to mend the matter by a preposterous subtlety
and winnowing of argument. But this comes too late, the case being
already past remedy; and is far from setting the business right
or sifting away the errors. The only hope therefore of any greater
increase or progress lies in a reconstruction of the sciences.

Of this reconstruction the foundation must be laid in natural history, and that of a new kind and gathered on a new principle. For it is in vain that you polish the mirror if there are no images to be reflected; and it is as necessary that the intellect should be supplied with fit matter to work upon, as with safeguards to guide its working. But my history differs from that in use (as my logic does) in many things,—in end and office, in mass and composition, in subtlety, in selection also and setting forth, with a view to the operations which are to follow.

For first, the object of a natural history which I propose is not so much to delight with variety of matter or to help with present use of experiments, as to give light to the discovery of causes and supply a suckling philosophy with its first food. For though it be true that I am principally in pursuit of works and the active department of the sciences, yet I wait for harvest-time, and do not attempt to mow the moss or to reap the green corn. For I well know that axioms once rightly discovered will carry whole troops of works along with them, and produce them, not here and there one, but in clusters. And that unseasonable and puerile hurry to snatch by way of earnest at the first works which come within reach, I utterly condemn and reject, as an Atalanta's apple that hinders the race. Such then is the office of this natural history of mine.
Next, with regard to the mass and composition of it: I mean it to be a
history not only of nature free and at large (when she is left to
her own course and does her work her own way)—such as that of
the heavenly bodies, meteors, earth and sea, minerals, plants,
animals,—but much more of nature under constraint and vexed; that
is to say, when by art and the hand of man she is forced out of her
natural state, and squeezed and moulded. Therefore I set down at
length all experiments of the mechanical arts, of the operative part
of the liberal arts, of the many crafts which have not yet grown into
arts properly so called, so far as I have been able to examine them
and as they conduce to the end in view. Nay (to say the plain truth)
I do in fact (low and vulgar as men may think it) count more upon this
part both for helps and safeguards than upon the other; seeing that
the nature of things betrays itself more readily under the vexations
of art than in its natural freedom.

Nor do I confine the history to Bodies; but I have thought it my
duty besides to make a separate history of such Virtues as may be
considered cardinal in nature. I mean those original passions or
desires of matter which constitute the primary elements of nature;
such as Dense and Rare, Hot and Cold, Solid and Fluid, Heavy and
Light, and several others.

Then again, to speak of subtlety: I seek out and get together a
kind of experiments much subtler and simpler than those which occur
accidentally. For I drag into light many things which no one who was
not proceeding by a regular and certain way to the discovery of causes
would have thought of inquiring after; being indeed in themselves of no great use; which shows that they were not sought for on their own account; but having just the same relation to things and works which the letters of the alphabet have to speech and words—which, though in themselves useless, are the elements of which all discourse is made up.

Further, in the selection of the relation and experiments I conceive I have been a more cautious purveyor than those who have hitherto dealt with natural history. For I admit nothing but on the faith of eyes, or at least of careful and severe examination; so that nothing is exaggerated for wonder's sake, but what I state is sound and without mixture of fables or vanity. All received or current falsehoods also (which by strange negligence have been allowed for many ages to prevail and become established) I proscribe and brand by name; that the sciences may be no more troubled with them For it has been well observed that the fables and superstitions and follies which nurses instil into children do serious injury to their minds; and the same consideration makes me anxious, having the management of the childhood as it were of philosophy in its course of natural history, not to let it accustom itself in the beginning to any vanity. Moreover, whenever I come to a new experiment of any subtlety (though it be in my own opinion certain and approved), I nevertheless subjoin a clear account of the manner in which I made it; that men knowing exactly how each point was made out, may see whether there be any error connected with it, and may arouse themselves to devise proofs more trustworthy and exquisite, if such can be found; and finally, I interpose everywhere
admonitions and scruples and cautions, with a religious care to eject, repress, and as it were exorcise every kind of phantasm.

Lastly, knowing how much the sight of man's mind is distracted by experience and history, and how hard it is at the first (especially for minds either tender or preoccupied) to become familiar with nature, I not unfrequently subjoin observations of my own, being as the first offers, inclinations, and as it were glances of history towards philosophy; both by way of an assurance to men that they will be kept for ever tossing on the waves of experience, and also that when the time comes for the intellect to begin its work, it may find everything the more ready. By such a natural history then as I have described, I conceive that a safe and convenient approach may be made to nature, and matter supplied of good quality and well prepared for the understanding to work upon.

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And now that we have surrounded the intellect with faithful helps and guards, and got together with most careful selection a regular army of divine works, it may seem that we have no more to do but to proceed to philosophy itself. And yet in a matter so difficult and doubtful there are still some things which it seems necessary to premise, partly for convenience of explanation, partly for present use.

Of these the first is to set forth examples of inquiry and invention
according to my method, exhibited by anticipation in some particular subjects; choosing such subjects as are at once the most noble in themselves among those under inquiry, and most different one from another; that there may be an example in every kind. I do not speak of those examples which are joined to the several precepts and rules by way of illustration (for of these I have given plenty in the second part of the work); but I mean actual types and models, by which the entire process of the mind and the whole fabric and order of invention from the beginning to the end, in certain subjects, and those various and remarkable, should be set as it were before the eyes. For I remember that in the mathematics it is easy to follow the demonstration when you have a machine beside you; whereas without that help all appears involved and more subtle than it really is. To examples of this kind,—being in fact nothing more than an application of the second part in detail and at large,—the fourth part of the work is devoted.

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The fifth part is for temporary use only, pending the completion of the rest; like interest payable from time to time until the principal be forthcoming. For I do not make so blindly for the end of my journey, as to neglect anything useful that may turn up by the way. And therefore I include in this fifth part such things as I have myself discovered, proved, or added,—not however according to the true rules and methods of interpretation, but by the ordinary use of the understanding in inquiring and discovering. For besides that I
hope my speculations may in virtue of my continual conversancy with
nature have a value beyond the pretensions of my wit, they will
serve in the meantime for wayside inns in which the mind may rest
and refresh itself on its journey to more certain conclusions.

Nevertheless I wish it to be understood in the meantime that they are
conclusions by which (as not being discovered and proved by the true
form of interpretation) I do not at all mean to bind myself. Nor
need any one be alarmed at such suspension of judgment, in one who
maintains not simply that nothing can be known, but only that nothing
can be known except in a certain course and way; and yet establishes
 provisionally certain degrees of assurance, for use and relief until
the mind shall arrive at a knowledge of causes in which it can
rest. For even those schools of philosophy which held the absolute
impossibility of knowing anything were not inferior to those which
took upon them to pronounce. But then they did not provide helps for
the sense and understanding, as I have done, but simply took away all
their authority: which is quite a different thing--almost the reverse.

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The sixth part of my work (to which the rest is subservient and
ministrant) discloses and sets forth that philosophy which by
the legitimate, chaste, and severe course of inquiry which I have
explained and provided is at length developed and established. The
completion however of this last part is a thing both above my strength
and beyond my hopes. I have made a beginning of the work--a beginning,
as I hope, not unimportant:--the fortune of the human race will give
the issue;--such an issue, it may be, as in the present condition of things and men's minds cannot easily be conceived or imagined. For the matter in hand is no mere felicity of speculation, but the real business and fortunes of the human race, and all power of operation. For man is but the servant and interpreter of nature: what he does and what he knows is only what he has observed of nature's order in fact or in thought; beyond this he knows nothing and can do nothing. For the chain of causes cannot by any force be loosed or broken, nor can nature be commanded except by being obeyed. And so those twin objects, human Knowledge and human Power, do really meet in one; and it is from ignorance of causes that operation fails.

And all depends on keeping the eye steadily fixed upon the facts of nature and so receiving their images simply as they are. For God forbid that we should give out a dream of our own imagination for a pattern of the world; rather may he graciously grant to us to write an apocalypse or true vision of the footsteps of the Creator imprinted on his creatures.

Therefore do thou, O Father, who gavest the visible light as the first fruits of creation, and didst breathe into the face of man the intellectual light as the crown and consummation thereof, guard and protect this work, which coming from thy goodness returneth to thy glory. Thou when thou turnedst to look upon the works which thy hands had made, sawest that all was very good, and didst rest from thy labours. But man, when he turned to look upon the work which his hands had made, saw that all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and could
find no rest therein. Wherefore if we labour in thy works with the
sweat of our brows thou wilt make us partakers of thy vision and thy
sabbath. Humbly we pray that this mind may be steadfast in us, and
that through these our hands, and the hands of others to whom thou
shalt give the same spirit, thou wilt vouchsafe to endow the human
family with new mercies.

PREFACE

TO THE NOVUM ORGANUM

Those who have taken upon them to lay down the law of nature as a
thing already searched out and understood, whether they have spoken
in simple assurance or professional affectation, have therein done
philosophy and the sciences great injury. For as they have been
successful in inducing belief, so they have been effective in
quenching and stopping inquiry; and have done more harm by spoiling
and putting an end to other men's efforts than good by their own.
Those on the other hand who have taken a contrary course, and asserted
that absolutely nothing can be known,--whether it were from hatred of
the ancient sophists, or from uncertainty and fluctuation of mind,
or even from a kind of fulness of learning, that they fell upon this
opinion,--have certainly advanced reasons for it that are not to be
despised; but yet they have neither started from true principles nor
rested in the just conclusion, zeal and affectation having carried
them much too far. The more ancient of the Greeks (whose writings
are lost) took up with better judgment a position between these two extremes,--between the presumption of pronouncing on everything, and the despair of comprehending anything; and though frequently and bitterly complaining of the difficulty of inquiry and the obscurity of things, and like impatient horses champing the bit, they did not the less follow up their object and engage with Nature; thinking (it seems) that this very question,--viz. whether or no anything can be known,--was to be settled not by arguing, but by trying. And yet they too, trusting entirely to the force of their understanding, applied no rule, but made everything turn upon hard thinking and perpetual working and exercise of the mind.

Now my method, though hard to practise, is easy to explain; and it is this. I propose to establish progressive stages of certainty. The evidence of the sense, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction, I retain. But the mental operation which follows the act of sense I for the most part reject; and instead of it I open and lay out a new and certain path for the mind to proceed in, starting directly from the simple sensuous perception. The necessity of this was felt no doubt by those who attributed so much importance to Logic; showing thereby that they were in search of helps for the understanding, and had no confidence in the native and spontaneous process of the mind. But this remedy comes too late to do any good, when the mind is already, through the daily intercourse and conversation of life, occupied with unsound doctrines and beset on all sides by vain imaginations. And therefore that art of Logic, coming (as I said) too late to the rescue, and no way able to set matters
right again, has had the effect of fixing errors rather than disclosing truth. There remains but one course for the recovery of a sound and healthy condition,—namely, that the entire work of the understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself be from the very outset not left to take its own course, but guided at every step; and the business be done as if by machinery. Certainly if in things mechanical men had set to work with their naked hands, without help or force of instruments, just as in things intellectual they have set to work with little else than the naked forces of the understanding, very small would the matters have been which, even with their best efforts applied in conjunction, they could have attempted or accomplished. Now (to pause while upon this example and look in it as in a glass) let us suppose that some vast obelisk were (for the decoration of a triumph or some such magnificence) to be removed from its place, and that men should set to work upon it with their naked hands; would not any sober spectator think them mad? And if they should then send for more people, thinking that in that way they might manage it, would he not think them all the madder? And if they then proceeded to make a selection, putting away the weaker hands, and using only the strong and vigorous, would he not think them madder than ever? And if lastly, not content with this, they resolved to call in aid the art of athletics, and required all their men to come with hands, arms, and sinews well anointed and medicated according to the rules of art, would he not cry out that they were only taking pains to show a kind of method and discretion in their madness? Yet just so it is that men proceed in matters intellectual,—with just the same kind of mad effort and useless combination of forces,—when they hope great things either from the number and cooperation or from the excellency and
acuteness of individual wits; yea, and when they endeavour by Logic
(which may be considered as a kind of athletic art) to strengthen the
sinews of the understanding; and yet with all this study and endeavour
it is apparent to any true judgment that they are but applying the
naked intellect all the time; whereas in every great work to be done
by the hand of man it is manifestly impossible, without instruments
or machinery, either for the strength of each to be exerted or the
strength of all to be united.

Upon these premises two things occur to me of which, that they may
not be overlooked, I would have men reminded. First it falls out
fortunately as I think for the allaying of contradictions and
heart-burnings, that the honour and reverence due to the ancients
remains untouched and undiminished; while I may carry out my designs
and at the same time reap the fruit of my modesty. For if I should
profess that I, going the same road as the ancients, have something
better to produce, there must needs have been some comparison or
rivalry between us (not to be avoided by any art of words) in respect
of excellency or ability of wit; and though in this there would be
nothing unlawful or new (for if there be anything misapprehended by
them, or falsely laid down, why may not I, using a liberty common
to all, take exception to it?) yet the contest, however just and
allowable, would have been an unequal one perhaps, in respect of the
measure of my own powers. As it is however,—my object being to open a
new way for the understanding, a way by them untried and unknown,—the
case is altered; party zeal and emulation are at an end; and I appear
merely as a guide to point out the road; an office of small authority,
and depending more upon a kind of luck than upon any ability or
excellency. And thus much relates to the persons only. The other point
of which I would have men reminded relates to the matter itself.

Be it remembered then that I am far from wishing to interfere with
the philosophy which now flourishes, or with any other philosophy
more correct and complete than this which has been or may hereafter
be propounded. For I do not object to the use of this received
philosophy, or others like it, for supplying matter for disputation
or ornaments for discourse,—for the professor's lecture and for the
business of life. Nay more, I declare openly that for these uses the
philosophy which I bring forward will not be much available. It does
not lie in the way. It cannot be caught up in passage. It does not
flatter the understanding by conformity with preconceived notions.
Nor will it come down to the apprehension of the vulgar except by its
utility and effects.

Let there be therefore (and may it be for the benefit of both) two
streams and two dispensations of knowledge; and in like manner two
tribes or kindreds of students in philosophy,—tribes not hostile or
alien to each other, but bound together by mutual services;—let there
in short be one method for the cultivation, another for the invention,
of knowledge.

And for those who prefer the former, either from hurry or from
considerations of business or for want of mental power to take in and
embrace the other (which must needs be most men's case), I wish that they may succeed to their desire in what they are about, and obtain what they are pursuing. But if any man there be who, not content to rest in and use the knowledge which has already been discovered, aspires to penetrate further; to overcome, not an adversary in argument, but nature in action; to seek, not pretty and probable conjectures, but certain and demonstrable knowledge;--I invite all such to join themselves, as true sons of knowledge, with me, that passing by the outer courts of nature, which numbers have trodden, we may find a way at length into her inner chambers. And to make my meaning clearer and to familiarise the thing by giving it a name, I have chosen to call one of these methods or ways _Anticipation of the Mind_, the other _Interpretation of Nature_.

Moreover I have one request to make. I have on my own part made it my care and study that the things which I shall propound should not only be true, but should also be presented to men's minds, how strangely soever preoccupied and obstructed, in a manner not harsh or unpleasant. It is but reasonable however (especially in so great a restoration of learning and knowledge) that I should claim of men one favour in return; which is this; If any one would form an opinion or judgment either out of his own observation, or out of the crowd of authorities, or out of the forms of demonstration (which have now acquired a sanction like that of judicial laws), concerning these speculations of mine, let him not hope that he can do it in passage or by the by; but let him examine the thing thoroughly; let him make some little trial for himself of the way which I describe and lay out; let
him familiarise his thoughts with that subtlety of nature to which
experience bears witness; let him correct by seasonable patience and
due delay the depraved and deep-rooted habits of his mind; and when
all this is done and he has begun to be his own master, let him (if he
will) use his own judgment.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST FOLIO EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS (1623)[A]

TO THE GREAT VARIETY OF READERS

From the most able, to him that can but spell: There you are number'd.
We had rather you were weighd. Especially, when the fate of all Bookes
depends vpon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your
purses. Well! it is now publique, & you wil stand for your priuiledges
wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth
best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soeuer your
braines be, or your wisedomes, make your licence the same, and
spare not. ludge your sixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your fiue
shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the iust rates,
and welcome. But, what euer you do, Buy. Censure will not driue a
Trade, or make the lacke go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit,
and sit on the Stage at _Black-Friers_, or the _Cock-pit_, to arraigne
Playes dailie, know, these Playes haue had their triall alreadie,
and stood out all Appeals; and do now come forth quitted rather by a
Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation.
It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene wished, that
the Author himselfe had liu’d to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne
writings. But since it hath bin ordain’d otherwise, and he by death
departed from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the
office of their care, and paine to haue collected & publish’d them,
and so to haue publish’d them, as where (before) you were abus’d with
diverse stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the
frauds and stealthes of inuirous imposters, that expos’d them even
those, are now offer’d to your view cur’d, and perfect of their
limbes, and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiued
them. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gentle
expresser of it. His mind and hand went together. And what he thought,
he vttered with that easinesse, that wee haue scarse receiued from him
a blot in his papers. But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his
works, and giue them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him.
And there we hope, to your diuers capacities, you will finde enough,
both to draw, and hold you for his wit can no more lie hid then it
could be lost. Reade him, therefore and againe and againe. And if then
you doe not like him surely you are in some manifest danger, not to
vnderstand him. And so we leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if
you need can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade
your selues, and others. And such Readers we wish him.

JOHN HEMINGE HENRIE CONDELL.

[Footnote A: Little more than half of Shakespeare’s plays were
published during his lifetime; and in the publication of these there
is no evidence that the author had any hand. Seven years after his
death, John Heminge and Henry Condell, two of his fellow-actors,
collected the unpublished plays, and, in 1623, issued them along with
the others in a single volume, usually known as the First Folio.
When one considers what would have been lost had it not been for the
enterprise of these men, it seems safe to say that the volume they
introduced by this quaint and not too accurate preface, is the most
important single book in the imaginative literature of the world.]

PREFACE TO THE PHILOSOPHIAE NATURALIS PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA

BY SIR ISAAC NEWTON. (1686)[A]

Since the ancients (as we are told by Pappus) made great account of
the science of mechanics in the investigation of natural things; and
the moderns, laying aside substantial forms and occult qualities,
have endeavored to subject the phenomena of nature to the laws of
mathematics, I have in this treatise cultivated mathematics so far as
it regards philosophy. The ancients considered mechanics in a twofold
respect; as rational, which proceeds accurately by demonstration, and
practical. To practical mechanics all the manual arts belong, from
which mechanics took its name. But as artificers do not work with
perfect accuracy, it comes to pass that mechanics is so distinguished
from geometry, that what is perfectly accurate is called geometrical;
what is less so is called mechanical. But the errors are not in the
art, but in the artificers. He that works with less accuracy is an
imperfect mechanic: and if any could work with perfect accuracy, he
would be the most perfect mechanic of all; for the description of
right lines and circles, upon which geometry is founded, belongs
to mechanics. Geometry does not teach us to draw these lines, but
requires them to be drawn; for it requires that the learner should
first be taught to describe these accurately, before he enters upon
gometry; then it shows how by these operations problems may be
solved. To describe right lines and circles are problems, but not
gmetrical problems. The solution of these problems is required from
mechanics; and by geometry the use of them, when so solved, is shown;
and it is the glory of geometry that from those few principles,
FETCHED FROM WITHOUT, IT IS ABLE TO PRODUCE SO MANY THINGS. THEREFORE
GEOMETRY IS FOUNDED IN MECHANICAL PRACTICE, AND IS NOTHING BUT THAT
PART OF UNIVERSAL MECHANICS WHICH ACCURATELY PROPOSES AND DEMONSTRATES
THE ART OF MEASURING. BUT SINCE THE MANUAL ARTS ARE CHIEFLY CONVERSANT
IN THE MOVING OF BODIES, IT COMES TO PASS THAT GEOMETRY IS COMMONLY
REFERRED TO THEIR MAGNITUDES, AND MECHANICS TO THEIR MOTION. IN THIS
SENSE RATIONAL MECHANICS WILL BE THE SCIENCE OF MOTIONS RESULTING
FROM ANY FORCES WHATSOEVER, AND OF THE FORCES REQUIRED TO PRODUCE ANY
MOTIONS, ACCURATELY PROPOSED AND DEMONSTRATED. THIS PART OF MECHANICS
WAS CULTIVATED BY THE ANCESTORS IN THE FIVE POWERS WHICH RELATE TO
MANUAL ARTS, WHO CONSIDERED GRAVITY (IT NOT BEING A MANUAL POWER) NO
OTHERWISE THAN AS IT MOVED WEIGHTS BY THOSE POWERS. OUR DESIGN, NOT
RESPECTING ARTS, BUT PHILOSOPHY, AND OUR SUBJECT, NOT MANUAL, BUT
NATURAL POWERS, WE CONSIDER CHIEFLY THOSE THINGS WHICH RELATE TO
GRAVITY, LEVITY, ELASTIC FORCE, THE RESISTANCE OF FLUIDS, AND THE LIKE
FORCES, WHETHER ATTRACTIVE OR IMPULSIVE; AND THEREFORE WE OFFER THIS
work as mathematical principles of philosophy; for all the difficulty
of philosophy seems to consist in this--from the phenomena of motions
to investigate the forces of nature, and then from these forces
to demonstrate the other phenomena; and to this end the general
propositions in the first and second book are directed. In the third
book we give an example of this in the explication of the system of
the World; for by the propositions mathematically demonstrated in the
first book, we there derive from the celestial phenomena the forces
of gravity with which bodies tend to the sun and the several planets.
Then, from these forces, by other propositions which are also
mathematical, we deduce the motions of the planets, the comets, the
moon, and the sea. I wish we could derive the rest of the phenomena of
nature by the same kind of reasoning from mechanical principles; for
I am induced by many reasons to suspect that they may all depend
upon certain forces by which the particles of bodies, by some causes
hitherto unknown, are either mutually impelled towards each other, and
cohere in regular figures, or are repelled and recede from each other;
which forces being unknown, philosophers have hitherto attempted the
search of nature in vain; but I hope the principles here laid
down will afford some light either to that or some truer method of
philosophy.

In the publication of this work, the most acute and universally
learned Mr. Edmund Halley not only assisted me with his pains in
correcting the press and taking care of the schemes, but it was to
his solicitations that its becoming public is owing; for when he
had obtained of me my demonstrations of the figure of the celestial
orbits, he continually pressed me to communicate the same to the Royal Society, who afterwards, by their kind encouragement and entreaties, engaged me to think of publishing them. But after I had begun to consider the inequalities of the lunar motions, and had entered upon some other things relating to the laws and measures of gravity, and other forces; and the figures that would be described by bodies attracted according to given laws; and the motion of several bodies moving among themselves; the motion of bodies in resisting mediums; the forces, densities, and motions of mediums; the orbits of the comets, and such like; I put off that publication till I had made a search into those matters, and could put out the whole together. What relates to the lunar motions (being imperfect) I have put all together in the corollaries of proposition 66, to avoid being obliged to propose and distinctly demonstrate the several things there contained in a method more prolix than the subject deserved, and interrupt the series of the several propositions. Some things, found out after the rest, I chose to insert in places less suitable, rather than change the number of the propositions and the citations. I heartily beg that what I have here done may be read with candor; and that the defects I have been guilty of upon this difficult subject may be not so much reprehended as kindly supplied, and investigated by new endeavors of my readers.

Cambridge, Trinity College, ISAAC NEWTON.

May 8, 1686
[Footnote A: Sir Isaac Newton, the great English mathematician and physicist, was born at Woolsthorpe in 1642, and died at Kensington in 1727. He held a professorship at Cambridge, represented the University in Parliament, as master of the mint reformed the English coinage, and for twenty-five years was president of the Royal Society. His theory of the law of universal gravitation, the most important of his many discoveries, is expounded in his "Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica," usually known merely as the "Principia," from which, this Preface is translated.]

PREFACE TO FABLES,

ANCIENT AND MODERN

BY JOHN DRYDEN. (1700)[A]

'Tis with a poet as with a man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the cost beforehand, but, generally speaking, he is mistaken in his account, and reckons short of the expense he first intended. He alters his mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that convenience more, of which he had not thought when he began. So has it happened to me; I have built a house, where I intended but a lodge; yet with better success than a certain nobleman,[1] who, beginning with a dog kennel, never liv'd to finish the palace he had contriv'd.
From translating the first of Homer's _Iliads_ (which I intended as an essay to the whole work) I proceeded to the translation of the twelfth book of Ovid's _Metamorphoses_, because it contains, among other things, the causes, the beginning, and ending, of the Trojan war. Here I ought in reason to have stopp'd; but the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses lying next in my way, I could not balk 'em. When I had compass'd them, I was so taken with the former part of the fifteenth book, (which is the masterpiece of the whole _Metamorphoses_) that I enjoin'd myself the pleasing task of rend'ring it into English. And now I found, by the number of my verses, that they began to swell into a little volume; which gave me an occasion of looking backward on some beauties of my author, in his former books. There occurred to me the _Hunting of the Boar, Cinyras and Myrrha_, the good-natur'd story of _Baucis and Philemon_, with the rest, which I hope I have translated closely enough, and given them the same turn of verse which they had in the original; and this, I may say without vanity, is not the talent of every poet. He who has arriv'd the nearest to it, is the ingenious and learned Sandys, the best versifier of the former age; if I may properly call it by that name, which was the former part of this concluding century. For Spenser and Fairfax both flourish'd in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; great masters in our language, and who saw much farther into the beauties of our numbers than those who immediately followed them. Milton was the poetical son of Spenser, and Mr. Waller of Fairfax, for we have our lineal descents and clans as well as other families. Spenser more than once insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfus'd into his body, and that he was begotten
by him two hundred years after his decease. Milton has acknowledg’d to me that Spenser was his original, and many besides myself have heard our famous Waller own that he deriv’d the harmony of his numbers from the _Godfrey of Bulloign_., which was turned into English by Mr. Fairfax. But to return. Having done with Ovid for this time, it came into my mind that our old English poet, Chaucer, in many things resembled him, and that with no disadvantage on the side of the modern author, as I shall endeavor to prove when I compare them; and as I am, and always have been, studious to promote the honor of my native country, so I soon resolv’d to put their merits to the trial, by turning some of the _Canterbury Tales_ into our language, as it is now refin’d; for by this means, both the poets being set in the same light, and dress’d in the same English habit, story to be compar’d with story, a certain judgment may be made betwixt them by the reader, without obtruding my opinion on him. Or, if I seem partial to my countryman and predecessor in the laurel, the friends of antiquity are not few; and besides many of the learn’d, Ovid has almost all the beaux, and the whole fair sex, his declared patrons. Perhaps I have assum’d somewhat more to myself than they allow me, because I have adventur’d to sum up the evidence; but the readers are the jury, and their privilege remains entire, to decide, according to the merits of the cause, or if they please, to bring it to another hearing before some other court. In the mean time, to follow the thrid of my discourse, (as thoughts, according to Mr. Hobbes, have always some connection,) so from Chaucer I was led to think on Boccace, who was not only his contemporary, but also pursued the same studies; wrote novels in prose, and many works in verse; particularly is said to have invented the octave rhyme,[2] or stanza of eight lines, which ever
since has been maintain'd by the practice of all Italian writers, who are, or at least assume the title of, heroic poets. He and Chaucer, among other things, had this in common, that they refin'd their mother tongues; but with this difference, that Dante had begun to file their language, at least in verse, before the time of Boccace, who likewise receiv'd no little help from his master Petrarch. But the reformation of their prose was wholly owing to Boccace himself, who is yet the standard of purity in the Italian tongue; tho' many of his phrases are become obsolete, as in process of time it must needs happen. Chaucer (as you have formerly been told by our learn'd Mr. Rymer) first adorn'd and amplified our barren tongue from the Provencal,[3] which was then the most polish'd of all the modern languages; but this subject has been copiously treated by that great critic, who deserves no little commendation from us his countrymen. For these reasons of time, and resemblance of genius in Chaucer and Boccace, I resolv'd to join them in my present work; to which I have added some original papers of my own; which, whether they are equal or inferior to my other poems, an author is the most improper judge, and therefore I leave them wholly to the mercy of the reader. I will hope the best, that they will not be condemn'd; but if they should, I have the excuse of an old gentleman, who mounting on horseback before some ladies, when I was present, got up somewhat heavily, but desir'd of the fair spectators that they would count fourscore and eight before they judg'd him. By the mercy of God, I am already come within twenty years of his number, a cripple in my limbs; but what decays are in my mind, the reader must determine. I think myself as vigorous as ever in the faculties of my soul, excepting only my memory, which is not impair'd to any great degree; and if I lose not more of it, I have no great...
reason to complain. What judgment I had, increases rather than
diminishes; and thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast
upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject; to run
them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose. I have so
long studied and practic'd both, that they are grown into a habit, and
become familiar to me. In short, tho' I may lawfully plead some part
of the old gentleman's excuse, yet I will reserve it till I think I
have greater need, and ask no grains of allowance for the faults of
this my present work, but those which are given of course to human
frailty. I will not trouble my reader with the shortness of time in
which I writ it, or the several intervals of sickness. They who think
too well of their own performances are apt to boast in their prefaces
how little time their works have cost them, and what other business of
more importance interfere'd; but the reader will be as apt to ask the
question, why they allow'd not a longer time to make their works more
perfect, and why they had so despicable an opinion of their judges
as to thrust their indigested stuff upon them, as if they deser'd no
better.

With this account of my present undertaking, I conclude the first part
of this discourse; in the second part, as at a second sitting, tho' I
alter not the draught, I must touch the same features over again, and
change the dead coloring[4] of the whole. In general, I will only say
that I have written nothing which savors of immorality or profaneness;
at least, I am not conscious to myself of any such intention. If there
happen to be found an irreverent expression, or a thought too wanton,
they are crept into my verses thro' my inadvertency; if the searchers
find any in the cargo, let them be stay'd or forfeited, like
counterbanded goods; at least, let their authors be answerable
for them, as being but imported merchandise, and not of my own
manufacture. On the other side, I have endeavor'd to choose such
fables, both ancient and modern, as contain in each of them some
instructive moral; which I could prove by induction, but the way
is tedious, and they leap foremost into sight, without the reader's
trouble of looking after them. I wish I could affirm, with a safe
conscience, that I had taken the same care in all my former writings;
for it must be own'd, that supposing verses are never so beautiful or
pleasing, yet if they contain anything which shocks religion, or good
manners, they are at best what Horace says of good numbers without
good sense, _Versus inopes rerum, nugaeque canorae_.[5] Thus far, I
hope, I am right in court, without renouncing to my other right of
self-defense, where I have been wrongfully accus'd, and my sense
wiredrawn into blasphemy or bawdry, as it has often been by a
religious lawyer.[6] in a late pleading against the stage; in which
he mixes truth with falsehood, and has not forgotten the old rule of
calumniating strongly, that something may remain.

I resume the thrid of my discourse with the first of my translations,
which was the _First Iliad_ of Homer. If it shall please God to give
me longer life, and moderate health, my intentions are to
translate the whole _Ilias_; provided still that I meet with those
encouragements from the public which may enable me to proceed in my
undertaking with some cheerfulness. And this I dare assure the world
beforehand, that I have found by trial Homer a more pleasing task than
Virgil, (tho' I say not the translation will be less laborious). For
the Grecian is more according to my genius than the Latin poet. In
the works of the two authors we may read their manners and natural
inclinations, which are wholly different. Virgil was of a quiet,
sedate temper; Homer was violent, impetuous, and full of fire. The
chief talent of Virgil was propriety of thoughts, and ornament of
words; Homer was rapid in his thoughts, and took all the liberties,
both of numbers and of expressions, which his language, and the age
in which he liv'd, allow'd him. Homer's invention was more copious,
Virgil's more confin'd; so that if Homer had not led the way, it was
not in Virgil to have begun heroic poetry; for nothing can be more
evident than that the Roman poem is but the second part of the
_Ilias_; a continuation of the same story, and the persons already
form'd; the manners of AEneas are those of Hector superadded to those
which Homer gave him. The adventures of Ulysses in the _Odysseis_ are
imitated in the first six books of Virgil's _Aeneis_; and tho' the
accidents are not the same, (which would have argued him of a servile,
copying, and total barrenness of invention,) yet the seas were the
same, in which both the heroes wander'd; and Dido cannot be denied to
be the poetical daughter of Calypso. The six latter books of Virgil's
poem are the four and twenty _Iliads_ contracted: a quarrel occasioned
by a lady, a single combat, battles fought, and a town besieg'd. I
say not this in derogation to Virgil, neither do I contradict anything
which I have formerly said in his just praise: for his episodes are
almost wholly of his own invention; and the form which he has given to
the telling makes the tale his own, even tho' the original story had
been the same. But this proves, however, that Homer taught Virgil to
design; and if invention be the first virtue of an epic poet, then the
Latin poem can only be allow’d the second place. Mr. Hobbes, in the preface to his own bald translation of the _Ilias_ (studying poetry as he did mathematics, when it was too late)--Mr. Hobbes, I say, begins the praise of Homer where he should have ended it. He tells us that the first beauty of an epic poem consists in diction, that is, in the choice of words, and harmony of numbers; now the words are the coloring of the work, which in the order of nature is last to be consider’d. The design, the disposition, the manners, and the thoughts, are all before it: where any of those are wanting or imperfect, so much wants or is imperfect in the imitation of human life; which is in the very definition of a poem. Words, indeed, like glaring colors, are the first beauties that arise and strike the sight: but if the draught be false or lame, the figures ill disposed, the manners obscure or inconsistent, or the thoughts unnatural, then the finest colors are but daubing, and the piece is a beautiful monster at the best. Neither Virgil nor Homer were deficient in any of the former beauties; but in this last, which is expression, the Roman poet is at least equal to the Grecian, as I have said elsewhere; supplying the poverty of his language by his musical ear, and by his diligence. But to return: our two great poets, being so different in their tempers, one choleric and sanguine, the other phlegmatic and melancholic; that which makes them excel in their several ways is that each of them has follow’d his own natural inclination, as well in forming the design as in the execution of it. The very heroes shew their authors: Achilles is hot, impatient, revengeful, _Impiger, iracundus, inexorabidis, acer_[7] &c.; AEneas patient, considerate, careful of his people, and merciful to his enemies; ever submissive to the will of Heaven--_Quo fata trahunt retrahuntque seqitamur_[8]
I could please myself with enlarging on this subject, but am forc'd to defer it to a fitter time. From all I have said I will only draw this inference, that the action of Homer being more full of vigor than that of Virgil, according to the temper of the writer, is of consequence more pleasing to the reader. One warms you by degrees: the other sets you on fire all at once, and never intermits his heat. 'Tis the same difference which Longinus makes betwixt the effects of eloquence in Demosthenes and Tully. One persuades; the other commands. You never cool while you read Homer, even not in the second book (a graceful flattery to his countrymen); but he hastens from the ships, and concludes not that book till he has made you an amends by the violent playing of a new machine. From thence he hurries on his action with variety of events, and ends it in less compass than two months. This vehemence of his, I confess, is more suitable to my temper; and therefore I have translated his first book with greater pleasure than any part of Virgil; but it was not a pleasure without pains. The continual agitations of the spirits must needs be a weakening of any constitution, especially in age; and many pauses are required for refreshment betwixt the heats; the _Iliad_ of itself being a third part longer than all Virgil's works together.

This is what I thought needful in this place to say of Homer. I proceed to Ovid and Chaucer, considering the former only in relation to the latter. With Ovid ended the golden age of the Roman tongue; from Chaucer the purity of the English tongue began. The manners of the poets were not unlike: both of them were well bred, well natur'd, amorous, and libertine, at least in their writings, it may be also in
Their studies were the same, philosophy and philology. Both of them were knowing in astronomy, of which Ovid's books of the Roman feasts, and Chaucer's treatise of the Astrolabe, are sufficient witnesses. But Chaucer was likewise an astrologer, as were Virgil, Horace, Persius, and Manilius. Both writ with wonderful facility and cleerness: neither were great inventors; for Ovid only copied the Grecian fables; and most of Chaucer's stones were taken from his Italian contemporaries, or their predecessors. Boccace his _Decameron_ was first publish'd; and from thence our Englishman has borrow'd many of his _Canterbury Tales_; yet that of _Palamon and Arcite_ was written in all probability by some Italian wit in a former age, as I shall prove hereafter. The tale of Grizild was the invention of Petrarch; by him sent to Boccace; from whom it came to Chaucer. _Troilus and Cressida_ was also written by a Lombard author; but much amplified by our English translator, as well as beautified; the genius of our countrymen, in general, being rather to improve an invention, than to invent themselves; as is evident not only in our poetry, but in many of our manufactures. I find I have anticipated already, and taken up from Boccace before I come to him; but there is so much less behind; and I am of the temper of most kings, who love to be in debt, are all for present money, no matter how they pay it afterwards: besides, the nature of a preface is rambling; never wholly out of the way, nor in it. This I have learnt from the practice of honest Montaigne, and return at my pleasure to Ovid and Chaucer, of whom I have little more to say. Both of them built on the inventions of other men; yet since Chaucer had something of his own, as _The Wife of Bath's Tale, The Cock and the Fox_ which I have translated, and some others, I may justly give our countryman the precedence in
that part; since I can remember nothing of Ovid which was wholly his.

Both of them understood the manners, under which name I comprehend the passions, and, in a larger sense, the descriptions of persons, and their very habits; for an example, I see Baucis and Philemon as perfectly before me, as if some ancient painter had drawn them; and all the pilgrims in the _Canterbury Tales_, their humors, their features, and the very dress, as distinctly as if I had supp’d with them at the Tabard in Southwark; yet even there too the figures of Chaucer are much more lively, and set in a better light: which tho’ I have not time to prove, yet I appeal to the reader, and am sure he will clear me from partiality. The thoughts and words remain to be consider’d in the comparison of the two poets; and I have sav’d myself one half of that labor, by owning that Ovid liv’d when the Roman tongue was in its meridian, Chaucer in the dawning of our language; therefore that part of the comparison stands not on an equal foot, any more than the diction of Ennius and Ovid, or of Chaucer and our present English. The words are given up as a post not to be defended in our poet, because he wanted the modern art of fortifying. The thoughts remain to be consider’d, and they are to be measured only by their propriety; that is, as they flow more or less naturally from the persons describ’d, on such and such occasions. The vulgar judges, which are nine parts in ten of all nations, who call conceits and jingles wit, who see Ovid full of them, and Chaucer altogether without them, will think me little less than mad, for preferring the Englishman to the Roman: yet, with their leave, I must presume to say that the things they admire are only glittering trifles, and so far from being witty, that in a serious poem they are nauseous, because they are unnatural. Would any man who is ready to die for love
describe his passion like Narcissus? Would he think of _inopem me copia fecit_ \[11\] and a dozen more of such expressions, pour'd on the neck of one another, and signifying all the same thing? If this were wit, was this a time to be witty, when the poor wretch was in the agony of death? This is just John Littlewit in _Bartholomew Fair_ \[12\] who had a conceit (as he tells you) left him in his misery; a miserable conceit. On these occasions the poet should endeavor to raise pity; but instead of this, Ovid is tickling you to laugh. Virgil never made use of such machines, when he was moving you to commiserate the death of Dido: he would not destroy what he was building. Chaucer makes Arcite violent in his love, and unjust in the pursuit of it; yet when he came to die, he made him think more reasonably: he repents not of his love, for that had alter'd his character; but acknowledges the injustice of his proceedings, and resigns Emilia to Palamon. What would Ovid have done on this occasion? He would certainly have made Arcite witty on his deathbed. He had complain'd he was farther off from possession by being so near, and a thousand such boyisms, which Chaucer rejected as below the dignity of the subject. They who think otherwise would by the same reason prefer Lucan and Ovid to Homer and Virgil, and Martial to all four of them. As for the turn of words, in which Ovid particularly excels all poets, they are sometimes a fault, and sometimes a beauty, as they are us'd properly or improperly; but in strong passions always to be shunn'd, because passions are serious, and will admit no playing. The French have a high value for them; and I confess, they are often what they call delicate, when they are introduced with judgment; but Chaucer writ with more simplicity, and followed nature more closely, than to use them. I have thus far, to the best of my knowledge, been an upright judge betwixt the parties in
competition, not meddling with the design nor the disposition of it;
because the design was not their own, and in the disposing of it they
were equal. It remains that I say somewhat of Chaucer in particular.

In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold
him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer or the
Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense, learn'd in
all sciences, and therefore speaks properly on all subjects as he knew
what to say, so he knows also when to leave off, a continence which
is practic'd by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients,
excepting Virgil and Horace. One of our late great poets[13] is sunk
in his reputation, because he could never forgive any conceit which
came in his way, but swept like a dragnet, great and small. There
was plenty enough, but the dishes were ill sorted, whole pyramids of
sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men.
All this proceeded not from any want of knowledge, but of judgment,
neither did he want that in discerning the beauties and faults of
other poets, but only indulg'd himself in the luxury of writing, and
perhaps knew it was a fault, but hop'd the reader would not find it.
For this reason, tho' he must always be thought a great poet he is
no longer esteem'd a good writer, and for ten impressions, which his
works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred
books are scarcely purchas'd once a twelvemonth for, as my last Lord
Rochester said, tho' somewhat profanely, "Not being of God, he could
not stand."

Chaucer follow'd Nature everywhere, but was never so bold to go beyond
her, and there is a great difference of being _poeta_ and _aimis poeta_... if we may believe Catullus, as much as betwixt a modest behavior and affectation. The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us, but 'tis like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends it was _auribus istius temporis accommodata_... they who liv'd with him, and some time after him, thought it musical and it continued so even in our judgment, if compar'd with the numbers of Lydgate and Gower, his contemporaries there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, tho' not perfect.

'Tis true, I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him... for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine but this opinion is not worth confuting, 'tis so gross and obvious an error, that common sense (which is a rule in everything but matters of faith and revelation) must convince the reader that equality of numbers in every verse which we call heroic was either not known, or not always practic'd, in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses, which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronunciation can make otherwise. We can only say, that he liv'd in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first. We must be children before we grow men. There was an Ennius, and in process of time a Lucilius and a Lucretius, before Virgil and Horace; even after Chaucer there was a Spenser, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before Waller and Denham were in being: and our numbers were in their nonage till these last appear'd. I need say little of his parentage, life, and fortunes;... they are to be found at large in all the editions of his works. He was employ'd abroad and favor'd by Edward
the Third, Richard the Second, and Henry the Fourth, and was poet, as I suppose, to all three of them. In Richard's time, I doubt, he was a little dipp’d in the rebellion of the commons, and being brother-in-law to John of Ghant, it was no wonder if he follow’d the fortunes of that family, and was well with Henry the Fourth when he had depos’d his predecessor. Neither is it to be admir’d,[18] that Henry, who was a wise as well as a valiant prince, who claim’d by succession, and was sensible that his title was not sound, but was rightfully in Mortimer, who had married the heir of York; it was not to be admir’d, I say, if that great politician should be pleas’d to have the greatest wit of those times in his interests, and to be the trumpet of his praises. Augustus had given him the example, by the advice of Maecenas, who recommended Virgil and Horace to him; whose praises help’d to make him popular while he was alive, and after his death have made him precious to posterity. As for the religion of our poet, he seems to have some little bias towards the opinions of Wycliffe, after John of Ghant his patron; somewhat of which appears in the tale of Piers Plowman.[19] Yet I cannot blame him for inveighing so sharply against the vices of the clergy in his age; their pride, their ambition, their pomp, their avarice, their worldly interest, deserv’d the lashes which he gave them, both in that and in most of his _Canterbury Tales_: neither has his contemporary Boccace spar’d them. Yet both those poets liv’d in much esteem with good and holy men in orders; for the scandal which is given by particular priests reflects not on the sacred function. Chaucer's Monk, his Canon, and his Friar, took not from the character of his Good Parson. A satirical poet is the check of the laymen on bad priests. We are only to take care that we involve not the innocent with the guilty in the same
condemnation. The good cannot be too much honor’d, nor the bad too
coarsely us’d: for the corruption of the best becomes the worst. When
a clergyman is whipp’d, his gown is first taken off, by which the
dignity of his order is secur’d: if he be wrongfully accus’d, he has
his action of slander; and ‘tis at the poet’s peril if he transgress
the law. But they will tell us that all kind of satire, tho’ never so
well deser’d by particular priests, yet brings the whole order into
contempt. Is then the peerage of England anything dishonored, when a
peer suffers for his treason? If he be libel’d or any way defam’d, he
has his _scandalum magnatum_ [20] to punish the offender. They who use
this kind of argument seem to be conscious to themselves of somewhat
which has deser’d the poet’s lash, and are less concern’d for their
public capacity than for their private; at least there is pride at the
bottom of their reasoning. If the faults of men in orders are only to
be judg’d among themselves, they are all in some sort parties: for,
since they say the honor of their order is concern’d in every member
of it, how can we be sure that they will be impartial judges? How far
I may be allow’d to speak my opinion in this case, I know not; but I
am sure a dispute of this nature caus’d mischief in abundance betwixt
a king of England and an archbishop of Canterbury,[21] one standing
up for the laws of his land, and the other for the honor (as he call’d
it) of God’s Church; which ended in the murther of the prelate, and in
the whipping of his Majesty from post to pillar for his penance.
The learn’d and ingenious Dr. Drake[22] has say’d me the labour of
inquiring into the esteem and reverence which the priests have had
of old, and I would rather extend than diminish any part of it: yet
I must needs say, that when a priest provokes me without any occasion
given him, I have no reason, unless it be the charity of a Christian,
to forgive him: _prior laesit_ is justification sufficient in the civil law. If I answer him in his own language, self-defense, I am sure, must be allow'd me; and if I carry it farther, even to a sharp recrimination, somewhat may be indulg'd to human frailty. Yet my resentment has not wrought so far, but that I have followed Chaucer in his character of a holy man, and have enlarg'd on that subject with some pleasure, reserving to myself the right, if I shall think fit hereafter, to describe another sort of priests, such as are more easily to be found than the Good Parson; such as have given the last blow to Christianity in this age, by a practice so contrary to their doctrine. But this will keep cold till another time. In the mean while I take up Chaucer where I left him. He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his _Canterbury Tales_ the various manners and humors (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escap'd him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguish'd from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Bapista Porta could not have described their natures better, than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humors, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity: their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearn'd, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learn'd. Even the ribaldry of the
low characters is different: the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook are several men, and distinguished from each other, as much as the mincing Lady Prioress and the broad-speaking gap-tooth'd Wife of Bath. But enough of this: there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great-grandames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days; their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, tho' they are call'd by other names than those of Monks and Friars, and Canons, and Lady Abbesses, and Nuns: for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, tho' everything is alter'd. May I have leave to do myself the justice--since my enemies will do me none, and are so far from granting me to be a good poet, that they will not allow me so much as to be a Christian, or a moral man--may I have leave, I say, to inform my reader that I have confin'd my choice to such tales of Chaucer as savor nothing of immodesty. If I had desir'd more to please than to instruct, the Reeve, the Miller, the Shipman, the Merchant, the Sumner, and, above all, the Wife of Bath, in the prologue to her tale, would have procured me as many friends and readers, as there are beaux and ladies of pleasure in the town. But I will no more offend against good manners: I am sensible, as I ought to be, of the scandal I have given by my loose writings; and make what reparation I am able, by this public acknowledgment. If anything of this nature, or of profaneness, be crept into these poems, I am so far from defending it, that I disown it. _Totum hoc indictum volo._[25] Chaucer makes another manner of apology for his broad speaking, and Boccace makes the like; but I will follow neither of them. Our countryman, in the end of his
characters, before the _Canterbury Tales_, thus excuses the ribaldry, which is very gross in many of his novels:

But first, I pray you of your courtesy,
That ye ne arrete[26] it nought my villany,
Though that I plainly speak in this mattere
To tellen you her[27] words, and eke her chere:
Ne though I speak her words properly,
For this ye knowen as well as I,
Who shall tellen a tale after a man,
He mote rehearse as nye as ever he can:
Everich word of it been in his charge,
_All speke he never so rudely ne large._
Or else he mote tellyen his tale untrue,
Or feine things, or find words new:
He may not spare, altho he were his brother,
He mote as well say o word as another.
Christ spake himself full broad in holy writ,
And well I wote no villany is it.
Eke Plato saith, who so can him rede,
The words mote[28] been cousin to the dede.[29]

Yet if a man should have enquired of Boccace or of Chaucer, what need they had of introducing such characters, where obscene words were proper in their mouths, but very undecent to be heard; I know not what answer they could have made: for that reason such tales shall be left untold by me. You have here a specimen of Chaucer's language, which
is so obsolete that his sense is scarce to be understood; and you
have likewise more than one example of his unequal numbers, which were
mentioned before. Yet many of his verses consist of ten syllables, and
the words not much behind our present English: as for example, these
two lines, in the description of the carpenter's young wife:

Wincing she was, as is a jolly colt,
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.

I have almost done with Chaucer, when I have answer'd some objections
relating to my present work. I find some people are offended that I
have turn'd these tales into modern English; because they think them
unworthy of my pains, and look on Chaucer as a dry, old-fashion'd wit,
not worth reviving. I have often heard the late Earl of Leicester say
that Mr. Cowley himself was of that opinion; who having read him over
at my lord's request, declar'd he had no taste of him. I dare not
advance my opinion against the judgment of so great an author; but
I think it fair, however, to leave the decision to the public: Mr.
Cowley was too modest to set up for a dictator; and being shock'd
perhaps with his old style, never examin'd into the depth of his
good sense. Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond, and must first
be polish'd, ere he shines. I deny not, likewise, that, living in our
early days of poetry, he writes not always of a piece, but sometimes
mingles trivial things with those of greater moment. Sometimes also,
 tho' not often, he runs riot, like Ovid, and knows not when he has
said enough. But there are more great wits, beside Chaucer, whose
fault is their excess of conceits, and those ill sorted. An author is
not to write all he can, but only all he ought. Having observ'd this redundancy in Chaucer, (as it is an easy matter for a man of ordinary parts to find a fault in one of greater,) I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judg'd unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts. I have presumed farther, in some places, and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true luster, for want of words in the beginning of our language. And to this I was the more embolden'd, because (if I may be permitted to say it of myself) I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies. Another poet, in another age, may take the same liberty with my writings; if at least they live long enough to deserve correction. It was also necessary sometimes to restore the sense of Chaucer, which was lost or mangled in the errors of the press. Let this example suffice at present; in the story of _Palawan and Arcite_, where the temple of Diana is describ'd, you find these verses, in all the editions of our author:

There saw I Dane turned unto a tree,
I mean not the goddess Diane,
But Venus daughter, which that hight Dane;

which after a little consideration I knew was to be reformed into this sense, that Daphne, the daughter of Peneus, was turn'd into a tree. I durst not make thus bold with Ovid, lest some future Milbourne should arise, and say I varied from my author, because I understood him not.
But there are other judges, who think I ought not to have translated Chaucer into English, out of a quite contrary notion: they suppose there is a certain veneration due to his old language; and that it is little less than profanation and sacrilege to alter it. They are farther of opinion that somewhat of his good sense will suffer in this transfusion, and much of the beauty of his thoughts will infallibly be lost, which appear with more grace in their old habit. Of this opinion was that excellent person whom I mention'd, the late Earl of Leicester, who valued Chaucer as much as Mr. Cowley despis'd him. My lord dissuaded me from this attempt, (for I was thinking of it some years before his death,) and his authority prevail'd so far with me as to defer my undertaking while he liv'd, in deference to him: yet my reason was not convinc'd with what he urg'd against it. If the first end of a writer be to be understood, then as his language grows obsolete, his thoughts must grow obscure:

Multa renascentur quae nunc cecidere; cadentque,
Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi.[30]

When an ancient word for its sound and significance deserves to be reviv'd, I have that reasonable veneration for antiquity, to restore it. All beyond this is superstition. Words are not like landmarks, so sacred as never to be remov'd; customs are chang'd, and even statutes are silently repeal'd, when the reason ceases for which they were enacted. As for the other part of the argument, that his thoughts
will lose of their original beauty, by the innovation of words; in
the first place, not only their beauty, but their being is lost, where
they are no longer understood, which is the present case. I grant
that something must be lost in all transfusion, that is, in all
translations; but the sense will remain, which would otherwise be
lost, or at least be maim’d, when it is scarce intelligible; and
that but to a few. How few are there who can read Chaucer so as to
understand him perfectly! And if imperfectly, then with less profit
and no pleasure. ‘Tis not for the use of some old Saxon friends that I
have taken these pains with him: let them neglect my version, because
they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes who understand
sense and poetry as well as they, when that poetry and sense is put
into words which they understand. I will go farther, and dare to add,
that what beauties I lose in some places, I give to others which had
them not originally; but in this I may be partial to myself; let the
reader judge, and I submit to his decision. Yet I think I have just
occasion to complain of them, who, because they understand Chaucer,
would deprive the greater part of their countrymen of the same
advantage, and hoard him up, as misers do their grandam gold, only to
look on it themselves and hinder others from making use of it. In
sum, I seriously protest that no man ever had, or can have, a greater
veneration for Chaucer, than myself. I have translated some part
of his works, only that I might perpetuate his memory, or at least
refresh it, amongst my countrymen. If I have alter’d him anywhere for
the better, I must at the same time acknowledge that I could have done
nothing without him: _facile est inventis addere_[,][31] is no great
commendation; and I am not so vain to think I have deserv’d a greater.
I will conclude what I have to say of him singly, with this one
remark: a lady of my acquaintance, who keeps a kind of correspondence with some authors of the fair sex in France, has been inform'd by them, that Mademoiselle de Scudery, who is as old as Sibyl, and inspir'd like her by the same God of Poetry, is at this time translating Chaucer into modern French. From which I gather that he has been formerly translated into the old Provencal (for how she should come to understand old English I know not). But the matter of fact being true, it makes me think that there is something in it like fatality; that, after certain periods of time, the fame and memory of great wits should be renewed, as Chaucer is both in France and England. If this be wholly chance, 't is extraordinary, and I dare not call it more, for fear of being tax'd with superstition.

Boccace comes last to be consider'd, who living in the same age with Chaucer, had the same genius, and follow'd the same studies: both writ novels, and each of them cultivated his mother tongue. But the greatest resemblance of our two modern authors being in their familiar style, and pleasing way of relating comical adventures, I may pass it over, because I have translated nothing from Boccace of that nature. In the serious part of poetry, the advantage is wholly on Chaucer's side; for tho' the Englishman has borrow'd many tales from the Italian, yet it appears that those of Boccace were not generally of his own making, but taken from authors of former ages, and by him only model'd; so that what there was of invention in either of them may be judg'd equal. But Chaucer has refin'd on Boccace, and has mended the stones which he has borrowed, in his way of telling; tho' prose allows more liberty of thought, and the expression is more easy when
unconfin’d by numbers. Our countryman carries weight, and yet wins the
race at disadvantage. I desire not the reader should take my word, and
therefore I will set two of their discourses on the same subject,
in the same light, for every man to judge betwixt them. I translated
Chaucer first, and, amongst the rest, pitch’d on _The Wife of Bath’s
Tale_; not daring, as I have said, to adventure on her prologue,
because ’t is too licentious: there Chaucer introduces an old woman
of mean parentage, whom a youthful knight of noble blood was forc’d to
marry, and consequently loath’d her; the crone being in bed with him
on the wedding night, and finding his aversion, endeavors to win his
affection by reason, and speaks a good word for herself (as who could
blame her?) in hope to mollify the sullen bridegroom. She takes her
topics from the benefits of poverty, the advantages of old age and
ugliness, the vanity of youth, and the silly pride of ancestry and
titles without inherent virtue, which is the true nobility. When I had
clos’d Chaucer, I returned to Ovid, and translated some more of his
fables; and by this time had so far forgotten _The Wife of Bath’s
Tale_, that, when I took up Boccace, unawares I fell on the same
argument of preferring virtue to nobility of blood, and titles, in the
story of Sigismonda; which I had certainly avoided for the resemblance
of the two discourses, if my memory had not fail’d me. Let the reader
weigh them both; and if he thinks me partial to Chaucer, ‘t is in him
to right Boccace.

I prefer in our countryman, far above all his other stories, the noble
poem of _Palamon and Arcite_, which is of the epic kind, and perhaps
not much inferior to the _Ilias_ or the _AEneis_; the story is more
pleasing than either of them, the manners as perfect, the diction as poetical, the learning as deep and various, and the disposition full as artful; only it includes a greater length of time, as taking up seven years at least, but Aristotle has left undecided the duration of the action; which yet is easily reduc'd into the compass of a year, by a narration of what preceded the return of Palamon to Athens. I had thought for the honor of our nation, and more particularly for his, whose laurel, tho’ unworthy, I have worn after him, that this story was of English growth, and Chaucer's own; but I was undeceiv’d by Boccace; for, casually looking on the end of his seventh _Giornata_, I found Dionco (under which name he shadows himself) and Fiametta (who represents his mistress, the natural daughter of Robert, King of Naples), of whom these words are spoken: _Dionco e Fiametta gran pezza cantarono insieme d'Arcita, e di Palamone_: by which it appears that this story was written before the time of Boccace; but, the name of its author being wholly lost, Chaucer is now become an original; and I question not but the poem has receiv’d many beauties by passing thro’ his noble hands. Besides this tale, there is another of his own invention, after the manner of the Provencals, call’d _The Flower and the Leaf_ with which I was so particularly pleas’d, both for the invention and the moral, that I cannot hinder myself from recommending it to the reader.

As a corollary to this preface, in which I have done justice to others, I owe somewhat to myself: not that I think it worth my time to enter the lists with one M---- or one B---- but barely to take notice, that such men there are who have written scurrilously
against me, without any provocation. M----, who is in orders, pretends amongst the rest this quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul on priesthood: if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his part of the reparation will come to little. Let him to satisfied that he shall not be able to force himself upon me for an adversary. I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him. His own translations of Virgil have answer'd his criticisms on mine. If (as they say he has declar'd in print) he prefers the version of Ogleby to mine, the world has made him the same compliment: for 't is agreed on all hands, that he writes even below Ogleby: that, you will say, is not easily to be done; but what cannot M---- bring about? I am satisfied, however, that while he and I live together, I shall not be thought the worst poet of the age. It looks as if I had desir'd him underhand to write so ill against me; but upon my honest word I have not brib'd him to do me this service, and am wholly guiltless of his pamphlet. 'T is true, I should be glad if I could persuade him to continue his good offices, and write such another critique on anything of mine for I find by experience he has a great stroke with the reader, when he condemns any of my poems, to make the world have a better opinion of them. He has taken some pains with my poetry, but nobody will be persuaded to take the same with his. If I had taken to the Church, (as he affirms, but which was never in my thoughts,) I should have had more sense, if not more grace, than to have turn'd myself out of my benefice by writing libels on my parishioners. But his account of my manners and my principles are of a piece with his cavils and his poetry; and so I have done with him for ever.
As for the City Bard, or Knight Physician, I hear his quarrel to me is that I was the author of _Absalom and Achitophel_ which, he thinks, is a little hard on his fanatic patrons in London.

But I will deal the more civilly with his two poems, because nothing ill is to be spoken of the dead; and therefore peace be to the _manes_ of his _Arthurs_. I will only say that it was not for this noble knight that I drew the plan of an epic poem on King Arthur, in my preface to the translation of Juvenal. The guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage; and therefore he rejected them, as Dares did the whirlbats of Eryx, when they were thrown before him by Entellus. Yet from that preface he plainly took his hint: for he began immediately upon the story, tho' he had the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor but, instead of it, to traduce me in a libel.

I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has tax'd me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, of immorality; and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance. It becomes me not to draw my pen in the defense of a bad cause, when I have so often drawn it for a good one. Yet it were not difficult to prove that in many places he has perverted my meaning by his glosses, and interpreted my words into blasphemy and bawdry, of which they were not guilty. Besides that, he is too much given to horseplay in his
raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plow. I will
not say: "The zeal of God's house has eaten him up;" but I am sure it
has devoured some part of his good manners and civility. It might also
be doubted whether it were altogether zeal which prompted him to this
rough manner of proceeding: perhaps it became not one of his function
to rake into the rubbish of ancient and modern plays; a divine might
have employ'd his pains to better purpose than in the nastiness of
Plautus and Aristophanes; whose examples, as they excuse not me, so
it might be possibly supposed that he read them not without some
pleasure. They who have written commentaries on those poets, or on
Horace, Juvenal, and Martial, have explain'd some vices which, without
their interpretation, had been unknown to modern times. Neither has he
judg'd impartially betwixt the former age and us.

There is more bawdry in one play of Fletcher's, call'd _The Custom of
the Country_, than in all ours together. Yet this has been often acted
on the stage in my remembrance. Are the times so much more reform'd
now than they were five and twenty years ago? If they are, I
congratulate the amendment of our morals. But I am not to prejudice
the cause of my fellow poets, tho' I abandon my own defense: they have
some of them answer'd for themselves, and neither they nor I can think
Mr. Collier so formidable an enemy that we should shun him. He has
lost ground at the latter end of the day, by pursuing his point too
far, like the Prince of Conde at the battle of Seneffe: from immoral
plays to no plays, _ab abusu ad usum, non valet consequentia_[36]. But
being a party, I am not to erect myself into a judge. 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, B---- and M----
are only distinguish'd from the crowd by being remember'd to their
infamy:

--Demetri, teque Tigeli[37]
Discipulorum inter jubeo plorare cathedras.

[Footnote A: John Dryden (1631-1700), the great dramatic and satirical
poet of the later seventeenth century, whose translation of Virgil's
"AEneid" appears in another volume of the Harvard Classics, deserves
hardly less distinction as a prose writer than as a poet. The present
essay, prefixed to a volume of narrative poems, is largely concerned
with Chaucer, and in its genial and penetrating criticism, expressed
with characteristic clearness and vigor, can be seen the ground for
naming Dryden the first of English literary critics, and the founder
of modern prose style.]

[Footnote 1: Scott suggests that the allusion is to the Duke of
Buckingham, who was often satirized for the slow progress of his great
mansion at Chefden.]

[Footnote 2: Boccaccio did not invent this stanza, which had been used
in both French and Italian before his day, but he did constitute it
the Italian form for heroic verse.]
[Footnote 3: Rymer misled Dryden. There is no trace of Provencal influence on Chaucer.]

[Footnote 4: The foundation layer of color in a painting.]

[Footnote 5: "Verses without content, melodious trifles."--_Ars Poet_. 322.]

[Footnote 6: Jeremy Collier, in his _Short View of the Immortality and Profaneness of the Stage_, 1698.]

[Footnote 7: "Energetic, irascible, unyielding, vehement."--Horace, _Ars Poet_. 121.]

[Footnote 8: "Whithersoever the fates drag us to and fro, let us follow."--Virgil, _AEneid_, v. 709.]

[Footnote 9: The statements that follow as to Chaucer's sources are mostly not in accord with the results of modern scholarship.]

[Footnote 10: The plot of neither of these poems was original with Chaucer.]

[Footnote 11: "Plenty has made me poor."--_Meta_ iii, 466.]
[Footnote 12: By Ben Jonson.]

[Footnote 13: Cowley]

[Footnote 14: 'Too much a poet'--Martial iii 44 (not Catullus)]

[Footnote 15: Suited to the ears of that time]

[Footnote 16: Speght, whom modern scholarship has shown to be right in this matter.]

[Footnote 17: What follows on Chaucer's life is full of errors.]

[Footnote 18: Wondered at]

[Footnote 19: A spurious "Plowman's Tale" was included in the older editions of Chaucer.]

[Footnote 20: A law term for slander of a man of high rank, involving more severe punishment than ordinary slander.]

[Footnote 21: Henry II. and Thomas a Becket.]
[Footnote 22: Dr. James Drake wrote a reply to Jeremy Collier's _Short View_.]

[Footnote 23: "He did the first injury"]

[Footnote 24: A Neapolitan physician who wrote on physiognomy.]

[Footnote 25: "I wish all this unsaid."]

[Footnote 26: Reckon.]

[Footnote 27: Their.]

[Footnote 28: Must.]

[Footnote 29: The corrupt state of the text of this passage is enough to explain why Dryden found Chaucer rough.]

[Footnote 30: "Many words which have now fallen out of use shall be born again; and others which are now in honor shall fall, if custom wills it, in the force of which lie the judgement and law and rules of speech."--Horace _Ars Poet._ 70-72.]
[Footnote 31: "It is easy to add to what is already invented."]

[Footnote 32: Dionco and Fiametta sang together a long time of Arcite and Palamon.]

[Footnote 33: Not by Chaucer.]

[Footnote 34: Rev. Luke Milbourne, who had attacked Dryden's Virgil.]

[Footnote 35: Sir Richard Blackmore, who had censured Dryden for the indecency of his writings.]

[Footnote 36: "The argument from abuse to use is not valid."]

[Footnote 37: "You, Demetrius and Tigellius, I bid lament among the chairs of your scholars." Blackmore had once been a schoolmaster.--Noyes.]

PREFACE TO JOSEPH ANDREWS

BY HENRY FIELDING (1742)[A]
THE COMIC EPIC IN PROSE

As it is possible the mere English reader may have a different idea of romance with the author of these little volumes; and may consequently expect a kind of entertainment, not to be found, nor which was even intended, in the following pages; it may not be improper to premise a few words concerning this kind of writing, which I do not remember to have seen hitherto attempted in our language.

The EPIC, as well as the DRAMA, is divided into tragedy and comedy. HOMER, who was the father of this species of poetry, gave us the pattern of both these, tho' that of the latter kind is entirely lost; which Aristotle tells us, bore the same relation to comedy which his Iliad bears to tragedy. And perhaps, that we have no more instances of it among the writers of antiquity, is owing to the loss of this great pattern, which, had it survived, would have found its imitators equally with the other poems of this great original.

And farther, as this poetry may be tragic or comic, I will not scruple to say it may be likewise either in verse or prose: for tho' it wants one particular, which the critic enumerates in the constituent parts of an epic poem, namely, metre; yet, when any kind of writing contains all its other parts, such as fable, action, characters, sentiments, and diction, and is deficient in metre only, it seems, I think, reasonable to refer it to the epic; at least, as no critic hath thought proper to range it under any other head, nor to assign it a
particular name to itself.

Thus the Telemachus of the archbishop of Cambray appears to me of the epic kind, as well as the Odyssey of Homer, indeed, it is much fairer and more reasonable to give it a name common with that species from which it differs only in a single instance, than to confound it with those which it resembles in no other. Such are those voluminous works, commonly called Romances, namely Clelia, Cleopatra, Astraea, Cassandra, the Grand Cyrus, and innumerable others which contain, as I apprehend, very little instruction or entertainment.

Now, a comic romance is a comic epic-poem in prose; differing from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy: its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action, in this: that as in the one these are grave and solemn, so in the other they are light and ridiculous; it differs in its characters, by introducing persons of inferior rank, and consequently of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance sets the highest before us; lastly in its sentiments and diction; by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime. In the diction I think, burlesque itself may be sometimes admitted; of which many instances will occur in this work, as in the description of the battles, and some other places not necessary to be pointed out to the classical reader; for whose entertainment those parodies or burlesque imitations are chiefly calculated.
But tho' we have sometimes admitted this in our diction, we have carefully excluded it from our sentiments and characters; for there it is never properly introduced, unless in writings of the burlesque kind, which this is not intended to be. Indeed, no two species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque: for as the latter is ever the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural, and where our delight, if we examine it, arises from the surprising absurdity, as in appropriating the manners of the highest to the lowest, or _e converso_; so in the former, we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature, from the just imitation of which, will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to a sensible reader. And perhaps, there is one reason, why a comic writer should of all others be the least excused for deviating from nature, since it may not be always so easy for a serious poet to meet with the great and the admirable; but life everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous.

I have hinted this little, concerning burlesque; because I have often heard that name given to performances, which have been truly of the comic kind, from the author's having sometimes admitted it in his diction only; which as it is the dress of poetry, doth like the dress of men establish characters, (the one of the whole poem, and the other of the whole man), in vulgar opinion, beyond any of their greater excellences: but surely, a certain drollery in style, where characters and sentiments are perfectly natural, no more constitutes the burlesque, than an empty pomp and dignity of words, where everything
else is mean and low, can entitle any performance to the appellation of the true sublime.

And I apprehend, my Lord Shaftesbury's opinion of mere burlesque agrees with mine, when he asserts, "There is no such thing to be found in the writings of the antients." But perhaps I have less abhorrence than he professes for it: and that not because I have had some little success on the stage this way; but rather as it contributes more to exquisite mirth and laughter than any other; and these are probably more wholesome physic for the mind, and conduce better to purge away spleen, melancholy, and ill affections, than is generally imagined. Nay, I will appeal to common observation, whether the same companies are not found more full of good-humour and benevolence, after they have been sweetened for two or three hours with entertainments of this kind, than soured by a tragedy or a grave lecture.

But to illustrate all this by another science, in which, perhaps, we shall see the distinction more clearly and plainly: let us examine the works of a comic history-painter, with those performances which the Italians call _Caricatura_, where we shall find the greatest excellence of the former to consist in the exactest copy of nature, insomuch, that a judicious eye instantly rejects anything _outre_, any liberty which the painter hath taken with the features of that _alma mater_. Whereas in the _Caricatura_ we allow all licence. Its aim is to exhibit monsters, not men, and all distortions and exaggerations whatever are within its proper province.
Now what Caricatura is in painting Burlesque is in writing, and in the same manner the comic writer and painter correlate to each other. And here I shall observe, that as in the former, the painter seems to have the advantage, so it is in the latter infinitely on the side of the writer, for the Monstrous is much easier to paint than describe, and the Ridiculous to describe than paint.

And tho’ perhaps this latter species doth not in either science so strongly affect and agitate the muscles as the other, yet it will be owned I believe, that a more rational and useful pleasure arises to us from it. He who should call the ingenious Hogarth a burlesque painter, would, in my opinion, do him very little honour: for sure it is much easier, much less the subject of admiration, to paint a man with a nose, or any other feature of a preposterous size, or to expose him in some absurd or monstrous attitude, than to express the affections of men on canvas. It hath been thought a vast commendation of a painter to say his figures _seem to breathe_, but surely it is a much greater and nobler applause, _that they appear to think_.

But to return The Ridiculous only, as I have before said, falls within my province in the present work. Nor will some explanation of this word be thought impertinent by the reader, if he considers how wonderfully it hath been mistaken, even by writers who have profess’d it; for to what but such a mistake, can we attribute the many attempts to ridicule the blackest villainies, and what is yet worse the most dreadful calamities? What could exceed the absurdity of an author, who
should write the comedy of Nero, with the merry incident of ripping up his mother's belly, or what would give a greater shock to humanity than an attempt to expose the miseries of poverty and distress to ridicule? And yet, the reader will not want much learning to suggest such instances to himself.

Besides, it may seem remarkable, that Aristotle, who is so fond and free of definitions, hath not thought proper to define the Ridiculous. Indeed, where he tells us it is proper to comedy, he hath remarked that villainy is not its object: but that he hath not, as I remember, positively asserted what is. Nor doth the Abbe Bellegarde, who hath written a treatise on this subject, tho' he shows us many species of it, once trace it to its fountain.

The only source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is affectation. But tho' it arises from one spring only, when we consider the infinite streams into which this one branches, we shall presently cease to admire at the copious field it affords to an observer. Now affectation proceeds from one of these two causes; vanity, or hypocrisy: for as vanity puts us on affecting false characters, in order to purchase applause; so hypocrisy sets us on an endeavour to avoid censure by concealing our vices under an appearance of their opposite virtues. And tho' these two causes are often confounded, (for they require some distinguishing;) yet, as they proceed from very different motives, so they are as clearly distinct in their operations: for indeed, the affectation which arises from vanity is nearer to truth than the other; as it hath not that violent repugnancy
of nature to struggle with, which that of the hypocrite hath. It
may be likewise noted, that affectation doth not imply an absolute
negation of those qualities which are affected: and therefore, tho',
when it proceeds from hypocrisy, it be nearly allied to deceit;
yet when it comes from vanity only, it partakes of the nature of
ostentation: for instance, the affectation of liberality in a vain
man, differs visibly from the same affectation in the avaricious; for
tho' the vain man is not what he would appear, or hath not the virtue
he affects, to the degree he would be thought to have it; yet it sits
less awkwardly on him than on the avaricious man, who is the very
reverse of what he would seem to be.

From the discovery of this affectation arises the Ridiculous--which
always strikes the reader with surprize and pleasure; and that in a
higher and stronger degree when the affectation arises from hypocrisy,
than when from vanity: for to discover any one to be the exact
reverse of what he affects, is more surprizing, and consequently more
ridiculous, than to find him a little deficient in the quality he
desires the reputation of. I might observe that our Ben Jonson, who
of all men understood the Ridiculous the best, hath chiefly used the
hypocritical affectation.

Now from affectation only, the misfortunes and calamities of life,
or the imperfections of nature, may become the objects of ridicule.
Surely he hath a very ill-framed mind, who can look on ugliness,
infirmitiy, or poverty, as ridiculous in themselves: nor do I believe
any man living who meets a dirty fellow riding through the streets in
a cart, is struck with an idea of the Ridiculous from it; but if he
should see the same figure descend from his coach and six, or bolt
from his chair with his hat under his arm, he would then begin to
laugh, and with justice. In the same manner, were we to enter a poor
house and behold a wretched family shivering with cold and languishing
with hunger, it would not incline us to laughter, (at least we must
have very diabolical natures, if it would): but should we discover
there a grate, instead of coals, adorned with flowers, empty plate or
china dishes on the side-board, or any other affectation of riches and
finery either on their persons or in their furniture: we might then
indeed be excused, for ridiculing so fantastical an appearance.
Much less are natural imperfections the object of derision: but when
ugliness aims at the applause of beauty, or lameness endeavours to
display agility; it is then that these unfortunate circumstances,
which at first moved our compassion, tend only to raise our mirth.

The poet carries this very far;

None are for being what they are in fault,
But for not being what they would be thought.

Where if the metre would suffer the word Ridiculous to close the first
line, the thought would be rather more proper. Great vices are the
proper objects of our detestation, smaller faults of our pity: but
affectation appears to me the only true source of the Ridiculous.
But perhaps it may be objected to me, that I have against my own rules introduced vices, and of a very black kind into this work. To this I shall answer: First, that it is very difficult to pursue a series of human actions and keep clear from them. Secondly, that the vices to be found here, are rather the accidental consequences of some human frailty, or foible, than causes habitually existing in the mind. Thirdly, that they are never set forth as the objects of ridicule, but detestation. Fourthly, that they are never the principal figure at that time on the scene; lastly, they never produce the intended evil.

[Footnote A: Henry Fielding, dramatist, novelist, and judge, was born near Glastonbury, Somersetshire, April 22, 1707, and died at Lisbon, October 8, 1754. Though seldom spoken of as an essayist, Fielding scattered through his novels a large number of detached or detachable discussions which are essentially essays, of which the preface to "Joseph Andrews" on the "Comic Epic in Prose," is a favorable specimen. The novel which it introduces was begun as a parody on Richardson's "Pamela," and the preface gives Fielding's conception of this form of fiction.]

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON (1755)[A]

It is the fate of those who toil at the lower employments of life, to
be rather driven by the fear of evil, than attracted by the prospect of good; to be exposed to censure, without hope of praise; to be disgraced by miscarriage, or punished for neglect, where success would have been without applause; and diligence without reward.

Among these unhappy mortals is the writer of dictionaries; whom mankind have considered, not as the pupil, but the slave of science, the pioneer of literature, doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths through which Learning and Genius press forward to conquest and glory, without bestowing a smile on the humble drudge that facilitates their progress. Every other author may aspire to praise; the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach, and even this negative recompense has been yet granted to very few.

I have, notwithstanding this discouragement, attempted a Dictionary of the English Language, which, while it was employed in the cultivation of every species of literature, has itself been hitherto neglected; suffered to spread, under the direction of chance, into wild exuberance; resigned to the tyranny of time and fashion: and exposed to the corruptions of ignorance, and caprices of innovation.

When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech copious without order, and energetic without rule: wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulterations were to be detected,
without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority.

Having therefore no assistance but from general grammar, I applied myself to the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work, such as experience and analogy suggested to me; experience, which practice and observation were continually increasing; and analogy, which, though in some words obscure, was evident in others.

In adjusting the ORTHOGRAPHY, which has been to this time unsettled and fortuitous, I found it necessary to distinguish those irregularities that are inherent in our tongue, and perhaps coeval with it, from others which the ignorance or negligence of later writers has produced. Every language has its anomalies, which though inconvenient, and in themselves once unnecessary, must be tolerated among the imperfections of human things, and which require only to be registered, that they may not be increased; and ascertained, that they may not be confounded: but every language has likewise its improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe.

As language was at its beginning merely oral, all words of necessary
or common use were spoken before they were written; and while they
were unfixed by any visible signs, must have been spoken with great
diversity, as we now observe those who cannot read to catch sounds
imperfectly, and utter them negligently. When this wild and barbarous
jargon was first reduced to an alphabet, every penman endeavored to
express, as he could, the sounds which he was accustomed to pronounce
or to receive, and vitiated in writing such words as were already
vitiated in speech. The powers of the letters, when they were applied
to a new language, must have been vague and unsettled, and
therefore different hands would exhibit the same sound by different
combinations.

From this uncertain pronunciation arise in a great part the various
dialects of the same country, which will always be observed to grow
fewer, and less different, as books are multiplied; and from this
arbitrary representation of sounds by letters proceeds that diversity
of spelling observable in the Saxon remains, and I suppose in the
first books of every nation, which perplexes or destroys analogy,
and produces anomalous formations, which, being once incorporated can
never be afterward dismissed or reformed.

Of this kind are the derivatives _length_ from _long_, _strength_ from
_strong_, _darling_ from _dear_, _breadth_ from _broad_, from _dry_,
_drought_, and from _high_, _height_, which Milton, in zeal for
analogy, writes highth. ‘Quid te exempta juvat spinis de pluribus
una?’ To change all would be too much, and to change one is nothing.
This uncertainty is most frequent in the vowels, which are so capriciously pronounced, and so differently modified, by accident or affectation, not only in every province, but in every mouth, that to them, as is well known to etymologists, little regard is to be shown in the deduction of one language from another.

Such defects are not errors in orthography, but spots of barbarity impressed so deep in the English language, that criticism can never wash them away: these, therefore, must be permitted to remain untouched; but many words have likewise been altered by accident, or depraved by ignorance, as the pronunciation of the vulgar has been weakly followed; and some still continue to be variously written, as authors differ in their care or skill: of these it was proper to inquire the true orthography, which I have always considered as depending on their derivation, and have therefore referred them to their original languages; thus I write _enchant_, _enchanted_, _enchanted_, _enchanter_, after the French, and _incantation_ after the Latin; thus _entire_ is chosen rather than _intire_, because it passed to us not from the Latin _integer_, but from the French _entier_.

Of many words it is difficult to say whether they were immediately received from the Latin or the French, since at the time when we had dominions in France, we had Latin service in our churches. It is, however, my opinion that the French generally supplied us; for we have few Latin words, among the terms of domestic use, which are not French; but many French, which are very remote from Latin.
Even in words of which the derivation is apparent, I have been often obliged to sacrifice uniformity to custom; thus I write, in compliance with a numberless majority, _convey_ and _ inveigh_, _deceit_ and _ receipt_, _fancy_ and _phantom_; sometimes the derivative varies from the primitive, as _explain_ and _explanation_, _repeat_ and _repetition_.

Some combinations of letters having the same power, are used indifferently without any discoverable reason of choice, as in _choak, choke; soap, sope; fewel, fuel_, and many others; which I have sometimes inserted twice, that those who search for them under either form, may not search in vain.

In examining the orthography of any doubtful word, the mode of spelling by which it is inserted in the series of the dictionary, is to be considered as that to which I give, perhaps not often rashly, the preference. I have left, in the examples, to every author his own practice unmolested, that the reader may balance suffrages, and judge between us: but this question is not always to be determined by reputed or by real learning; some men, intent upon greater things, have thought little on sounds and derivations; some, knowing in the ancient tongues, have neglected those in which our words are commonly to be sought. Thus Hammond writes _fecibleness_ for _feasibleness_, because I suppose he imagined it derived immediately from the Latin; and some words, such as _dependant, dependent; dependance,
dependence, vary their final syllable, as one or other language is present to the writer.

In this part of the work, where caprice has long wantoned without control, and vanity sought praise by petty reformation, I have endeavored to proceed with a scholar's reverence for antiquity, and a grammarian's regard to the genius of our tongue. I have attempted few alterations, and among those few, perhaps the greater part is from the modern to the ancient practice; and I hope I may be allowed to recommend to those, whose thoughts have been perhaps employed too anxiously on verbal singularities, not to disturb, upon narrow views, or for minute propriety, the orthography of their fathers. It has been asserted, that for the law to be _known_, is of more importance than to be _right_. 'Change,' says Hooker, 'is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better.' There is in constancy and stability a general and lasting advantage, which will always overbalance the slow improvements of gradual correction. Much less ought our written language to comply with the corruptions of oral utterance, or copy that which every variation of time or place makes different from itself, and imitate those changes, which will again be changed, while imitation is employed in observing them.

This recommendation of steadiness and uniformity does not proceed from an opinion that particular combinations of letters have much influence on human happiness; or that truth may not be successfully taught by modes of spelling fanciful and erroneous; I am not yet so lost in lexicography as to forget that 'words are the daughters of earth, and
that things are the sons of heaven.' Language is only the instrument
of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however,
that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might
be permanent, like the things which they denote.

In settling the orthography, I have not wholly neglected the
pronunciation, which I have directed, by printing an accent upon the
acute or elevated syllable. It will sometimes be found that the accent
is placed by the author quoted, on a different syllable from that
marked in the alphabetical series; it is then to be understood, that
custom has varied, or that the author has, in my opinion, pronounced
wrong. Short directions are sometimes given where the sound of letters
is irregular; and if they are sometimes omitted, defect in such minute
observations will be more easily excused, than superfluity.

In the investigation, both of the orthography and signification of
words, their ETYMOLOGY was necessarily to be considered, and they were
therefore to be divided into primitives and derivatives. A primitive
word is that which can be traced no further to any English root;
thus _circumspect, circumvent, circumstance, delude, concave_, and
_complicate_, though compounds in the Latin, are to us primitives.
Derivatives, are all those that can be referred to any word in English
of greater simplicity.

The derivatives I have referred to their primitives, with an accuracy
sometimes needless; for who does not see that _remoteness_ comes
from _remote_, _lovely_ from _love_, _concavity_ from _concave_, and
_demonstrative_ from _demonstrate_? But this grammatical exuberance
the scheme of my work did not allow me to repress. It is of great
importance, in examining the general fabric of a language, to trace
one word from another, by noting the usual modes of derivation and
inflection; and uniformity must be preserved in systematical works;
though sometimes at the expense of particular propriety.

Among other derivatives I have been careful to insert and elucidate
the anomalous plurals of nouns and preterites of verbs, which in the
Teutonic dialects are very frequent, and, though familiar to those
who have always used them, interrupt and embarrass the learners of our
language.

The two languages from which our primitives have been derived, are
the Roman and Teutonic: under the Roman, I comprehend the French and
provincial tongues; and under the Teutonic, range the Saxon, German,
and all their kindred dialects. Most of our polysyllables are Roman,
and our words of one syllable are very often Teutonic.

In assigning the Roman original, it has perhaps sometimes happened
that I have mentioned only the Latin, when the word was borrowed
from the French; and considering myself as employed only in the
illustration of my own language, I have not been very careful to
observe whether the Latin would be pure or barbarous, or the French
elegant or obsolete.
For the Teutonic etymologies, I am commonly indebted to Junius and Skinner, the only names which I have forborne to quote when I copied their books; not that I might appropriate their labors or usurp their honors, but that I might spare perpetual repetition by one general acknowledgment. Of these, whom I ought not to mention but with the reverence due to instructors and benefactors, Junius appears to have excelled in extent of learning, and Skinner in rectitude of understanding. Junius was accurately skilled in all the northern languages, Skinner probably examined the ancient and remoter dialects only by occasional inspection into dictionaries; but the learning of Junius is often of no other use than to show him a track by which he may deviate from his purpose, to which Skinner always presses forward by the shortest way. Skinner is often ignorant, but never ridiculous: Junius is always full of knowledge; but his variety distracts his judgment, and his learning is very frequently disgraced by his absurdities.

The votaries of the northern muses will not perhaps easily restrain their indignation, when they find the name of Junius thus degraded by a disadvantageous comparison; but whatever reverence is due to his diligence, or his attainments, it can be no criminal degree of censoriousness to charge that etymologist with want of judgment, who can seriously derive _dream_ from _drama_, because 'life is a drama and a drama is a dream'; and who declares with a tone of defiance, that no man can fail to derive _moan_ from [Greek: monos], _monos_, single_ or _solitary_, who considers that grief naturally loves to be
alone.

Our knowledge of the northern literature is so scanty, that of words undoubtedly Teutonic, the original is not always to be found in an ancient language; and I have therefore inserted Dutch or German substitutes, which I consider not as radical, but parallel, not as the parents, but sisters of the English.

The words which are represented as thus related by descent or cognation, do not always agree in sense; for it is incident to words, as to their authors, to degenerate from their ancestors, and to change their manners when they change their country. It is sufficient, in etymological inquiries, if the senses of kindred words be found such as may easily pass into each other, or such as may both be referred to one general idea.

The etymology, so far as it is yet known, was easily found in the volumes, where it is particularly and professedly delivered, and, by proper attention to the rules of derivation, the orthography was soon adjusted. But to COLLECT THE WORDS of our language was a task of greater difficulty the deficiency of dictionaries was immediately apparent, and when they were exhausted, what was yet wanting must be sought by fortuitous and unguided excursions into books and gleaned as industry should find, or chance should offer it, in the boundless chaos of a living speech. My search, however, has been either skilful or lucky, for I have much augmented the vocabulary.
As my design was a dictionary, common or appellative, I have omitted all words which have relation to proper names, such as _Arian, Socinian, Calvinist, Benedictine, Mahometan_, but have retained those of a more general nature, as _Heathen, Pagan_.

Of the terms of art I have received such as could be found either in books of science or technical dictionaries, and have often inserted, from philosophical writers, words which are supported perhaps only by a single authority, and which, being not admitted into general use, stand yet as candidates or probationers, and must depend for their adoption on the suffrage of futurity. The words which our authors have introduced by their knowledge of foreign languages or ignorance of their own, by vanity or wantonness, by compliance with fashion or lust of innovation, I have registered as they occurred, though commonly only to censure them, and warn others against the folly of naturalizing useless foreigners to the injury of the natives.

I have not rejected any by design, merely because they were unnecessary or exuberant, but have received those which by different writers have been differently formed, as _viscid_, and _viscidity_, _viscous_, and _viscosity_.

Compounded or double words I have seldom noted, except when they obtain a signification different from that which the components have in then simple state.
Thus _highwayman, woodman_, and _horsecourser_, require an
explanation, but of _thieflike_, or _coachdriver_, no notice was
needed, because the primitives contain the meaning of the compounds.

Words arbitrarily formed by a constant and settled analogy, like
diminutive adjectives in _ish, as greenish, bluish_; adverbs in _ly_,
as _dully, openly_; substantives in _ness_, as _vileness, faultiness_; were less diligently sought, and many sometimes have been omitted,
when I had no authority that invited me to insert them; not that they
are not genuine, and regular offsprings of English roots, but
because their relation to the primitive being always the same, their
signification cannot be mistaken.

The verbal nouns in _ing_, such as the _keeping_ of the _castle_,
the _leading_ of the _army_, are always neglected, or placed only to
illustrate the sense of the verb, except when they signify things as
well as actions, and have therefore a plural number, as _dwelling,
living_; or have an absolute and abstract signification, as _coloring,
painting, learning_.

The participles are likewise omitted, unless, by signifying rather
habit or quality than action, they take the nature of adjectives; as a
_thinking_ man, a man of prudence; a _pacing_ horse, a horse that
can pace: these I have ventured to call _participial adjectives_. But
neither are these always inserted, because they are commonly to be
understood without any danger of mistake, by consulting the verb.

Obsolete words are admitted when they are found in authors not obsolete, or when they have any force or beauty that may deserve revival.

As composition is one of the chief characteristics of a language, I have endeavored to make some reparation for the universal negligence of my predecessors, by inserting great numbers of compounded words, as may be found under _after, fore, new, night, fair_, and many more. These, numerous as they are, might be multiplied, but that use and curiosity are here satisfied, and the frame of our language and modes of our combination amply discovered.

Of some forms of composition, such as that by which _re_ is prefixed to note _repetition_, and _un_ to signify _contrariety_ or _privation_, all the examples cannot be accumulated, because the use of these particles, if not wholly arbitrary, is so little limited, that they are hourly affixed to new words as occasion requires, or is imagined to require them.

There is another kind of composition more frequent in our language than perhaps in any other, from which arises to foreigners the greatest difficulty. We modify the signification of many verbs by a particle subjoined; as to _come off_, to escape by a fetch; to _fall on_, to attack; _fall off_, to apostatize; _break off_, to stop
abruptly; to _bear out_, to justify; _to fall in_, to comply; to _give over_, to cease; to _set off_, to embellish; to _set in_, to begin a continual tenor; to _set out_, to begin a course or journey; to _take off_, to copy; with innumerable expressions of the same kind, of which some appear wildly irregular, being so far distant from the sense of the simple words, that no sagacity will be able to trace the steps by which they arrived at the present use. These I have noted with great care; and though I cannot flatter myself that the collection is complete, I believe I have so far assisted the students of our language that this kind of phraseology will be no longer insuperable; and the combinations of verbs and particles, by chance omitted, will be easily explained by comparison with those that may be found.

Many words yet stand supported only by the name of Bailey, Ainsworth, Philips, or the contracted _Dict._ for Dictionaries, subjoined; of these I am not always certain that they are read in any book but the works of lexicographers. Of such I have omitted many, because I had never read them; and many I have inserted, because they may perhaps exist, though they have escaped my notice: they are, however, to be yet considered as resting only upon the credit of former dictionaries. Others, which I considered as useful, or know to be proper, though I could not at present support them by authorities, I have suffered to stand upon my own attestation, claiming the same privilege with my predecessors, of being sometimes credited without proof.

The words, thus selected and disposed, are grammatically considered; they are referred to the different parts of speech; traced when they
are irregularly inflected, through their various terminations;
and illustrated by observations, not indeed of great or striking
importance, separately considered, but necessary to the elucidation
of our language, and hitherto neglected or forgotten by English
grammarians.

That part of my work on which I expect malignity most frequently to
fasten, is the EXPLANATION; in which I cannot hope to satisfy those,
who are perhaps not inclined to be pleased, since I have not always
been able to satisfy myself. To interpret a language by itself is very
difficult; many words cannot be explained by synonimes, because the
idea signified by them has not more than one appellation; nor by
paraphrase, because simple ideas cannot be described. When the nature
of things is unknown, or the notion unsettled and indefinite,
and various in various minds, the words by which such notions are
conveyed, or such things denoted, will be ambiguous and perplexed. And
such is the fate of hapless lexicography, that not only darkness, but
light impedes and distresses it; things may be not only too little,
but too much known, to be happily illustrated. To explain, requires
the use of terms less abstruse than that which is to be explained, and
such terms cannot always be found; for as nothing can be proved but by
supposing something intuitively known, and evident without proof, so
nothing can be defined but by the use of words too plain to admit a
definition.

Other words there are, of which the sense is too subtle and evanescent
to be fixed in a paraphrase; such are all those which are by the
grammarians termed expletives, and, in dead languages, are suffered
to pass for empty sounds, of no other use than to fill a verse, or to
modulate a period, but which are easily perceived in living tongues to
have power and emphasis, though it be sometimes such as no other form
of expression can convey.

My labor has likewise been much increased by a class of verbs too
frequent in the English language, of which the signification is so
loose and general, the use so vague and indeterminate, and the senses
detorted so widely from the first idea, that it is hard to trace them
through the maze of variation, to catch them on the brink of utter
inanity, to circumscribe them by any limitations, or interpret them
by any words of distinct and settled meaning; such are _bear, break,
come, cast, full, get, give, do, put, set, go, run, make, take, turn,
throw_. If of these the whole power is not accurately delivered,
it must be remembered, that while our language is yet living, and
variable by the caprice of every one that speaks it, these words are
hourly shifting their relations, and can no more be ascertained in
a dictionary, than a grove, in the agitation of a storm, can be
accurately delineated from its picture in the water.

The particles are among all nations applied with so great latitude,
that they are not easily reducible under any regular scheme of
explication: this difficulty is not less, nor perhaps greater, in
English, than in other languages. I have labored them with diligence,
I hope with success; such at least as can be expected in a task, which
no man, however learned or sagacious, has yet been able to perform.
Some words there are which I cannot explain, because I do not understand them; these might have been omitted very often with little inconvenience, but I would not so far indulge my vanity as to decline this confession: for when Tully owns himself ignorant whether _lessus_, in the twelve tables, means a _funeral song_, or _mourning garment_; and Aristotle doubts whether [Greek: ourous] in the _Iliad_ signifies a _mule, or muleteer_, I may surely without shame, leave some obscurities to happier industry, or future information.

The rigor of interpretative lexicography requires that _the explanation_, and _the word explained should be always reciprocal_; this I have always endeavoured, but could not always attain. Words are seldom exactly synonymous; a new term was not introduced, but because the former was thought inadequate: names, therefore, have often many ideas, but few ideas have many names. It was then necessary to use the proximate word, for the deficiency of single terms can very seldom be supplied by circumlocution; nor is the inconvenience great of such mutilated interpretations, because the sense may easily be collected entire from the examples.

In every word of extensive use, it was requisite to mark the progress of its meaning, and show by what gradations of intermediate sense it has passed from its primitive to its remote and accidental signification; so that every foregoing explanation should tend to that which follows, and the series be regularly concatenated from the first
This is specious, but not always practicable; kindred senses may be so interwoven, that the perplexity cannot be disentangled, nor any reason be assigned why one should be ranged before the other. When the radical idea branches out into parallel ramifications, how can a consecutive series be formed of senses in their nature collateral? The shades of meaning sometimes pass imperceptibly into each other, so that though on one side they apparently differ, yet it is impossible to mark the point of contact. Ideas of the same race, though not exactly alike, are sometimes so little different, that no words can express the dissimilitude, though the mind easily perceives it when they are exhibited together; and sometimes there is such a confusion of acceptations, that discernment is wearied and distinction puzzled, and perseverance herself hurries to an end, by crowding together what she cannot separate.

These complaints of difficulty will, by those that have never considered words beyond their popular use, be thought only the jargon of a man willing to magnify his labors, and procure veneration to his studies by involution and obscurity. But every art is obscure to those that have not learned it; this uncertainty of terms, and commixture of ideas, is well known to those who have joined philosophy with grammar; and if I have not expressed them very clearly, it must be remembered that I am speaking of that which words are insufficient to explain.
The original sense of words is often driven out of use by their metaphorical acceptations, yet must be inserted for the sake of a regular origination. Thus I know not whether _ardor_ is used for _material heat_, or whether _flagrant_, in English, ever signifies the same with _burning_: yet such are the primitive ideas of these words, which are therefore set first, though without examples, that the figurative senses may be commodiously deduced.

Such is the exuberance of signification which many words have obtained, that it was scarcely possible to collect all their senses; sometimes the meaning of derivatives must be sought in the mother term, and sometimes deficient explanations of the primitive may he supplied in the train of derivation. In any case of doubt or difficulty, it will be always proper to examine all the words of the same race; for some words are slightly passed over to avoid repetition, some admitted easier and clearer explanation than others, and all will be better understood, as they are considered in greater variety of structures and relations.

All the interpretations of words are not written with the same skill, or the same happiness: things equally easy in themselves, are not all equally easy to any single mind. Every writer of a long word commits errors, where there appears neither ambiguity to mislead, nor obscurity to confound him; and in a search like this, many felicities of expression will be casually overlooked, many convenient parallels will be forgotten, and many particulars will admit improvement from a mind utterly unequal to the whole performance.
But many seeming faults are to be imputed rather to the nature of
the undertaking, than the negligence of the performer. Thus some
explanations are unavoidably reciprocal or circular, as _hind_, the
female of the stag; stag, the male of the hind_: sometimes easier
words are changed into harder, as _burial_ into _sepulture_, or
interment, drier_ into _desiccative_, dryness_ into _siccity_ or
_aridity, fit_ into _paroxysm_; for the easiest word, whatever it
be, can never be translated into one more easy. But easiness and
difficulty are merely relative; and if the present prevalence of our
language should invite foreigners to this Dictionary, many will be
assisted by those words which now seem only to increase or produce
obscurity. For this reason I have endeavoured frequently to join a
Teutonic and Roman interpretation, as to _cheer_, to _gladden_ or
_exhilarate_, that every learner of English may be assisted by his own
tongue.

The solution of all difficulties, and the supply of all defects must
be sought in the examples, subjoined to the various senses of each
word, and ranged according to the time of their authors.

When I first collected these authorities, I was desirous that every
quotation should be useful to some other end than the illustration of
a word; I therefore extracted from philosophers principles of science;
from historians remarkable facts; from chymists complete processes;
from divines striking exhortations; and from poets beautiful
descriptions. Such is design, while it is yet at a distance from
execution. When the time called upon me to range this accumulation
of elegance and wisdom into an alphabetical series, I soon discovered
that the bulk of my volumes would fright away the student, and was
forced to depart from my scheme of including all that was pleasing or
useful in English literature, and reduce my transcripts very often to
clusters of words, in which scarcely any meaning is retained; thus
to the weariness of copying, I was condemned to add the vexation of
expunging. Some passages I have yet spared, which may relieve the
labor of verbal searches, and intersperse with verdure and flowers the
dusty deserts of barren philology.

The examples, thus mutilated, are no longer to be considered as
conveying the sentiments or doctrine of their authors; the word for
the sake of which they are inserted, with all its appendant clauses,
has been carefully preserved; but it may sometimes happen, by hasty
detruncation, that the general tendency of the sentence may be
changed: the divine may desert his tenets, or the philosopher his
system.

Some of the examples have been taken from writers who were never
mentioned as masters of elegance, or models of style; but words must
be sought where they are used; and in what pages, eminent for purity,
can terms of manufacture or agriculture be found? Many quotations
serve no other purpose than that of proving the bare existence of
words, and are therefore selected with less scrupulousness than those
which are to teach their structures and relations.
My purpose was to admit no testimony of living authors, that I might not be misled by partiality, and that none of my contemporaries might have reason to complain; nor have I departed from this resolution, but when some performance of uncommon excellence excited my veneration, when my memory supplied me, from late books, with an example that was wanting, or when my heart, in the tenderness of friendship, solicited admission for a favorite name.

So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavored to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the Restoration, whose works I regard as the 'wells of English undefiled,' as the pure sources of genuine diction. Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original Teutonic character and deviating towards a Gallic structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavor to recall it, by making our ancient volumes the groundwork of style, admitting among the additions of later times, only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with our native idioms.

But as every language has a time of rudeness antecedent to perfection, as well as of false refinement and declension, I have been cautious lest my zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and crowd my book with words now no longer understood. I have fixed
Sidney's work for the boundary, beyond which I make few excursions.

From the authors which rose in the time of Elizabeth, a speech might be formed adequate to all the purposes of use and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from Hooker and the translation of the Bible, the terms of natural knowledge from Bacon, the phrases of policy, war, and navigation from Raleigh, the dialect of poetry and fiction from Spender and Sidney, and the diction of common life from Shakespeare, few ideas would be lost to mankind, for want of English words in which they might be expressed.

It is not sufficient that a word is found, unless it be so combined as that its meaning is apparently determined by the tract and tenor of the sentence, such passages I have therefore chosen, and when it happened that any author gave a definition of a term, or such an explanation as is equivalent to a definition, I have placed his authority as a supplement to my own, without regard to the chronological order that is otherwise observed.

Some words, indeed, stand unsupported by any authority, but they are commonly derivative nouns or adverbs, formed from their primitives by regular and constant analogy, or names of things seldom occurring in books, or words of which I have reason to doubt the existence.

There is more danger of censure from the multiplicity than paucity of examples, authorities will sometimes seem to have been accumulated without necessity or use, and perhaps some will be found, which
might, without loss, have been omitted. But a work of this kind is not
hastily to be charged with superfluities; those quotations, which to
careless or unskillful perusers appear only to repeat the same sense,
will often exhibit, to a more accurate examiner, diversities of
signification, or, at least, afford different shades of the same
meaning: one will show the word applied to persons, another to things;
one will express an ill, another a good, and a third a neutral sense;
one will prove the expression genuine from an ancient author;
another will show it elegant from a modern: a doubtful authority
is corroborated by another of more credit; an ambiguous sentence is
ascertained by a passage clear and determinate: the word, how
often soever repeated, appears with new associates and in different
combinations, and every quotation contributes something to the
stability or enlargement of the language.

When words are used equivocally I receive them in either sense; when
they are metaphorical, I adopt them in their primitive acceptation.

I have sometimes, though rarely, yielded to the temptation of
exhibiting a genealogy of sentiments, by showing how one author copied
the thoughts and diction of another: such quotations are indeed little
more than repetitions, which might justly be censured, did they not
gratify the mind, by affording a kind of intellectual history.

The various syntactical structures occurring in the examples have been
carefully noted; the license or negligence with which many words have
been hitherto used, has made our style capricious and indeterminate; when the different combinations of the same word are exhibited together, the preference is readily given to propriety, and I have often endeavored to direct the choice.

Thus have I labored by settling the orthography, displaying the analogy, regulating the structures, and ascertaining the signification of English words, to perform all the parts of a faithful lexicographer: but I have not always executed my own scheme, or satisfied my own expectations. The work, whatever proofs of diligence and attention it may exhibit, is yet capable of many improvements; the orthography which I recommend is still controvertible, the etymology which I adopt is uncertain, and perhaps frequently erroneous; the explanations are sometimes too much contracted, and sometimes too much diffused, the significations are distinguished rather with subtlety than skill, and the attention is harassed with unnecessary minuteness.

The examples are too often injudiciously truncated, and perhaps sometimes--I hope very rarely--alleged in a mistaken sense; for in making this collection I trusted more to memory, than, in a state of disquiet and embarrassment, memory can contain, and purposed to supply at the review what was left incomplete in the first transcription.

Many terms appropriated to particular occupations, though necessary and significant, are undoubtedly omitted, and of the words most studiously considered and exemplified, many senses have escaped
Yet these failures, however frequent, may admit extenuation and apology. To have attempted much is always laudable, even when the enterprise is above the strength that undertakes it: to rest below his own aim is incident to every one whose fancy is active, and whose views are comprehensive; nor is any man satisfied with himself because he has done much, but because he can conceive little. When first I engaged in this work, I resolved to leave neither words nor things unexamined, and pleased myself with a prospect of the hours which I should revel away in feasts of literature, the obscure recesses of northern learning which I should enter and ransack, the treasures with which I expected every search into those neglected mines to reward my labor, and the triumph with which I should display my acquisitions to mankind. When I had thus inquired into the original of words, I resolved to show likewise my attention to things; to pierce deep into every science, to inquire the nature of every substance of which I inserted the name, to limit every idea by a definition strictly logical, and exhibit every production of art or nature in an accurate description, that my book might be in place of all other dictionaries whether appellative or technical. But these were the dreams of a poet doomed at last to wake a lexicographer. I soon found that it is too late to look for instruments, when the work calls for execution, and that whatever abilities I had brought to my task, with those I must finally perform it. To deliberate whenever I doubted, to inquire whenever I was ignorant, would have protracted the undertaking without end, and, perhaps, without much improvement; for I did not find by
my first experiments, that what I had not of my own was easily to be
obtained: I saw that one inquiry only gave occasion to another, that
book referred to book, that to search was not always to find, and
to find was not always to be informed; and that thus to pursue
perfection, was, like the first inhabitants of Arcadia, to chase the
sun, which, when they had reached the hill where he seemed to rest,
was still beheld at the same distance from them.

I then contracted my design, determining to confide in myself, and
no longer to solicit auxiliaries which produced more incumbrance than
assistance; by this I obtained at least one advantage, that I set
limits to my work, which would in time be ended, though not completed.

Despondency has never so far prevailed as to depress me to negligence;
some faults will at last appear to be the effects of anxious diligence
and persevering activity. The nice and subtle ramifications of meaning
were not easily avoided by a mind intent upon accuracy, and convinced
of the necessity of disentangling combinations, and separating
similitudes. Many of the distinctions which to common readers appear
useless and idle, will be found real and important by men versed
in the school philosophy, without which no dictionary can ever be
accurately compiled, or skillfully examined.

Some senses, however, there are, which, though not the same, are
yet so nearly allied, that they are often confounded. Most men
think indistinctly, and therefore cannot speak with exactness; and
consequently some examples might be indifferently put to either
signification: this uncertainty is not to be imputed to me, who do not
form, but register the language; who do not teach men how they should
think, but relate how they have hitherto expressed their thoughts.

The imperfect sense of some examples I lamented, but could not remedy,
and hope they will be compensated by innumerable passages selected
with propriety, and preserved with exactness; some shining with sparks
of imagination, and some replete with treasures of wisdom.

The orthography and etymology, though imperfect, are not imperfect
for want of care, but because care will not always be successful, and
recollection or information come too late for use.

That many terms of art and manufacture are omitted, must be frankly
acknowledged; but for this defect I may boldly allege that it is
unavoidable; I could not visit caverns to learn the miner's language,
nor take a voyage to perfect my skill in the dialect of navigation,
nor visit the warehouses of merchants, and shops of artificers, to
gain the names of wares, tools, and operations, of which no mention is
found in books; what favorable accident or easy inquiry brought within
my reach, has not been neglected; but it had been a hopeless labor to
glean up words, by courting living information, and contesting with
the sullenness of one, and the roughness of another.

To furnish the Academicians _della Crusca_ with words of this kind, a
series of comedies called _La Fiera_, or _The Fair_, was professedly
written by Buonaroti; but I had no such assistant, and therefore was
content to want what they must have wanted likewise, had they not
luckily been so supplied.

Nor are all words which are not found in the vocabulary, to be
lamented as omissions. Of the laborious and mercantile part of the
people, the diction is in a great measure casual and mutable; many of
their terms are formed for some temporary or local convenience, and
though current at certain times and places, are in others utterly
unknown. This fugitive cant, which is always in a state of increase
or decay, cannot be regarded as any part of the durable materials of
a language, and therefore must be suffered to perish with other things
unworthy of preservation.

Care will sometimes betray to the appearance of negligence. He that is
catching opportunities which seldom occur, will suffer those to pass
by unregarded, which he expects hourly to return; he that is searching
for rare and remote things, will neglect those that are obvious and
familiar: thus many of the most common and cursory words have
been inserted with little illustration, because in gathering the
authorities, I forebore to copy those which I thought likely to occur
whenever they were wanted. It is remarkable that, in reviewing my
collection, I found the word _sea_ unexemplified.

Thus it happens, that in things difficult there is danger from
ignorance, and in things easy, from confidence; the mind, afraid of
greatness, and disdainful of littleness, hastily withdraws herself
from painful searches, and passes with scornful rapidity over tasks
not adequate to her powers; sometimes too secure for caution, and
again too anxious for vigorous effort; sometimes idle in a plain path,
and sometimes distracted in labyrinths, and dissipated by different
intentions.

A large work is difficult because it is large, even though all its
parts might singly be performed with facility; where there are many
things to be done, each must be allowed its share of time and labor,
in the proportion only which it bears to the whole; nor can it be
expected, that the stones which form the dome of a temple, should be
squared and polished like the diamond of a ring.

Of the event of this work, for which; having labored it with so much
application, I cannot but have some degree of parental fondness, it
is natural to form conjectures. Those who have been persuaded to think
well of my design, will require that it should fix our language, and
put a stop to those alterations which time and chance have hitherto
been suffered to make in it without opposition. With this consequence
I will confess that I flattered myself for a while; but now begin
to fear that I have indulged expectation which neither reason nor
experience can justify. When we see men grow old and die at a certain
time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the
elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with
equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to
produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and 
phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm 
his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in 
his power to change sublunary nature, and clear the world at once from 
folly, vanity, and affectation.

With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard 
the avenues of their languages, to retain fugitives, and repulse 
intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; 
sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints; to enchain 
syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of 
pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength. The French 
language has visibly changed under the inspection of the Academy; 
the style of Amelot's translation of Father Paul is observed by Le 
Courayer to be _un peu passe_; and no Italian will maintain that the 
diction of any modern writer is not perceptibly different from that of 
Boccace, Machiavel, or Caro.

Total and sudden transformations of a language seldom happen; 
conquests and migrations are now very rare: but there are other causes 
of change, which, though slow in their operation, and invisible in 
their progress, are perhaps as much superior to human resistance, as 
the revolutions of the sky, or intumescence of the tide. Commerce, 
however necessary, however lucrative, as it depraves the manners, 
corrupts the language; they that have frequent intercourse with 
strangers, to whom they endeavor to accommodate themselves, must 
in time learn a mingled dialect, like the jargon which serves the
traffickers on the Mediterranean and Indian coasts. This will not always be confined to the exchange, the warehouse, or the port, but will be communicated by degrees to other ranks of the people, and be at last incorporated with the current speech.

There are likewise internal causes equally forcible. The language most likely to continue long without alterations, would be that of a nation raised a little, and but a little, above barbarity, secluded from strangers, and totally employed in procuring the conveniences of life; either without books, or, like some of the Mahometan countries, with every few: men thus busied and unlearned, having only such words as common use requires, would perhaps long continue to express the same notions by the same signs. But no such constancy can be expected in a people polished by arts, and classed by subordination, where one part of the community is sustained and accommodated by the labor of the other. Those who have much leisure to think, will always be enlarging the stock of ideas; and every increase of knowledge, whether real or fancied, will produce new words, or combination of words. When the mind is unchained from necessity, it will range after convenience; when it is left at large in the fields of speculation, it will shift opinions; as any custom is disused, the words that expressed it must perish with it; as any opinion grows popular, it will innovate speech in the same proportion as it alters practice.

As by the cultivation of various sciences a language is amplified, it will be more furnished with words deflected from their original sense; the geometrician will talk of a courtier's zenith or the eccentric
virtue of a wild hero, and the physician, of sanguine expectations and
phlegmatic delays. Copiousness of speech will give opportunities to
capricious choice, by which some words will be preferred, and others
degraded; vicissitudes of fashion will enforce the use of new, or
extend the signification of known terms. The tropes of poetry will
make hourly encroachments, and the metaphorical will become the
current sense: pronunciation will be varied by levity or ignorance,
and the pen must at length comply with the tongue; illiterate writers
will, at one time or other, by public infatuation, rise into renown,
who, not knowing the original import of words, will use them with
colloquial licentiousness, confound distinction, and forget propriety.
As politeness increases, some expressions will be considered as
too gross and vulgar for the delicate, others as too formal and
ceremonious for the gay and airy; new phrases are therefore adopted,
which must for the same reasons be in time dismissed. Swift, in his
petty treatise on the English language, allows that new words must
sometimes be introduced, but proposes that none should be suffered
to become obsolete. But what makes a word obsolete, more than general
agreement to forbear it? and how shall it be continued, when it
conveys an offensive idea, or recalled again into the mouths of
mankind, when it has once become unfamiliar by disuse, and unpleasing
by unfamiliarity?

There is another cause of alteration more prevalent than any other,
which yet in the present state of the world cannot be obviated. A
mixture of two languages will produce a third distinct from both, and
they will always be mixed, where the chief parts of education, and
the most conspicuous accomplishment, is skill in ancient or in foreign
tongues. He that has long cultivated another language, will find
its words and combinations crowd upon his memory; and haste and
negligence, refinement and affectation, will obtrude borrowed terms
and exotic expressions.

The great pest of speech is frequency of translation. No book was ever
turned from one language into another, without imparting something
of its native idiom; this is the most mischievous and comprehensive
innovation; single words may enter by thousands, and the fabric of the
tongue continue the same; but new phraseology changes much at once;
it alters not the single stones of the building, but the order of the
columns. If an academy should be established for the cultivation of
our style—which I, who can never wish to see dependence multiplied,
hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy—let them,
instead of compiling grammars and dictionaries, endeavor, with all
their influence, to stop the license of translators, whose idleness
and ignorance, if it be suffered to proceed, will reduce us to babble
a dialect of France.

If the changes that we fear be thus irresistible, what remains but to
acquiesce with silence, as in the other insurmountable distresses
of humanity? It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we
palliate what we cannot cure. Life may be lengthened by care, though
death cannot be ultimately defeated: tongues, like governments, have
a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our
constitution, let us make some struggles for our language.
In hope of giving longevity to that which its own nature forbids to be
immortal, I have devoted this book, the labor of years, to the honor
of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology,
without a contest, to the nations of the continent. The chief glory of
every people arises from its authors: whether I shall add any thing by
my own writings to the reputation of English literature, must be left
to time: much of my life has been lost under the pressures of
disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent in
provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think
my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations,
and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and
understand the teachers of truth; if my labors afford light to the
repositories of science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to
Milton, and to Boyle.

When I am animated by this wish, I look with pleasure on my book,
however defective, and deliver it to the world with the spirit of a
man that has endeavored well. That it will immediately become popular
I have not promised to myself: a few wild blunders, and risible
absurdities, from which no work of such multiplicity was ever free,
may for a time furnish folly with laughter, and harden ignorance into
contempt; but useful diligence will at last prevail, and there never
can be wanting some who distinguish desert; who will consider that no
dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since, while it
is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling
away; that a whole life cannot be spent upon syntax and etymology, and
that even a whole life would not be sufficient; that he, whose design
includes whatever language can express, must often speak of what
he does not understand; that a writer will sometimes be hurried by
eagerness to the end, and sometimes faint with weariness under a task
which Scaliger compares to the labors of the anvil and the mine; that
what is obvious is not always known, and what is known is not always
present; that sudden fits of inadvertency will surprise vigilance,
slight avocations will seduce attention, and casual eclipses of the
mind will darken learning; and that the writer shall often in vain
trace his memory at the moment of need, for that which yesterday he
knew with intuitive readiness, and which will come uncalled into his
thoughts to-morrow.

In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not
be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was
ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is
little solicitous to know whence proceed the faults of that which it
condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it, that the English
Dictionary was written with little assistance of the learned, and
without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities
of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst
inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may
repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our
language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt
which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of
ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes,
be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive;
if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

February 7, 1755.

MY LORD:

I have lately been informed by the proprietor of _The World_, that two papers, in which my _Dictionary_ is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honor which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your
address; and I could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself 'Le
vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre'; that I might obtain that regard
for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so
little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to
continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I
had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly
scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well
pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward
rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been
pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to
complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication,
without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile
of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron
before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found
him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man
struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground,
encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to
take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has
been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am
solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it.
I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations
where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Public
should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has
enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any
favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should
conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long
wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with
so much exultation,

My Lord, Your Lordship's most humble,

Most obedient servant, SAM. JOHNSON.

[Footnote A: For a sketch of Johnson's life, see the Introduction to
"Life of Addison" in the volume of English Essays. The interest of his
preface to the great Dictionary need hardly be pointed out, since the
work itself is a landmark in the history of our language. The letter
to Chesterfield, short though it is is a document of great importance
in the freeing of literature from patronage, and is in itself a
notable piece of literature. The preface to Johnson's edition of
Shakespeare's plays not only explains the editor's conception of
his task, but contains what is perhaps the best appreciation of the
dramatist written in the eighteenth century.]
That praises are without reason lavished on the dead, and that the
honours due only to excellence are paid to antiquity, is a complaint
likely to be always continued by those, who, being able to add nothing
to truth, hope for eminence from the heresies of paradox; or those,
who, being forced by disappointment upon consolatory expedients,
are willing to hope from posterity what the present age refuses, and
flatter themselves that the regard which is yet denied by envy, will
be at last bestowed by time.

Antiquity, like every other quality that attracts the notice of
mankind, has undoubtedly votaries that reverence it, not from reason,
but from prejudice. Some seem to admire indiscriminately whatever
has been long preserved, without considering that time has sometimes
co-operated with chance; all perhaps are more willing to honour past
than present excellence; and the mind contemplates genius through the
shades of age, as the eye surveys the sun through artificial opacity.
The great contention of criticism is to find the faults of the
moderns, and the beauties of the ancients. While an author is yet
living we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is
dead, we rate them by his best.
To works, however, of which the excellence is not absolute and
definite, but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon
principles demonstrative and scientifick, but appealing wholly to
observation and experience, no other test can he applied than
length of duration and continuance of esteem. What mankind have long
possessed they have often examined and compared; and if they persist
to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have
confirmed opinion in its favour. As among the works of nature no
man can properly call a river deep, or a mountain high, without the
knowledge of many mountains, and many rivers; so in the productions of
genius, nothing can be stiled excellent till it has been compared with
other works of the same kind. Demonstration immediately displays its
power, and has nothing to hope or fear from the flux of years; but
works tentative and experimental must be estimated by their proportion
to the general and collective ability of man, as it is discovered in a
long succession of endeavours. Of the first building that was raised,
it might be with certainty determined that it was round or square; but
whether it was spacious or lofty must have been referred to time. The
Pythagorean scale of numbers was at once discovered to be perfect; but
the poems of Homer we yet know not to transcend the common limits
of human intelligence, but by remarking, that nation after nation, and
century after century, has been able to do little more than transpose
his incidents, new-name his characters, and paraphrase his sentiments.

The reverence due to writings that have long subsisted arises
therefore not from any credulous confidence in the superior wisdom of
past ages, or gloomy persuasion of the degeneracy of mankind, but is
the consequence of acknowledged and indubitable positions, that what
has been longest known has been most considered, and what is most
considered is best understood.

The Poet, of whose works I have undertaken the revision, may now
begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of
established fame and prescriptive veneration. He has long outlived
his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit.
Whatever advantages he might once derive from personal allusions,
local customs, or temporary opinions, have for many years been lost;
and every topic of merriment, or motive of sorrow, which the modes of
artificial life afforded him, now only obscure the scenes which they
once illuminated. The effects of favour and competition are at an end;
the tradition of his friendships and his enemies has perished; his
works support no opinion with arguments, nor supply any faction with
invectives; they can neither indulge vanity nor gratify malignity; but
are read without any other reason than the desire of pleasure, and are
therefore praised only as pleasure is obtained; yet, thus unassisted
by interest or passion, they have past through variations of taste
and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to
another, have received new honours at every transmission.

But because human judgment, though it be gradually gaining upon
certainty, never becomes infallible; and approbation, though long
continued, may yet be only the approbation of prejudice or fashion;
it is proper to inquire, by what peculiarities of excellence
_Shakespeare_ has gained and kept the favour of his countrymen.
Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of
general nature. Particular manner, can be known to few, and therefore
few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular
combinations of fanciful invention may delight a-while, by that
novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest; but
the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can
only repose on the stability of truth.

_Shakespeare_ is above all writers, at least above all modern writers,
the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful
mirrour of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the
customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world;
by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate
but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or
temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity,
such as the world will always supply, and observation will always
find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general
passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole
system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets
a character is too often an individual; in those of _Shakespeare_ it
is commonly a species.

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction
is derived. It is this which fills the plays of _Shakespeare_ with
practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of _Euripides_, that
every verse was a precept; and it may be said of _Shakespeare_, that
from his works may be collected a system of civil and oeconomical
prudence. Yet his real power is not shewn in the splendour of
particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and the
tenour of his dialogue; and he that tries to recommend him by select
quotations, will succeed like the pedant in _Hierocles_, who, when
he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a
specimen.

It will not easily be imagined how much _Shakespeare_ excels in
accommodating his sentiments to real life, but by comparing him with
other authors. It was observed of the ancient schools of declamation,
that the more diligently they were frequented, the more was the
student disqualified for the world, because he found nothing there
which he should ever meet in any other place. The same remark may be
applied to every stage but that of _Shakespeare_. The theatre, when
it is under any other direction, is peopled by such characters as
were never seen, conversing in a language which was never heard, upon
topicks which will never rise in the commerce of mankind. But the
dialogue of this author is often so evidently determined by the
incident which produces it, and is pursued with so much ease and
simplicity, that it seems scarcely to claim the merit of fiction, but
to have been gleaned by diligent selection out of common conversation,
and common occurrences.

Upon every other stage the universal agent is love, by whose power all
good and evil is distributed, and every action quickened or retarded.
To bring a lover, a lady and a rival into the fable; to entangle
them in contradictory obligations, perplex them with oppositions of
interest, and harrass them with violence of desires inconsistent with
each other; to make them meet in rapture and part in agony; to fill
their mouths with hyperbolical joy and outrageous sorrow; to distress
them as nothing human ever was distressed; to deliver them as nothing
human ever was delivered; is the business of a modern dramatist. For
this probability is violated, life is misrepresented, and language
is depraved. But love is only one of many passions; and as it has no
great influence upon the sum of life, it has little operation in the
dramas of a poet, who caught his ideas from the living world, and
exhibited only what he saw before him. He knew, that any other
passion, as it was regular or exorbitant, was a cause of happiness or
calamity.

Characters thus ample and general were not easily discriminated and
preserved, yet perhaps no poet ever kept his personages more distinct
from each other. I will not say with _Pope_, that every speech may be
assigned to the proper speaker, because many speeches there are which
have nothing characteristical; but perhaps, though some may be equally
adapted to every person, it will be difficult to find any that can be
properly transferred from the present possessor to another claimant.
The choice is right, when there is reason for choice.

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated
characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the
writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a
dwarf; and he that should form his expectations of human affairs from
the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. _Shakespeare_
has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak
as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on
the same occasion: Even where the agency is supernatural the dialogue
is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions
and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the
book will not know them in the world: _Shakespeare_ approximates the
remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents
will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably
be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only
shewn human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be
found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed.

This therefore is the praise of _Shakespeare_, that his drama is the
mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following
the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be
cured of his delirious extasies, by reading human sentiments in human
language, by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions
of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.

His adherence to general nature has exposed him to the censure of
criticks, who form their judgments upon narrow principles. _Dennis_
and _Rhymer_ think his _Romans_ not sufficiently _Roman_; and
_Voltaire_ censures his kings as not completely royal. _Dennis_
is offended, that _Menenius_, a senator of _Rome_, should play the
buffoon; and _Voltaire_ perhaps thinks decency violated when the
Danish Usurper is represented as a drunkard. But Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident; and if he preserves the essential character, is not very careful of distinctions superinduced and adventitious. His story requires Romans or kings, but, he thinks only on men. He knew that Rome, like every other city, had men of all dispositions; and wanting a buffoon, he went into the senate-house for that which the senate-house would certainly have afforded him. He was inclined to shew an usurper and a murderer not only odious but despicable, he therefore added drunkenness to his other qualities, knowing that kings love wine like other men, and that wine exerts its natural power upon kings. These are the petty cavils of petty minds; a poet overlooks the casual distinction of country and condition, as a painter, satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery.

The censure which he has incurred by mixing comick and tragick scenes, as it extends to all his works, deserves more consideration. Let the fact be first stated, and then examined.

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveller is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolick of another; and many mischiefs and many
benefits are done and hindered without design.

Out of this chaos of mingled purposes and casualties the ancient poets, according to the laws which custom had prescribed, selected some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terrours of distress, and some the gayeties of prosperity. Thus rose the two modes of imitation, known by the names of _tragedy_ and _comedy_, compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied, that I do not recollect among the _Greeks_ or _Romans_ a single writer who attempted both.

_Shakespeare_ has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind, but in one composition. Almost all his plays are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and, in the successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied, because it includes both in its alterations of exhibition and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life, by shewing how great machinations and slender designs may promote or obviate one another, and the
high and the low co-operate in the general system by unavoidable concatenation.

It is objected, that by this change of scenes the passions are interrupted in their progression, and that the principal event, being not advanced by a due gradation of preparatory incidents, wants at last the power to move, which constitutes the perfection of dramatick poetry. This reasoning is so specious, that it is received as true even by those who in daily experience feel it to be false. The interchanges of mingled scenes seldom fail to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion. Fiction cannot move so much, but that the attention may be easily transferred; and though it must be allowed that pleasing melancholy be sometimes interrupted by unwelcome levity, yet let it be considered likewise, that melancholy is often not pleasing, and that the disturbance of one man may be the relief of another; that different auditors have different habitudes; and that, upon the whole, all pleasure consists in variety.

The players, who in their edition divided our authour's works into comedies, histories, and tragedies, seem not to have distinguished the three kinds by any very exact or definite ideas.

And action which ended happily to the principal persons, however serious or distressful through its intermediate incidents, in their opinion, constituted a comedy. This idea of a comedy continued long amongst us; and plays were written, which, by changing the
catastrophe, were tragedies to-day, and comedies to-morrow.

Tragedy was not in those times a poem of more general dignity or
elevation than comedy; it required only a calamitous conclusion, with
which the common criticism of that age was satisfied, whatever lighter
pleasure it afforded in its progress.

History was a series of actions, with no other than chronological
succession, independent on each other, and without any tendency to
introduce or regulate the conclusion. It is not always very nicely
distinguished from tragedy. There is not much nearer approach to
unity of action in the tragedy of _Antony and Cleopatra_ than in
the history of _Richard the Second_. But a history might be continued
through many plays; as it had no plan, it had no limits.

Through all these denominations of the drama, _Shakespeare's_ mode of
composition is the same; an interchange of seriousness and merriment,
by which the mind is softened at one time, and exhilarated at another.
But whatever be his purpose, whether to gladden or depress, or to
conduct the story, without vehemence or emotion, through tracts of
easy and familiar dialogue, he never fails to attain his purpose;
as he commands us, we laugh or mourn, or sit silent with quiet
expectation, in tranquility without indifference.

When _Shakespeare's_ plan is understood, most of the criticisms of
_Rhymer_ and _Voltaire_ vanish away. The play of _Hamlet_ is opened,
without impropriety, by two sentinels; _Iago_ bellows at _Brabantio's_ window, without injury to the scheme of the play, though in terms which a modern audience would not easily endure; the character of _Polonius_ is seasonable and useful; and the Grave-diggers themselves may be heard with applause.

_Shakespeare_ engaged in dramatick poetry with the world open before him; the rules of the ancients were yet known to few; but publick judgment was unformed; he had no example of such fame as might force him upon imitation, nor critics of such authority as might restrain his extravagance: He therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as _Rhymer_ has remarked, led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes, with great appearance of toil and study, what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comick scenes, he seems to produce without labour what no labour can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comick; but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In his tragick scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.

The force of his comick scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half, in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations
are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits, are only superficial dies, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; but the discriminations of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heap by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of _Shakespeare_.

If there be, what I believe there is, in every nation, a stile which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so consonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language as to remain settled and unaltered; this style is probably to be sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition of elegance. The polite are always catching modish innovations, and the learned depart from established forms of speech, in hope of finding or making better; those who wish for distinction forsake the vulgar, when the vulgar is right; but there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gathered his comick dialogue. He is therefore more agreeable to the ears of the present age than any other authour equally remote, and among his other
excellencies deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language.

These observations are to be considered not as unexceptionally constant, but as containing general and predominant truth.

_Shakespeare's_ familiar dialogue is affirmed to be smooth and clear, yet not wholly without ruggedness or difficulty; as a country may be eminently fruitful, though it has spots unfit for cultivation:

His characters are praised as natural, though their sentiments are sometimes forced, and their actions improbable; as the earth upon the whole is spherical, though its surface is varied with protuberances and cavities.

_Shakespeare_ with his excellencies has likewise faults, and faults sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit. I shall shew them in the proportion in which they appear to me, without envious malignity or superstitious veneration. No question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown; and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candour higher than truth.

His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think
morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes
no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to shew
in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons
indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them
without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance.
This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always
a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue
independent on time or place.

The plots are often so loosely formed, that a very slight
consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued, that
he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design. He omits
opportunities of instructing or delighting which the train of
his story seems to force upon him, and apparently rejects those
exhibitions which would be more affecting, for the sake of those which
are more easy.

It may be observed, that in many of his plays the latter part is
evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work,
and, in view of his reward, he shortened the labour to snatch
the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most
vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or
imperfectly represented.

He had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age
or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions
of another, at the expense not only of likelihood, but of possibility.

These faults _Pope_ has endeavoured, with more zeal than judgment,
to transfer to his imagined interpolators. We need not wonder to find
_Hector_ quoting _Aristotle_, when we see the loves of _Theseus_
and _Hippolyta_ combined with the _Gothic_ mythology of fairies.
_Shakespeare_ indeed, was not the only violator of chronology, for in
the same age _Sidney_, who wanted not the advantages of learning, has,
in his _Arcadia_, confounded the pastoral with the feudal times,
the days of innocence, quiet and security, with those of turbulence,
vigour, and adventure.

In his comick scenes he is seldom very successful, when he engages
his characters in reciprocations of smartsness and contests of sarcasm;
their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantry licentious;
neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are
sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of
refined manners. Whether he represented the real conversation of his
time is not easy to determine; the reign of _Elizabeth_ is commonly
supposed to have been a time of stateliness, formality and reserve;
yet perhaps the relaxations of that severity were not very elegant.
There must, however, have been always some modes of gayety preferable
to others, and a writer ought to chuse the best.

In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse, as his labour
is more. The effusions of passion which exigence forces out are for
the most part striking and energetick; but whenever he solicits his
invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is
tumour, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity.

In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction, and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatrick poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action; it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. _Shakespeare_ found it an encumberance, and instead of lightening it by brevity, endeavoured to recommend it by dignity and splendour.

His declamations or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, for his power was the power of nature; when he endeavoured, like other tragick writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader.

It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it.

Not that always where the language is intricate the thought is subtle,
or the image always great where the line is bulky; the equality of
words to things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and
vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended
by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.

But the admirers of this great poet have never less reason to indulge
their hopes of supreme excellence, than when he seems fully resolved
to sink them in dejection, and mollify them with tender emotions by
the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, or the crosses of
love. He is not long soft and pathetick without some idle conceit,
or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move, than he
counteracts himself; and terour and pity, as they are rising in the
mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity.

A quibble is to _Shakespeare_, what luminous vapours are to the
traveller; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out
of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant
power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever
be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be
enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing
attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a
quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A
quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from
his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as
it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by
the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the
fatal _Cleopatra_ for which he lost the world, and was content to lose
It will be thought strange, that, in enumerating the defects of this writer, I have not yet mentioned his neglect of the unities: his violation of those laws which have been instituted and established by the joint authority of poets and critics.

For his other deviations from the art of writing I resign him to critical justice, without making any other demand in his favour, than that which must be indulged to all human excellence: that his virtues be rated with his failings: But, from the censure which this irregularity may bring upon him, I shall, with due reverence to that learning which I must oppose, adventure to try how I can defend him.

His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect, than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought.

In his other works he has well enough preserved the unity of action. He has not, indeed, an intrigue regularly perplexed and regularly unravelled: he does not endeavour to hide his design only to discover it, for this is seldom the order of real events, and Shakespeare is the poet of nature: But his plan has commonly what Aristotle
requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated
with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence. There
are perhaps some incidents that might be spared, as in other poets
there is much talk that only fills up time upon the stage; but the
general system makes gradual advances, and the end of the play is the
end of expectation.

To the unities of time and place he has shewn no regard; and perhaps a
nearer view of the principles on which they stand will diminish their
value, and withdraw from them the veneration which, from the time of
_Corneille_, they have very generally received, by discovering
that they have given more trouble to the poet, than pleasure to the
auditor.

The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from
the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The criticks
hold it impossible, that an action of months or years can be possibly
believed to pass in three hours; or that the spectator can suppose
himself to sit in the theatre, while ambassadors go and return between
distant kings while armies are levied and towns besieged, while an
exile wanders and returns, or till he whom they saw courting his
mistress, shall lament the untimely fall of his son. The mind revolts
from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs
from the resemblance of reality.

From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction
of place. The spectator, who knows that he saw the first act at
_Alexandria_, cannot suppose that he sees the next at _Rome_, at a
distance to which not the dragons of _Medea_ could, in so short a
time, have transported him; he knows with certainty that he has not
changed his place, and he knows that place cannot change itself; that
what was a house cannot become a plain; that what was _Thebes_ can
never be _Persepolis_.

Such is the triumphant language with which a critick exults over the
misery of an irregular poet, and exults commonly without resistance
or reply. It is time therefore to tell him by the authority of
_Shakespeare_, that he assumes, as an unquestionable principle,
a position, which, while his breath is forming it into words,
his understanding pronounces to be false. It is false, that any
representation is mistake for reality; that any dramatrick fable in
its materiality was ever credible, or, for a single moment, was ever
credited.

The objection arising from the impossibility of passing the first hour
at _Alexandria_, and the next at _Rome_, supposes, that when the play
opens, the spectator really imagines himself at _Alexandria_, and
believes that his walk to the theatre has been a voyage to _Egypt_,
and that he lives in the days of _Antony_ and _Cleopatra_. Surely he
that imagines this may imagine more. He that can take the stage at one
time for the palace of the _Ptolemies_, may take it in half an hour
for the promontory of _Actium_. Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has
no certain limitation; if the spectator can be once persuaded,
that his old acquaintance are Alexander and Caesar, that a room illuminated with candles is the plain of Pharsalia, or the bank of Granicus, he is in a state of elevation above the reach of reason, or of truth, and from the heights of empyrean poetry, may despise the circumscriptions of terrestrial nature. There is no reason why a mind thus wandering in extacy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field.

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They came to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must he in some place; but the different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other; and where is the absurdity of allowing that space to represent first Athens, and then Sicily, which was always known to be neither Sicily nor Athens, but a modern theatre?

By supposition, as place is introduced, times may be extended; the time required by the fable elapses for the most part between the acts; for, of so much of the action as is represented, the real and poetical duration is the same. If, in the first act, preparations for war against Mithridates are represented to be made in Rome, the event of the war may, without absurdity, be represented, in the catastrophe, as happening in Pontus; we know that there is neither war, nor preparation for war; we know that we are neither in Rome nor
Pontus; that neither Mithridates nor Lucullus are before us. The drama exhibits successive imitations of successive actions; and why may not the second imitation represent an action that happened years after the first, if it be so connected with it, that nothing but time can be supposed to intervene? Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.

It will be asked, how the drama moves, if it is not credited. It is credited with all the credit due to a drama. It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel, if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done. The reflection that strikes the heart is not, that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we ourselves may be exposed. If there be any fallacy, it is not that we fancy the players, but that we fancy ourselves unhappy for a moment; but we rather lament the possibility than suppose the presence of misery, as a mother weeps over her babe, when she remembers that death may take it from her. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more.

Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not
supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness; but we consider, how we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us, and such woods waving over us. We are agitated in reading the history of _Henry_ the Fifth, yet no man takes his book for the field of _Agencourt_. A dramatrick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that encrease or diminish its effect. Familiar comedy is often more powerful in the theatre, than on the page; imperial tragedy is always less. The humour of _Petruchio_ may be heightened by grimace; but what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of _Cato_.

A play read, affects the mind like a play acted. It is therefore evident, that the action is not supposed to be real; and it follows, that between the acts a longer or shorter time may be allowed to pass, and that no more account of space or duration is to be taken by the auditor of a drama, than by the reader of a narrative, before whom may pass in an hour the life of a hero, or the revolutions of an empire.

Whether _Shakespeare_ knew the unities, and rejected them by design, or deviated from them by happy ignorance, it is, I think, impossible to decide, and useless to enquire. We may reasonably suppose, that, when he rose to notice, he did not want the counsels and admonitions of scholars and criticks, and that he at last deliberately persisted in a practice, which he might have begun by chance. As nothing is essential to the fable, but unity of action, and as the unities of time and place arise evidently from false assumptions, and, by circumscribing the extent of the drama, lessen its variety, I cannot
think it much to be lamented, that they were not known by him, or
not observed: Nor, if such another poet could arise, should I very
vehemently reproach him, that his first act passed at _Venice_, and
his next in _Cyprus_. Such violations of rules merely positive, become
the comprehensive genius of _Shakespeare_, and such censures are
suitable to the minute and slender criticism of _Voltaire_:

Non usque adeo permiscuit imis
Longus summa dies, ut non, si voce Metelli
Serventur leges, malint a Caesare tolli.

Yet when I speak thus slightly of dramatick rules, I cannot but
recollect how much wit and learning may be produced against me; before
such authorities I am afraid to stand, not that I think the present
question one of those that are to be decided by mere authority, but
because it is to be suspected, that these precepts have not been so
easily received but for better reasons than I have yet been able to
find. The result of my enquiries, in which it would be ludicrous to
boast of impartiality, is, that the unities of time and place are not
essential to a just drama, that though they may sometimes conduce to
pleasure, they are always to be sacrificed to the nobler beauties
of variety and instruction; and that a play, written with nice
observation of critical rules, is to be contemplated as an elaborate
curiosity, as the product of superfluous and ostentatious art, by
which is shewn, rather what is possible, than what is necessary.
He that, without diminution of any other excellence, shall preserve
all the unities unbroken, deserves the like applause with the
architect, who shall display all the orders of architecture in a
citadel; without any deduction from its strength; but the principal
beauty of a citadel is to exclude the enemy; and the greatest graces
of a play, are to copy nature and instruct life.

Perhaps what I have here not dogmatically but deliberatively written,
may recal the principles of the drama to a new examination. I am
almost frighted at my own temerity; and when I estimate the fame and
the strength of those that maintain the contrary opinion, am ready to
sink down in reverential silence; as _AEneas_ withdrew from the defence
of _Troy_, when he saw _Neptune_ shaking the wall, and _Juno_ heading
the besiegers.

Those whom my arguments cannot persuade to give their approbation
to the judgment of _Shakespeare_, will easily, if they consider the
condition of his life, make some allowance for his ignorance.

Every man's performances, to be rightly estimated, must be compared
with the state of the age in which he lived, and with his own
particular opportunities; and though to the reader a book be not worse
or better for the circumstances of the authour, yet as there is always
a silent reference of human works to human abilities, and as the
enquiry, how far man may extend his designs, or how high he may rate
his native force, is of far greater dignity than in what rank we shall
place any particular performance, curiosity is always busy to discover
the instruments, as well as to survey the workmanship, to know how
much is to be ascribed to original powers, and how much to casual and
adventitious help. The palaces of _Peru_ or _Mexico_ were certainly
mean and incommodious habitations, if compared to the houses
of _European_ monarchs; yet who could forbear to view them with
astonishment, who remembered that they were built without the use of
iron?

The _English_ nation, in the time of _Shakespeare_, was yet
struggling to emerge from barbarity. The philology of _Italy_ had
been transplanted hither in the reign of _Henry_ the Eighth; and
the learned languages had been successfully cultivated by _Lilly,
Linacer_, and _More_; by _Pole, Cheke_, and _Gardiner_; and afterwards
by _Smith, Clerk, Haddon_, and _Ascham_. Greek was now taught to boys
in the principal schools; and those who united elegance with learning,
read, with great diligence, the _Italian_ and _Spanish_ poets. But
literature was yet confined to professed scholars, or to men and women
of high rank. The publick was gross and dark; and to be able to read
and write, was an accomplishment still valued for its rarity.

Nations, like individuals, have their infancy. A people newly awakened
to literary curiosity, being yet unacquainted with the true state
of things, knows not how to judge of that which is proposed as its
resemblance. Whatever is remote from common appearances is always
welcome to vulgar, as to childish credulity; and of a country
unenlightened by learning, the whole people is the vulgar. The study
of those who then aspired to plebeian learning was laid out upon
adventures, giants, dragons, and enchantments. _The Death of Arthur_
was the favourite volume.

The mind, which has feasted on the luxurious wonders of fiction, has
no taste of the insipidity of truth. A play which imitated only
the common occurrences of the world, would, upon the admirers of
_Palmerin_ and _Guy_ of _Warwick_, have made little impression; he
that wrote for such an audience was under the necessity of looking
round for strange events and fabulous transactions, and that
incredibility, by which maturer knowledge is offended, was the chief
recommendation of writings, to unskilful curiosity.

Our authour's plots are generally borrowed from novels, and it is
reasonable to suppose, that he chose the most popular, such as were
read by many, and related by more; for his audience could not have
followed him through the intricacies of the drama, had they not held
the thread of the story in their hands.

The stories, which we now find only in remoter authours, were in his
time accessible and familiar. The fable of _As you like it_, which is
supposed to be copied from _Chaucer's_ Gamelyn, was a little pamphlet
of those times; and old Mr. _Cibber_ remembered the tale of _Hamlet_
in plain _English_ prose, which the criticks have now to seek in _Saxo
Grammaticus_.}
His _English_ histories he took from _English_ chronicles and _English_ ballads; and as the ancient writers were made known to his countrymen by versions, they supplied him with new subjects; he dilated some of _Plutarch's_ lives into plays, when they had been translated by _North_.

His plots, whether historical or fabulous, are always crowded with incidents, by which the attention of a rude people was more easily caught than by sentiment or argumentation; and such is the power of the marvellous even over those who despise it, that every man finds his mind more strongly seized by the tragedies of _Shakespeare_ than of any other writer; others please us by particular speeches, but he always makes us anxious for the event, and has perhaps excelled all but _Homer_ in securing the first purpose of a writer, by exciting restless and unquenchable curiosity and compelling him that reads his work to read it through. The shows and bustle with which his plays abound have the same original. As knowledge advances, pleasure passes from the eye to the ear, but returns, as it declines, from the ear to the eye. Those to whom our author's labours were exhibited had more skill in pomp or processions than in poetical language, and perhaps wanted some visible and discriminated events, as comments on the dialogue. He knew how he should most please; and whether his practice is more agreeable to nature, or whether his example has prejudiced the nation, we still find that on our stage something must be done as well as said, and inactive declamation is very coldly heard, however musical or elegant, passionate or sublime.
Voltaire expresses his wonder, that our author's extravagances are endured by a nation, which has seen the tragedy of Cato. Let him be answered, that Addison speaks the language of poets, and Shakespeare, of men. We find in Cato innumerable beauties which enamour us of its author, but we see nothing that acquaints us with human sentiments or human actions; we place it with the fairest and the noblest progeny which judgment propagates by conjunction with learning, but Othello is the vigorous and vivacious offspring of observation impregnated by genius. Cato affords a splendid exhibition of artificial and fictitious manners, and delivers just and noble sentiments, in diction easy, elevated and harmonious, but its hopes and fears communicate no vibration to the heart; the composition refers us only to the writer; we pronounce the name of Cato, but we think on Addison.

The work of a correct and regular writer is a garden accurately formed and diligently planted, varied with shades, and scented with flowers; the composition of Shakespeare is a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses; filling the eye with awful pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity. Other poets display cabinets of precious rarities, minutely finished, wrought into shape, and polished into brightness. Shakespeare opens a mine which contains gold and diamonds in unexhaustible plenty, though clouded by incrustations, debased by impurities, and mingled with a mass of meaner minerals.
It has been much disputed, whether _Shakespeare_ owed his excellence to his own native force, or whether he had the common helps of scholastick education, the precepts of critical science, and the examples of ancient authours.

There has always prevailed a tradition, that _Shakespeare_ wanted learning, that he had no regular education, nor much skill in the dead languages. _Johnson_, his friend, affirms, that _he had small Latin, and no Greek_; who, besides that he had no imaginable temptation to falsehood, wrote at a time when the character and acquisitions of _Shakespeare_ were known to multitudes. His evidence ought therefore to decide the controversy, unless some testimony of equal force could be opposed.

Some have imagined, that they have discovered deep learning in many imitations of old writers; but the examples which I have known urged, were drawn from books translated in his time; or were such easy coincidences of thought, as will happen to all who consider the same subjects; or such remarks on life or axioms of morality as float in conversation, and are transmitted through the world in proverbial sentences.

I have found it remarked, that, in this important sentence, _Go before, I'll follow_, we read a translation of, _I prae, sequar_. I have been told, that when _Caliban_, after a pleasing dream, says, _I
cry'd to sleep again, the authour imitates Anacreon, who had, like every other man, the same wish on the same occasion.

There are a few passages which may pass for imitations, but so few, that the exception only confirms the rule; he obtained them from accidental quotations, or by oral communication, and as he used what he had, would have used more if he had obtained it.

The Comedy of Errors is confessedly taken from the Menaechmi of Plautus: from the only play of Plautus which was then in English. What can be more probable, than that he who copied that, would have copied more; but that those which were not translated were inaccessible?

Whether he knew the modern languages is uncertain. That his plays have some French scenes proves but little; he might easily procure them to be written, and probably, even though he had known the language in the common degree, he could not have written it without assistance. In the story of Romeo and Juliet he is observed to have followed the English translation, where it deviates from the Italian: but this on the other part proves nothing against his knowledge of the original. He was to copy, not what he knew himself, but what was known to his audience.

It is most likely that he had learned Latin sufficiently to make him acquainted with construction, but that he never advanced to an easy
perusal of the _Roman_ authours. Concerning his skill in modern
languages, I can find no sufficient ground of determination; but as
no imitations of _French_ or _Italian_ authours have been discovered,
though the _Italian_ poetry was then high in esteem, I am inclined to
believe, that he read little more than _English_, and chose for his
fables only such tales as he found translated.

That much knowledge is scattered over his works is very justly
observed by _Pope_, but it is often such knowledge as books did not
supply. He that will understand _Shakespeare_, must not be content to
study him in the closet, he must look for his meaning sometimes among
the sports of the field, and sometimes among the manufactures of the
shop.

There is however proof enough that he was a very diligent reader, nor
was our language then so indigent of books, but that he might very
liberally indulge his curiosity without excursion into foreign
literature. Many of the _Roman_ authours were translated, and some of
the _Greek_; the reformation had filled the kingdom with theological
learning; most of the topicks of human disquisition had found
_English_ writers; and poetry had been cultivated, not only with
diligence, but success. This was a stock of knowledge sufficient for a
mind so capable of appropriating and improving it.

But the greater part of his excellence was the product of his
own genius. He found the _English_ stage in a state of the utmost
rudeness; no essays either in tragedy or comedy had appeared, from which it could be discovered to what degree of delight either one or other might be carried. Neither character nor dialogue were yet understood. _Shakespeare_ may be truly said to have introduced them both amongst us, and in some of his happier scenes to have carried them both to the utmost height.

By what gradations of improvement he proceeded, is not easily known; for the chronology of his works is yet unsettled. _Rowe_ is of opinion, that _perhaps we are not to look for his beginning, like those of other writers, in his least perfect works; art had so little, and nature so large a share in what he did, that for ought I know_, says he, _the performances of his youth, as they were the most vigorous, were the best._ But the power of nature is only the power of using to any certain purpose the materials which diligence procures, or opportunity supplies. Nature gives no man knowledge, and when images are collected by study and experience, can only assist in combining or applying them. _Shakespeare_, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned; and as he must increase his ideals, like other mortals, by gradual acquisition, he, like them, grew wiser as he grew older, could display life better, as he knew it more, and instruct with more efficacy, as he was himself more amply instructed.

There is a vigilance of observation and accuracy of distinction which books and precepts cannot confer; from this almost all original and native excellence proceeds. _Shakespeare_ must have looked
upon mankind with perspicacity, in the highest degree curious and attentive. Other writers borrow their characters from preceding writers, and diversify them only by the accidental appendages of present manners; the dress is a little varied, but the body is the same. Our authour had both matter and form to provide; for except the characters of _Chaucer_, to whom I think he is not much indebted, there were no writers in _English_, and perhaps not many in other modern languages, which shewed life in its native colours.

The contest about the original benevolence or malignity of man had not yet commenced. Speculation had not yet attempted to analyse the mind, to trace the passions to their sources, to unfold the seminal principles of vice and virtue, or sound the depths of the heart for the motives of action. All those enquiries, which from that time that human nature became the fashionable study, have been made sometimes with nice discernment, but often with idle subtilty, were yet unattempted. The tales, with which the infancy of learning was satisfied, exhibited only the superficial appearances of action, related the events but omitted the causes, and were formed for such as delighted in wonders rather than in truth. Mankind was not then to be studied in the closet; he that would know the world, was under the necessity of gleaning his own remarks, by mingling as he could in its business and amusements.

_Boyle_ congratulated himself upon his high birth, because it favoured his curiosity, by facilitating his access. _Shakespeare_ had no such advantage; he came to _London_ a needy adventurer, and lived for a
time by very mean employments. Many works of genius and learning have been performed in states of life, that appear very little favourable to thought or to enquiry; so many, that he who considers them is inclined to think that he sees enterprise and perseverance predominating over all external agency, and bidding help and hindrance vanish before them. The genius of Shakespeare was not to be depressed by the weight of poverty, nor limited by the narrow conversation to which men in want are inevitably condemned; the incumbrances of his fortune were shaken from his mind, as dewdrops from a lion's mane.

Though he had so many difficulties to encounter, and so little assistance to surmount them, he has been able to obtain an exact knowledge of many modes of life, and many casts of native dispositions; to vary them with great multiplicity; to mark them by nice distinctions; and to shew them in full view by proper combinations. In this part of his performances he had none to imitate, but has himself been imitated by all succeeding writers; and it may be doubted, whether from all his successors more maxims of theoretical knowledge, or more rules of practical prudence, can be collected, than he alone has given to his country.

Nor was his attention confined to the actions of men; he was an exact surveyor of the inanimate world; his descriptions have always some peculiarities, gathered by contemplating things as they really exist. It may be observed, that the oldest poets of many nations preserve their reputation, and that the following generations of wit, after a
short celebrity, sink into oblivion. The first, whoever they be, must
take their sentiments and descriptions immediately from knowledge;
the resemblance is therefore just, their descriptions are verified by
every eye, and their sentiments acknowledged by every breast. Those
whom their fame invites to the same studies, copy partly them, and
partly nature, till the books of one age gain such authority, as
to stand in the place of nature to another, and imitation,
always deviating a little, becomes at last capricious and casual.
_Shakespeare_, whether life or nature be his subject, shews plainly,
that he has seen with his own eyes; he gives the image which he
receives, not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other
mind; the ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the
learned see that they are compleat.

Perhaps it would not be easy to find any author, except _Homer_, who
invented so much as _Shakespeare_, who so much advanced the studies
which he cultivated, or effused so much novelty upon his age or
country. The form, the characters, the language, and the shows of the
_English_ drama are his, _He seems_, says _Dennis, to have been the
very original of our_ English _tragical harmony, that is, the harmony
of blank verse, diversified often by dissyllable and trisyllable
terminations. For the diversity distinguishes it from heroick harmony,
and by bringing it nearer to common use makes it more proper to gain
attention, and more fit for action and dialogue. Such verse we make
when we are writing prose; we make such verse in common conversation_.

I know not whether this praise is rigorously just. The dissyllable
termination, which the critic rightly appropriates to the drama, is
to be found, though, I think, not in _Gorboduc_, which is confessedly
before our author; yet in _Hieronnymo_, of which the date is not
certain, but which there is reason to believe at least as old as his
earliest plays. This however is certain, that he is the first who
taught either tragedy or comedy to please, there being no theatrical
piece of any older writer, of which the name is known, except to
antiquaries and collectors of books, which are sought because they are
scarce, and would not have been scarce, had they been much esteemed.

To him we must ascribe the praise, unless _Spenser_ may divide it with
him, of having first discovered to how much smoothness and harmony
the _English_ language could be softened. He has speeches, perhaps
sometimes scenes, which have all the delicacy of _Rowe_, without his
effeminacy. He endeavours indeed commonly to strike by the force and
vigour of his dialogue, but he never executes his purpose better, than
when he tries to soothe by softness.

Yet it must be at last confessed, that as we owe every thing to
him, he owes something to us; that, if much of his praise is paid
by perception and judgement, much is likewise given by custom and
veneration. We fix our eyes upon his graces, and turn them from his
deformities, and endure in him what we should in another loath or
despise. If we endured without praising, respect for the father of
our drama might excuse us; but I have seen, in the book of some modern
critick, a collection of anomalies, which shew that he has corrupted
language by every mode of depravation, but which his admirer has

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accumulated as a monument of honour.

He has scenes of undoubted and perpetual excellence, but perhaps not one play, which, if it were now exhibited as the work of a contemporary writer, would be heard to the conclusion. I am indeed far from thinking, that his works were wrought to his own ideas of perfection; when they were such as would satisfy the audience, they satisfied the writer. It is seldom that authors, though more studious of fame than _Shakespeare_, rise much above the standard of their own age; to add a little of what is best will always be sufficient for present praise, and those who find themselves exalted into fame, are willing to credit their encomiasts, and to spare the labour of contending with themselves.

It does not appear, that _Shakespeare_ thought his works worthy of posterity, that he levied any ideal tribute upon future times, or had any further prospect, than of present popularity and present profit. When his plays had been acted, his hope was at an end; he solicited no addition of honour from the reader. He therefore made no scruple to repeat the same jests in many dialogues, or to entangle different plots by the same knot of perplexity, which may be at least forgiven him, by those who recollect, that of _Congreve’s_ four comedies, two are concluded by a marriage in a mask, by a deception, which perhaps never happened, and which, whether likely or not, he did not invent.

So careless was this great poet of future fame, that, though he
retired to ease and plenty, while he was yet little _declined into the vale of years_, before he could be disgusted with fatigue, or disabled by infirmity, he made no collection of his works, nor desired to rescue those that had been already published from the deprivations that obscured them, or secure to the rest a better destiny, by giving them to the world in their genuine state.

Of the plays which bear the name of _Shakespeare_ in the late editions, the greater part were not published till about seven years after his death, and the few which appeared in his life are apparently thrust into the world without the care of the authour, and therefore probably without his knowledge.

Of all the publishers, clandestine or professed, their negligence and unskilfulness has by the late revisers been sufficiently shown. The faults of all are indeed numerous and gross, and have not only corrupted many passages perhaps beyond recovery, but have brought others into suspicion, which are only obscured by obsolete phraseology, or by the writer's unskilfulness and affectation. To alter is more easy than to explain, and temerity is a more common quality than diligence. Those who saw that they must employ conjecture to a certain degree, were willing to indulge it a little further. Had the author published his own works, we should have sat quietly down to disentangle his intricacies, and clear his obscurities; but now we tear what we cannot loose, and eject what we happen not to understand.
The faults are more than could have happened without the concurrence of many causes. The stile of _Shakespeare_ was in itself ungrammatical, perplexed and obscure; his works were transcribed for the players by those who may be supposed to have seldom understood them; they were transmitted by copiers equally unskilful, who still multiplied errors; they were perhaps sometimes mutilated by the actors, for the sake of shortening the speeches; and were at last printed without correction of the press.

In this state they remained, not as Dr. _Warburton_ supposes, because they were unregarded, but because the editor's art was not yet applied to modern languages, and our ancestors were accustomed to so much negligence of _English_ printers, that they could very patiently endure it. At last an edition was undertaken by _Rowe_; not because a poet was to be published by a poet, for _Rowe_ seems to have thought very little on correction or explanation, but that our author's works might appear like those of his fraternity, with the appendages of a life and recommendatory preface. _Rowe_ has been clamorously blamed for not performing what he did not undertake, and it is time that justice be done him, by confessing, that though he seems to have had no thought of corruption beyond the printer's errors, yet he has made many emendations, if they were not made before, which his successors have received without acknowledgement, and which, if they had produced them, would have filled pages and pages with censures of the stupidity by which the faults were committed, with displays of the absurdities which they involved, with ostentatious expositions of the new reading, and self congratulations on the happiness of discovering it.
Of _Rowe_, as of all the editors, I have preserved the preface, and have likewise retained the authour's life, though not written with much elegance or spirit; it relates however what is now to be known, and therefore deserves to pass through all succeeding publications.

The nation had been for many years content enough with Mr. _Rowe's_ performance, when Mr. _Pope_ made them acquainted with the true state of _Shakespeare's_ text, shewed that it was extremely corrupt, and gave reason to hope that there were means of reforming it. He collated the old copies, which none had thought to examine before, and restored many lines to their integrity; but, by a very compendious criticism, he rejected whatever he disliked, and thought more of amputation than of cure.

I know not why he is commended by Dr. _Warburton_ for distinguishing the genuine from the spurious plays. In this choice he exerted no judgement of his own; the plays which he received, were given by _Hemings_ and _Condel_ the first editors; and those which he rejected, though, according to the licentiousness of the press in those times, they were printed during _Shakespeare's_ life, with his name, had been omitted by his friends, and were never added to his works before the edition of 1664, from which they were copied by the later printers.

This was a work which _Pope_ seems to have thought unworthy of his
abilities, being not able to suppress his contempt of the dull duty of an editor. He understood but half his undertaking. The duty of a collator is indeed dull, yet, like other tedious tasks, is very necessary; but an emendatory critic would ill discharge his duty, without qualities very different from dullness. In perusing a corrupted piece, he must have before him all possibilities of meaning, with all possibilities of expression. Such must be his comprehension of thought, and such his copiousness of language. Out of many readings possible, he must be able to select that which best suits with the state, opinions, and modes of language prevailing in every age, and with his author's particular cast of thought, and turn of expression. Such must be his knowledge, and such his taste. Conjectural criticism demands more than humanity possesses, and he that exercises it with most praise has very frequent need of indulgence. Let us now be told no more of the dull duty of an editor.

Confidence is the common consequence of success. They whose excellence of any kind has been loudly celebrated, are ready to conclude, that their powers are universal. Pope's edition fell below his own expectations, and he was so much offended, when he was found to have left any thing for others to do, that he past the latter part of his life in a state of hostility with verbal criticism.

I have retained all his notes, that no fragment of so great a writer may be lost; his preface, valuable alike for elegance of composition and justness of remark, and containing a general criticism on his author, so extensive, that little can be added, and so exact, that
little can be disputed, every editor has an interest to suppress, but
that every reader would demand its insertion.

_Pope_ was succeeded by _Theobald_, a man of narrow comprehension and
small acquisitions, with no native and intrinsick splendour of genius,
with little of the artificial light of learning, but zealous for
minute accuracy, and not negligent in pursuing it. He collated
the ancient copies, and rectified many errors. A man so anxiously
scrupulous might have been expected to do more, but what little he did
was commonly right.

In his report of copies and editions he is not to be trusted, without
examination. He speaks sometimes indefinitely of copies, when he has
only one. In his enumeration of editions, he mentions the two first
folios as of high, and the third folio as of middle authority; but
the truth is, that the first is equivalent to all others, and that the
rest only deviate from it by the printer's negligence. Whoever has
any of the folios has all, excepting those diversities which mere
reiteration of editions will produce. I collated them all at the
beginning, but afterwards used only the first.

Of his notes I have generally retained those which he retained himself
in his second edition, except when they were confuted by subsequent
annotators, or were too minute to merit preservation. I have sometimes
adopted his restoration of a comma, without inserting the panegyrick
in which he celebrated himself for his achievement. The exuberant
excrècence of his diction I have often lopped, his triumphant
exultations over _Pope_ and _Rowe_ I have sometimes suppressed, and
his contemptible ostentation I have frequently concealed; but I have
in some places shewn him, as he would have shewn himself, for the
reader's diversion, that the inflated emptiness of some notes may
justify or excuse the contraction of the rest.

_Theobald_, thus weak and ignorant, thus mean and faithless, thus
petulant and ostentatious, by the good luck of having _Pope_ for his
enemy, has escaped, and escaped alone, with reputation, from this
undertaking. So willingly does the world support those who solicit
favour, against those who command reverence; and so easily is he
praised, whom no man can envy.

Our authour fell then into the hands of Sir _Thomas Hanmer_, the
_Oxford_ editor, a man, in my opinion, eminently qualified by nature
for such studies. He had, what is the first requisite to emendatory
criticism, that intuition by which the poet's intention is immediately
discovered, and that dexterity of intellect which despatches its work
by the easiest means. He had undoubtedly read much; his acquaintance
with customs, opinions, and traditions, seems to have been large; and
he is often learned without shew. He seldom passes what he does not
understand, without an attempt to find or to make a meaning, and
sometimes hastily makes what a little more attention would have found.
He is solicitous to reduce to grammar, what he could not be sure that
his authour intended to be grammatical. _Shakespeare_ regarded more
the series of ideas, than of words; and his language, not being
designed for the reader's desk, was all that he desired it to be, if
it conveyed his meaning to the audience.

_Hanmer's_ care of the metre has been too violently censured. He found
the measures reformed in so many passages, by the silent labours
of some editors, with the silent acquiescence of the rest, that he
thought himself allowed to extend a little further the license, which
had already been carried so far without reprehension; and of his
corrections in general, it must be confessed, that they are often
just, and made commonly with the least possible violation of the text.

But, by inserting his emendations, whether invented or borrowed, into
the page, without any notice of varying copies, he has appropriated
the labour of his predecessors, and made his own edition of little
authority. His confidence indeed, both in himself and others, was
too great; he supposes all to be right that was done by _Pope_ and
_Theobald_; he seems not to suspect a critic of fallibility, and it
was but reasonable that he should claim what he so liberally granted.

As he never writes without careful enquiry and diligent consideration,
I have received all his notes, and believe that every reader will wish
for more.

Of the last editor it is more difficult to speak. Respect is due to
high place, tenderness to living reputation, and veneration to genius
and learning; but he cannot be justly offended at that liberty
of which he has himself so frequently given an example, nor very
solicitous what is thought of notes, which he ought never to have
considered as part of his serious employments, and which, I suppose,
since the ardour of composition is remitted, he no longer numbers
among his happy effusions.

The original and predominant errour of his commentary, is acquiescence
in his first thoughts; that precipitation which is produced by
consciousness of quick discernment; and that confidence whichpresumes
to do, by surveying the surface, what labour only can perform,
by penetrating the bottom. His notes exhibit sometimes perverse
interpretations, and sometimes improbable conjectures; he at one
time gives the authour more profundity of meaning, than the sentence
admits, and at another discovers absurdities, where the sense is plain
to every other reader. But his emendations are likewise often happy
and just; and his interpretation of obscure passages learned and
sagacious.

Of his notes, I have commonly rejected those, against which the
general voice of the publick has exclaimed, or which their own
incongruity immediately condemns, and which, I suppose, the authour
himself would desire to be forgotten. Of the rest, to part I have
given the highest approbation, by inserting the offered reading in
the text; part I have left to the judgment of the reader, as doubtful,
though specious; and part I have censured without reserve, but I am
sure without bitterness of malice, and, I hope, without wantonness of
insult.
It is no pleasure to me, in revising my volumes, to observe how much paper is wasted in confutation. Whoever considers the revolutions of learning, and the various questions of greater or less importance, upon which wit and reason have exercised their powers, must lament the unsuccessfulness of enquiry, and the slow advances of truth, when he reflects, that great part of the labour of every writer is only the destruction of those that went before him. The first care of the builder of a new system, is to demolish the fabricks which are standing. The chief desire of him that comments an authour, is to shew how much other commentators have corrupted and obscured him. The opinions prevalent in one age, as truths above the reach of controversy, are confuted and rejected in another, and rise again to reception in remoter times. Thus the human mind is kept in motion without progress. Thus sometimes truth and criour, and sometimes contrarieties of errour, take each other's place by reciprocal invasion. The tide of seeming knowledge which is poured over one generation, retires and leaves another naked and barren; the sudden meteors of intelligence which for a while appear to shoot their beams into the regions of obscurity, on a sudden withdraw their lustre, and leave mortals again to grope their way.

These elevations and depressions of renown, and the contradictions to which all improvers of knowledge must for ever be exposed, since they are not escaped by the highest and brightest of mankind, may surely be endured with patience by criticks and annotators, who can rank themselves but as the satellites of their authours. How canst thou beg
for life, says _Achilles_ to his captive, when thou knowest that
thou art now to suffer only what must another day be suffered by
_Achilles?_

Dr. _Warburton_ had a name sufficient to confer celebrity on those who
could exalt themselves into antagonists, and his notes have raised a
clamour too loud to be distinct. His chief assailants are the authours
of _the Canons of criticism_ and of the _Review of_ Shakespeare's
_text_; of whom one ridicules his errours with airy petulance,
suitable enough to the levity of the controversy; the other attacks
them with gloomy malignity, as if he were dragging to justice an
assassin or incendiary. The one stings like a fly, sucks a little
blood, takes a gay flutter, and returns for more; the other bites like
a viper, and would be glad to leave inflammations and gangrene behind
him. When I think on one, with his confederates, I remember the danger
of _Coriolanus_, who was afraid that _girls with spits, and boys with
stones, should slay him in puny battle_; when the other crosses my
imagination, I remember the prodigy in _Macbeth_.

_An eagle tow'ring in his pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd._

Let me however do them justice. One is a wit, and one a scholar. They
have both shown acuteness sufficient in the discovery of faults, and
have both advanced some probable interpretations of obscure passages;
but when they aspire to conjecture and emendation, it appears how
falsely we all estimate our own abilities, and the little which they
have been able to perform might have taught them more candour to the
endeavours of others.

Before Dr. Warburton's edition, Critical observations on
Shakespeare had been published by Mr. Upton, a man skilled in
languages, and acquainted with books, but who seems to have had no
great vigour of genius or nicety of taste. Many of his explanations
are curious and useful, but he likewise, though he professed to oppose
the licentious confidence of editors, and adhere to the old copies,
is unable to restrain the rage of emendation, though his ardour is ill
seconded by his skill. Every cold empirick, when his heart is expanded
by a successful experiment, swells into a theorist, and the laborious
collator at some unlucky moment frolicks in conjecture.

Critical, historical and explanatory notes have been likewise
published upon Shakespeare by Dr. Grey, whose diligent perusal
of the old English writers has enabled him to make some useful
observations. What he undertook he has well enough performed, but
as he neither attempts judicial nor emendatory criticism, he employs
rather his memory than his sagacity. It were to be wished that all
would endeavour to imitate his modesty who have not been able to
surpass his knowledge.

I can say with great sincerity of all my predecessors, what I hope
will hereafter be said of me, that not one has left Shakespeare_
without improvement, nor is there one to whom I have not been indebted for assistance and information. Whatever I have taken from them it was my intention to refer to its original authour, and it is certain, that what I have not given to another, I believed when I wrote it to be my own. In some perhaps I have been anticipated; but if I am ever found to encroach upon the remarks of any other commentator, I am willing that the honour, be it more or less, should be transferred to the first claimant, for his right, and his alone, stands above dispute; the second can prove his pretensions only to himself, nor can himself always distinguish invention, with sufficient certainty, from recollection.

They have all been treated by me with candour, which they have not been careful of observing to one another. It is not easy to discover from what cause the acrimony of a scholiast can naturally proceed. The subjects to be discussed by him are of very small importance; they involve neither property nor liberty; nor favour the interest of sect or party. The various readings of copies, and different interpretations of a passage, seem to be questions that might exercise the wit, without engaging the passions. But, whether it be, that _small things make mean men proud_, and vanity catches small occasions; or that all contrariety of opinion, even in those that can defend it no longer, makes proud men angry; there is often found in commentaries a spontaneous strain of invective and contempt, more eager and venomous than is vented by the most furious controvertist in politicks against those whom he is hired to defame.
Perhaps the lightness of the matter may conduce to the vehemence of the agency; when the truth to be investigated is so near to inexistence, as to escape attention, its bulk is to be enlarged by rage and exclamation: That to which all would be indifferent in its original state, may attract notice when the fate of a name is appended to it. A commentator has indeed great temptations to supply by turbulence what he wants of dignity, to beat his little gold to a spacious surface, to work that to foam which no art or diligence can exalt to spirit.

The notes which I have borrowed or written are either illustrative, by which difficulties are explained; or judicial by which faults and beauties are remarked; or emendatory, by which depravations are corrected.

The explanations transcribed from others, if I do not subjoin any other interpretation, I suppose commonly to be right, at least I intend by acquiescence to confess, that I have nothing better to propose.

After the labours of all the editors, I found many passages which appeared to me likely to obstruct the greater number of readers, and thought it my duty to facilitate their passage. It is impossible for an expositor not to write too little for some, and too much for others. He can only judge what is necessary by his own experience; and how long soever he may deliberate, will at last explain many lines
which the learned will think impossible to be mistaken, and omit many
for which the ignorant will want his help. These are censures merely
relative, and must be quietly endured. I have endeavoured to be
neither superfluously copious, nor scrupulously reserved, and hope
that I have made my author's meaning accessible to many who before
were frightened from perusing him, and contributed something to the
publick, by diffusing innocent and rational pleasure.

The compleat explanation of an author not systematic and
consequential, but desultory and vagrant, abounding in casual
allusions and light hints, is not to be expected from any single
scholiast. All personal reflections, when names are suppressed, must
be in a few years irrecoverably obliterated; and customs, too minute
to attract the notice of law, such as modes of dress, formalities of
correspondence, rules of visits, disposition of furniture, and practices
of ceremony, which naturally find places in familiar dialogue, are
so fugitive and unsubstantial, that they are not easily retained or
recovered. What can be known, will be collected by chance, from the
recesses of obscure and obsolete papers, perused commonly with some
other view. Of this knowledge every man has some, and none has much;
but when an author has engaged the publick attention, those who can
add any thing to his illustration, communicate their discoveries, and
time produces what had eluded diligence.

To time I have been obliged to resign many passages, which, though I
did not understand them, will perhaps hereafter be explained, having,
I hope, illustrated some, which others have neglected or mistaken,
sometimes by short remarks, or marginal directions, such as every editor has added at his will, and often by comments more laborious than the matter will seem to deserve; but that which is most difficult is not always most important, and to an editor nothing is a trifle by which his authour is obscured.

The poetical beauties or defects I have not been very diligent to observe. Some plays have more, and some fewer judicial observations, not in proportion to their difference of merit, but because I gave this part of my design to chance and to caprice. The reader, I believe, is seldom pleased to find his opinion anticipated; it is natural to delight more in what we find or make, than in what we receive. Judgement, like other faculties, is improved by practice, and its advancement is hindered by submission to dictatorial decisions, as the memory grows torpid by the use of a table book. Some initiation is however necessary; of all skill, part is infused by precept, and part is obtained by habit; I have therefore shewn so much as may enable the candidate of criticism to discover the rest.

To the end of most plays, I have added short strictures, containing a general censure of faults, or praise of excellence; in which I know not how much I have concurred with the current opinion; tut I have not, by any affectation of singularity, deviated from it. Nothing is minutely and particularly examined, and therefore it is to be supposed, that in the plays which are condemned there is much to be praised, and in these which are praised much to be condemned.
The part of criticism in which the whole succession of editors has laboured with the greatest diligence, which has occasioned the most arrogant ostentation, and excited the keenest acrimony, is the emendation of corrupted passages, to which the publick attention having been first drawn by the violence of contention between _Pope_ and _Theobald_, has been continued by the persecution, which, with a kind of conspiracy, has been since raised against all the publishers of _Shakespeare_.

That many passages have passed in a state of depravation through all the editions is indubitably certain; of these the restoration is only to be attempted by collation of copies or sagacity of conjecture. The collator's province is safe and easy, the conjecturer's perilous and difficult. Yet as the greater part of the plays are extant only in one copy, the peril must not be avoided, nor the difficulty refused.

Of the readings which this emulation of amendment has hitherto produced, some from the labours of every publisher I have advanced into the text; those are to be considered as in my opinion sufficiently supported; some I have rejected without mention, as evidently erroneous; some I have left in the notes without censure or approbation, as resting in equipoise between objection and defence; and some, which seemed specious but not right, I have inserted with a subsequent animadversion.
Having classed the observations of others, I was at last to try what
I could substitute for their mistakes, and how I could supply their
omissions. I collated such copies as I could procure, and wished
for more, but have not found the collectors of these rarities very
communicative. Of the editions which chance or kindness put into
my hands I have given an enumeration, that I may not be blamed for
neglecting what I had not the power to do.

By examining the old copies, I soon found that the later publishers,
with all their boasts of diligence, suffered many passages to stand
unauthorised, and contented themselves with _Rowe's_ regulation of
the text, even where they knew it to be arbitrary, and with a
little consideration might have found it to be wrong. Some of these
alterations are only the ejection of a word for one that appeared to
him more elegant or more intelligible. These corruptions I have often
silently rectified; for the history of our language, and the true
force of our words, can only be preserved, by keeping the text of
authours free from adulteration. Others, and those very frequent,
smoothed the cadence, or regulated the measure; on these I have
not exercised the same rigour; if only a word was transposed, or a
particle Inserted or omitted, I have sometimes suffered the line
to stand; for the inconstancy of the copies is such, as that some
liberties may be easily permitted. But this practice I have not
suffered to proceed far, having restored the primitive diction
wherever it could for any reason be preferred.

The emendations, which comparison of copies supplied, I have inserted
in the text; sometimes where the improvement was slight, without notice, and sometimes with an account of the reasons of the change.

Conjecture, though it be sometimes unavoidable, I have not wantonly nor licentiously indulged. It has been my settled principle, that the reading of the ancient books is probably true, and therefore is not to be disturbed for the sake of elegance, perspicuity, or mere improvement of the sense. For though much credit is not due to the fidelity, nor any to the judgement of the first publishers, yet they who had the copy before their eyes were more likely to read it right, than we who read it only by imagination. But it is evident that they have often made strange mistakes by ignorance or negligence, and that therefore something may be properly attempted by criticism, keeping the middle way between presumption and timidity.

Such criticism I have attempted to practice, and where any passage appeared inextricably perplexed, have endeavoured to discover how it may be recalled to sense, with least violence. But my first labour is, always to turn the old text on every side, and try if there be any interstice, through which light can find its way; nor would _Huetius_ himself condemn me, as refusing the trouble of research, for the ambition of alteration. In this modest industry I have not been unsuccessful. I have rescued many lines from the violations of temerity, and secured many scenes from the inroads of correction. I have adopted the _Roman_ sentiment, that it is more honourable to save a citizen, than to kill an enemy, and have been more careful to protect than to attack.
I have preserved the common distribution of the plays into acts, though I believe it to be in almost all the plays void of authority. Some of those which are divided in the later editions have no division in the first folio, and some that are divided in the folio have no division in the preceding copies. The settled mode of the theatre requires four intervals in the play, but few, if any, of our author's compositions can be properly distributed in that manner. An act is so much of the drama as passes without intervention of time or change of place. A pause makes a new act. In every real, and therefore in every imitative action, the intervals may be more or fewer, the restriction of five acts being accidental and arbitrary. This Shakespeare knew, and this he practised; his plays were written, and at first printed in one unbroken continuity, and ought now to be exhibited with short pauses, interposed as often as the scene is changed, or any considerable time is required to pass. This method would at once quell a thousand absurdities.

In restoring the author's works to their integrity, I have considered the punctuation as wholly in my power; for what could be their care of colons and commas, who corrupted words and sentences. Whatever could be done by adjusting points is therefore silently performed, in some plays with much diligence, in others with less; it is hard to keep a busy eye steadily fixed upon evanescent atoms, or a discursive mind upon evanescent truth.
The same liberty has been taken with a few particles, or other words of slight effect. I have sometimes inserted or omitted them without notice. I have done that sometimes, which the other editors have done always, and which indeed the state of the text may sufficiently justify.

The greater part of readers, instead of blaming us for passing trifles, will wonder that on mere trifles so much labour is expended, with such importance of debate, and such solemnity of diction. To these I answer with confidence, that they are judging of an art which they do not understand; yet cannot much reproach them with their ignorance, nor promise that they would become in general, by learning criticism, more useful, happier or wiser.

As I practised conjecture more, I learned to trust it less; and after I had printed a few plays, resolved to insert none of my own readings in the text. Upon this caution I now congratulate myself, for every day encreases my doubt of my emendations.

Since I have confined my imagination to the margin, it must not be considered as very reprehensible, if I have suffered it to play some freaks in its own dominion. There is no danger in conjecture, if it be proposed as conjecture; and while the text remains uninjured, those changes may be safely offered, which are not considered even by him that offers them as necessary or safe.
If my readings are of little value, they have not been ostentatiously displayed or importunately obtruded. I could have written longer notes, for the art of writing notes is not of difficult attainment. The work is performed, first by railing at the stupidity, negligence, ignorance, and asinine tastelessness of the former editors, and shewing, from all that goes before and all that follows, the inelegance and absurdity of the old reading; then by proposing something which to superficial readers would seem specious, but which the editor rejects with indignation; then by producing the true reading, with a long paraphrase, and concluding with loud acclamations on the discovery, and a sober wish for the advancement and prosperity of genuine criticism.

All this may be done, and perhaps done sometimes without impropriety. But I have always suspected that the reading is right, which requires many words to prove it wrong; and the emendation wrong, that cannot without so much labour appear to be right. The justness of a happy restoration strikes at once, and the moral precept may be well applied to criticism, _quod dubitas ne feceris_.

To dread the shore which he sees spread with wrecks, is natural to the sailor. I had before my eye, so many critical adventures ended in miscarriage, that caution was forced upon me. I encountered in every page Wit struggling with its own sophistry, and Learning confused by the multiplicity of its views. I was forced to censure those whom I admired, and could not but reflect, while I was dispossessing their
emendations, how soon the same fate might happen to my own, and how
many of the readings which I have corrected may be by some other
editor defended and established.

Criticks, I saw, that other's names efface,
And fix their own, with labour, in the place;
Their own, like others, soon their place resign'd,
Or disappear'd, and left the first behind,

POPE.

That a conjectural critick should often be mistaken, cannot be
wonderful, either to others or himself, if it be considered, that in
his art there is no system, no principal and axiomatical truth that
regulates subordinate positions. His chance of error is renewed
at every attempt; an oblique view of the passage, a slight
misapprehension of a phrase, a casual inattention to the parts
connected, is sufficient to make him not only fails, but fail
ridiculously; and when he succeeds best, he produces perhaps but one
reading of many probable, and he that suggests another will always be
able to dispute his claims.

It is an unhappy state, in which danger is hid under pleasure. The
allurements of emendation are scarcely resistible. Conjecture has all
the joy and all the pride of invention, and he that has once started
a happy change, is too much delighted to consider what objections may
rise against it.

Yet conjectural criticism has been of great use in the learned world; nor is it my intention to depreciate a study, that has exercised so many mighty minds, from the revival of learning to our own age, from the Bishop of _Aleria_ to English _Bentley_. The critics on ancient authours have, in the exercise of their sagacity, many assistances, which the editor of _Shakespeare_ is condemned to want. They are employed upon grammatical and settled languages, whose construction contributes so much to perspicuity, that _Homer_ has fewer passages unintelligible than _Chaucer_. The words have not only a known regimen, but invariable quantities, which direct and confine the choice. There are commonly more manuscripts than one; and they do not often conspire in the same mistakes. Yet _Scaliger_ could confess to _Salmasius_ how little satisfaction his emendations gave him. _Illudunt nobis conjectureae nostrae, quarum nos pudet, posteaquam in meliores codices incidimus_. And _Lipsius_ could complain, that critics were making faults, by trying to remove them. _Ut olim vitii, ita nunc remediis laboratur_. And indeed, where mere conjecture is to be used, the emendations of _Scaliger_ and _Lipsius_, notwithstanding their wonderful sagacity and erudition, are often vague and disputable, like mine or _Theobald_'s.

Perhaps I may not be more censured for doing wrong, than for doing little; for raising in the publick expectations, which at last I have not answered. The expectation of ignorance is indefinite, and that of knowledge is often tyrannical. It is hard to satisfy those who know...
not what to demand, or those who demand by design what they think impossible to be done. I have indeed disappointed no opinion more than my own; yet I have endeavoured to perform my task with no slight solicitude. Not a single passage in the whole work has appeared to me corrupt, which I have not attempted to restore; or obscure, which I have not endeavoured to illustrate. In many I have failed like others, and from many, after all my efforts, I have retreated, and confessed the repulse. I have not passed over, with affected superiority, what is equally difficult to the reader and to myself, but where I could not instruct him, have owned my ignorance. I might easily have accumulated a mass of seeming learning upon easy scenes; but it ought not to be imputed to negligence, that, where nothing was necessary, nothing has been done, or that, where others have said enough, I have said no more.

Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. Let him, that is yet unacquainted with the powers of _Shakespeare_, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of _Theobald_ and of _Pope_. Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness, and read the commentators.
Particular passages are cleared by notes, but the general effect of the work is weakened. The mind is refrigerated by interruption; the thoughts are diverted from the principal subject; the reader is weary, he suspects not why; and at last throws away the book, which he has too diligently studied.

Parts are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed; there is a kind of intellectual remoteness necessary for the comprehension of any great work in its full design and its true proportions; a close approach shews the smaller niceties, but the beauty of the whole is discerned no longer. It is not very grateful to consider how little the succession of editors has added to this author's power of pleasing. He was read, admired, studied, and imitated, while he was yet deformed with all the improprieties which ignorance and neglect could accumulate upon him; while the reading was yet not rectified, nor his allusions understood; yet then did _Dryden_ pronounce "that _Shakespeare_ was the man, who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul." All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat and insipid; his comick wit degenerating into clenchcs, his
serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some
great occasion is presented to him: No man can say, he ever had a fit
subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the
rest of poets,

"Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi."

It is to be lamented, that such a writer should want a commentary;
that his language should become obsolete, or his sentiments obscure.
But it is vain to carry wishes beyond the condition of human things;
that which must happen to all, has happened to _Shakespeare_, by
accident and time; and more than has been suffered by any other writer
since the use of types, has been suffered by him through his own
negligence of fame, or perhaps by that superiority of mind, which
despised its own performances, when it compared them with its powers,
and judged those works unworthy to be preserved, which the criticks
of following ages were to contend for the fame of restoring and
explaining.

Among these candidates of inferiour fame, I am now to stand the
judgment of the publick; and wish that I could confidently produce my
commentary as equal to the encouragement which I have had the honour
of receiving. Every work of this kind is by its nature deficient,
and I should feel little solicitude about the sentence, were it to be
pronounced only by the skilful and the learned.
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPYLAeEN [A]

BY J.W. VON GOETHE. (1798)

The youth, when Nature and Art attract him, thinks that with a vigorous effort he can soon penetrate into the innermost sanctuary, the man, after long wanderings, finds himself still in the outer court.

Such an observation has suggested our title. It is only on the step, in the gateway, the entrance, the vestibule, the space between the outside and the inner chamber, between the sacred and the common, that we may ordinarily tarry with our friends.

If the word _Propylaea_ recalls particularly the structure through which was reached the citadel of Athens and the temple of Minerva, this is not inconsistent with our purpose; but the presumption of intending to produce here a similar work of art and splendor should not be laid to our charge. The name of the place may be understood as symbolizing what might have happened there; one may expect conversations and discussions such as would perhaps not be unworthy of that place.

Are not thinkers, scholars, artists, in their best hours allured to those regions, to dwell (at least in imagination) among a people to
whom a perfection which we desire but never attain was natural,
among whom in the course of time and life, a culture developed in a
beautiful continuity, which to us appears only in passing fragments?
What modern nation does not owe its artistic culture to the Greeks,
and, in certain branches, what nation more than the German?

So much by way of excuse for the symbolic title, if indeed an excuse
be necessary. May the title be a reminder that we are to depart as
little as possible from classic ground; may it, through its brevity
and signification, modify the demands of the friends of art whom
we hope to interest through the present work, which is to contain
observations and reflections concerning Nature and Art by a harmonious
circle of friends.

He who is called to be an artist will give careful heed to everything
around him; objects and their parts will attract his attention, and
by making practical use of such experience he will gradually train
himself to observe more sharply. He will, in his early career, apply
everything, so far as possible, to his own advantage; later he will
gladly make himself serviceable to others. Thus we also hope to
present and relate to our readers many things which we regard as
useful and agreeable, things which, under various circumstances, have
been noted by us during a number of years.

But who will not willingly agree that pure observation is more rare
than is believed? We are apt to confuse our sensations, our opinion,
our judgment, with what we experience, so that we do not remain
long in the passive attitude of the observer, but soon go on to make
reflections; and upon these no greater weight can be placed than may
be more or less justified by the nature and quality of our individual
intellects.

In this matter we are able to gain stronger confidence from our
harmony with others, and from the knowledge that we do not think and
work alone, but in common. The perplexing doubt whether our method
of thought belongs only to us—a doubt which often comes over us when
others express the direct opposite of our convictions—is softened,
even dispelled, when we find ourselves in agreement with others; only
then do we go on rejoicing with assurance in the possession of those
principles which a long experience, on our own part and on the part of
others, has gradually confirmed.

When several persons thus live united, so that they may call one
another friends, because they have a common interest in bringing about
their progressive cultivation and in advancing towards closely related
aims, then they may be certain that they will meet again in the most
varied ways, and that even the courses which seemed to separate them
from one another will nevertheless soon bring them happily together
again.

Who has not experienced what advantages are afforded in such cases by
conversation? But conversation is ephemeral; and while the results
of a mutual development are imperishable, the memory of the means by which it was reached disappears. Letters preserve better the stages of a progress which friends achieve together; every moment of growth is fixed, and if the result attained affords us agreeable satisfaction, a look backward at the process of development is instructive since it permits its to hope for an unflagging advance in the future.

Short papers, in which are set down from time to time one's thoughts, convictions, and wishes, in order to find entertainment in one's past self after a lapse of time, are excellent auxiliary means for the development of oneself and of others, none of which should be neglected when one considers the brief period allotted to life and the many obstacles that stand in the way of every advance.

It is self evident that we are talking here particularly of an exchange of ideas between such friends as are striving for cultivation in the sphere of science and art; although life in the world of affairs and industry should not lack similar advantages.

In the arts and sciences, however, in addition to this close association among their votaries, a relation to the public is as favorable as it is necessary. Whatever of universal interest one thinks or accomplishes belongs to the world, and the world brings to maturity whatever it can utilize of the efforts of the individual. The desire for approval which the author feels is an impulse implanted by Nature to draw him toward something higher; he thinks he has attained
the laurel wreath, but soon becomes aware that a more laborious training of every native talent is necessary in order to retain the public favor; though it may be attained for a short moment through fortune or accident also.

The relation of the author to his public is important in his early period; even in later days he cannot dispense with it. However little he may be fitted to teach others, he wishes to share his thoughts with those whom he feels congenial, but who are scattered far and wide in the world. By this means he wishes to re-establish his relation with his old friends, to continue it with new ones, and to gain in the younger generation still others for the remainder of his life. He wishes to spare youth the circuitous paths upon which he himself went astray, and while observing and utilizing the advantages of the present, to maintain the memory of his praiseworthy earlier efforts.

With this serious view, a small society has been brought together; may cheerfulness attend our undertakings, and time may show whither we are bound.

The papers which we intend to present, though they are composed by several authors, will, it is hoped, never be contradictory in the main points, even though the methods of thought may not be the same in all. No two persons regard the world in exactly the same way, and different characters will often apply in different ways a principle which they all acknowledge. Indeed, a person is not always consistent with
himself in his views and judgments: early convictions must give way to
later ones. The individual opinions that a man holds and expresses may
stand all tests or not; the main thing is that he continue on his way,
true to himself and to others!

Much as the authors wish and hope to be in harmony with one another
and with a large part of the public, they must not shut their eyes to
the fact that from various quarters many a discord will ring out.
They must expect this all the more since they differ from prevailing
opinions in more than one point. Though far from wishing to dominate
or change the way of thinking of a third person, still they will
firmly express their own opinion, and, as circumstances dictate, will
avoid or take tip a quarrel. On the whole, however, they will adhere
to one creed, and especially will they repeat again and again those
conditions which seem to them indispensable in the training of an
artist. Whoever takes an interest in this matter, must be ready to
take sides; otherwise he does not deserve to be effective anywhere.

If, therefore, we promise to present reflections and observations
concerning Nature, we must at the same time indicate that these
remarks will chiefly have reference, first, to plastic art; then, to
art in general; finally, to the general training of the artist.

The highest demand that is made on an artist is this: that he be
true to Nature, study her, imitate her, and produce something that
resembles her phenomena. How great, how enormous, this demand is,
is not always kept in mind; and the true artist himself learns it by experience only, in the course of his progressive development. Nature is separated from Art by an enormous chasm, which genius itself is unable to bridge without external assistance.

All that we perceive around us is merely raw material; if it happens rarely enough that an artist, through instinct and taste, through practice and experiment, reaches the point of attaining the beautiful exterior of things, of selecting the best from the good before him, and of producing at least an agreeable appearance, it is still more rare, particularly in modern times, for an artist to penetrate into the depths of things as well as into the depths of his own soul, in order to produce in his works not only something light and superficially effective, but, as a rival of Nature, to produce something spiritually organic, and to give his work of art a content and a form through which it appears both natural and beyond Nature.

Man is the highest, the characteristic subject of plastic art; to understand him, to extricate oneself from the labyrinth of his anatomy, a general knowledge of organic nature is imperative. The artist should also acquaint himself theoretically with inorganic bodies and with the general operations of Nature, particularly if, as in the case of sound and color, they are adaptable to the purposes of art; but what a circuitous path he would be obliged to take if he wanted to seek laboriously in the schools of the anatomist, the naturalist, and the physicist, for that which serves his purposes! It is, indeed, a question whether he would find there what must be most
important for him. Those men have the entirely different needs of their own pupils to satisfy, so that they cannot be expected to think of the limited and special needs of the artist. For that reason it is our intention to take a hand, and, even though we cannot see prospects of completing the necessary work ourselves, both to give a view of the whole and to begin the elaboration of details.

The human figure cannot be understood merely through observation of its surface; the interior must be laid bare, its parts must be separated, the connections perceived, the differences noted, action and reaction observed, the concealed, constant, and fundamental elements of the phenomena impressed on the mind, if one really wishes to contemplate and imitate what moves before our eyes in living waves as a beautiful, undivided whole. A glance at the surface of a living being confuses the observer; we may cite here, as in other cases, the true proverb, "One sees only what one knows" For just as a short-sighted man sees more clearly an object from which he draws back than one to which he draws near, because his intellectual vision comes to his aid, so the perfection of observation really depends on knowledge. How well an expert naturalist, who can also draw, imitates objects by recognizing and emphasizing the important and significant parts from which is derived the character of the whole!

Just as the artist is greatly helped by an exact knowledge of the separate parts of the human figure, which he must in the end regard again as a whole, so a general view, a side glance at related objects, is highly advantageous, provided the artist is capable of rising to
Ideas and of grasping the close relationship of things apparently remote. Comparative anatomy has prepared a general conception of organic creatures; it leads us from form to form, and by observing organisms closely or distantly related, we rise above them all to see their characteristics in an ideal picture. If we keep this picture in mind, we find that in observing objects our attention takes a definite direction, that scattered facts can be learned and retained more easily by comparison, that in the practice of art we can finally vie with Nature only when we have learned from her, at least to some extent, her method of procedure in the creation of her works.

Furthermore, we would encourage the artist to gain knowledge also of the inorganic world; this can be done all the more easily since now we can conveniently and quickly acquire knowledge of the mineral kingdom. The painter needs some knowledge of stones in order to imitate their characteristics; the sculptor and architect, in order to utilize them; the cutter of precious stones cannot be without a knowledge of their nature; the connoisseur and amateur, too, will strive for such information.

Now that we have advised the artist to gain a conception of the general operations of Nature, in order to become acquainted with those which particularly interest him, partly to develop himself in more directions, partly to understand better that which concerns him; we shall add a few further remarks on this significant point.
Up to the present the painter has been able merely to wonder at the physicist's theory of colors, without gaining any advantage from it. The natural feeling of the artist, however, constant training, and a practical necessity led him into a way of his own. He felt the vivid contrasts out of the union of which harmony of color arises, he designated certain characteristics through approximate sensations, he had warm and cold colors, colors which express proximity, others which express distance, and what not; and thus in his own way he brought these phenomena closer to the most general laws of Nature. Perhaps the supposition is confirmed that the operations of Nature in colors, as well as magnetic, electric, and other operations, depend upon a mutual relation, a polarity, or whatever else we might call the twofold or manifold aspects of a distinct unity.

We shall make it our duty to present this matter in detail and in a form comprehensible to the artist; and we can be the more hopeful of doing something welcome to him, since we shall be concerned only with explaining and tracing to fundamental principles things which he has hitherto done by instinct.

So much for what we hope to impart in regard to Nature; now for what is most necessary in regard to Art.

Since the arrangement of this work proposes the presentation of single treatises, some of these only in part, and since it is not our desire to dissect a whole, but rather to build up a whole from many parts,
it will be necessary to present, as soon as possible and in a general summary, those thing's which the reader will gradually find unfolded in our detailed elaborations. We shall, therefore, be occupied first with an essay on plastic art, in which the familiar rubrics will be presented according to our interpretation and method. Here it will be our main concern to emphasize the importance of every branch of Art, and to show that the artist must not neglect a single one, as has unfortunately often happened, and still happens.

Hitherto we have regarded Nature as the treasure chamber of material in general; now, however, we reach the important point where it is shown how Art prepares its materials for itself.

When the artist takes any object of Nature, the object no longer belongs to Nature; indeed, we can say that the artist creates the object in that moment, by extracting from it all that is significant, characteristic, interesting, or rather by putting into it a higher value. In this way finer proportions, nobler forms, higher characteristics are, as it were, forced upon the human figure; the circle of regularity, perfection, signification, and completeness is drawn, in which Nature gladly places her best possessions even though elsewhere in her vast extent she easily degenerates into ugliness and loses herself in indifference.

The same is true of composite works of art, of their subject and content, whether the theme be fable or history. Happy the artist who
makes no mistake in undertaking the work, who knows how to choose, or rather to determine what is suitable for art! He who wanders uneasily among scattered myths and far-stretching history in search of a theme, he who wishes to be significantly scholarly or allegorically interesting, will often be checked in the midst of his work by unexpected obstacles, or will miss his finest aim after the completion of the work. He who does not speak clearly to the senses, will not address himself clearly to the mind; and we regard this point as so important that we insert at the very outset a more extended discussion of it.

A theme having been happily found or invented, it is subjected to treatment which we would divide into the spiritual the sensuous, and the mechanical. The spiritual develops the subject according to its inner relations, it discovers subordinate motives; and, if we can at all judge the depth of an artistic genius by the choice of subject, we can recognize in his selection of themes his breadth, wealth, fullness, and power of attraction. The sensuous treatment we should define as that through which the work becomes thoroughly comprehensible to the senses, agreeable, delightful, and irresistible through its gentle charm. The mechanical treatment, finally, is that which works upon given material through any bodily organ, and thus brings the work into existence and gives it reality.

While we hope to be useful to the artist in this way, and earnestly wish that he may avail himself of advice and of suggestions in his work, the disquieting observation is forced upon us that every
undertaking, like every man, is likely to suffer just as much from its
period as it is to derive occasional advantage from it, and in our
own case we cannot altogether put aside the question concerning the
reception we are likely to meet with.

Everything is subject to constant change, and since certain things
cannot exist side by side, they displace one another. This is true of
kinds of knowledge, of certain methods of instruction, of methods of
representation, and of maxims. The aims of men remain nearly always
the same: they still desire to become good artists or poets as they
did centuries ago; but the means through which the goal is reached are
not clear to everybody, and why should it be denied that nothing
would be more agreeable than to be able to carry out joyfully a great
design?

Naturally the public has a great influence upon Art, since in
return for its approval and its money it demands work that may give
satisfaction and immediate enjoyment; and the artist will for the
most part be glad to adapt himself to it, for he also is a part of the
public, he has received his training during the same years, he feels
the same needs, strives in the same direction, and thus moves along
happily with the multitude which supports him and which is invigorated
by him. In this matter we see whole nations and epochs delighted by
their artists, just as the artist sees himself reflected in his nation
and his epoch, without either having even the slightest suspicion
that their path might not be right, that their taste might be at least
one-sided, their art on the decline, and their progress in the wrong
Instead of proceeding to further generalities on this point, we shall make a remark which refers particularly to plastic art.

For the German artist, in fact for modern and northern artists in general, it is difficult--indeed almost impossible--to make the transition from formless matter to form, and to maintain himself at that point, even should he succeed in reaching it. Let every artist who has lived for a time in Italy ask himself whether the presence of the best works of ancient and modern art have not aroused in him the incessant endeavour to study and imitate the human figure in its proportions, forms, and characteristics, to apply all diligence and care in the execution in order to approach those artistic works, so entirely complete in themselves, in order to produce a work which, in gratifying the sense, exalts the spirit to the greatest heights. Let him also admit, however, that after his return he must gradually relax his efforts, because he finds few persons who will really see, enjoy, and comprehend what is depicted, but, for the most part, finds only those who look at a work superficially, receive from it mere random impressions, and in some way of their own try to get out of it any kind of sensation and pleasure.

The worst picture can appeal to our senses and imagination by arousing their activity, setting them free, and leaving them to themselves, the best work of art also appeals to our senses, but in a higher language
which, of course, we must understand; it enchains the feelings and imagination, it deprives us of caprice, we cannot deal with a perfect work at our will; we are forced to give ourselves up to it, in order to receive ourselves from it again, exalted and refined.

That these are no dreams we shall try to show gradually, in detail, and as clearly as possible, we shall call attention particularly to a contradiction in which the moderns are often involved. They call the ancients their teachers, they acknowledge in their works an unattainable excellence, yet they depart both in theory and practice far from the maxims which the ancients continually observed. In starting from this important point and in returning to it often, we shall find others about which something falls to be said.

One of the principal signs of the decay of art is the mixture of its various kinds. The arts themselves, as well as their branches, are related to one another, and have a certain tendency to unite, even to lose themselves in one another; but it is in this that the duty, the merit, the dignity of the real artist consists, namely, in being able to separate the field of art in which he works from others, in placing every art and every branch of art on its own footing, and in isolating it as far as possible.

It has been noticed that all plastic art strives toward painting, all literary art toward the drama, and this observation may in the future give us occasion for important reflections.
The genuine law-giving artist strives for the truth of art, the lawless artist who follows a blind impulse strives for the reality of Nature; through the former, art reaches its highest summit, through the latter its lowest stage.

What holds good of art in general holds good also of the kinds of art. The sculptor must think and feel differently from the painter, indeed he must proceed when he wishes to produce a work in relief, in a different fashion from that which he will employ for a work in the round. By the raising of low reliefs higher and higher, by the making of various parts and figures stand out completely, and finally by the adding of buildings and landscapes, so that work was produced which was half painting and half puppet-show, true art steadily declined. Excellent artists of modern times have unfortunately pursued this course.

When in the future we express such maxims as we think sound, we should like, since they are deduced from works of art, to have them put to the test of practice by the artist. How rarely one can come to a theoretical agreement with anyone else on a fundamental principle. That which is applicable and useful, on the other hand, is decided upon much more quickly. How often we see artists in embarrassment over the choice of subjects, over the general type of composition adapted to their art, and the detailed arrangement; how often the painter over the choice of colors! Then is the time to test a principle, then will
it he easier to decide whether it is bringing us closer to the great models and to everything that we value and love in them, or whether it leaves us entangled in the empirical confusion of an experience that has not been sufficiently thought out.

If such maxims hold good in training: the artist, in guiding him in many an embarrassment, they will serve also in the development, valuation, and judgment of old and new works of art, and will in turn arise from an observation of these works. Indeed, it is all the more necessary to adhere to this, because, notwithstanding the universally praised excellences of antiquity, individuals and whole nations among the moderns often fail to recognize wherein lies the highest excellence of those works.

An exact test will protect us best from this evil. For that reason let us cite only one example to show what usually happens to the amateur in plastic art, so that we may make clear how necessary it is that criticism of ancient as well as modern works should be exact if it is to be of any use.

Upon him who has an eye for beauty, though untrained, even a blurred, imperfect plaster cast of an excellent antique will always have a great effect; for in such a reproduction there always remain the idea, the simplicity and greatness of form, in short, the general outlines; as much, at all events, as one could perceive with poor eyes at a distance.
It may be noticed that a strong inclination toward art is often enkindled by such quite imperfect reproductions. But the effect is like the object; it is rather that an obscure indefinite feeling is aroused, than that the object in all its worth and dignity really appears to such beginners in art. These are they who usually express the theory that too minute a critical investigation destroys the enjoyment, who are accustomed to oppose and resist regard for details.

If gradually, however, after further experience and training, they are confronted with a sharp cast instead of a blurred one, an original instead of a cast, their pleasure grows with their insight, and increases when the originals themselves, the perfect originals, finally become known to them.

The labyrinth of exact observations is willingly entered when the details as well as the whole are perfect; indeed one learns to realize that the excellences can be appreciated only in proportion as the defects are perceived. To discriminate the restoration from the genuine parts, and the copy from the original, to see in the smallest fragments the ruined glory of the whole--this is the joy of the finished expert; and there is a great difference between observing and comprehending an imperfect whole with obscured vision, and a perfect whole with clear vision.

He who concerns himself with any branch of knowledge, should strive
for the highest! Insight is different from practice, for in practical
work everyone must soon resign himself to the fact that only a certain
measure of strength is allotted to him; far more people, however,
are capable of knowledge and insight. Indeed, one may well say that
everyone is thus capable who can deny himself and subordinate himself
to external objects, everyone who does not strive with rigid and
narrow-minded obstinacy to impose upon the highest works of Nature and
Art his own personality and his petty onesideness.

To speak of works of art fitly and with true benefit to oneself and
others, the discussion should take place only in the presence of the
works themselves. Everything depends on the objects being in view; on
whether something absolutely definite is suggested by the word with
which one hopes to illuminate the work of art; for, otherwise, nothing
is thought of at all. This is why it so often happens that the writer
on art dwells merely on generalities, through which, indeed, ideas and
sensations are aroused in all readers, but no satisfaction is given to
the man who, book in hand, steps in front of the work of art itself.
Precisely on this account, however, we may in several essays be in a
position to arouse rather than to satisfy the desire of the readers;
for nothing is more natural than that they should wish to have before
their eyes immediately an excellent work of art which is minutely
dissected, in order to enjoy the whole which we are discussing, and,
so far as the parts are concerned, to subject to their own judgment
the opinion which they read.

While the authors, however, write on the assumption that their readers
either have seen the works, or will see them in the future, yet they
hope to do everything in their power for those who are in neither
case. We shall mention reproductions, shall indicate where casts of
antique works of art and antique works themselves are accessible,
particularly to Germans; and thus try, as far as we can, to minister
to the genuine love and knowledge of art.

A history of art can be based only upon the highest and most detailed
comprehension of art; only when one knows the finest things that man
can produce can one trace the psychological and chronological course
taken in art, as in other fields. This course began with a limited
activity, busied about a dry and even gloomy imitation of the
insignificant as well as the significant, whence developed a more
amiable, more kindly feeling toward Nature, till finally, under
favorable circumstances, accompanied by knowledge, regularity,
seriousness, and severity, art rose to its height. There at last it
became possible for the fortunate genius, surrounded by all these
auxiliaries, to produce the charming and the complete.

Unfortunately, however, works of art with such ease of expression,
which instil into man cheerfulness, freedom, and a pleasant feeling of
his own personality, arouse in the striving artist the idea that the
process of production is also agreeable. Since the pinnacle of what
art and genius produce is an appearance of ease, the artists who come
after are tempted to make things easy for themselves, and to work for
the sake of appearances. Thus art gradually declines from its high
position, as to the whole as well as details. But if we wish to gain
a fair conception, we must come down to details of details, an occupation not always agreeable or charming, but by and by richly rewarded with a more certain view of the whole.

If the experience of observing ancient and mediaeval works of art has shown us that certain maxims hold good we need these most of all in judging the most recent modern productions; for, since personal relations, love and hatred of individuals, favor or disfavor of the multitude so easily enter into the valuation of living or recently deceased artists, we are in all the more need of principles in order to pass judgment on our contemporaries. The inquiry can be conducted in two ways: by diminishing the influence of caprice; by bringing the question before a higher tribunal. The principle can be tested as well as its application; and even if we should not agree, the point in dispute can still be definitely and clearly pointed out.

Especially should we wish that the vivifying artist, in whose works we might perhaps have found something to remember, might test our judgments carefully in this way; for everyone who deserves this name is forced in our times to form, as a result of his work and his reflections, a theory, or at least a certain conception of theoretical means, by the use of which he gets along tolerably well in a variety of cases. It will often be noticed, however, that in this way he sets up as laws such maxims as are in accordance with his talent, his inclination, and his convenience. He is subject to a fate that is common to all mankind. How many act in this very way in other fields! But we are not cultivating ourselves when we merely set in motion with
ease and convenience that which lies in us. Every artist, like every man, is only an individual, and will always lean to one side. For that reason, man should pursue so far as possible, both theoretically and practically, that which is contrary to his nature. Let the easy-going seek what is serious and severe; let the stern keep before his eyes the light and agreeable; the strong, loveliness; the amiable, strength; and everyone will develop his own nature the more, the farther he seems to remove himself from it. Every art requires the whole man; the highest possible degree of art requires all mankind.

The practice of the plastic arts is mechanical, and the training of the artist rightly begins in his earliest youth with the mechanical side; the rest of his education, on the other hand, is often neglected, for it ought to be far more careful than the training of others who have opportunity of deriving advantage from life itself. Society soon makes a rough person courteous, a business life makes the most simple person prudent; literary labors, which through print come before a great public, find opposition and correction everywhere; only the plastic artist is, for the most part, limited to a lonely workshop; he has dealings almost solely with the man who orders and pays for his labor, with a public which frequently follows only certain morbid impressions, with connoisseurs who make him restless, with auctioneers who receive every new work with praise and estimates of value such as would fitly honor the most superlative production.

But it is time to conclude this introduction lest it anticipate and forestall the work, instead of merely preceding it. We have so far at
least designated the point from which we intend to set out; how far
our views can and will spread, must at first develop gradually. The
theory and criticism of literary art will, we hope, soon occupy us;
and whatever life, travel, and daily events suggest to us, shall not
be excluded. In closing, let us say a word on an important concern of
this moment.

For the training of the artist, for the enjoyment of the friend of
art, it was from time immemorial of the greatest significance in what
place the works of art happened to be. There was a time when, except
for slight changes of location, they remained for the most part in
one place; now, however, a great change has occurred, which will
have important consequences for art in general and in particular.
At present we have perhaps more cause than ever to regard Italy as a
great storehouse of art--as it still was until recently. When it is
possible to give a general review of it, then it will be shown what
the world lost at the moment when so many parts were torn from this
great and ancient whole.

What was destroyed in the very act of tearing away will probably
remain a secret forever; but a description of the new storehouse that
is being formed in Paris will be possible in a few years. Then the
method by which an artist and a lover of art is to use France and
Italy can be indicated; and a further important and fine question will
arise: what are other nations, particularly Germany and England, to
do in this period of scattering and loss, to make generally useful the
manifold and widely strewn treasures of art--a task requiring the true
cosmopolitan mind which is found perhaps nowhere purer than in the arts and sciences? And what are they to do to help to form an ideal storehouse, which in the course of time may perhaps happily compensate us for what the present moment tears away when it does not destroy?

So much in general of the purpose of a work in which we desire many earnest and friendly sympathizers.

[Footnote A: The Propylaen was a periodical founded in July, 1798, by Goethe and his friend Heinrich Meyer. During its short existence of three years, there were published in it, besides the writings of the editors, short contributions by Schiller and Humboldt. Its purpose was to spread sound ideas about the aims and methods of art, and in this notable introduction Goethe set forth with clearness and profundity his fundamental ideas on these subjects. The present translation has been made expressly for the Harvard Classics.]

PREFACES TO VARIOUS VOLUMES OF POEMS

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH[A]

ADVERTISEMENT TO LYRICAL BALLADS

(1798)
It is the honourable characteristic of Poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind. The evidence of this fact is to be sought, not in the writings of Critics, but in those of Poets themselves.

The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. It is desirable that such readers, for their own sakes, should not suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that, while they are perusing this book, they should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision.

Readers of superior judgement may disapprove of the style in which many of these pieces are executed; it must be expected that many lines
and phrases will not exactly suit their taste. It will perhaps appear to them, that wishing to avoid the prevalent fault of the day, the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity. It is apprehended that the more conversant the reader is with our elder writers, and with those in modern times who have been the most successful in painting manners and passions, the fewer complaints of this kind will he have to make.

An accurate taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced reader from judging for himself; but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest that if poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgement may be erroneous, and that in many cases it necessarily will be so.

The tale of _Goody Blake and Harry Gill_ is founded on a well-authenticated fact which happened in Warwickshire. Of the other poems in the collection, it may be proper to say that they are either absolute inventions of the author, or facts which took place within his personal observation or that of his friends. The poem of _The Thorn_, as the reader will soon discover, is not supposed to be spoken in the author's own person: the character of the loquacious narrator will sufficiently show itself in the course of the story. _The Rime
of the Ancyent Marinere_ was professedly written in imitation of the
_style_, as well as of the spirit of the elder poets; but with a few
exceptions, the Author believes that the language adopted in it has
been equally intelligible for these three last centuries. The lines
entitled _Expostulation and Reply_, and those which follow, arose out
of conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached
to modern books of moral philosophy.

[Footnote A: William Wordsworth (1770-1830), probably the greatest of
the poets of the Romantic Movement in England, was also foremost in
the critical defence of that movement. The Prefaces and Essays printed
here form a kind of manifesto of the reaction from the poetical
traditions of the eighteenth century; and contain besides some of the
soundest theorizing on the nature of poetry to be found in English.
They afford an interesting comparison with the parallel protest in
Victor Hugo’s Preface to “Cromwell,” to be found later in the volume.]

PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS

(1800)

The first volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general
perusal. It was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be
of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement
a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation,
that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted,

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which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them, they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please.

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Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems, from a belief, that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realized, a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the quality, and in the multiplicity of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, knowing that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of _reasoning_ him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because, adequately to display the opinions, and fully to enforce the arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to a preface. For, to treat the subject with the
clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible, it would be
necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public
taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy
or depraved; which, again, could not be determined, without pointing
out in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each
other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone,
but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined
to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible, that there
would be something like impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the
Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially
different from those upon which general approbation is at present
bestowed.

It is supposed that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes
a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of
association; that he not only thus apprises the Reader that certain
classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that
others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth
by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited
very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus,
Terence, and Lucretius, and that of Statius or Claudian; and in our
own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, and
that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope. I will not take upon
me to determine the exact import of the promise which, by the act of
writing in verse, an Author in the present day makes to his reader:
but it will undoubtedly appear to many persons that I have not
fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They
who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope therefore the reader will not censure me for attempting to state what I have proposed to myself to perform; and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonourable accusations which can be brought against an Author; namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find
a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under
restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in
that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state
of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately
contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of
rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from
the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily
comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that
condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and
permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men has been
adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from
all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such
men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part
of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in
society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being
less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings
and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such
a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings,
is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that
which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they
are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as
they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in
arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to
furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own
creation.[1]

I cannot, however, be insensible to the present outcry against the
triviality and meanness, both of thought and language, which some of
my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical
compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect, where it exists, is
more dishonourable to the Writer's own character than false refinement
or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time,
that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From
such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished
at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy
_Purpose_. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose
formerly conceived; but habits of meditation have, I trust, so
prompted and regulated my feelings, that my descriptions of such
objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry
along with them a _purpose_. If this opinion be erroneous, I can
have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the
spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true,
Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any
variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than
usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For
our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by
our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past
feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general
representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to
men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings
will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be
originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be
produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of
those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of
such a nature, and in such connexion with each other, that the
understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree
enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

It has been said that each of these poems has a purpose. Another
circumstance must be mentioned which distinguishes these Poems from
the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein
developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the
action and situation to the feeling.

A sense of false modesty shall not prevent me from asserting, that the
Reader's attention is pointed to this mark of distinction, far
less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general
importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the
human mind is capable of being excited without the application of
gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception
of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not
further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion
as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that
to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best
services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this
service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day.
For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting
with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind,
and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state
of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the
great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing
accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their
occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.--When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavour made in these volumes to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonourable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible; and were there not added to this impression a belief, that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed, by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these Poems, I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their _style_, in order, among other reasons, that he may not censure me for not having performed what I never attempted. The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men;
and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or
regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech
occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such;
but have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device
of style, or as a family language which Writers in metre seem to lay
claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the Reader in the
company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall
interest him. Others who pursue a different track will interest him
likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, but wish to prefer a
claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of
what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to
avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for
the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language
of men; and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to
myself to impart, is of a kind very different from that which is
supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. Without
being culpably particular, I do not know how to give my Reader a more
exact notion of the style in which it was my wish and intention to
write, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to
look steadily at my subject; consequently, there is I hope in these
Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in
language fitted to their respective importance. Something must have
been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of
all good poetry, namely, good sense: but it has necessarily cut me
off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from
father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of
Poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still
further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in
themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly
repeated by bad Poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected
with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to
overpower.

If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single
line, in which the language, though naturally arranged, and according
to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there
is a numerous class of critics, who, when they stumble upon these
prosaisms, as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable
discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own
profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which
the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be
pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove
to him, that not only the language of a large portion of every good
poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except
with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good
prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the
best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose
when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be
demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical
writings, even of Milton himself. To illustrate the subject in a
general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who
was at the head of those who, by their reasonings, have attempted to
widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition,
and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure
of his own poetic diction.
In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire;
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
_A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire_;
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
_I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain._

It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet
which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics; it is equally
obvious, that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word
'fruitless' for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of
these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation it has been shown that the language
of Prose may yet be well adapted to Poetry; and it was previously
asserted, that a large portion of the language of every good poem can
in no respect differ from that of good Prose. We will go further.
It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any
\_essential\_ difference between the language of prose and metrical
composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and
Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we
find bonds of connexion sufficiently strict to typify the affinity
betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the
same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said
to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost
identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; Poetry[2] sheds
no tears \_such as Angels weep,\_ but natural and human tears; she can
boast of no celestial choir that distinguishes her vital juices from
those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of
them both.

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves
constitute a distinction which overturns what has just been said on
the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves
the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily
admits, I answer that the language of such Poetry as is here
recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language
really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with
true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater
than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the
composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and, if
metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be
produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational
mind. What other distinction would we have? Whence is it to come? And
where is it to exist? Not, surely, where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters: it cannot be necessary here, either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments: for, if the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an incongruity which would shock the intelligent Reader, should the Poet interweave any foreign splendour of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests: it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary. And, surely, it is more probable that those passages, which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures, will have their due effect, if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate.

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the Poems now presented to the Reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject, and, as it is in itself of high importance to our taste and moral feelings, I cannot content myself with these detached remarks. And if, in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labour is unnecessary, and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies, such persons may be reminded, that, whatever be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown. If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgements concerning the works of the greatest Poets both ancient and modern will be far different from what they are
at present, both when we praise, and when we censure: and our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgements will, I believe, be corrected and purified.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask, what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?--He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves:--whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.
But whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest
Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt that the language which it
will suggest to him, must often, in liveliness and truth, fall
short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual
pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus
produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of
a Poet, it is obvious, that while he describes and imitates passions,
his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom
and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it
will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of
the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of
time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even
confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only
the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that
he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here,
then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already
insisted upon. He will depend upon this for removing what would
otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that
there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature: and, the more
industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith
that no words, which _his_ fancy or imagination can suggest, will
be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and
truth.
But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who does not scruple to substitute excellencies of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a _taste_ for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a
physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but
as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing
between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the
Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered
as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an
acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgement the
more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and
easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it
is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand
elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels,
and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by
pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize
with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried
on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that
is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular
facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by
pleasure alone. The Man of science, the Chemist and Mathematician,
whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with,
know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the
Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is
pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then
does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as
acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite
complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature
and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity
of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and
deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions;
he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and
sensations, and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite
in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are
accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these
sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our
daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally
directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially
adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of
the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. And thus the
Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him
through the whole course of his studies, converses with general
nature, with affections akin to those, which, through labour and
length of time, the Man of science has raised up in himself, by
conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects
of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science
is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary
part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the
other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to
us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our
fellow-beings. The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown
benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet,
singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in
the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion.
Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the
impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science.

Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of
man, 'that he looks before and after.' He is the rock of defence for
human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him
relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of
language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently
gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds
together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as
it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of
the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man
are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever
he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings.

Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge--it is as immortal as
the heart of man. If the labours of Men of science should ever create
any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in
the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then
no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the
Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he
will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects
of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the
Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's
art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come
when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under
which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective
sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying
and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now
called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on,
as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine
spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus
produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.--It is
not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion
of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the
sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental
ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts, the
necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of
his subject.

What has been thus far said applies to Poetry in general; but
especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through
the mouths of his characters; and upon this point it appears to
authorize the conclusion, that there are few persons of good sense,
who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are
defective, in proportion as they deviate from the real language
of nature, and are coloured by a diction of the Poet's own, either
peculiar to him as an individual Poet or belonging simply to Poets
in general; to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their
compositions being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular
language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for
this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary
where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this
I answer by referring the Reader to the description before given of a
Poet. Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to
form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but
only in degree. The sum of what was said is, that the Poet is chiefly
distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and
feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in
expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that
manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general
passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are
they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal
sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the
operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible
universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the
seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with
injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow.
These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the Poet
describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects
which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human
passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree
from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might
be _proved_ that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not
the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language
when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of
men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men.
Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which subsists
upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do
not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height; and,
in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other
men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only
selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same
thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is
treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him.

Our feelings are the same with respect to metre; for, as it may be
proper to remind the Reader, the distinction of metre is regular
and uniform, and not, like that which is produced by what is usually
called POETIC DICTION, arbitrary, and subject to infinite caprices
upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case, the
Reader is utterly at the mercy of the Poet, respecting what imagery
or diction he may choose to connect with the passion; whereas, in the
other, the metre obeys certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both
willingly submit because they are certain, and because no interference
is made by them with the passion, but such as the concurring testimony
of ages has shown to heighten and improve the pleasure which co-exists
with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question, namely, Why,
professing these opinions, have I written in verse? To this, in
addition to such answer as is included in what has been already said,

I reply, in the first place, Because, however I may have restricted
myself, there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes
the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse;
the great and universal passions of men, the most general and
interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature
before me--to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery. Now,
supposing for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects
may be as vividly described in prose, why should I be condemned for
attempting to superadd to such description the charm which, by the


consent of all nations, is acknowledged to exist in metrical language?

To this, by such as are yet unconvinced, it may he answered that

a very small part of the pleasure given by Poetry depends upon the

metre, and that it is injudicious to write in metre, unless it be

accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which

metre is usually accompanied, and that, by such deviation, more will

be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the Reader's

associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can

derive from the general power of numbers. In answer to those who

still contend for the necessity of accompanying metre with certain

appropriate colours of style in order to the accomplishment of its

appropriate end, and who also, in my opinion, greatly underrate the

power of metre in itself, it might, perhaps, as far as relates to

these Volumes, have been almost sufficient to observe, that poems are

extant, written upon more humble subjects, and in a still more

naked and simple style, which have continued to give pleasure from

generation to generation. Now, if nakedness and simplicity be a

defect, the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that

poems somewhat less naked and simple are capable of affording pleasure

at the present day; and, what I wish _chiefly_ to attempt, at present,

was to justify myself for having written under the impression of this

belief.

But various causes might be pointed out why, when the style is manly,

and the subject of some importance, words metrically arranged will

long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who proves

the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of
Poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure; but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words, however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an inter-texture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion.

This is unquestionably true; and hence, though the opinion will at first appear paradoxical, from the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition, there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rhyme, than in prose. The metre of the old ballads is very artless; yet they contain many passages which would illustrate this opinion; and, I hope, if the following Poems be attentively perused, similar instances will be found in them. This opinion may be further illustrated by appealing to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of _Clarissa Harlowe_, or _The Gamester_; while Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which, in a
much greater degree than might at first be imagined, is to be ascribed
to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise
from the metrical arrangement.--On the other hand (what it must be
allowed will much more frequently happen) if the Poet's words should
be incommensurate with the passion, and inadequate to raise the Reader
to a height of desirable excitement, then (unless the Poet's choice of
his metre has been grossly injudicious), in the feelings of pleasure
which the Reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general,
and in the feeling, whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been
accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there
will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart
passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the Poet
proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a SYSTEMATIC defence of the theory here
maintained, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes
upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among
the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must
be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of
accurate reflection; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from
the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the
great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder.
From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the
passions connected with it, take their origin: it is the life of our
ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in
dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude are perceived, depend
our taste and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment
to apply this principle to the consideration of metre, and to show that metre is hence enabled to afford much pleasure, and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real
life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so
widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight,
which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling
always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper
passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned
poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness
with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a
principal source of the gratification of the Reader. All that it is
_necessary_ to say, however, upon this subject, may he effected by
affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions,
either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well
executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be
read a hundred times where the prose is read once.

Having thus explained a few of my reasons for writing in verse, and
why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavoured to bring
my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too
minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating
a subject of general interest; and for this reason a few words shall
be added with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some
defects which will probably be found in them. I am sensible that my
associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general,
and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, I
may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects; but I am less
apprehensive on this account, than that my language may frequently
have suffered from those arbitrary connexions of feelings and ideas
with particular words and phrases, from which no man can altogether
protect himself. Hence I have no doubt, that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic. Such faulty expressions, were I convinced they were faulty at present, and that they must necessarily continue to be so, I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct. But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men; for where the understanding of an Author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself: for his own feelings are his stay and support; and, if he set them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself, and become utterly debilitated. To this it may be added, that the critic ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the Poet, and, perhaps, in a much greater degree: for there can be no presumption in saying of most readers, that it is not probable they will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed, or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other; and, above all, since they are so much less interested in the subject, they may decide lightly and carelessly.

Long as the Reader has been detained, I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to Poetry, in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies, of which Dr. Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen:
I put my hat upon my head
And walked into the Strand,
And there I met another man
Whose hat was in his hand.

Immediately under these lines let us place one of the most justly admired stanzas of the 'Babes in the Wood,'

These pretty Babes with hand in hand
Went wandering up and down;
But never more they saw the Man
Approaching from the Town.

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the words, in no respect differ from the most unimpassioned conversation. There are words in both, for example, 'the Strand,' and 'the Town,' connected with none but the most familiar ideas; yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the _matter_ expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses, to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism, is not to say, this is a bad kind of poetry, or, this is not poetry; but, this wants sense; it is neither interesting in itself nor can _lead_ to anything interesting; the
images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the Reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses. Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove than an ape is not a Newton, when it is self-evident that he is not a man?

One request I must make of my reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgement of others. How common is it to hear a person say, I myself do not object to this style of composition, or this or that expression, but, to such and such classes of people it will appear mean or ludicrous! This mode of criticism, so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgement, is almost universal: let the Reader then abide, independently, by his own feelings, and, if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

If an Author, by any single composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that on other occasions where we have been displeased, he, nevertheless, may not have written ill or absurdly; and further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us, with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice, but, in our decisions upon poetry especially, may conduce, in a high degree, to the improvement of our own taste; for an _accurate_ taste
in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an _acquired_ talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself), but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest, that, if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgement may be erroneous; and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so.

Nothing would, I know, have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view, as to have shown of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavoured to recommend: for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition; and what more can be done for him? The power of any art is limited; and he will suspect, that, if it be proposed to furnish him with new friends, that can be only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honourable bigotry, for the objects which have long continued to please them: we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is in these feelings enough to resist a host of arguments; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully,
as I am willing to allow, that, in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry
which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what
is ordinarily enjoyed. But, would my limits have permitted me to point
out how this pleasure is produced, many obstacles might have been
removed, and the Reader assisted in perceiving that the powers of
language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible
for poetry to give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting,
and more exquisite nature. This part of the subject has not been
altogether neglected, but it has not been so much my present aim to
prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less
vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, as to offer
reasons for presuming, that if my purpose were fulfilled, a species of
poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry; in its nature well
adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the
multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems, the Reader
will be able clearly to perceive the object which I had in view: he
will determine how far it has been attained; and, what is a much
more important question, whether it be worth attaining: and upon the
decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation
of the Public.

[Footnote 1: It is worth while here to observe, that the affecting
parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and
universally intelligible even to this day.]
[Footnote 2: I here use the word ‘Poetry’ (though against my own judgement) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a _strict_ antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable.]

APPENDIX TO LYRICAL BALLADS

(1802)

Perhaps, as I have no right to expect that attentive perusal, without which, confined, as I have been, to the narrow limits of a preface, my meaning cannot be thoroughly understood, I am anxious to give an exact notion of the sense in which the phrase poetic diction has been used; and for this purpose, a few words shall here be added, concerning the origin and characteristics of the phraseology, which I have condemned under that name.

The earliest poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events; they wrote naturally, and as men: feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring, and figurative. In succeeding
times, Poets, and Men ambitious of the fame of Poets, perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect without being animated by the same passion, set themselves to a mechanical adoption of these figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connexion whatsoever. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men in any situation. The Reader or Hearer of this distorted language found himself in a perturbed and unusual state of mind: when affected by the genuine language of passion he had been in a perturbed and unusual state of mind also: in both cases he was willing that his common judgement and understanding should be laid asleep, and he had no instinctive and infallible perception of the true to make him reject the false; the one served as a passport for the other. The emotion was in both cases delightful, and no wonder if he confounded the one with the other, and believed them both to be produced by the same, or similar causes. Besides, the Poet spake to him in the character of a man to be looked up to, a man of genius and authority. Thus, and from a variety of other causes, this distorted language was received with admiration; and Poets, it is probable, who had before contented themselves for the most part with misapplying only expressions which at first had been dictated by real passion, carried the abuse still further, and introduced phrases composed apparently in the spirit of the original figurative language of passion, yet altogether of their own invention, and characterized by various degrees of wanton deviation from good sense and nature.
It is indeed true, that the language of the earliest Poets was felt to
differ materially from ordinary language, because it was the language
of extraordinary occasions; but it was really spoken by men, language
which the Poet himself had uttered when he had been affected by the
events which he described, or which he had heard uttered by those
around him. To this language it is probable that metre of some sort
or other was early superadded. This separated the genuine language of
Poetry still further from common life, so that whoever read or heard
the poems of these earliest Poets felt himself moved in a way in which
he had not been accustomed to be moved in real life, and by causes
manifestly different from those which acted upon him in real life.
This was the great temptation to all the corruptions which have
followed: under the protection of this feeling succeeding Poets
constructed a phraseology which had one thing, it is true, in common
with the genuine language of poetry, namely, that it was not heard in
ordinary conversation; that it was unusual. But the first Poets, as
I have said, spake a language which, though unusual, was still the
language of men. This circumstance, however, was disregarded by their
successors; they found that they could please by easier means:
they became proud of modes of expression which they themselves had
invented, and which were uttered only by themselves. In process of
time metre became a symbol or promise of this unusual language, and
whoever took upon him to write in metre, according as he possessed
more or less of true poetic genius, introduced less or more of this
adulterated phraseology into his compositions, and the true and the
false were inseparately interwoven until, the taste of men becoming
gradually perverted, this language was received as a natural language:
and at length, by the influence of books upon men, did to a certain
degree really become so. Abuses of this kind were imported from one
nation to another, and with the progress of refinement this diction
became daily more and more corrupt, thrusting out of sight the plain
humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses,
hieroglyphics, and enigmas.

It would not be uninteresting to point out the causes of the pleasure
given by this extravagant and absurd diction. It depends upon a great
variety of causes, but upon none, perhaps, more than its influence in
impressing a notion of the peculiarity and exaltation of the Poet's
character, and in flattering the Reader's self-love by bringing
him nearer to a sympathy with that character; an effect which is
accomplished by unsettling ordinary habits of thinking, and thus
assisting the Reader to approach to that perturbed and dizzy state
of mind in which if he does not find himself, he imagines that he is
_balked_ of a peculiar enjoyment which poetry can and ought to bestow.

The sonnet quoted from Gray, in the Preface, except the lines printed
in italics, consists of little else but this diction, though not of
the worst kind; and indeed, if one may be permitted to say so, it is
far too common in the best writers both ancient and modern. Perhaps
in no way, by positive example could more easily be given a notion
of what I mean by the phrase _poetic diction_ than by referring to a
comparison between the metrical paraphrase which we have of passages
in the Old and New Testament, and those passages as they exist in
our common Translation. See Pope's _Messiah_ throughout; Prior's 'Did
sweeter sounds adorn my flowing tongue,' &c. &c. 'Though I speak with
the tongues of men and of angels,' &c. &c, 1st Corinthians, ch. xiii.

By way of immediate example take the following of Dr. Johnson:

Turn on the prudent Ant thy heedless eyes,
Observe her labours, Sluggard, and be wise;
No stern command, no monitory voice,
Prescribes her duties, or directs her choice;
Yet, timely provident, she hastes away
To snatch the blessings of a plenteous day;
When fruitful Summer loads the teeming plain,
She crops the harvest, and she stores the grain.
How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours,
Unnerve thy vigour, and enchain thy powers?
While artful shades thy downy couch enclose,
And soft solicitation courts repose,
Amidst the drowsy charms of dull delight,
Year chases year with unremitted flight,
Till Want now following, fraudulent and slow,
Shall spring to seize thee, like an ambush'd foe.

From this hubbub of words pass to the original 'Go to the Ant, thou
Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide,
overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth
her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard?
when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little
slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty
come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man' Proverbs, ch. vi.

One more quotation, and I have done. It is from Cowper’s Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk:

Religion! what treasure untold
Resides in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford
But the sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard,
Ne’er sighed at the sound of a knell,
Or smiled when a sabbath appeared
Ye winds, that have made me your sport
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial endearing report
Of a land I must visit no more
My friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see

This passage is quoted as an instance of three different styles of composition. The first four lines are poorly expressed, some Critics would call the language prosaic; the fact is, it would be bad prose,
so bad, that it is scarcely worse in metre. The epithet ‘church-going’
applied to a bell, and that by so chaste a writer as Cowper, is an
instance of the strange abuses which Poets have introduced into their
language, till they and their Readers take them as matters of course,
if they do not single them out expressly as objects of admiration.
The two lines ‘Ne'er sighed at the sound,’ &c., are, in my opinion, an
instance of the language of passion wrested from its proper use, and,
from the mere circumstance of the composition being in metre, applied
upon an occasion that does not justify such violent expressions; and I
should condemn the passage, though perhaps few Readers will agree with
me, as vicious poetic diction. The last stanza is throughout admirably
expressed: it would be equally good whether in prose or verse, except
that the Reader has an exquisite pleasure in seeing such natural
language so naturally connected with metre. The beauty of this stanza
tempts me to conclude with a principle which ought never to be
lost sight of, and which has been my chief guide in all I have
said,—namely, that in works of _imagination and sentiment_, for of
these only have I been treating, in proportion as ideas and feelings
are valuable, whether the composition be in prose or in verse, they
require and exact one and the same language. Metre is but adventitious
to composition, and the phraseology for which that passport is
necessary, even where it may be graceful at all will be little valued
by the judicious.

PREFACE TO POEMS

(1815)
The powers requisite for the production of poetry are: first, those of Observation and Description,—i.e. the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer; whether the things depicted be actually present to the senses, or have a place only in the memory. This power, though indispensable to a Poet, is one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time: as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects, much in the same way as a translator or engraver ought to be to his original. 2ndly, Sensibility,—which, the more exquisite it is, the wider will be the range of a poet's perceptions; and the more will he be incited to observe objects, both as they exist in themselves and as re-acted upon by his own mind. (The distinction between poetic and human sensibility has been marked in the character of the Poet delineated in the original preface,) 3rdly, Reflection,—which makes the Poet acquainted with the value of actions, images, thoughts, and feelings; and assists the sensibility in perceiving their connexion with each other. 4thly, Imagination and Fancy,—to modify, to create, and to associate. 5thly, Invention,—by which characters are composed out of materials supplied by observation; whether of the Poet's own heart and mind, or of external life and nature; and such incidents and situations produced as are most impressive to the imagination, and most fitted to do justice to the characters, sentiments, and passions, which the Poet undertakes to illustrate. And, lastly, Judgement, to decide how
and where, and in what degree, each of these faculties ought to be exerted; so that the less shall not be sacrificed to the greater; nor the greater, slighting the less, arrogate, to its own injury, more than its due. By judgement, also, is determined what are the laws and appropriate graces of every species of composition.[3]

The materials of Poetry, by these powers collected and produced, are cast, by means of various moulds, into divers forms. The moulds may be enumerated, and the forms specified, in the following order. 1st, The Narrative,—including the Epopoeia, the Historic Poem, the Tale, the Romance, the Mock-heroic, and, if the spirit of Homer will tolerate such neighbourhood, that dear production of our days, the metrical Novel. Of this Class, the distinguishing mark is, that the Narrator, however liberally his speaking agents be introduced, is himself the source from which everything primarily flows. Epic Poets, in order that their mode of composition may accord with the elevation of their subject, represent themselves as _singing_ from the inspiration of the Muse, 'Anna virumque _cano_;' but this is a fiction, in modern times, of slight value: the _Iliad_ or the _Paradise Lost_ would gain little in our estimation by being chanted. The other poets who belong to this class are commonly content to _tell_ their tale;—so that of the whole it may be affirmed that they neither require nor reject the accompaniment of music.

2ndly, The Dramatic,—consisting of Tragedy, Historic Drama, Comedy, and Masque, in which the Poet does not appear at all in his own person, and where the whole action is carried on by speech and
dialogue of the agents; music being admitted only incidentally and rarely. The Opera may be placed here, inasmuch as it proceeds by dialogue; though depending, to the degree that it does, upon music, it has a strong claim to be ranked with the lyrical. The characteristic and Impassioned Epistle, of which Ovid and Pope have given examples, considered as a species of monodrama, may, without impropriety, be placed in this class.

3rdly, The Lyrical,—containing the Hymn, the Ode, the Elegy, the Song, and the Ballad; in all which, for the production of their full effect, an accompaniment of music is indispensable.

4thly, The Idyllium,—descriptive chiefly either of the processes and appearances of external nature, as the _Seasons_ of Thomson; or of characters, manners, and sentiments, as are Shenstone's _Schoolmistress, The Cotter's Saturday Night_ of Burns, _The Twa Dogs_ of the same Author; or of these in conjunction with the appearances of Nature, as most of the pieces of Theocritus, the _Allegro_ and _Penseroso_ of Milton, Beattie's _Minstrel_, Goldsmith's _Deserted Village_, The Epitaph, the Inscription, the Sonnet, most of the epistles of poets writing in their own persons, and all loco-descriptive poetry, belonging to this class.

5thly, Didactic,—the principal object of which is direct instruction; as the Poem of Lucretius, the _Georgics_ of Virgil, _The Fleece_ of Dyer, Mason's _English Garden_, &c.
And, lastly, philosophical Satire, like that of Horace and Juvenal; personal and occasional Satire rarely comprehending sufficient of the general in the individual to be dignified with the name of poetry.

Out of the three last has been constructed a composite order, of which Young's _Night Thoughts_, and Cowper's _Task_, are excellent examples.

It is deducible from the above, that poems apparently miscellaneous, may with propriety be arranged either with reference to the powers of mind _predominant_ in the production of them; or to the mould in which they are cast; or, lastly, to the subjects to which they relate. From each of these considerations, the following Poems have been divided into classes; which, that the work may more obviously correspond with the course of human life, and for the sake of exhibiting in it the three requisites of a legitimate whole, a beginning, a middle, and an end, have been also arranged, as far as it was possible, according to an order of time, commencing with Childhood, and terminating with Old Age, Death, and Immortality. My guiding wish was, that the small pieces of which these volumes consist, thus discriminated, might be regarded under a two-fold view; as composing an entire work within themselves, and as adjuncts to the philosophical Poem, _The Recluse_. This arrangement has long presented itself habitually to my own mind. Nevertheless, I should have preferred to scatter the contents of these volumes at random, if I had been persuaded that, by the plan adopted, anything material would be taken from the natural effect of the
pieces, individually, on the mind of the unreflecting Reader. I trust there is a sufficient variety in each class to prevent this; while, for him who reads with reflection, the arrangement will serve as a commentary unostentatiously directing his attention to my purposes, both particular and general. But, as I wish to guard against the possibility of misleading by this classification, it is proper first to remind the Reader, that certain poems are placed according to the powers of mind, in the Author's conception, predominant in the production of them; _predominant_, which implies the exertion of other faculties in less degree. Where there is more imagination than fancy in a poem, it is placed under the head of imagination, and _vice versa_. Both the above classes might without impropriety have been enlarged from that consisting of 'Poems founded on the Affections;' as might this latter from those, and from the class 'proceeding from Sentiment and Reflection.' The most striking characteristics of each piece, mutual illustration, variety, and proportion, have governed me throughout.

None of the other Classes, except those of Fancy and Imagination, require any particular notice. But a remark of general application may be made. All Poets, except the dramatic, have been in the practice of feigning that their works were composed to the music of the harp or lyre: with what degree of affectation this has done in modern times, I leave to the judicious to determine. For my own part, I have not been disposed to violate probability so far, or to make such a large demand upon the Reader's charity. Some of these pieces are essentially lyrical; and, therefore, cannot have their due force without a
supposed musical accompaniment; but, in much the greatest part, as a substitute for the classic lyre or romantic harp, I require nothing more than an animated or impassioned recitation, adapted to the subject. Poems, however humble in their kind, if they be good in that kind, cannot read themselves; the law of long syllable and short must not be so inflexible,--the letter of metre must not be so impassive to the spirit of versification,--as to deprive the Reader of all voluntary power to modulate, in subordination to the sense, the music of the poem;--in the same manner as his mind is left at liberty, and even summoned, to act upon its thoughts and images. But, though the accompaniment of a musical instrument be frequently dispensed with, the true Poet does not therefore abandon his privilege distinct from that of the mere Proseman;

He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

Let us come now to the consideration of the words Fancy and Imagination, as employed in the classification of the following Poems. 'A man,' says an intelligent author, 'has imagination in proportion as he can distinctly copy in idea the impressions of sense: it is the faculty which _images_ within the mind the phenomena of sensation. A man has fancy in proportion as he can call up, connect, or associate, at pleasure, those internal images ([Greek: phantazein] is to cause to appear) so as to complete ideal representations of absent objects. Imagination is the power of depicting, and fancy of evoking and combining. The imagination is formed by patient observation; the fancy
by a voluntary activity in shifting the scenery of the mind. The more accurate the imagination, the more safely may a painter, or a poet, undertake a delineation, or a description, without the presence of the objects to be characterized. The more versatile the fancy, the more original and striking will be the decorations produced.'--_British Synonyms discriminated, by W. Taylor_.

Is not this as if a man should undertake to supply an account of a building, and be so intent upon what he had discovered of the foundation, as to conclude his task without once looking up at the superstructure? Here, as in other instances throughout the volume, the judicious Author's mind is enthralled by Etymology; he takes up the original word as his guide and escort, and too often does not perceive how soon he becomes its prisoner, without liberty to tread in any path but that to which it confines him. It is not easy to find out how imagination, thus explained, differs from distinct remembrance of images; or fancy from quick and vivid recollection of them: each is nothing more than a mode of memory. If the two words bear the above meaning, and no other, what term is left to designate that faculty of which the Poet is 'all compact;' he whose eyes glances from earth to heaven, whose spiritual attributes body forth what his pen is prompt in turning to shape; or what is left to characterize Fancy, as insinuating herself into the heart of objects with creative activity?--Imagination, in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following Poems, has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the
mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, 
governed by certain fixed laws. I proceed to illustrate my meaning by 
instances. A parrot _hangs_ from the wires of his cage by his beak or 
by his claws; or a monkey from the bough of a tree by his paws or 
his tail. Each creature does so literally and actually. In the first 
Eclogue of Virgil, the shepherd, thinking of the time when he is to 
take leave of his farm, thus addresses his goats:--

Non ego vos posthac viridi projectus in antro
Dumosa _pendere_ procul de rupe videbo.
----half way down
_Hangs_ one who gathers samphire,

is the well-known expression of Shakespeare, delineating an ordinary 
image upon the cliffs of Dover. In these two instances is a slight 
exertion of the faculty which I denominate imagination, in the use 
of one word: neither the goats nor the samphire-gatherer do literally 
hang, as does the parrot or the monkey; but, presenting to the senses 
something of such an appearance, the mind in its activity, for its own 
gratification, contemplates them as hanging.

As when far off at sea a fleet descried
_Hangs_ in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengal, or the isles
Of Ternate or Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs; they on the trading flood
Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape

Ply, stemming nightly toward the Pole; so seemed

Far off the flying Fiend.

Here is the full strength of the imagination involved in the word
_hangs_, and exerted upon the whole image: First, the fleet, an
aggregate of many ships, is represented as one mighty person, whose
track, we know and feel, is upon the waters; but, taking advantage
of its appearance to the senses, the Poet dares to represent it as
_hanging in the clouds_, both for the gratification of the mind in
contemplating the image itself, and in reference to the motion and
appearance of the sublime objects to which it is compared.

From impressions of sight we will pass to those of sound; which,
as they must necessarily be of a less definite character, shall be
selected from these volumes:

Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove _broods_; 

of the same bird,

His voice was _buried_ among trees,

Yet to be come at by the breeze;

O, Cuckoo I shall I call thee _Bird_.


Or but a wandering _Voice_?

The stock-dove is said to _coo_, a sound well imitating the note of the bird; but, by the intervention of the metaphor _broods_, the affections are called in by the imagination to assist in marking the manner in which the bird reiterates and prolongs her soft note, as if herself delighting to listen to it, and participating of a still and quiet satisfaction, like that which may be supposed inseparable from the continuous process of incubation. 'His voice was buried among trees,' a metaphor expressing the love of _seclusion_ by which this Bird is marked; and characterizing its note as not partaking of the shrill and the piercing, and therefore more easily deadened by the intervening shade; yet a note so peculiar and withal so pleasing, that the breeze, gifted with that love of the sound which the Poet feels, penetrates the shades in which it is entombed, and conveys it to the ear of the listener.

Shall I call thee Bird,

Or but a wandering _Voice_?

This concise interrogation characterizes the seeming ubiquity of the voice of the cuckoo, and dispossesses the creature almost of a corporeal existence; the Imagination being tempted to this exertion of her power by a consciousness in the memory that the cuckoo is almost perpetually heard throughout the season of spring, but seldom becomes an object of sight.
Thus far of images independent of each other, and immediately endowed by the mind with properties that do not inhere in them, upon an incitement from properties and qualities the existence of which is inherent and obvious. These processes of imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to react upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence.

I pass from the Imagination acting upon an individual image to a consideration of the same faculty employed upon images in a conjunction by which they modify each other. The Reader has already had a fine instance before him in the passage quoted from Virgil, where the apparently perilous situation of the goat, hanging upon the shaggy precipice, is contrasted with that of the shepherd contemplating it from the seclusion of the cavern in which he lies stretched at ease and in security. Take these images separately, and how unaffecting the picture compared with that produced by their being thus connected with, and opposed to, each other!

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie 
Couched on the bald top of an eminence, 
Wonder to all who do the same espy 
By what means it could thither come, and whence, 
So that it seems a thing endued with sense,
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, which on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun himself.

Such seemed this Man; not all alive or dead
Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age.

* * * * *

Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
And moveth altogether if it move at all.

In these images, the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying
powers of the Imagination, immediately and mediately acting, are all
brought into conjunction. The stone is endowed with something of the
power of life to approximate it to the sea-beast; and the sea-beast
stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone;
which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose of bringing
the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the
figure and condition of the aged Man; who is divested of so much of
the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where
the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison. After what has
been said, the image of the cloud need not be commented upon.

Thus far of an endowing or modifying power: but the Imagination also
shapes and _creates_; and how? By innumerable processes; and in none
does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into
unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number,--alternations
proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the
soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers. Recur to the passage
already cited from Milton. When the compact Fleet, as one Person, has
been introduced 'sailing from Bengala,' 'They,' i.e. the 'merchants,'
representing the fleet resolved into a multitude of ships, 'ply' their
voyage towards the extremities of the earth: 'So' (referring to the
word 'As' in the commencement) 'seemed the flying Fiend'; the image
of his Person acting to recombine the multitude of ships into one
body,--the point from which the comparison set out. 'So seemed,' and
to whom seemed? To the heavenly Muse who dictates the poem, to the eye
of the Poet's mind, and to that of the Reader, present at one moment
in the wide Ethiopian, and the next in the solitudes, then first
broken in upon, of the infernal regions!

Modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis.

Hear again this mighty Poet,--speaking of the Messiah going forth to
expel from heaven the rebellious angels,

Attended by ten thousand thousand Saints
He onward came: far off his coming shone,--

the retinue of Saints, and the Person of the Messiah himself, lost
almost and merged in the splendour of that indefinite abstraction 'His coming!'

As I do not mean here to treat this subject further than to throw some light upon the present Volumes, and especially upon one division of them, I shall spare myself and the Reader the trouble of considering the Imagination as it deals with thoughts and sentiments, as it regulates the composition of characters, and determines the course of actions: I will not consider it (more than I have already done by implication) as that power which, in the language of one of my most esteemed Friends, 'draws all things to one; which makes things animate or inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects with their accessories, take one colour and serve to one effect[4].' The grand storehouses of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination, of poetical, as contra-distinguished from human and dramatic Imagination, are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton; to which I cannot forbear to add to those of Spenser. I select these writers in preference to those of ancient Greece and Rome, because the anthropomorphism of the Pagan religion subjected the minds of the greatest poets in those countries too much to the bondage of definite form; from which the Hebrews were preserved by their abhorrence of idolatry. This abhorrence was almost as strong in our great epic Poet, both from circumstances of his life, and from the constitution of his mind. However imbued the surface might be with classical literature, he was a Hebrew in soul; and all things tended in him towards the sublime. Spenser, of a gentler nature, maintained his freedom by aid of his allegorical spirit, at one time inciting him
to create persons out of abstractions; and, at another, by a
superior effort of genius, to give the universality and permanence of
abstractions to his human beings, by means of attributes and emblems
that belong to the highest moral truths and the purest sensations,—of
which his character of Una is a glorious example. Of the human and
dramatic Imagination the works of Shakespeare are an inexhaustible
source.

I tax not you, ye Elements, with unkindness,
I never gave you kingdoms, call'd you Daughters!

And if, bearing in mind the many Poets distinguished by this prime
quality, whose names I omit to mention; yet justified by recollection
of the insults which the ignorant, the incapable, and the
presumptuous, have heaped upon these and my other writings, I may be
permitted to anticipate the judgment of posterity upon myself, I
shall declare (censurable, I grant, if the notoriety of the fact above
stated does not justify me) that I have given in these unfavourable
times evidence of exertions of this faculty upon its worthiest
objects, the external universe, the moral and religious sentiments of
Man, his natural affections, and his acquired passions; which have
the same ennobling tendency as the productions of men, in this kind,
worthy to be holden in undying remembrance.

To the mode in which Fancy has already been characterized as the power
of evoking and combining, or, as my friend Mr. Coleridge has styled
it, 'the aggregative and associative power,' my objection is only that
the definition is too general. To aggregate and to associate, to evoke
and to combine, belong as well to the Imagination as to the Fancy; but
either the materials evoked and combined are different; or they are
brought together under a different law, and for a different purpose.
Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of
should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch;
and, where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose if
it be slight, limited, and evanescent. Directly the reverse of these,
are the desires and demands of the Imagination. She recoils from
everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite. She leaves
it to Fancy to describe Queen Mab as coming,

In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman.

Having to speak of stature, she does not tell you that her gigantic
Angel was as tall as Pompey's Pillar; much less that he was twelve
cubits, or twelve hundred cubits high; or that his dimensions equalled
those of Teneriffe or Atlas;--because these, and if they were
a million times as high it would be the same, are bounded: The
expression is, 'His stature reached the sky!' the illimitable
firmament!--When the Imagination frames a comparison, if it does
not strike on the first presentation, a sense of the truth of the
likeness, from the moment that it is perceived, grows--and continues
to grow--upon the mind; the resemblance depending less upon outline
of form and feature, than upon expression and effect; less upon
casual and outstanding, than upon inherent and internal, properties: moreover, the images invariably modify each other.--The law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender, or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortunately combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which she scatters her thoughts and images; trusting that their number, and the felicity with which they are linked together, will make amends for the want of individual value: or she prides herself upon the curious subtlety and the successful elaboration with which she can detect their lurking affinities. If she can win you over to her purpose, and impart to you her feelings, she cares not how unstable or transitory may be her influence, knowing that it will not be out of her power to resume it upon an apt occasion. But the Imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion:--the Soul may fall away from it, not being able to sustain its grandeur; but, if once felt and acknowledged, by no act of any other faculty of the mind can it be relaxed, impaired, or diminished.--Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal.--Yet is it not the less true that Fancy, as she is an active, is also, under her own laws and in her own spirit, a creative faculty? In what manner Fancy ambitiously aims at a rivalship with Imagination, and Imagination stoops to work with the materials of Fancy, might be illustrated from the compositions of all eloquent writers, whether in prose or verse; and chiefly from those of our own Country. Scarcely a page of the impassioned parts of Bishop Taylor's Works can be opened that shall not afford examples.--Referring the Reader to those
inestimable volumes, I will content myself with placing a conceit
(ascribed to Lord Chesterfield) in contrast with a passage from the
_Paradise Lost_:

The dews of the evening most carefully shun,
They are the tears of the sky for the loss of the sun.

After the transgression of Adam, Milton, with other appearances of
sympathizing Nature, thus marks the immediate consequence,

Sky lowered, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completion of the mortal sin.

The associating link is the same in each instance: Dew and rain, not
distinguishable from the liquid substance of tears, are employed as
indications of sorrow. A flash of surprise is the effect in the former
case; a flash of surprise, and nothing more; for the nature of things
does not sustain the combination. In the latter, the effects from the
act, of which there is this immediate consequence and visible
sign, are so momentous, that the mind acknowledges the justice and
reasonableness of the sympathy in nature so manifested; and the sky
weeps drops of water as if with human eyes, as 'Earth had before
trembled from her entrails, and Nature given a second groan.'

Finally, I will refer to Cotton's _Ode upon Winter_, an admirable
composition, though stained with some peculiarities of the age in which he lived, for a general illustration of the characteristics of Fancy. The middle part of this ode contains a most lively description of the entrance of Winter, with his retinue, as ‘A palsied king,’ and yet a military monarch,—advancing for conquest with his army; the several bodies of which, and their arms and equipments, are described with a rapidity of detail, and a profusion of _fanciful_ comparisons, which indicate on the part of the poet extreme activity of intellect, and a correspondent hurry of delightful feeling. Winter retires from the foe into his fortress, where

a magazine

Of sovereign juice is cellared in;

Liquor that will the siege maintain

Should Phoebus ne’er return again.

Though myself a water drinker, I cannot resist the pleasure of transcribing what follows, as an instance still more happy of Fancy employed in the treatment of feeling than, in its preceding passages, the Poem supplies of her management of forms.

‘Tis that, that gives the poet rage,

And thaws the gelid blood of age;

Matures the young, restores the old,

And makes the fainting coward bold.
It lays the careful head to rest,
Calms palpitations in the breast,
Renders our lives' misfortune sweet;

• • • • •

Then let the chill Sirocco blow,
And gird us round with hills of snow,
Or else go whistle to the shore,
And make the hollow mountains roar,

Whilst we together jovial sit
Careless, and crowned with mirth and wit,
Where, though bleak winds confine us home
Our fancies round the world shall roam.

We'll think of all the Friends we know,
And drink to all worth drinking to;
When having drunk all thine and mine,
We rather shall want healths than wine.

But where Friends fail us, we'll supply
Our friendships with our charity;
Men that remote in sorrows live,
Shall by our lusty brimmers thrive.
We'll drink the wanting into wealth,
And those that languish into health,
The afflicted into joy; th' opprest
Into security and rest.

The worthy in disgrace shall find
Favour return again more kind,
And in restraint who stifled lie,
Shall taste the air of liberty.

The brave shall triumph in success,
The lover shall have mistresses,
Poor unregarded Virtue, praise,
And the neglected Poet, bays.

Thus shall our healths do others good,
Whilst we ourselves do all we would;
For, freed from envy and from care,
What would we be but what we are?

When I sate down to write this Preface, it was my intention to have made it more comprehensive; but, thinking that I ought rather to apologize for detaining the reader so long, I will here conclude.
ESSAY SUPPLEMENTARY TO PREFACE

(1815)

With the young of both sexes, Poetry is, like love, a passion; but, for much the greater part of those who have been proud of its power over their minds, a necessity soon arises of breaking the pleasing bondage; or it relaxes of itself:--the thoughts being occupied in domestic cares, or the time engrossed by business. Poetry then becomes only an occasional recreation; while to those whose existence passes away in a course of fashionable pleasure, it is a species of luxurious amusement. In middle and declining age, a scattered number of serious persons resort to poetry, as to religion, for a protection against the pressure of trivial employments, and as a consolation for the afflictions of life. And, lastly, there are many, who, having been enamoured of this art in their youth, have found leisure, after youth was spent, to cultivate general literature; in which poetry has continued to be comprehended _as a study_.

[Footnote 3: As sensibility to harmony of numbers, and the power of producing it, are invariably attendants upon the faculties above specified, nothing has been said upon those requisites.]

[Footnote 4: Charles Lamb upon the genius of Hogarth.]
Into the above classes the Readers of poetry may be divided; Critics abound in them all; but from the last only can opinions be collected of absolute value, and worthy to be depended upon, as prophetic of the destiny of a new work. The young, who in nothing can escape delusion, are especially subject to it in their intercourse with Poetry. The cause, not so obvious as the fact is unquestionable, is the same as that from which erroneous judgements in this art, in the minds of men of all ages, chiefly proceed; but upon Youth it operates with peculiar force. The appropriate business of poetry (which, nevertheless, if genuine, is as permanent as pure science), her appropriate employment, her privilege and her _duty_, is to treat of things not as they _are_, but as they _appear_; not as they exist in themselves, but as they _seem_ to exist to the _senses_, and to the _passions_. What a world of delusion does this acknowledged obligation prepare for the inexperienced! what temptations to go astray are here held forth for them whose thoughts have been little disciplined by the understanding, and whose feelings revolt from the sway of reason!—When a juvenile Reader is in the height of his rapture with some vicious passage, should experience throw in doubts, or common sense suggest suspicions, a lurking consciousness that the realities of the Muse are but shows, and that her liveliest excitements are raised by transient shocks of conflicting feeling and successive assemblages of contradictory thoughts—is ever at hand to justify extravagance, and to sanction absurdity. But, it may be asked, as these illusions are unavoidable, and, no doubt, eminently useful to the mind as a process, what good can be gained by making observations, the tendency of which is to diminish the confidence of youth in its feelings, and thus to abridge
its innocent and even profitable pleasures? The reproach implied in the question could not be warded off, if Youth were incapable of being delighted with what is truly excellent; or, if these errors always terminated of themselves in due season. But, with the majority, though their force be abated, they continue through life. Moreover, the fire of youth is too vivacious an element to be extinguished or damped by a philosophical remark; and, while there is no danger that what has been said will be injurious or painful to the ardent and the confident, it may prove beneficial to those who, being enthusiastic, are, at the same time, modest and ingenuous. The intimation may unite with their own misgivings to regulate their sensibility, and to bring in, sooner than it would otherwise have arrived, a more discreet and sound judgement.

If it should excite wonder that men of ability, in later life, whose understandings have been rendered acute by practice in affairs, should be so easily and so far imposed upon when they happen to take up a new work in verse, this appears to be the cause;--that, having discontinued their attention to poetry, whatever progress may have been made in other departments of knowledge, they have not, as to this art, advanced in true discernment beyond the age of youth. If, then, a new poem fall in their way, whose attractions are of that kind which would have enraptured them during the heat of youth, the judgement not being improved to a degree that they shall be disgusted, they are dazzled, and prize and cherish the faults for having had power to make the present time vanish before them, and to throw the mind back, as by enchantment, into the happiest season of life. As they read, powers
seem to be revived, passions are regenerated, and pleasures restored.
The Book was probably taken up after an escape from the burden of
business, and with a wish to forget the world, and all its vexations
and anxieties. Having obtained this wish, and so much more, it is
natural that they should make report as they have felt.

If Men of mature age, through want of practice, be thus easily
beguiled into admiration of absurdities, extravagances, and misplaced
ornaments, thinking it proper that their understandings should enjoy
a holiday, while they are unbending their minds with verse, it may be
expected that such Readers will resemble their former selves also
in strength of prejudice, and an inaptitude to be moved by the
unostentatious beauties of a pure style. In the higher poetry, an
enlightened Critic chiefly looks for a reflection of the wisdom of
the heart and the grandeur of the imagination. Wherever these appear,
simplicity accompanies them, Magnificence herself, when legitimate,
depending upon a simplicity of her own, to regulate her ornaments. But
it is a well-known property of human nature, that our estimates are
ever governed by comparisons, of which we are conscious with various
degrees of distinctness. Is it not, then, inevitable (confining these
observations to the effects of style merely) that an eye, accustomed
to the glaring hues of diction by which such Readers are caught and
excited, will for the most part be rather repelled than attracted by
an original Work, the colouring of which is disposed according to a
pure and refined scheme of harmony? It is in the fine arts as in the
affairs of life, no man can _serve_ (i.e. obey with zeal and fidelity)
two Masters.
As Poetry is most just to its own divine origin when it administers
the comforts and breathes the spirit of religion, they who have
learned to perceive this truth, and who betake themselves to reading
verse for sacred purposes, must be preserved from numerous illusions
to which the two Classes of Readers, whom we have been considering,
are liable. But, as the mind grows serious from the weight of
life, the range of its passions is contracted accordingly; and its
sympathies become so exclusive, that many species of high excellence
wholly escape, or but languidly excite, its notice. Besides, men who
read from religious or moral inclinations, even when the subject is
of that kind which they approve, are beset with misconceptions and
mistakes peculiar to themselves. Attaching so much importance to the
truths which interest them, they are prone to overrate the Authors by
whom those truths are expressed and enforced. They come prepared
to impart so much passion to the Poet’s language, that they remain
unconscious how little, in fact, they receive from it. And, on the
other hand, religious faith is to him who holds it so momentous
a thing, and error appears to be attended with such tremendous
consequences, that, if opinions touching upon religion occur which
the Reader condemns, he not only cannot sympathize with them, however
animated the expression, but there is, for the most part, an end put
to all satisfaction and enjoyment. Love, if it before existed, is
converted into dislike; and the heart of the Reader is set against
the Author and his book.—To these excesses, they, who from their
professions ought to be the most guarded against them, are perhaps
the most liable; I mean those sects whose religion, being from the
calculating understanding, is cold and formal. For when Christianity, the religion of humility, is founded upon the proudest faculty of our nature, what can be expected but contradictions? Accordingly, believers of this cast are at one time contemptuous; at another, being troubled, as they are and must he, with inward misgivings, they are jealous and suspicious;--and at all seasons, they are under temptation to supply by the heat with which they defend their tenets, the animation which is wanting to the constitution of the religion itself.

Faith was given to man that his affections, detached from the treasures of time, might be inclined to settle upon those of eternity:--the elevation of his nature, which this habit produces on earth, being to him a presumptive evidence of a future state of existence; and giving him a title to partake of its holiness. The religious man values what he sees chiefly as an 'imperfect shadowing forth' of what he is incapable of seeing. The concerns of religion refer to indefinite objects, and are too weighty for the mind to support them without relieving itself by resting a great part of the burden upon words and symbols. The commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried on but by a process where much is represented in little, and the Infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity. In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry; between religion--making up the deficiencies of reason by faith; and poetry--passionate for the instruction of reason; between religion--whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry--ethereal and transcendent,
yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation.

In this community of nature may be perceived also the lurking incitements of kindred error;--so that we shall find that no poetry has been more subject to distortion, than that species, the argument and scope of which is religious; and no lovers of the art have gone farther astray than the pious and the devout.

Whither then shall we turn for that union of qualifications which must necessarily exist before the decisions of a critic can be of absolute value? For a mind at once poetical and philosophical; for a critic whose affections are as free and kindly as the spirit of society, and whose understanding is severe as that of dispassionate government? Where are we to look for that initiatory composure of mind which no selfishness can disturb? For a natural sensibility that has been tutored into correctness without losing anything of its quickness; and for active faculties, capable of answering the demands which an Author of original imagination shall make upon them, associated with a judgement that cannot he duped into admiration by aught that is unworthy of it?--among those and those only, who, never having suffered their youthful love of poetry to remit much of its force, have applied to the consideration of the laws of this art the best power of their understandings. At the same time it must be observed--that, as this Class comprehends the only judgements which are trustworthy, so does it include the most erroneous and perverse. For to be mistaught is worse than to be untaught; and no perverseness equals that which is supported by system, no errors are so difficult to root out as those which the understanding has pledged its credit to
uphold. In this Class are contained censors, who, if they be pleased
with what is good, are pleased with it only by imperfect glimpses,
and upon false principles; who, should they generalize rightly, to
a certain point, are sure to suffer for it in the end; who, if they
stumble upon a sound rule, are fettered by misapplying it, or by
straining it too far; being incapable of perceiving when it ought to
yield to one of higher order. In it are found critics too petulant to
be passive to a genuine poet, and too feeble to grapple with him; men,
who take upon them to report of the course which _he_ holds whom they
are utterly unable to accompany;--confounded if he turn quick upon the
wing, dismayed if he soar steadily 'into the region';--men of palsied
imaginations and indurated hearts; in whose minds all healthy action
is languid, who therefore feed as the many direct them, or, with the
many, are greedy after vicious provocatives;--judges, whose censure is
auspicious, and whose praise ominous! In this class meet together the
two extremes of best and worst.

The observations presented in the foregoing series are of too
ungracious a nature to have been made without reluctance; and, were
it only on this account, I would invite the reader to try them by the
test of comprehensive experience. If the number of judges who can be
confidently relied upon be in reality so small, it ought to follow
that partial notice only, or neglect, perhaps long continued, or
attention wholly inadequate to their merits--must have been the fate
of most works in the higher departments of poetry; and that, on the
other hand, numerous productions have blazed into popularity, and have
passed away, leaving scarcely a trace behind them: it will be further
found, that when Authors shall have at length raised themselves into
general admiration and maintained their ground, errors and prejudices
have prevailed concerning their genius and their works, which the few
who are conscious of those errors and prejudices would deplore; if
they were not recompensed by perceiving that there are select Spirits
for whom it is ordained that their fame shall be in the world an
existence like that of Virtue, which owes its being to the struggles
it makes, and its vigour to the enemies whom it provokes;—a vivacious
quality, ever doomed to meet with opposition, and still triumphing
over it; and, from the nature of its dominion, incapable of being
brought to the sad conclusion of Alexander, when he wept that there
were no more worlds for him to conquer.

Let us take a hasty retrospect of the poetical literature of this
Country for the greater part of the last two centuries, and see if the
facts support these inferences.

Who is there that now reads the _Creation_ of Dubartas? Yet all Europe
once resounded with his praise; he was caressed by kings; and, when
his Poem was translated into our language, the _Faery Queen_ faded
before it. The name of Spenser, whose genius is of a higher order than
even that of Ariosto, is at this day scarcely known beyond the limits
of the British Isles. And if the value of his works is to be estimated
from the attention now paid to them by his countrymen, compared with
that which they bestow on those of some other writers, it must be
pronounced small indeed.
The laurel, meed of mighty conquerors
And poets _sage_--

are his own words; but his wisdom has, in this particular, been his worst enemy: while its opposite, whether in the shape of folly or madness, has been _their_ best friend. But he was a great power, and bears a high name: the laurel has been awarded to him.

A dramatic Author, if he write for the stage, must adapt himself to the taste of the audience, or they will not endure him; accordingly the mighty genius of Shakespeare was listened to. The people were delighted: but I am not sufficiently versed in stage antiquities to determine whether they did not flock as eagerly to the representation of many pieces of contemporary Authors, wholly undeserving to appear upon the same boards. Had there been a formal contest for superiority among dramatic writers, that Shakespeare, like his predecessors Sophocles and Euripides, would have often been subject to the mortification of seeing the prize adjudged to sorry competitors, becomes too probable, when we reflect that the admirers of Settle and Shadwell were, in a later age, as numerous, and reckoned as respectable, in point of talent, as those of Dryden. At all events, that Shakespeare stooped to accommodate himself to the People, is sufficiently apparent; and one of the most striking proofs of his almost omnipotent genius is, that he could turn to such glorious purpose those materials which the prepossessions of the age compelled him to make use of. Yet even this marvellous skill appears not to have
been enough to prevent his rivals from having some advantage over him in public estimation; else how can we account for passages and scenes that exist in his works, unless upon a supposition that some of the grossest of them, a fact which in my own mind I have no doubt of, were foisted in by the Players, for the gratification of the many?

But that his Works, whatever might be their reception upon the stage, made but little impression upon the ruling Intellects of the time, may be inferred from the fact that Lord Bacon, in his multifarious writings, nowhere either quotes or alludes to him.[5] His dramatic excellence enabled him to resume possession of the stage after the Restoration; but Dryden tells us that in his time two of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher were acted for one of Shakespeare's. And so faint and limited was the perception of the poetic beauties of his dramas in the time of Pope, that, in his Edition of the Plays, with a view of rendering to the general reader a necessary service, he printed between inverted commas those passages which he thought most worthy of notice.

At this day, the French Critics have abated nothing of their aversion to this darling of our Nation: 'the English, with their bouffon de Shakespeare,' is as familiar an expression among them as in the time of Voltaire. Baron Grimm is the only French writer who seems to have perceived his infinite superiority to the first names of the French Theatre; an advantage which the Parisian Critic owed to his German blood and German education. The most enlightened Italians, though well acquainted with our language, are wholly incompetent to measure the
proportions of Shakespeare. The Germans only, of foreign nations, are
approaching towards a knowledge and feeling of what he is. In some
respects they have acquired a superiority over the fellow countrymen
of the Poet: for among us it is a current, I might say, an established
opinion, that Shakespeare is justly praised when he is pronounced to
be 'a wild irregular genius, in whom great faults are compensated by
great beauties.' How long may it be before this misconception passes
away, and it becomes universally acknowledged that the judgement of
Shakespeare in the selection of his materials, and in the manner in
which he has made them, heterogeneous as they often are, constitute a
unity of their own, and contribute all to one great end, is not less
admirable than his imagination, his invention, and his intuitive
knowledge of human Nature?

There is extant a small Volume of miscellaneous poems, in which
Shakespeare expresses his own feelings in his own person. It is not
difficult to conceive that the Editor, George Steevens, should have
been insensible to the beauties of one portion of that Volume, the
Sonnets; though in no part of the writings of this Poet is found, in
an equal compass, a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously
expressed. But, from regard to the Critic's own credit, he would not
have ventured to talk of an[6] act of parliament not being strong
enough to compel the perusal of those little pieces, if he had not
known that the people of England were ignorant of the treasures
contained in them: and if he had not, moreover, shared the too common
propensity of human nature to exult over a supposed fall into the mire
of a genius whom he had been compelled to regard with admiration, as
an inmate of the celestial regions--'there sitting where he durst not
soar.'

Nine years before the death of Shakespeare, Milton was born, and early
in life he published several small poems, which, though on their
first appearance they were praised by a few of the judicious, were
afterwards neglected to that degree, that Pope in his youth could
borrow from them without risk of its being known. Whether these poems
are at this day justly appreciated, I will not undertake to decide nor
would it imply a severe reflection upon the mass of readers to suppose
the contrary, seeing that a man of the acknowledged genius of Voss,
the German poet, could suffer their spirit to evaporate, and could
change their character, as is done in the translation made by him of
the most popular of these pieces. At all events, it is certain that
these Poems of Milton are now much read, and loudly praised, yet were
they little heard of till more than 150 years after their publication,
and of the Sonnets, Dr. Johnson, as appears from Boswell's _Life_ of
him, was in the habit of thinking and speaking as contemptuously as
Steevens wrote upon those of Shakespeare.

About the time when the Pindaric odes of Cowley and his imitators, and
the productions of that class of curious thinkers whom Dr. Johnson has
strangely styled metaphysical Poets, were beginning to lose something
of that extravagant admiration which they had excited, the _Paradise
Lost_ made its appearance. 'Fit audience find though few,' was the
petition addressed by the Poet to his inspiring Muse. I have said
elsewhere that he gained more than he asked, this I believe to be
true, but Dr. Johnson has fallen into a gross mistake when he attempts
to prove, by the sale of the work, that Milton's Countrymen were
'just to it' upon its first appearance. Thirteen hundred Copies were
sold in two years, an uncommon example, he asserts, of the prevalence
of genius in opposition to so much recent enmity as Milton's public
conduct had excited. But be it remembered that, if Milton's political
and religious opinions, and the manner in which he announced them, had
raised him many enemies, they had procured him numerous friends, who,
as all personal danger was passed away at the time of publication,
would be eager to procure the master-work of a man whom they revered,
and whom they would be proud of praising. Take, from the number
of purchasers, persons of this class, and also those who wished to
possess the Poem as a religious work, and but few I fear would be left
who sought for it on account of its poetical merits. The demand did
not immediately increase; 'for,' says Dr. Johnson, 'many more readers'
(he means persons in the habit of reading poetry) 'than were supplied
at first the Nation did not afford.' How careless must a writer be who
can make this assertion in the face of so many existing title-pages
to belie it! Turning to my own shelves, I find the folio of Cowley,
seventh edition, 1681. A book near it is Flatman's Poems, fourth
edition, 1686, Waller, fifth edition, same date. The Poems of Norris
of Bemerton not long after went, I believe, through nine editions.
What further demand there might be for these works I do not know; but
I well remember that, twenty-five years ago, the booksellers' stalls
in London swarmed with the folios of Cowley. This is not mentioned in
disparagement of that able writer and amiable man; but merely to show
that, if Milton's Works were not more read, it was not because readers
did not exist at the time. The early editions of the _Paradise Lost_
were printed in a shape which allowed them to be sold at a low price, yet only three thousand copies of the Work were sold in eleven years; and the Nation, says Dr. Johnson, had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the Works of Shakespeare; which probably did not together make one thousand Copies; facts adduced by the critic to prove the 'paucity of Readers,'--There were readers in multitudes; but their money went for other purposes, as their admiration was fixed elsewhere. We are authorized, then, to affirm that the reception of the _Paradise Lost_, and the slow progress of its fame, are proofs as striking as can be desired that the positions which I am attempting to establish are not erroneous.[7]--How amusing to shape to one's self such a critique as a Wit of Charles's days, or a Lord of the Miscellanies or trading Journalist of King William's time, would have brought forth, if he had set his faculties industriously to work upon this Poem, everywhere impregnated with _original_ excellence.

So strange indeed are the obliquities of admiration, that they whose opinions are much influenced by authority will often be tempted to think that there are no fixed principles[8] in human nature for this art to rest upon. I have been honoured by being permitted to peruse in MS. a tract composed between the period of the Revolution and the close of that century. It is the Work of an English Peer of high accomplishments, its object to form the character and direct the studies of his son. Perhaps nowhere does a more beautiful treatise of the kind exist. The good sense and wisdom of the thoughts, the delicacy of the feelings, and the charm of the style, are, throughout,
equally conspicuous. Yet the Author, selecting among the Poets of his own country those whom he deems most worthy of his son's perusal, particularizes only Lord Rochester, Sir John Denham, and Cowley.

Writing about the same time, Shaftesbury, an author at present unjustly depreciated, describes the English Muses as only yet lisping in their cradles.

The arts by which Pope, soon afterwards, contrived to procure to himself a more general and a higher reputation than perhaps any English Poet ever attained during his lifetime, are known to the judicious. And as well known is it to them, that the undue exertion of those arts is the cause why Pope has for some time held a rank in literature, to which, if he had not been seduced by an over-love of immediate popularity, and had confided more in his native genius, he never could have descended. He bewitched the nation by his melody, and dazzled it by his polished style and was himself blinded by his own success. Having wandered from humanity in his Eclogues with boyish inexperience, the praise, which these compositions obtained, tempted him into a belief that Nature was not to be trusted, at least in pastoral Poetry. To prove this by example, he put his friend Gay upon writing those Eclogues which their author intended to be burlesque. The instigator of the work, and his admirers, could perceive in them nothing but what was ridiculous. Nevertheless, though these Poems contain some detestable passages, the effect, as Dr Johnson well observes, 'of reality and truth became conspicuous even when the intention was to show them grovelling and degraded.' The Pastorals, ludicrous to such as prided themselves upon their refinement, in spite
of those disgusting passages, ‘became popular, and were read with
delight, as just representations of rural manners and occupations.’

Something less than sixty years after the publication of the _Paradise
Lost_ appeared Thomson’s _Winter_, which was speedily followed by his
other Seasons. It is a work of inspiration, much of it is written
from himself, and nobly from himself. How was it received? ‘It was
no sooner read,’ says one of his contemporary biographers, ‘than
universally admired those only excepted who had not been used to feel,
or to look for anything in poetry, beyond a _point_ of satirical or
epigrammatic wit, a smart _antithesis_ richly trimmed with rime, or
the softness of an _elegiac_ complaint. To such his manly classical
spirit could not readily commend itself, till, after a more attentive
perusal, they had got the better of their prejudices, and either
acquired or affected a truer taste. A few others stood aloof, merely
because they had long before fixed the articles of their poetical
creed, and resigned themselves to an absolute despair of ever seeing
anything new and original. These were somewhat mortified to find
their notions disturbed by the appearance of a poet, who seemed to owe
nothing but to nature and his own genius. But, in a short time, the
applause became unanimous, every one wondering how so many pictures,
and pictures so familiar, should have moved them but faintly to what
they felt in his descriptions. His digressions too, the overflows
of a tender benevolent heart, charmed the reader no less, leaving him
in doubt, whether he should more admire the Poet or love the Man.’

This case appears to bear strongly against us— but we must distinguish
between wonder and legitimate admiration. The subject of the work is
the changes produced in the appearances of nature by the revolution
of the year: and, by undertaking to write in verse, Thomson pledged
himself to treat his subject as became a Poet. Now, it is remarkable
that, excepting the nocturnal _Reverie of Lady Winchelsea_, and a
passage or two in the _Windsor Forest_ of Pope, the poetry of the
period intervening between the publication of the _Paradise Lost_ and
the _Seasons_ does not contain a single new image of external nature;
and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred
that the eye of the Poet has been steadily fixed upon his object, much
less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of
genuine imagination. To what a low state knowledge of the most obvious
and important phenomena had sunk, is evident from the style in which
Dryden has executed a description of Night in one of his Tragedies,
and Pope his translation of the celebrated moonlight scene in
the _Iliad_. A blind man, in the habit of attending accurately to
descriptions casually dropped from the lips of those around him, might
easily depict these appearances with more truth. Dryden's lines are
vague, bombastic, and senseless;[9] those of Pope, though he had Homer
to guide him, are throughout false and contradictory. The verses of
Dryden, once highly celebrated, are forgotten; those of Pope still
retain their hold upon public estimation,--nay, there is not a passage
of descriptive poetry, which at this day finds so many and such ardent
admirers. Strange to think of an enthusiast, as may have been the case
with thousands, reciting those verses under the cope of a moonlight
sky, without having his raptures in the least disturbed by a suspicion
of their absurdity!--If these two distinguished writers could
habitually think that the visible universe was of so little
consequence to a poet, that it was scarcely necessary for him to cast his eyes upon it, we may be assured that those passages of the elder poets which faithfully and poetically describe the phenomena of nature, were not at that time holden in much estimation, and that there was little accurate attention paid to those appearances.

Wonder is the natural product of Ignorance; and as the soil was _in such good condition_ at the time of the publication of the _Seasons_ the crop was doubtless abundant. Neither individuals nor nations become corrupt all at once, nor are they enlightened in a moment. Thomson was an inspired poet, but he could not work miracles; in cases where the art of seeing had in some degree been learned, the teacher would further the proficiency of his pupils, but he could do little _more_; though so far does vanity assist men in acts of self-deception, that many would often fancy they recognized a likeness when they knew nothing of the original. Having shown that much of what his biographer deemed genuine admiration must in fact have been blind wonderment--how is the rest to be accounted for?--Thomson was fortunate in the very title of his poem, which seemed to bring it home to the prepared sympathies of every one: in the next place, notwithstanding his high powers, he writes a vicious style; and his false ornaments are exactly of that kind which would be most likely to strike the undiscerning. He likewise abounds with sentimental commonplaces, that, from the manner in which they were brought forward, bore an imposing air of novelty. In any well-used copy of the _Seasons_ the book generally opens of itself with the rhapsody on love, or with one of the stories (perhaps 'Damon and Musidora'); these
also are prominent in our collections of Extracts, and are the parts
of his Work which, after all, were probably most efficient in first
recommending the author to general notice. Pope, repaying praises
which he had received, and wishing to extol him to the highest, only
styles him 'an elegant and philosophical Poet'; nor are we able to
collect any unquestionable proofs that the true characteristics of
Thomson's genius as an imaginative poet[10] were perceived, till
the elder Warton, almost forty years after the publication of the
_Sequences_, pointed them out by a note in his Essay on the _Life and
Writings of Pope_. In the _Castle of Indolence_ (of which Gray
speaks so coldly) these characteristics were almost as conspicuously
displayed, and in verse more harmonious and diction more pure. Yet
that fine poem was neglected on its appearance, and is at this day the
delight only of a few!

When Thomson died, Collins breathed forth his regrets in an Elegiac
Poem, in which he pronounces a poetical curse upon _him_ who should
regard with insensibility the place where the Poet's remains were
deposited. The Poems of the mourner himself have now passed through
innumerable editions, and are universally known, but if, when Collins
died, the same kind of imprecation had been pronounced by a surviving
admirer, small is the number whom it would not have comprehended. The
notice which his poems attained during his lifetime was so small, and
of course the sale so insignificant, that not long before his death
he deemed it right to repay to the bookseller the sum which he had
advanced for them and threw the edition into the fire.
Next in importance to the _Seasons_ of Thomson, though a considerable
distance from that work in order of time, come the _Reliques of
Ancient English Poetry_, collected, new-modelled, and in many
instances (if such a contradiction in terms may be used) composed by
the Editor, Dr Percy. This work did not steal silently into the world,
as is evident from the number of legendary tales, that appeared not
long after its publication, and had been modelled, as the authors
persuaded themselves, after the old Ballad. The Compilation was,
however ill suited to the then existing taste of city society, and Dr
Johnson, 'mid the little senate to which he gave laws, was not
sparing in his exertions to make it an object of contempt. The critic
triumphed, the legendary imitators were deservedly disregarded, and
as undeservedly, their ill imitated models sank in this country into
temporary neglect, while Burger and other able writers of Germany,
were translating or imitating these Reliques, and composing, with the
aid of inspiration thence derived, poems which are the delight of the
German nation. Dr Percy was so abashed by the ridicule flung upon his
labours from the ignorance and insensibility of the persons with whom
he lived, that, though while he was writing under a mask he had
not wanted resolution to follow his genius into the regions of true
simplicity and genuine pathos (as is evinced by the exquisite ballad
of _Sir Cauline_ and by many other pieces), yet when he appeared in
his own person and character as a poetical writer, he adopted, as in
the tale of the _Hermit of Warkworth_, a diction scarcely in any
one of its features distinguishable from the vague, the glossy, and
unfeeling language of his day. I mention this remarkable fact[11]
with regret, esteeming the genius of Dr. Percy in this kind of writing
superior to that of any other man by whom in modern times it has been
cultivated. That even Burger (to whom Klopstock gave, in my hearing,
a commendation which he denied to Goethe and Schiller, pronouncing him
to be a genuine poet, and one of the few among the Germans whose works
would last) had not the fine sensibility of Percy, might be shown
from many passages, in which he has deserted his original only to go
astray. For example,

Now daye was gone, and night was come,
And all were fast asleepe,
All save the Lady Emeline,
Who sate in her bowre to weepe:

And soone she heard her true Love's voice
Low whispering at the walle,
Awake, awake, my dear Ladye,
'Tis I thy true love call

Which is thus tricked out and dilated;

Als nun die Nacht Gebirg' und Thal
Vermummt in Rabenschatten,
Und Hochburgs Lampen uberall
Schon ausgeflimmert hatten,
Und alles tief entschlafen war;
Doch nur das Fraulein immerdar,
But from humble ballads we must ascend to heroics.

All hail, Macpherson! hail to thee, Sire of Ossian! The Phantom was begotten by the snug embrace of an impudent Highlander upon a cloud of tradition--it travelled southward, where it was greeted with acclamation, and the thin Consistence took its course through Europe, upon the breath of popular applause. The Editor of the _Reliques_ had indirectly preferred a claim to the praise of invention, by not concealing that his supplementary labours were considerable! how selfish his conduct, contrasted with that of the disinterested Gael, who, like Lear, gives his kingdom away, and is content to become a pensioner upon his own issue for a beggarly pittance!--Open this far-famed Book!--I have done so at random, and the beginning of the _Epic Poem Temora_, in eight Books, presents itself. 'The blue waves of Ullin roll in light. The green hills are covered with day. Trees shake their dusky heads in the breeze. Grey torrents pour their noisy streams. Two green hills with aged oaks surround a narrow plain. The blue course of a stream is there. On its banks stood Cairbar of Atha. His spear supports the king; the red eyes of his fear are sad. Cormac rises on his soul with all his ghastly wounds.'
from the pocket-book of the blind Ossian!

If it be unbecoming, as I acknowledge that for the most part it is, to speak disrespectfully of Works that have enjoyed for a length of time a widely-spread reputation, without at the same time producing irrefragable proofs of their unworthiness, let me be forgiven upon this occasion.--Having had the good fortune to be born and reared in a mountainous country, from my very childhood I have felt the falsehood that pervades the volumes imposed upon the world under the name of Ossian. From what I saw with my own eyes, I knew that the imagery was spurious. In nature everything is distinct, yet nothing defined into absolute independent singleness. In Macpherson's work it is exactly the reverse; everything (that is not stolen) is in this manner defined, insulated, dislocated, deadened,--yet nothing distinct. It will always be so when words are substituted for things. To say that the characters never could exist, that the manners are impossible, and that a dream has more substance than the whole state of society, as there depicted, is doing nothing more than pronouncing a censure which Macpherson defied; when, with the steeps of Morven before his eyes, he could talk so familiarly of his Car-borne heroes;--of Morven, which, if one may judge from its appearance at the distance of a few miles, contains scarcely an acre of ground sufficiently accommodating for a sledge to be trailed along its surface.--Mr. Malcolm Laing has ably shown that the diction of this pretended translation is a motley assemblage from all quarters; but he is so fond of making out parallel passages as to call poor Macpherson to account for his '_ands_' and his '_but_.' and he has weakened his argument by conducting it as
if he thought that every striking resemblance was a conscious plagiarism. It is enough that the coincidences are too remarkable for it to be probable or possible that they could arise in different minds without communication between them. Now as the Translators of the Bible, and Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope, could not be indebted to Macpherson, it follows that he must have owed his fine feathers to them; unless we are prepared gravely to assert, with Madame de Stael, that many of the characteristic beauties of our most celebrated English Poets are derived from the ancient Fingallian; in which case the modern translator would have been but giving back to Ossian his own.--It is consistent that Lucien Buonaparte, who could censure Milton for having surrounded Satan in the infernal regions with courtly and regal splendour, should pronounce the modern Ossian to be the glory of Scotland;--a country that has produced a Dunbar, a Buchanan, a Thomson, and a Burns! These opinions are of ill omen for the Epic ambition of him who has given them to the world.

Yet, much as those pretended treasures of antiquity have been admired, they have been wholly uninfluential upon the literature of the Country. No succeeding writer appears to have caught from them a ray of inspiration; no author, in the least distinguished, has ventured formally to imitate them--except the boy, Chatterton, on their first appearance. He had perceived, from the successful trials which he himself had made in literary forgery, how few critics were able to distinguish between a real ancient medal and a counterfeit of modern manufacture; and he set himself to the work of filling a magazine with _Saxon Poems_--counterparts of those of Ossian, as like his as one
of his misty stars is to another. This incapability to amalgamate with
the literature of the Island is, in my estimation, a decisive proof
that the book is essentially unnatural; nor should I require any other
to demonstrate it to be a forgery, audacious as worthless.--Contrast,
in this respect, the effect of Macpherson's publication with the
_Reliques_ of Percy, so unassuming, so modest in their pretensions!--I
have already stated how much Germany is indebted to this latter work;
and for our own country, its poetry has been absolutely redeemed
by it. I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the
present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to
the _Reliques_: I know that it is so with my friends; and, for myself,
I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own.

Dr. Johnson, more fortunate in his contempt of the labours of
Macpherson than those of his modest friend, was solicited not long
after to furnish Prefaces biographical and critical for the works
of some of the most eminent English Poets. The booksellers took upon
themselves to make the collection; they referred probably to the most
popular miscellanies, and, unquestionably, to their books of accounts;
and decided upon the claim of authors to be admitted into a body of
the most eminent, from the familiarity of their names with the readers
of that day, and by the profits, which, from the sale of his works,
each had brought and was bringing to the Trade. The Editor was allowed
a limited exercise of discretion, and the Authors whom he recommended
are scarcely to be mentioned without a smile. We open the volume of
Prefatory Lives, and to our astonishment the _first_ name we find is
that of Cowley!--What Is become of the morning-star of English Poetry?
Where is the bright Elizabethan constellation? Or, if names be more acceptable than images, where is the ever to-be-honoured Chaucer? where is Spenser? where Sidney? and, lastly, where he, whose rights as a poet, contra-distinguished from those which he is universally allowed to possess as a dramatist, we have vindicated,—where Shakespeare?--These, and a multitude of others not worthy to be placed near them, their contemporaries and successors, we have _not_. But in their stead, we have (could better be expected when precedence was to be settled by an abstract of reputation at any given period made, as in this case before us?) Roscommon, and Stepney, and Phillips, and Walsh, and Smith, and Duke, and King, and Spratt--Halifax, Granville, Sheffield, Congreve, Broome, and other reputed Magnates--metrical writers utterly worthless and useless, except for occasions like the present, when their productions are referred to as evidence what a small quantity of brain is necessary to procure a considerable stock of admiration, provided the aspirant will accommodate himself to the likings and fashions of his day.

As I do not mean to bring down this retrospect to our own times, it may with propriety be closed at the era of this distinguished event. From the literature of other ages and countries, proofs equally cogent might have been adduced, that the opinions announced in the former part of this Essay are founded upon truth. It was not an agreeable office, nor a prudent undertaking, to declare them; but their importance seemed to render it a duty. It may still be asked, where lies the particular relation of what has been said to these Volumes?--The question will be easily answered by the discerning
Reader who is old enough to remember the taste that prevailed when some of these poems were first published, seventeen years ago; who has also observed to what degree the poetry of this Island has since that period been coloured by them; and who is further aware of the unremitting hostility with which, upon some principle or other, they have each and all been opposed. A sketch of my own notion of the constitution of Fame has been given; and, as far as concerns myself, I have cause to be satisfied. The love, the admiration, the indifference, the slight, the aversion, and even the contempt, with which these Poems have been received, knowing, as I do, the source within my own mind, from which they have proceeded, and the labour and pains, which, when labour and pains appeared needful, have been bestowed upon them, must all, if I think consistently, be received as pledges and tokens, bearing the same general impression, though widely different in value;--they are all proofs that for the present time I have not laboured in vain; and afford assurances, more or less authentic, that the products of my industry will endure.

If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the fortunes and fate of poetical Works, it is this--that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time _original_, has had the task of _creating_ the taste by which he is to be enjoyed: so has it been, so will it continue to be. This remark was long since made to me by the philosophical Friend for the separation of whose poems from my own I have previously expressed my regret. The predecessors of an original Genius of a high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has
in common with them;—and much he will have in common; but, for what
is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to
shape his own road;—he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the
Alps.

And where lies the real difficulty of creating that taste by which a
truly original poet is to be relished? Is it in breaking the bonds
of custom, in overcoming the prejudices of false refinement, and
displacing the aversions of inexperience? Or, if he labour for an
object which here and elsewhere I have proposed to myself, does it
consist in divesting the reader of the pride that induces him to dwell
upon those points wherein men differ from each other, to the exclusion
of those in which all men are alike, or the same; and in making him
ashamed of the vanity that renders him insensible of the appropriate
excellence which civil arrangements, less unjust than might appear,
and Nature illimitable in her bounty, had conferred on men who may
stand below him in the scale of society? Finally, does it lie in
establishing that dominion over the spirits of readers by which they
are to be humbled and humanized, in order that they may be purified
and exalted?

If these ends are to be attained by the mere communication of
knowledge, it does not lie here.—TASTE, I would remind the
reader, like IMAGINATION, is a word which has been forced to extend
its services far beyond the point to which philosophy would have
confined them. It is a metaphor, taken from a passive sense of the
human body, and transferred to things which are in their essence
The word, Imagination, has been overstrained, from impulses honourable to mankind, to meet the demands of the faculty which is perhaps the noblest of our nature. In the instance of Taste, the process has been reversed; and from the prevalence of dispositions at once injurious and discreditable, being no other than that selfishness which is the child of apathy,—which, as Nations decline in productive and creative power, makes them value themselves upon a presumed refinement of judging. Poverty of language is the primary cause of the use which we make of the word, Imagination; but the word, Taste, has been stretched to the sense which it bears in modern Europe by habits of self-conceit, inducing that inversion in the order of things whereby a passive faculty is made paramount among the faculties conversant with the fine arts. Proportion and congruity, the requisite knowledge being supposed, are subjects upon which taste may be trusted; it is competent to this office—for in its intercourse with these the mind is _passive_, and is affected painfully or pleasurably as by an instinct. But the profound and the exquisite in feeling, the lofty and universal in thought and imagination; or, in ordinary language, the pathetic and the sublime;—are neither of them, accurately speaking, objects of a faculty which could ever without a sinking in the spirit of Nations have been designated by the metaphor _Taste_. And why? Because without the exertion of a co-operating _power_ in the mind of the reader, there can be no adequate sympathy with either of these emotions: without this auxiliary impulse, elevated or profound passion cannot exist.
Passion, it must be observed, is derived from a word which signifies _suffering_; but the connexion which suffering has with effort, with exertion, and _action_, is immediate and inseparable. How strikingly is this property of human nature exhibited by the fact that, in popular language, to be in a passion is to be angry! But,

Anger in hasty _words_ or _blows_

Itself discharges on its foes.

To be moved, then, by a passion is to be excited, often to external, and always to internal, effort; whether for the continuance and strengthening of the passion, or for its suppression, accordingly as the course which it takes may be painful or pleasurable. If the latter, the soul must contribute to its support, or it never becomes vivid.--and soon languishes and dies. And this brings us to the point. If every great poet with whose writings men are familiar, in the highest exercise of his genius, before he can be thoroughly enjoyed, has to call forth and to communicate _power_, this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original writer, at his first appearance in the world.--Of genius the only proof is, the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before: Of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit of human nature. Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce
effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance, or a
conquest, made by the soul of the poet? Is it to be supposed that
the reader can make progress of this kind, like an Indian prince or
general--stretched on his palanquin, and borne by his slaves? No;
he is invigorated and inspired by his leader, in order that he
may exert himself; for he cannot proceed in quiescence, he cannot be
carried like a dead weight. Therefore to create taste is to call forth
and bestow power, of which knowledge is the effect; and _there_ lies
the true difficulty.

As the pathetic participates of an _animal_ sensation, it might
seem--that, if the springs of this emotion were genuine, all men,
possessed of competent knowledge of the facts and circumstances, would
be instantaneously affected. And, doubtless, in the works of every
ture poet will be found passages of that species of excellence which
is proved by effects immediate and universal. But there are emotions
of the pathetic that are simple and direct, and others--that are
complex and revolutionary; some--to which the heart yields with
gentleness; others--against which it struggles with pride; these
varieties are infinite as the combinations of circumstance and the
constitutions of character. Remember, also, that the medium through
which, in poetry, the heart is to be affected, is language; a thing
subject to endless fluctuations and arbitrary associations. The genius
of the poet melts these down for his purpose; but they retain their
shape and quality to him who is not capable of exerting, within his
own mind, a corresponding energy. There is also a meditative, as well
as a human, pathos; an enthusiastic, as well as an ordinary, sorrow;
a sadness that has its seat in the depths of reason, to which the mind cannot sink gently of itself—but to which it must descend by treading the steps of thought. And for the sublime,—if we consider what are the cares that occupy the passing day, and how remote is the practice and the course of life from the sources of sublimity, in the soul of Man, can it be wondered that there is little existing preparation for a poet charged with a new mission to extend its kingdom, and to augment and spread its enjoyments?

Away, then, with the senseless iteration of the word _popular_, applied to new works in poetry, as if there were no test of excellence in this first of the fine arts but that all men should run after its productions, as if urged by an appetite, or constrained by a spell!—The qualities of writing best fitted for eager reception are either such as startle the world into attention by their audacity and extravagance; or they are chiefly of a superficial kind, lying upon the surfaces of manners; or arising out of a selection and arrangement of incidents, by which the mind is kept upon the stretch of curiosity, and the fancy amused without the trouble of thought. But in everything which is to send the soul into herself, to be admonished of her weakness, or to be made conscious of her power;—wherever life and nature are described as operated upon by the creative or abstracting virtue of the imagination; wherever the instinctive wisdom of antiquity and her heroic passions uniting, in the heart of the poet, with the meditative wisdom of later ages, have produced that accord of sublimated humanity which is at once a history of the remote past and a prophetic enunciation of the remotest future, _there_, the poet must
reconcile himself for a season to few and scattered hearers.--Grand
thoughts (and Shakespeare must often have sighed over this truth), as
they are most naturally and most fitly conceived in solitude, so
can they not be brought forth in the midst of plaudits without
some violation of their sanctity. Go to a silent exhibition of the
productions of the sister Art, and be convinced that the qualities
which dazzle at first sight, and kindle the admiration of the
multitude, are essentially different from those by which permanent
influence is secured. Let us not shrink from following up these
principles as far as they will carry us, and conclude with
observing--that there never has been a period, and perhaps never will
be, in which vicious poetry, of some kind or other, has not excited
more zealous admiration, and been far more generally read, than good;
but this advantage attends the good, that the _individual_, as well
as the species, survives from age to age; whereas, of the depraved,
though the species be immortal, the individual quickly _perishes_; the
object of present admiration vanishes, being supplanted by some other
as easily produced; which, though no better, brings with it at least
the irritation of novelty,—with adaptation, more or less skilful, to
the changing humours of the majority of those who are most at leisure
to regard poetical works when they first solicit their attention.

Is it the result of the whole, that, in the opinion of the Writer, the
judgement of the People is not to be respected? The thought is most
injurious; and, could the charge be brought against him, he would
repel it with indignation. The People have already been justified,
and their eulogium pronounced by implication, when it was said,
above--that, of good poetry, the individual, as well as the
species, survives. And how does it survive but through the People?
What preserves it but their intellect and their wisdom?

--Past and future, are the wings
On whose support, harmoniously conjoined,
Moves the great Spirit of human knowledge--
_MS_

The voice that issues from this Spirit is that Vox Populi which the
Deity inspires. Foolish must he be who can mistake for this a local
acclamation, or a transitory out-cry--transitory though it be for
years, local though from a Nation. Still more lamentable is his error
who can believe that there is anything of divine infallibility in
the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community, ever
governed by factitious influence, which, under the name of the PUBLIC,
passes itself, upon the unthinking, for the PEOPLE. Towards the
Public, the Writer hopes that he feels as much deference as it is
entitled to: but to the People, philosophically characterized, and to
the embodied spirit of their knowledge, so far as it exists and moves,
at the present, faithfully supported by its two wings, the past and
the future, his devout respect, his reverence, is due. He offers it
willingly and readily; and, this done, takes leave of his Readers,
by assuring them--that, if he were not persuaded that the contents
of these Volumes, and the Work to which they are subsidiary, evince
something of the 'Vision and the Faculty divine'; and that, both in
words and things, they will operate in their degree, to extend the
domain of sensibility for the delight, the honour, and the benefit of human nature, notwithstanding the many happy hours which he has employed in their composition, and the manifold comforts and enjoyments they have procured to him, he would not, if a wish could do it, save them from immediate destruction;--from becoming at this moment, to the world, as a thing that had never been.

[Footnote 5: The learned Hakewill (a third edition of whose book bears date 1635), writing to refute the error 'touching Nature's perpetual and universal decay,' cites triumphantly the names of Ariosto, Tasso, Bartas, and Spenser, as instances that poetic genius had not degenerated; but be makes no mention of Shakespeare.]

[Footnote 6: This flippant insensibility was publicly reprehended by Mr. Coleridge in a course of Lectures upon Poetry given by him at the Royal Institution. For the various merits of thought and language in Shakespeare's _Sonnets_, see Nos. 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 54, 64, 66, 68, 73, 76, 86, 91, 92, 93, 97, 98, 105, 107, 108, 109, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 129, and many others.]

[Footnote 7: Hughes is express upon this subject in his dedication of Spenser's Works to Lord Somers, he writes thus 'It was your Lordship's encouraging a beautiful edition of _Paradise Lost_ that first brought that incomparable Poem to be generally known and esteemed.]

[Footnote 8: This opinion seems actually to have been entertained by
Adam Smith, the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland,
a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced.]

[Footnote 9: CORTES, alone in a night-gown.]

All things are hush'd as Nature's self lay dead;
The mountains seem to nod their drowsy head.
The little Birds in dreams their songs repeat,
And sleeping Flowers beneath the Night-dew sweat:
Even Lust and Envy sleep; yet Love denies
Rest to my soul, and slumber to my eyes.

DRYDEN'S Indian Emperor.]

[Footnote 10: Since these observations upon Thomson were written, I
have perused the second edition of his Seasons, and find that even
that does not contain the most striking passages which Warton points
out for admiration, these, with other improvements, throughout the
whole work, must have been added at a later period.]

[Footnote 11: Shenstone, in his Schoolmistress, gives a still more
remarkable instance of this timidity On its first appearance (see
D'Israeli's 2d Series of the Curiosities of Literature) the Poem was
accompanied with an absurd prose commentary, showing, as indeed some
incongruous expressions in the text imply, that the whole was intended
for burlesque. In subsequent editions, the commentary was dropped, and
the People have since continued to read in seriousness, doing for the
Author what he had not courage openly to venture upon for himself.]

PREFACE TO CROMWELL

BY VICTOR HUGO. (1827)[A]

The drama contained in the following pages has nothing to commend
it to the attention or the good will of the public. It has not, to
attract the interest of political disputants, the advantage of the
veto of the official censorship, nor even, to win for it at the outset
the literary sympathy of men of taste, the honour of having been
formally rejected by an infallible reading committee.

It presents itself, therefore, to the public gaze, naked and
friendless, like the infirm man of the Gospel—_solus, pauper, nudus_.

Not without some hesitation, moreover, did the author determine to
burden his drama with a preface. Such things are usually of very
little interest to the reader. He inquires concerning the talent of
a writer rather than concerning his point of view; and in determining
whether a work is good or bad, it matters little to him upon what
ideas it is based, or in what sort of mind it germinated. One seldom
inspects the cellars of a house after visiting its salons, and when
one eats the fruit of a tree, one cares but little about its root.

On the other hand, notes and prefaces are sometimes a convenient method of adding to the weight of a book, and of magnifying, in appearance at least, the importance of a work; as a matter of tactics this is not dissimilar to that of the general who, to make his battle-front more imposing, puts everything, even his baggage-trains, in the line. And then, while critics fall foul of the preface and scholars of the notes, it may happen that the work itself will escape them, passing uninjured between their cross-fires, as an army extricates itself from a dangerous position between two skirmishes of outposts and rear-guards.

These reasons, weighty as they may seem, are not those which influenced the author. This volume did not need to be _inflated_, it was already too stout by far. Furthermore, and the author does not know why it is so, his prefaces, frank and ingenuous as they are, have always served rather to compromise him with the critics than to shield him. Far from being staunch and trusty bucklers, they have played him a trick like that played in a battle by an unusual and conspicuous uniform, which, calling attention to the soldier who wears it, attracts all the blows and is proof against none.

Considerations of an altogether different sort acted upon the author. It seemed to him that, although in fact, one seldom inspects the cellars of a building for pleasure, one is not sorry sometimes to
examine its foundations. He will, therefore, give himself over once more, with a preface, to the wrath of the _feuilletonists. Che sara, sara_. He has never given much thought to the fortune of his works, and he is but little appalled by dread of the literary _what will people say_. In the discussion now raging, in which the theatre and the schools, the public and the academies, are at daggers drawn, one will hear, perhaps, not without some interest, the voice of a solitary _apprentice_ of nature and truth, who has withdrawn betimes from the literary world, for pure love of letters, and who offers good faith in default of good taste, sincere conviction in default of talent, study in default of learning.

He will confine himself, however, to general considerations concerning the art, without the slightest attempt to smooth the path of his own work, without pretending to write an indictment or a plea, against or for any person whomsoever. An attack upon or defence of his book is of less importance to him than to anybody else. Nor is personal controversy agreeable to him. It is always a pitiful spectacle to see two hostile self-esteem crossing swords. He protests, therefore, beforehand against every interpretation of his ideas, every personal application of his words, saying with the Spanish fablist:--

Quien haga aplicaciones

Con su pan se lo coma.

In truth, several of the leading champions of "sound literary
doctrines” have done him the honour to throw the gauntlet to him, even in his profound obscurity--to him, a simple, imperceptible spectator of this curious contest He will not have the presumption to pick it up. In the following pages will be found the observations with which he might oppose them--there will be found his sling and his stone; but others, if they choose, may hurl them at the head of the classical Goliaths.

This said, let us pass on.

Let us set out from a fact. The same type of civilization, or to use a more exact, although more extended expression, the same society, has not always inhabited the earth. The human race as a whole has grown, has developed, has matured, like one of ourselves. It was once a child, it was once a man; we are now looking on at its impressive old age. Before the epoch which modern society has dubbed “ancient,” there was another epoch which the ancients called “fabulous,” but which it would be more accurate to call “primitive.” Behold then three great successive orders of things in civilization, from its origin down to our days. Now, as poetry is always superposed upon society, we propose to try to demonstrate, from the form of its society, what the character of the poetry must have been in those three great ages of the world--primitive times, ancient times, modern times.

In primitive times, when man awakes in a world that is newly created, poetry awakes with him. In the face of the marvellous things that
dazzle and intoxicate him, his first speech is a hymn simply. He is still so close to God that all his meditations are ecstatic, all his dreams are visions. His bosom swells, he sings as he breathes. His lyre has but three strings--God, the soul, creation; but this threefold mystery envelopes everything, this threefold idea embraces everything. The earth is still almost deserted. There are families, but no nations; patriarchs, but no kings. Each race exists at its own pleasure; no property, no laws, no contentions, no wars. Everything belongs to each and to all. Society is a community. Man is restrained in nought. He leads that nomadic pastoral life with which all civilizations begin, and which is so well adapted to solitary contemplation, to fanciful reverie. He follows every suggestion, he goes hither and thither, at random. His thought, like his life, resembles a cloud that changes its shape and its direction according to the wind that drives it. Such is the first man, such is the first poet. He is young, he is cynical. Prayer is his sole religion, the ode is his only form of poetry.

This ode, this poem of primitive times, is Genesis.

By slow degrees, however, this youth of the world passes away. All the spheres progress; the family becomes a tribe, the tribe becomes a nation. Each of these groups of men camps about a common centre, and kingdoms appear. The social instinct succeeds the nomadic instinct. The camp gives place to the city, the tent to the palace, the ark to the temple. The chiefs of these nascent states are still shepherds, it is true, but shepherds of nations; the pastoral staff has already
assumed the shape of a sceptre. Everything tends to become stationary
and fixed. Religion takes on a definite shape; prayer is governed by
rites; dogma sets bounds to worship. Thus the priest and king share
the paternity of the people; thus theocratic society succeeds the
patriarchal community.

Meanwhile the nations are beginning to be packed too closely on the
earth's surface. They annoy and jostle one another; hence the clash
of empires--war. They overflow upon another; hence, the migrations of
nations--voyages. Poetry reflects these momentous events; from ideas
it proceeds to things. It sings of ages, of nations, of empires. It
becomes epic, it gives birth to Homer.

Homer, in truth, dominates the society of ancient times. In that
society, all is simple, all is epic. Poetry is religion, religion is
law. The virginity of the earlier age is succeeded by the chastity
of the later. A sort of solemn gravity is everywhere noticeable, in
private manners no less than in public. The nations have retained
nothing of the wandering life of the earlier time, save respect
for the stranger and the traveller. The family has a fatherland;
everything is connected therewith; it has the cult of the house and
the cult of the tomb.

We say again, such a civilization can find its one expression only in
the epic. The epic will assume diverse forms, but will never lose its
specific character. Pindar is more priestlike than patriarchal, more
epic than lyrical. If the chroniclers, the necessary accompaniments of this second age of the world, set about collecting traditions and begin to reckon by centuries, they labour to no purpose--chronology cannot expel poesy; history remains an epic. Herodotus is a Homer.

But it is in the ancient tragedy, above all, that the epic breaks out at every turn. It mounts the Greek stage without losing aught, so to speak, of its immeasurable, gigantic proportions. Its characters are still heroes, demigods, gods; its themes are visions, oracles, fatality; its scenes are battles, funeral rites, catalogues. That which the rhapsodists formerly sang, the actors declaim--that is the whole difference.

There is something more. When the whole plot, the whole spectacle of the epic poem have passed to the stage, the Chorus takes all that remains. The Chorus annotates the tragedy, encourages the heroes, gives descriptions, summons and expels the daylight, rejoices, laments, sometimes furnishes the scenery, explains the moral bearing of the subject, flatters the listening assemblage. Now, what is the Chorus, this anomalous character standing between the spectacle and the spectator, if it be not the poet completing his epic?

The theatre of the ancients is, like their dramas, huge, pontifical, epic. It is capable of holding thirty thousand spectators; the plays are given in the open air, in bright sunlight; the performances last all day. The actors disguise their voices, wear masks, increase their
stature; they make themselves gigantic, like their roles. The stage is immense. It may represent at the same moment both the interior and the exterior of a temple, a palace, a camp, a city. Upon it, vast spectacles are displayed. There is--we cite only from memory--Prometheus on his mountain; there is Antigone, at the top of a tower, seeking her brother Polynices in the hostile army (_The Phoenicians_); there is Evadne hurling herself from a cliff into the flames where the body of Capaneus is burning (_The Suppliants_ of Euripides); there is a ship sailing into port and landing fifty princesses with their retinues (_The Suppliants_ of AEschylus). Architecture, poetry, everything assumes a monumental character. In all antiquity there is nothing more solemn, more majestic. Its history and its religion are mingled on its stage. Its first actors are priests; its scenic performances are religious ceremonies, national festivals.

One last observation, which completes our demonstration of the epic character of this epoch: in the subjects which it treats, no less than in the forms it adopts, tragedy simply re-echoes the epic. All the ancient tragic authors derive their plots from Homer. The same fabulous exploits, the same catastrophes, the same heroes. One and all drink from the Homeric stream. The Iliad and Odyssey are always in evidence. Like Achilles dragging Hector at his chariot-wheel, the Greek tragedy circles about Troy.

But the age of the epic draws near its end. Like the society that it represents, this form of poetry wears itself out revolving upon
itself. Rome reproduces Greece, Virgil copies Homer, and, as if to make a becoming end, epic poetry expires in the last parturition.

It was time. Another era is about to begin, for the world and for poetry.

A spiritual religion, supplanting the material and external paganism, makes its way to the heart of the ancient society, kills it, and deposits, in that corpse of a decrepit civilization, the germ of modern civilization. This religion as complete, because it is true; between its dogma and its cult, it embraces a deep-rooted moral. Arid first of all, as a fundamental truth, it teaches man that he has two lives to live, one ephemeral, the other immortal; one on earth, the other in heaven. It shows him that he, like his destiny, is twofold: that there is in him an animal and an intellect, a body and a soul; in a word, that he is the point of intersection, the common link of the two chains of beings which embrace all creation--of the chain of material beings and the chain of incorporeal beings; the first starting from the rock to arrive at man, the second starting from man to end at God.

A portion of these truths had perhaps been suspected by certain wise men of ancient times, but their full, broad, luminous revelation dates from the Gospels. The pagan schools walked in darkness, feeling their way, clinging to falsehoods as well as to truths in their haphazard journeying. Some of their philosophers occasionally cast upon certain
subjects feeble gleams which illuminated but one side and made the
darkness of the other side more profound. Hence all the phantoms
created by ancient philosophy. None but divine wisdom was capable of
substituting an even and all-embracing light for all those flickering
rays of human wisdom. Pythagoras, Epicurus, Socrates, Plato, are
torches: Christ is the glorious light of day.

Nothing could be more material, indeed, than the ancient theogony. Far
from proposing, as Christianity does, to separate the spirit from the
body, it ascribes form and features to everything, even to impalpable
essences, even to the intelligence. In it everything is visible,
tangible, fleshly. Its gods need a cloud to conceal themselves from
men's eyes. They eat, drink, and sleep. They are wounded and their
blood flows; they are maimed, and lo! they limp forever after. That
religion has gods and halves of gods. Its thunderbolts are forged on
an anvil, and among other things three rays of twisted rain (_tres
imbris torti radios_) enter into their composition. Its Jupiter
suspends the world by a golden chain; its sun rides in a four-horse
chariot; its hell is a precipice the brink of which is marked on the
globe; its heaven is a mountain.

Thus paganism, which moulded all creations from the same clay,
minimizes divinity and magnifies man. Homer's heroes are of almost the
same stature as his gods. Ajax defies Jupiter, Achilles is the peer
of Mars. Christianity on the contrary, as we have seen, draws a broad
line of division between spirit and matter. It places an abyss between
the soul and the body, an abyss between man and God.
At this point—to omit nothing from the sketch upon which we have ventured—we will call attention to the fact that, with Christianity, and by its means, there entered into the mind of the nations a new sentiment, unknown to the ancients and marvellously developed among moderns, a sentiment which is more than gravity and less than sadness—melancholy. In truth, might not the heart of man, hitherto deadened by religions purely hierarchical and sacerdotal, awake and feel springing to life within it some unexpected faculty, under the breath of a religion that is human because it is divine, a religion which makes of the poor man's prayer, the rich man's wealth, a religion of equality, liberty and charity? Might it not see all things in a new light, since the Gospel had shown it the soul through the senses, eternity behind life?

Moreover, at that very moment the world was undergoing so complete a revolution that it was impossible that there should not be a revolution in men's minds. Hitherto the catastrophes of empires had rarely reached the hearts of the people; it was kings who fell, majesties that vanished, nothing more. The lightning struck only in the upper regions, and, as we have already pointed out, events seemed to succeed one another with all the solemnity of the epic. In the ancient society, the individual occupied so lowly a place that, to strike him, adversity must needs descend to his family. So that he knew little of misfortune outside of domestic sorrows. It was an almost unheard of thing that the general disasters of the state should disarrange his life. But the instant that Christian society became
firmly established, the ancient continent was thrown into confusion. Everything was pulled up by the roots. Events, destined to destroy ancient Europe and to construct a new Europe, trod upon one another's heels in their ceaseless rush, and drove the nations pell-mell, some into the light, others into darkness. So much uproar ensued that it was impossible that some echoes of it should not reach the hearts of the people. It was more than an echo, it was a reflex blow. Man, withdrawing within himself in presence of these imposing vicissitudes, began to take pity upon mankind, to reflect upon the bitter disillusionments of life. Of this sentiment, which to Cato the heathen was despair, Christianity fashioned melancholy.

At the same time was born the spirit of scrutiny and curiosity. These great catastrophes were also great spectacles, impressive cataclysms. It was the North hurling itself upon the South; the Roman world changing shape; the last convulsive throes of a whole universe in the death agony. As soon as that world was dead, lo! clouds of rhetoricians, grammarians, sophists, swooped down like insects on its immense body. People saw them swarming and heard them buzzing in that seat of putrefaction. They vied with one another in scrutinizing, commenting, disputing. Each limb, each muscle, each fibre of the huge prostrate body was twisted and turned in every direction. Surely it must have been a keen satisfaction to those anatomists of the mind, to be able, at their debut, to make experiments on a large scale; to have a dead society to dissect, for their first "subject."

Thus we see melancholy and meditation, the demons of analysis and
controversy, appear at the same moment, and, as it were, hand-in-hand.

At one extremity of this era of transition is Longinus, at the other

St. Augustine. We must beware of casting a disdainful eye upon that
epoch wherein all that has since borne fruit was contained in germs;
upon that epoch whose least eminent writers, if we may be pardoned a
vulgar but expressive phrase, made fertilizer for the harvest that was
to follow. The Middle Ages were grafted on the Lower Empire.

Behold, then, a new religion, a new society; upon this twofold
foundation there must inevitably spring up a new poetry. Previously---
we beg pardon for setting forth a result which the reader has probably
already foreseen from what has been said above--previously, following
therein the course pursued by the ancient polytheism and philosophy,
the purely epic muse of the ancients had studied nature in only a
single aspect, casting aside without pity almost everything in art
which, in the world subjected to its imitation, had not relation to a
certain, type of beauty. A type which was magnificent at first, but,
as always happens with everything systematic, became in later times
false, trivial and conventional. Christianity leads poetry to the
truth. Like it, the modern muse will see things in a higher and
broader light. It will realize that everything in creation is not
humanly _beautiful_, that the ugly exists beside the beautiful, the
unshapely beside the graceful, the grotesque on the reverse of the
sublime, evil with good, darkness with light. It will ask itself if
the narrow and relative sense of the artist should prevail over the
infinite, absolute sense of the Creator; if it is for man to correct
God; if a mutilated nature will be the more beautiful for the
mutilation; if art has the right to duplicate, so to speak, man, life, creation; if things will progress better when their muscles and their vigour have been taken from them; if, in short, to be incomplete is the best way to be harmonious. Then it is that, with its eyes fixed upon events that are both laughable and redoubtable, and under the influence of that spirit of Christian melancholy and philosophical criticism which we described a moment ago, poetry will take a great step, a decisive step, a step which, like the upheaval of an earthquake, will change the whole face of the intellectual world. It will set about doing as nature does, mingling in its creations—but without confounding them—darkness and light, the grotesque and the sublime; in other words, the body and the soul, the beast and the intellect; for the starting-point of religion is always the starting-point of poetry. All things are connected.

Thus, then, we see a principle unknown to the ancients, a new type, introduced in poetry; and as an additional element in anything modifies the whole of the thing, a new form of the art is developed. This type is the grotesque; its new form is comedy.

And we beg leave to dwell upon this point; for we have now indicated the significant feature, the fundamental difference which, in our opinion, separates modern from ancient art, the present form from the defunct form; or, to use less definite but more popular terms, _romantic_ literature from _classical_ literature.
"At last!" exclaim the people who for some time past have seen what we were coming at, "at last we have you—you are caught in the act. So then you put forward the ugly as a type for imitation, you make the grotesque an element of art. But the graces; but good taste! Don't you know that art should correct nature? that we must ennoble art? that we must select? Did the ancients ever exhibit the ugly or the grotesque? Did they ever mingle comedy and tragedy? The example of the ancients, gentlemen! And Aristotle, too, and Boileau, and La Haipe Upon my word!"

These arguments are sound, doubtless, and, above all, of extraordinary novelty. But it is not our place to reply to them. We are constructing no system here—God protect us from systems! We are stating a fact. We are a historian, not a critic. Whether the fact is agreeable or not matters little, it is a fact. Let us resume, therefore, and try to prove that it is of the fruitful union of the grotesque and the sublime types that modern genius is born—so complex, so diverse in its forms, so inexhaustible in its creations, and therein directly opposed to the uniform simplicity of the genius of the ancients, let us show that that is the point from which we must set out to establish the real and radical difference between the two forms of literature.

Not that it is strictly true that comedy and the grotesque were entirely unknown to the ancients. In fact, such a thing would be impossible. Nothing grows without a root, the germ of the second epoch always exists in the first. In the Iliad Thersites and Vulcan furnish comedy, one to the mortals, the other to the gods. There is too much
nature and originality in the Greek tragedy for there not to be an occasional touch of comedy in it. For example, to cite only what we happen to recall, the scene between Menelaus and the portress of the palace. *(Helen*, Act I), and the scene of the Phrygian *(Orestes*, Act IV) The Tritons, the Satyrs, the Cyclops are grotesque, Polyphemus is a terrifying, Silenus a farcical grotesque.

But one feels that this part of the art is still in its infancy. The epic, which at this period imposes its form on everything, the epic weighs heavily upon it and stifles it. The ancient grotesque is timid and forever trying to keep out of sight. It is plain that it is not on familiar ground, because it is not in its natural surroundings. It conceals itself as much as it can. The Satyrs, the Tritons, and the Sirens are hardly abnormal in form. The Fates and the Harpies are hideous in their attributes rather than in feature; the Furies are beautiful, and are called _Eumenides_, that is to say, _gentle, beneficent_. There is a veil of grandeur or of divinity over other grotesques. Polyphemus is a giant, Midas a king, Silenus a god.

Thus comedy is almost imperceptible in the great epic _ensemble_ of ancient times. What is the barrow of Thespis beside the Olympian chariots? What are Aristophanes and Plautus, beside the Homeric colossi, AESchylus, Sophocles, Euripides? Homer bears them along with him, as Hercules bore the pygmies, hidden in his lion's skin!

In the idea of men of modern times, however, the grotesque plays an
enormous part. It is found everywhere; on the one hand it creates the abnormal and the horrible, on the other the comic and the burlesque. It fastens upon religion a thousand original superstitions, upon poetry a thousand picturesque fancies. It is the grotesque which scatters lavishly, in air, water, earth, fire, those myriads of intermediary creatures which we find all alive in the popular traditions of the Middle Ages; it is the grotesque which impels the ghastly antics of the witches' revels, which gives Satan his horns, his cloven foot and his bat's wings. It is the grotesque, still the grotesque, which now casts into the Christian hell the frightful faces which the severe genius of Dante and Milton will evoke, and again peoples it with those laughter-moving figures amid which Callot, the burlesque Michelangelo, will disport himself. If it passes from the world of imagination to the real world, it unfolds an inexhaustible supply of parodies of mankind. Creations of its fantasy are the Scaramouches, Crispins and Harlequins, grinning silhouettes of man, types altogether unknown to serious-minded antiquity, although they originated in classic Italy. It is the grotesque, lastly, which, colouring the same drama with the fancies of the North and of the South in turn, exhibits Sganarelle capering about Don Juan and Mephistopheles crawling about Faust.

And how free and open it is in its bearing! how boldly it brings into relief all the strange forms which the preceding age had timidly wrapped in swaddling-clothes! Ancient poetry, compelled to provide the lame Vulcan with companions, tried to disguise their deformity by distributing it, so to speak, upon gigantic proportions. Modern genius
retains this myth of the supernatural smiths, but gives it an entirely
different character and one which makes it even more striking; it
changes the giants to dwarfs and makes gnomes of the Cyclops. With
like originality, it substitutes for the somewhat commonplace Lernaean
hydra all the local dragons of our national legends--the gargoyle of
Rouen, the _gra-ouilli_ of Metz, the _chair sallee_ of Troyes, the
_dree_ of Montlhery, the _tarasque_ of Tarascon--monsters of forms so
diverse, whose outlandish names are an additional attribute. All these
creations draw from their own nature that energetic and significant
expression before which antiquity seems sometimes to have recoiled.
Certain it is that the Greek Eumenides are much less horrible, and
consequently less _true_, than the witches in _Macbeth_. Pluto is not the devil.

In our opinion a most novel book might be written upon the employment
of the grotesque in the arts. One might point out the powerful
effects the moderns have obtained from that fruitful type, upon which
narrow-minded criticism continues to wage war even in our own day.
It may be that we shall be led by our subject to call attention in
passing to some features of this vast picture. We will simply say here
that, as a means of contrast with the sublime, the grotesque is, in
our view, the richest source that nature can offer art. Rubens so
understood it, doubtless, when it pleased him to introduce the hideous
features of a court dwarf amid his exhibitions of royal magnificence,
coronations and splendid ceremonial. The universal beauty which the
ancestors solemnly laid upon everything, is not without monotony; the
same impression repeated again and again may prove fatiguing at last.
Sublime upon sublime scarcely presents a contrast, and we need a little rest from everything, even the beautiful. On the other hand, the grotesque seems to be a halting-place, a mean term, a starting-point whence one rises toward the beautiful with a fresher and keener perception. The salamander gives relief to the water-sprite; the gnome heightens the charm of the sylph.

And it would be true also to say that contact with the abnormal has imparted to the modern sublime a something purer, grander, more sublime, in short, than the beautiful of the ancients; and that is as it should be. When art is consistent with itself, it guides everything more surely to its goal. If the Homeric Elysium is a long, long way from the ethereal charm, the angelic pleasureableness of Milton's Paradise, it is because under Eden there is a hell far more terrible than the heathen Tartarus. Do you think that Francesca da Rimini and Beatrice would be so enchanting in a poet who should not confine us in the Tower of Hunger and compel us to share Ugolino's revolting repast? Dante would have less charm, if he had less power. Have the fleshly naiads, the muscular Tritons, the wanton Zephyrs, the diaphanous transparency of our water-sprites and sylphs? Is it not because the modern imagination does not fear to picture the ghastly forms of vampires, ogres, ghouls, snake-charmers and jinns prowling about graveyards, that it can give to its fairies that incorporeal shape, that purity of essence, of which the heathen nymphs fall so far short? The antique Venus is beautiful, admirable, no doubt; but what has imparted to Jean Goujon's faces that weird, tender, ethereal delicacy? What has given them that unfamiliar suggestion of life and grandeur,
if not the proximity of the rough and powerful sculptures of the
Middle Ages?

If the thread of our argument has not been broken in the reader's mind
by these necessary digressions---which in truth, might be developed
much further--he has realized, doubtless, how powerfully the
grotesque--that germ of comedy, fostered by the modern muse--grew in
extent and importance as soon as it was transplanted to a soil more
propitious than paganism and the Epic. In truth, in the new poetry,
while the sublime represents the soul as it is, purified by Christian
morality, the grotesque plays the part of the human beast. The former
type, delivered of all impure alloy, has as its attributes all the
charms, all the graces, all the beauties; it must be able some day
to create Juliet, Desdemona, Ophelia. The latter assumes all the
absurdities, all the infirmities, all the blemishes. In this partition
of mankind and of creation, to it fall the passions, vices, crimes;
it is sensuous, fawning, greedy, miserly, false, incoherent,
hypocritical; it is, in turn, Iago, Tartuffe, Basile, Polonius,
Harpagon, Bartholo, Falstaff, Scapin, Figaro. The beautiful has but
one type, the ugly has a thousand. The fact is that the beautiful,
humanly speaking, is merely form considered in its simplest aspect
in its most perfect symmetry, in its most entire harmony with our
make-up. Thus the _ensemble_ that it offers us is always complete, but
restricted like ourselves. What we call the ugly, on the contrary, is
a detail of a great whole which eludes us, and which is in harmony,
not with man but with all creation. That is why it constantly presents
itself to us in new but incomplete aspects.
It is interesting to study the first appearance and the progress of the grotesque in modern times. At first, it is an invasion, an irruption, an overflow, as of a torrent that has burst its banks. It rushes through the expiring Latin literature, imparts some coloring to Persius, Petronius and Juvenal, and leaves behind it the _Golden Ass_ of Apuleius. Thence it diffuses itself through the imaginations of the new nations that are remodelling Europe. It abounds in the work of the fabulists, the chroniclers, the romancists. We see it make its way from the South to the North. It disports itself in the dreams of the Teutonic nations, and at the same time vivifies with its breath the admirable Spanish _romanceros_, a veritable Iliad of the age of chivalry. For example, it is the grotesque which describes thus, in the _Roman de la Rose_, an august ceremonial, the election of a king:

"A long-shanked knave they chose, I wis,
Of all their men the boniest."

More especially it imposes its characteristic qualities upon that wonderful architecture which, in the Middle Ages, takes the place of all the arts. It affixes its mark on the facades of cathedrals, frames its hells and purgatories in the ogive arches of great doorways, portrays them in brilliant hues on window-glass, exhibits its monsters, its bull-dogs, its imps about capitals, along friezes, on the edges of roofs. It flaunts itself in numberless shapes on the
wooden facades of houses, on the stone facades of chateaux, on the marble facades of palaces. From the arts it makes its way into the national manners, and while it stirs applause from the people for the _graciosos_ of comedy, it gives to the kings court-jesters. Later, in the age of etiquette, it will show us Scarron on the very edge of Louis the Fourteenth's bed. Meanwhile it decorates coats of-arms, and draws upon knight, shields the symbolic hieroglyphs of feudalism. From the manners, it makes its way into the laws, numberless strange customs at test its passage through the institutions of the Middle Ages. Just as it represented Thespis, smeared with wine-lees, leaping in her tomb it dances with the _Basoche_ on the famous marble table which served at the same time as a stage for the popular farces and for the royal banquets. Finally, having made its way into the arts, the manners, and the laws, it enters even the Church. In every Catholic city we see it organizing some one of those curious ceremonies, those strange processions, wherein religion is attended by all varieties of superstition--the sublime attended by all the forms of the grotesque. To paint it in one stroke, so great is its vigour, its energy, its creative sap, at the dawn of letters, that it casts, at the outset, upon the threshold of modern poetry, three burlesque Homers: Ariosto in Italy, Cervantes in Spain, Rabelais in France.

It would be mere surplusage to dwell further upon the influence of the grotesque in the third civilization. Every thing tends to show its close creative alliance with the beautiful in the so called "romantic" period. Even among the simplest popular legends there are none which do not somewhere, with an admirable instinct, solve this mystery of
modern art. Antiquity could not have produced _Beauty and the Beast_.

It is true that at the period at which we have arrived the predominance of the grotesque over the sublime in literature is clearly indicated. But it is a spasm of reaction, an eager thirst for novelty, which is but temporary, it is an initial wave which gradually recedes. The type of the beautiful will soon resume its rights and its role, which is not to exclude the other principle, but to prevail over it. It is time that the grotesque should be content with a corner of the picture in Murillo's loyal frescoes, in the sacred pages of Veronese, content to be introduced in two marvellous _Last Judgments_, in which art will take a just pride, in the scene of fascination and horror with which Michelangelo will embellish the Vatican, in those awe-inspiring represervations of the fall of man which Rubens will throw upon the arches of the Cathedral of Antwerp. The time has come when the balance between the two principles is to be established. A man, a poet-king, _poeta soverano_, as Dante calls Homer, is about to adjust everything. The two rival genii combine their flames, and thence issues Shakespeare.

We have now reached the poetic culmination of modern times. Shakespeare is the drama; and the drama, which with the same breath moulds the grotesque and the sublime, the terrible and the absurd, tragedy and comedy--the drama is the distinguishing characteristic of the third epoch of poetry, of the literature of the present day.
Thus, to sum up hurriedly the facts that we have noted thus far, poetry has three periods, each of which corresponds to an epoch of civilization: the ode, the epic, and the drama. Primitive times are lyrical, ancient times epical, modern times dramatic. The ode sings of eternity, the epic imparts solemnity to history, the drama depicts life. The characteristic of the first poetry is ingenuousness, of the second, simplicity, of the third, truth. The rhapsodists mark the transition from the lyric to the epic poets, as do the romancists that from the lyric to the dramatic poets. Historians appear in the second period, chroniclers and critics in the third. The characters of the ode are colossi--Adam, Cain, Noah; those of the epic are giants--Achilles, Atreus, Orestes; those of the drama are men--Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello. The ode lives upon the ideal, the epic upon the grandiose, the drama upon the real. Lastly, this threefold poetry flows from three great sources--The Bible, Homer, Shakespeare.

Such then--and we confine ourselves herein to noting a single result--such are the diverse aspects of thought in the different epochs of mankind and of civilization. Such are its three faces, in youth, in manhood, in old age. Whether one examines one literature by itself or all literatures _en masse,_ one will always reach the same result: the lyric poets before the epic poets, the epic poets before the dramatic poets. In France, Malherbe before Chapelain, Chapelain before Corneille; in ancient Greece, Orpheus before Homer, Homer before AEschylus; in the first of all books, _Genesis_ before _Kings, Kings_ before _Job_; or to come back to that monumental scale of all ages of poetry, which we ran over a moment since, The Bible before the
In a word, civilization begins by singing of its dreams, then narrates its doings, and, lastly, sets about describing what it thinks. It is, let us say in passing, because of this last, that the drama, combining the most opposed qualities, may be at the same time full of profundity and full of relief, philosophical and picturesque.

It would be logical to add here that everything in nature and in life passes through these three phases, the lyric, the epic, and the dramatic, because everything is born, acts, and dies. If it were not absurd to confound the fantastic conceits of the imagination with the stern deductions of the reasoning faculty, a poet might say that the rising of the sun, for example, is a hymn, noon-day a brilliant epic, and sunset a gloomy drama wherein day and night, life and death, contend for mastery. But that would be poetry--folly, perhaps--- and _what does it prove_?

Let us hold to the facts marshalled above; let us supplement them, too, by an important observation, namely that we have in no wise pretended to assign exclusive limits to the three epochs of poetry, but simply to set forth their predominant characteristics. The Bible, that divine lyric monument, contains in germ, as we suggested a moment ago, an epic and a drama--_Kings_ and _Job_. In the Homeric poems one is conscious of a clinging reminiscence of lyric poetry and of a beginning of dramatic poetry. Ode and drama meet in the epic. There is
a touch of all in each; but in each there exists a generative element to which all the other elements give place, and which imposes its own character upon the whole.

The drama is complete poetry. The ode and the epic contain it only in germ; it contains both of them in a state of high development, and epitomizes both. Surely, he who said: “The French have not the epic brain,” said a true and clever thing; if he had said, “The moderns,” the clever remark would have been profound. It is beyond question, however, that there is epic genius in that marvellous _Athalie,_ so exalted and so simple in its sublimity that the royal century was unable to comprehend it. It is certain, too, that the series of Shakespeare's chronicle dramas presents a grand epic aspect. But it is lyric poetry above all that befits the drama; it never embarrasses it, adapts itself to all its caprices, disports itself in all forms, sometimes sublime as in Ariel, sometimes grotesque as in Caliban. Our era being above all else dramatic, is for that very reason eminently lyric. There is more than one connection between the beginning and the end; the sunset has some features of the sunrise; the old man becomes a child once more. But this second childhood is not like the first; it is as melancholy as the other is joyous. It is the same with lyric poetry. Dazzling, dreamy, at the dawn of civilization it reappears, solemn and pensive, at its decline. The Bible opens joyously with _Genesis_ and comes to a close with the threatening _Apocalypse_. The modern ode is still inspired, but is no longer ignorant. It meditates more than it scrutinizes; its musing is melancholy. We see, by its painful labour, that the muse has taken the drama for her mate.
To make clear by a metaphor the ideas that we have ventured to put forth, we will compare early lyric poetry to a placid lake which reflects the clouds and stars; the epic is the stream which flows from the lake, and rushes on, reflecting its banks, forests, fields and cities, until it throws itself into the ocean of the drama. Like the lake, the drama reflects the sky; like the stream, it reflects its banks; but it alone has tempests and measureless depths.

The drama, then, is the goal to which everything in modern poetry leads. _Paradise Lost_ is a drama before it is an epic. As we know, it first presented itself to the poet's imagination in the first of these forms, and as a drama it always remains in the reader's memory, so prominent is the old dramatic framework still beneath Milton's epic structure! When Dante had finished his terrible _Inferno_, when he had closed its doors and nought remained save to give his work a name, the unerring instinct of his genius showed him that that multiform poem was an emanation of the drama, not of the epic; and on the front of that gigantic monument, he wrote with his pen of bronze: _Divina Commedia._

Thus we see that the only two poets of modern times who are of Shakespeare's stature follow him in unity of design. They coincide with him in imparting a dramatic tinge to all our poetry, like him, they blend the grotesque with the sublime, and, far from standing by themselves in the great literary _ensemble_ that rests upon
Shakespeare, Dante and Milton are, in some sort, the two supporting
abutments of the edifice of which he is the central pillar, the
buttresses of the arch of which he is the keystone.

Permit us, at this point, to recur to certain ideas already suggested,
which, however, it is necessary to emphasize. We have arrived, and now
we must set out again.

On the day when Christianity said to man "Thou art twofold, thou art
made up of two beings, one perishable, the other immortal, one carnal,
the other ethereal, one enslaved by appetites, cravings and passions,
the other borne aloft on the wings of enthusiasm and reverie--in a
word, the one always stooping toward the earth, its mother, the other
always darting up toward heaven, its fatherland"--on that day the
drama was created. Is it in truth, anything other than that contrast
of every day, that struggle of every moment, between two opposing
principles which are ever face to face in life, and which dispute
possession of man from the cradle to the tomb?

The poetry born of Christianity, the poetry of our time, is,
therefore, the drama, the real results from the wholly natural
combination of two types, the sublime and the grotesque, which meet
in the drama, as they meet in life and in creation. For true poetry,
complete poetry, consists in the harmony of contraries. Hence, it is
time to say aloud--and it is here above all that exceptions prove the
rule--that everything that exists in nature exists in art.
On taking one's stand at this point of view, to pass judgment on
our petty conventional rules, to disentangle all those scholastic
labyrinths, to solve all those trivial problems which the critics of
the last two centuries have laboriously built up about the art, one is
struck by the promptitude with which the question of the modern stage
is made clear and distinct. The drama has but to take a step to
break all the spider's webs with which the militia of Lilliput have
attempted to fetter its sleep.

And so, let addle-pated pedants (one does not exclude the other) claim
that the deformed, the ugly, the grotesque should never be imitated
in art; one replies that the grotesque is comedy, and that comedy
apparently makes a part of art. Tartuffe is not handsome, Pourceaugnac
is not noble, but Pourceaugnac and Tartuffe are admirable flashes of
art.

If, driven back from this entrenchment to their second line of
custom-houses, they renew their prohibition of the grotesque coupled
with the sublime, of comedy melted into tragedy, we prove to them
that, in the poetry of Christian nations, the first of these two types
represents the human beast, the second the soul. These two stalks of
art, if we prevent their branches from mingling, if we persistently
separate them, will produce by way of fruit, on the one hand abstract
vices and absurdities, on the other, abstract crime, heroism and
virtue. The two types, thus isolated and left to themselves, will go
each its own way, leaving the real between them, at the left hand of
one, at the right hand of the other. Whence it follows that after
all these abstractions there will remain something to represent--man;
after these tragedies and comedies, something to create--the drama.

In the drama, as it may be conceived at least, if not executed, all
things are connected and follow one another as in real life. The
body plays its part no less than the mind; and men and events, set
in motion by this twofold agent, pass across the stage, burlesque and
terrible in turn, and sometimes both at once. Thus the judge will say:
"Off with his head and let us go to dinner!" Thus the Roman Senate
will deliberate over Domitian's turbot. Thus Socrates, drinking the
hemlock and discoursing on the immortal soul and the only God,
will interrupt himself to suggest that a cook be sacrificed to
_AEsculapius_. Thus Elizabeth will swear and talk Latin. Thus Richelieu
will submit to Joseph the Capuchin, and Louis XI to his barber, Maitre
Olivier le Diable. Thus Cromwell will say: "I have Parliament in my
bag and the King in my pocket"; or, with the hand that signed the
death sentence of Charles the First, smear with ink the face of a
regicide who smilingly returns the compliment. Thus Caesar, in his
triumphal car, will be afraid of overturning. For men of genius,
however great they be, have always within them a touch of the beast
which mocks at their intelligence. Therein they are akin to mankind
in general, for therein they are dramatic. "It is but a step from the
sublime to the ridiculous," said Napoleon, when he was convinced that
he was mere man; and that outburst of a soul on fire illumines art and
history at once; that cry of anguish is the resume of the drama and of
It is a striking fact that all these contrasts are met with in the poets themselves, taken as men. By dint of meditating upon existence, of laying stress upon its bitter irony, of pouring floods of sarcasm and raillery upon our infirmities, the very men who make us laugh so heartily become profoundly sad. These Democrituses are Heraclituses as well. Beaumarchais was surly, Moliere gloomy, Shakespeare melancholy.

The fact is, then, that the grotesque is one of the supreme beauties of the drama. It is not simply an appropriate element of it, but is oftentimes a necessity. Sometimes it appears in homogeneous masses, in entire characters, as Daudin, Prusias, Trissotin, Brid'oison, Juliet's nurse; sometimes impregnated with terror, as Richard III, Begears, Tartuffe, Mephistopheles; sometimes, too, with a veil of grace and refinement, as Figaro, Osric, Mercutio, Don Juan. It finds its way in everywhere; for just as the most commonplace have their occasional moments of sublimity, so the most exalted frequently pay tribute to the trivial and ridiculous. Thus, often impalpable, often imperceptible, it is always present on the stage, even when it says nothing, even when it keeps out of sight. Thanks to it, there is no thought of monotony. Sometimes it injects laughter, sometimes horror, into tragedy. It will bring Romeo face to face with the apothecary, Macbeth with the witches, Hamlet with the grave-diggers. Sometimes it may, without discord, as in the scene between King Lear and his jester, mingle its shrill voice with the most sublime, the most dismal, the dreamiest music of the soul.
That is what Shakespeare alone among all has succeeded in doing, in a fashion of his own, which it would be no less fruitless than impossible to imitate--Shakespeare, the god of the stage, in whom, as in a trinity, the three characteristic geniuses of our stage, Corneille, Molière, Beaumarchais, seem united.

We see how quickly the arbitrary distinction between the species of poetry vanishes before common sense and taste. No less easily one might demolish the alleged rule of the two unities. We say _two_ and not _three_ unities, because unity of plot or of _ensemble_, the only true and well founded one, was long ago removed from the sphere of discussion.

Distinguished contemporaries, foreigners and Frenchmen, have already attacked, both in theory and in practice that fundamental law of the pseudo-Aristotelian code. Indeed, the combat was not likely to be a long one. At the first blow it cracked, so worm eaten was that timber of the old scholastic hovel!

The strange thing is that the slaves of routine pretend to rest their rule of the two unities on probability, whereas reality is the very thing that destroys it. Indeed, what could be more improbable and absurd than this porch or peristyle or ante-chamber--vulgar places where our tragedies are obliging enough to develop themselves; whither conspirators come, no one knows whence, to declaim against the tyrant,
and the tyrant to declaim against the conspirators, each in turn, as
if they had said to one another in bucolic phrase--

Alternis cantemus, amant alterna Camenae.

Where did anyone ever see a porch or peristyle of that sort?
What could be more opposed--we will not say to the truth, for the
scholastics hold it very cheap, but to probability? The result is that
everything that is too characteristic, too intimate, too local, to
happen in the ante chamber or on the street-corner--that is to say,
the whole drama--takes place in the wings. We see on the stage only
the elbows of the plot, so to speak; its hands are somewhere
else. Instead of scenes we have narrative, instead of tableaux,
descriptions. Solemn-faced characters, placed, as in the old chorus,
between the drama and ourselves, tell us what is going on in the
temple, in the palace, on the public square, until we are tempted many
a time to call out to them: "Indeed! then take us there! It must be
very entertaining--a fine sight!" To which they would reply no doubt:
"It is quite possible that it might entertain or interest you, but
that isn't the question; we are the guardians of the dignity of the
French Melpomene." And there you are!

"But," someone will say, "this rule that you discard is borrowed from
the Greek drama." Wherein, pray, do the Greek stage and drama resemble
our stage and drama? Moreover, we have already shown that the vast
extent of the ancient stage enabled it to include a whole locality,
so that the poet could, according to the exigencies of the plot,
transport it at his pleasure from one part of the stage to another,
which is practically equivalent to a change of stage-setting. Curious
contradiction! the Greek theatre, restricted as it was to a national
and religious object, was much more free than ours, whose only
object is the enjoyment, and, if you please, the instruction, of the
spectator. The reason is that the one obeys only the laws that
are suited to it, while the other takes upon itself conditions
of existence which are absolutely foreign to its essence. One is
artistic, the other artificial.

People are beginning to understand in our day that exact localization
is one of the first elements of reality. The speaking or acting
characters are not the only ones who engrave on the minds of the
spectators a faithful representation of the facts. The place where
this or that catastrophe took place becomes a terrible and inseparable
witness thereof; and the absence of silent characters of this sort
would make the greatest scenes of history incomplete in the drama.
Would the poet dare to murder Rizzio elsewhere than in Mary Stuart's
chamber? to stab Henri IV elsewhere than in Rue de la Ferronerie, all
blocked with drays and carriages? to burn Jeanne d'Arc elsewhere than
in the Vieux-Marche? to despatch the Duc de Guise elsewhere than in
that chateau of Blois where his ambition roused a popular assemblage
to frenzy? to behead Charles I and Louis XVI elsewhere than in those
ill-omened localities whence Whitehall or the Tuileries may be seen,
as if their scaffolds were appurtenances of their palaces?
Unity of time rests on no firmer foundation than unity of place. A plot forcibly confined within twenty-four hours is as absurd as one confined within a peristyle. Every plot has its proper duration as well as its appropriate place. Think of administering the same dose of time to all events! of applying the same measure to everything! You would laugh at a cobbler who should attempt to put the same shoe on every foot. To cross unity of time and unity of place like the bars of a cage, and pedantically to introduce therein, in the name of Aristotle, all the deeds, all the nations, all the figures which Providence sets before us in such vast numbers in real life,—to proceed thus is to mutilate men and things, to cause history to make wry faces. Let us say, rather, that everything will die in the operation, and so the dogmatic mutilators reach their ordinary result: what was alive in the chronicles is dead in tragedy. That is why the cage of the unities often contains only a skeleton.

And then, if twenty-four hours can be comprised in two, it is a logical consequence that four hours may contain forty-eight. Thus Shakespeare's unity must be different from Corneille's. 'Tis pity!

But these are the wretched quibbles with which mediocrity, envy and routine has pestered genius for two centuries past! By such means the flight of our greatest poets has been cut short. Their wings have been clipped with the scissors of the unities. And what has been given us in exchange for the eagle feathers stolen from Corneille and Racine? Campistron.
We imagine that someone may say: "There is something in too frequent changes of scene which confuses and fatigues the spectator, and which produces a bewildering effect on his attention; it may be, too, that manifold transitions from place to place, from one time to another time, demand explanations which repel the attention; one should also avoid leaving, in the midst of a plot, gaps which prevent the different parts of the drama from adhering closely to one another, and which, moreover, puzzle the spectator because he does not know what there may be in those gaps." But these are precisely the difficulties which art has to meet. These are some of the obstacles peculiar to one subject or another, as to which it would be impossible to pass judgment once for all. It is for genius to overcome, not for treatises or poetry to evade them.

A final argument, taken from the very bowels of the art, would of itself suffice to show the absurdity of the rule of the two unities. It is the existence of the third unity, unity of plot--the only one that is universally admitted, because it results from a fact: neither the human eye nor the human mind can grasp more than one _ensemble_ at one time. This one is as essential as the other two are useless. It is the one which fixes the view-point of the drama; now, by that very fact, it excludes the other two. There can no more be three unities in the drama than three horizons in a picture. But let us be careful not to confound unity with simplicity of plot. The former does not in any way exclude the secondary plots on which the principal plot may depend. It is necessary only that these parts, being skilfully
subordinated to the general plan, shall tend constantly toward the central plot and group themselves about it at the various stages, or rather on the various levels of the drama. Unity of plot is the stage law of perspective.

"But," the customs-officers of thought will cry, "great geniuses have submitted to these rules which you spurn!" Unfortunately, yes. But what would those admirable men have done if they had been left to themselves? At all events they did not accept your chains without a struggle. You should have seen how Pierre Corneille, worried and harassed at his first step in the art on account of his marvellous work, _Le Cid_, struggled under Mairet, Claveret, d'Aubignac and Scuderi! How he denounced to posterity the violent attacks of those men, who, he says, made themselves "all white with Aristotle!" You should read how they said to him--and we quote from books of the time: "Young man, you must learn before you teach; and unless one is a Scaliger or a Heinsius that is intolerable!" Thereupon Corneille rebels and asks if their purpose is to force him "much below Claveret." Here Scuderi waxes indignant at such a display of pride, and reminds the "trice great author of _Le Cid_ of the modest words in which Tasso, the greatest man of his age, began his apology for the finest of his works against the bitterest and most unjust censure perhaps that will ever be pronounced. M. Corneille," he adds, "shows in his replies that he is as far removed from that author's moderation as from his merit." The young man _so justly and gently reproved_ dares to protest; thereupon Scuderi returns to the charge; he calls to his assistance the _Eminent Academy_: "Pronounce, O my Judges, a
decree worthy of your eminence, which will give all Europe to know
that _Le Cid_ is not the chef-d'oeuvre of the greatest man in France,
but the least judicious performance of M. Corneille himself. You are
bound to do it, both for your own private renown; and for that of
our people in general, who are concerned in this matter; inasmuch
as foreigners who may see this precious masterpiece--they who have
possessed a Tasso or a Guarini--might think that our greatest masters
were no more than apprentices."

These few instructive lines contain the everlasting tactics of envious
routine against growing talent--tactics which are still followed in
our own day, and which, for example, added such a curious page to the
youthful essays of Lord Byron. Scuderi gives us its quintessence. In
like manner the earlier works of a man of genius are always preferred
to the newer ones, in order to prove that he is going down instead of
up--_Melite and La Galerie du Palais_ placed above _Le Cid_. And
the names of the dead are always thrown at the heads of the
living--Corneille stoned with Tasso and Guarini (Guarini!), as, later,
Racine will be stoned with Corneille, Voltaire with Racine, and as
to-day, everyone who shows signs of rising is stoned with Corneille,
Racine and Voltaire. These tactics, as will be seen, are well-worn;
but they must be effective as they are still in use. However, the poor
devil of a great man still breathed. Here we cannot help but admire
the way in which Scuderi, the bully of this tragic-comedy, forced to
the wall, blackguards and maltreats him, how pitilessly he unmasks
his classical artillery, how he shows the author of _Le Cid_ "what the
episodes should be, according to Aristotle, who tells us in the tenth
and sixteenth chapters of his _Poetics_; how he crushes Corneille, in the name of the same Aristotle "in the eleventh chapter of his _Art of Poetry_; wherein we find the condemnation of _Le Cid_;"; in the name of Plato, "in the tenth book of his _Republic_;"; in the name of Marcellinus, "as may be seen in the twenty-seventh book"; in the name of "the tragedies of Niobe and Jephthah"; in the name of the "_Ajax_ of Sophocles"; in the name of "the example of Euripides"; in the name of "Heinsius, chapter six of the _Constitution_ of _Tragedy_; and the younger Scaliger in his poems"; and finally, in the name of the Canonists and Jurisconsults, under the title "Nuptials." The first arguments were addressed to the Academy, the last one was aimed at the Cardinal. After the pin-pricks the blow with a club. A judge was needed to decide the question. Chapelain gave judgment. Corneille saw that he was doomed; the lion was muzzled, or, as was said at the time, the crow (Corneille) was plucked. Now comes the painful side of this grotesque performance: after he had been thus quenched at his first flash, this genius, thoroughly modern, fed upon the Middle Ages and Spain, being compelled to lie to himself and to hark back to ancient times, drew for us that Castilian Rome, which is sublime beyond question, but in which, except perhaps in _Nicomede_, which was so ridiculed by the eighteenth century for its dignified and simple colouring, we find neither the real Rome nor the true Corneille.

Racine was treated to the same persecution, but did not make the same resistance. Neither in his genius nor in his character was there any of Corneille's lofty asperity. He submitted in silence and sacrificed to the scorn of his time his enchanting elegy of _Esther_, his
magnificent epic, *Athalie*. So that we can but believe that, if he had not been paralyzed as he was by the prejudices of his epoch, if he had come in contact less frequently with the classic cramp-fish, he would not have failed to introduce Locuste in his drama between Narcisse and Neron, and above all things would not have relegated to the wings the admirable scene of the banquet at which Seneca’s pupil poisons Britannicus in the cup of reconciliation. But can we demand of the bird that he fly under the receiver of an air-pump? What a multitude of beautiful scenes the _people of taste_ have cost us, from Scuderi to La Harpe! A noble work might be composed of all that their scorching breath has withered in its germ. However, our great poets have found a way none the less to cause their genius to blaze forth through all these obstacles. Often the attempt to confine them behind walls of dogmas and rules is vain. Like the Hebrew giant they carry their prison doors with them to the mountains.

But still the same refrain is repeated, and will be, no doubt, for a long while to come: “Follow the rules! Copy the models! It was the rules that shaped the models.” One moment! In that case there are two sorts of models, those which are made according to the rules, and, prior to them, those according to which the rules were made. Now, in which of these two categories should genius seek a place for itself? Although it is always disagreeable to come in contact with pedants, is it not a thousand times better to give them lessons than to receive lessons from them? And then--copy! Is the reflection equal to the light? Is the satellite which travels unceasingly in the same circle equal to the central creative planet? With all his poetry Virgil is no
more than the moon of Homer.

And whom are we to copy, I pray to know? The ancients? We have just shown that their stage has nothing in common with ours. Moreover, Voltaire, who will have none of Shakespeare, will have none of the Greeks, either. Let him tell us why: "The Greeks ventured to produce scenes no less revolting to us. Hippolyte, crushed by his fall, counts his wounds and utters doleful cries. Philoctetes falls in his paroxysms of pain; black blood flows from his wound. Oedipus, covered with the blood that still drops from the sockets of the eyes he has torn out, complains bitterly of gods and men. We hear the shrieks of Clytemnestra, murdered by her own son, and Electra, on the stage, cries: 'Strike! spare her not! she did not spare our father,' Prometheus is fastened to a rock by nails driven through his stomach and his arms. The Furies reply to Clytemnestra's bleeding shade with inarticulate roars. Art was in its infancy in the time of AEschylus as it was in London in Shakespeare's time."

Whom shall we copy, then? The moderns? What! Copy copies! God forbid!

"But," someone else will object, "according to your conception of the art, you seem to look for none but great poets, to count always upon genius." Art certainly does not count upon mediocrity. It prescribes no rules for it, it knows nothing of it; in fact, mediocrity has no existence so far as art is concerned; art supplies wings, not crutches. Alas! D'Aubignac followed rules, Campistron copied models.
What does it matter to art? It does not build its palaces for ants. It lets them make their ant-hill, without taking the trouble to find out whether they have built their burlesque imitation of its palace upon its foundation.

The critics of the scholastic school place their poets in a strange position. On the one hand they cry incessantly: "Copy the models!"

On the other hand they have a habit of declaring that "the models are inimitable"! Now, if their craftsman, by dint of hard work, succeeds in forcing through this dangerous defile some colourless tracing of the masters, these ungrateful wretches, after examining the new _refaccimiento_, exclaim sometimes: "This doesn't resemble anything!" and sometimes: "This resembles everything!" And by virtue of a logic made for the occasion each of these formulae is a criticism.

Let us then speak boldly. The time for it has come, and it would be strange if, in this age, liberty, like the light, should penetrate everywhere except to the one place where freedom is most natural--the domain of thought. Let us take the hammer to theories and poetic systems. Let us throw down the old plastering that conceals the facade of art. There are neither rules nor models; or, rather, there are no other rules than the general laws of nature, which soar above the whole field of art, and the special rules which result from the conditions appropriate to the subject of each composition. The former are of the essence, eternal, and do not change; the latter are variable, external, and are used but once. The former are the framework that supports the house; the latter the scaffolding which
is used in building it, and which is made anew for each building. In a word, the former are the flesh and bones, the latter the clothing, of the drama. But these rules are not written in the treatises on poetry. Richelet has no idea of their existence. Genius, which divines rather than learns, devises for each work the general rules from the general plan of things, the special rules from the separate ensemble of the subject treated; not after the manner of the chemist, who lights the fire under his furnace, heats his crucible, analyzes and destroys; but after the manner of the bee, which flies on its golden wings, lights on each flower and extracts its honey, leaving it as brilliant and fragrant as before.

The poet--let us insist on this point--should take counsel therefore only of nature, truth, and inspiration which is itself both truth and nature. "Quando he," says Lope de Vega,

"Quando he de escribir una comedia,
Encierro los preceptos con seis llaves."

To secure these precepts "six keys" are none too many, in very truth. Let the poet beware especially of copying anything whatsoever--Shakespeare no more than Moliere, Schiller no more than Corneille. If genuine talent could abdicate its own nature in this matter, and thus lay aside its original personality, to transform itself into another, it would lose everything by playing this role of its own double. It is as if a god should turn valet. We must draw our
inspiration from the original sources. It is the same sap, distributed
through the soil, that produces all the trees of the forest, so
different in bearing power, in fruit, in foliage. It is the same
nature that fertilizes and nourishes the most diverse geniuses. The
poet is a tree that may be blown about by all winds and watered by
every fall of dew; and bears his works as his fruit, as the _fablier_
of old bore his fables. Why attach one's self to a master, or graft
one's self upon a model? It were better to be a bramble or a thistle,
fed by the same earth as the cedar and the palm, than the fungus
or the lichen of those noble trees. The bramble lives, the fungus
vegetates. Moreover, however great the cedar and the palm may be,
it is not with the sap one sucks from them that one can become great
one's self. A giant's parasite will be at best a dwarf. The oak,
colossus that it is, can produce and sustain nothing more than the
mistletoe.

Let there be no misunderstanding: if some of our poets have succeeded
in being great, even when copying, it is because, while forming
themselves on the antique model, they have often listened to the
voice of nature and to their own genius--it is because they have been
themselves in some one respect. Their branches became entangled in
those of the near-by tree, but their roots were buried deep in the
soil of art. They were the ivy, not the mistletoe. Then came imitators
of the second rank, who, having neither roots in the earth, nor genius
in their souls, had to confine themselves to imitation. As Charles
Nodier says: "After the school of Athens, the school of Alexandria."
Then there was a deluge of mediocrity; then there came a swarm of
those treatises on poetry, so annoying to true talent, so convenient
for mediocrity. We were told that everything was done, and God was
forbidden to create more Molieres or Corneilles. Memory was put
in place of imagination. Imagination itself was subjected to
hard-and-fast rules, and aphorisms were made about it: "To imagine,"
says La Harpe, with his naive assurance, "is in substance to remember,
that is all."

But nature! Nature and truth!--And here, in order to prove that, far
from demolishing art, the new ideas aim only to reconstruct it
more firmly and on a better foundation, let us try to point out the
impassable limit which in our opinion, separates reality according to
art from reality according to nature. It is careless to confuse them
as some ill-informed partisans of _romanticism_ do. Truth in art
cannot possibly be, as several writers have claimed, _absolute_
reality. Art cannot produce the thing itself. Let us imagine, for
example, one of those unreflecting promoters of absolute nature, of
nature viewed apart from art, at the performance of a romantic play,
say _Le Cid_. "What's that?" he will ask at the first word. "The Cid
speaks in verse? It isn't _natural_ to speak in verse."--"How would
you have him speak, pray?"--"In prose." Very good. A moment later,
"How's this!" he will continue, if he is consistent; "the Cid is
speaking French!"--"Well?"--"Nature demands that he speak his own
language; he can't speak anything but Spanish."

We shall fail entirely to understand, but again--very good. You
imagine that this is all? By no means: before the tenth sentence in
Castilian, he is certain to rise and ask if the Cid who is speaking is the real Cid, in flesh and blood. By what right does the actor, whose name is Pierre or Jacques, take the name of the Cid? That is _false_. There is no reason why he should not go on to demand that the sun should be substituted for the footlights, _real_ trees and _real_ houses for those deceitful wings. For, once started on that road, logic has you by the collar, and you cannot stop.

We must admit, therefore, or confess ourselves ridiculous, that the domains of art and of nature are entirely distinct. Nature and art are two things--were it not so, one or the other would not exist. Art, in addition to its idealistic side, has a terrestrial, material side. Let it do what it will, it is shut in between grammar and prosody, between Vaugelas and Richelet. For its most capricious creations, it has formulas, methods of execution, a complete apparatus to set in motion. For genius there are delicate instruments, for mediocrity, tools.

It seems to us that someone has already said that the drama is a mirror wherein nature is reflected. But if it be an ordinary mirror, a smooth and polished surface, it will give only a dull image of objects, with no relief-faithful, but colourless; everyone knows that colour and light are lost in a simple reflection. The drama, therefore, must be a concentrating mirror, which, instead of weakening, concentrates and condenses the coloured rays, which makes of a mere gleam a light, and of a light a flame. Then only is the drama acknowledged by art.
The stage is an optical point. Everything that exists in the world—in history, in life, in man—should be and can be reflected therein, but under the magic wand of art. Art turns the leaves of the ages, of nature, studies chronicles, strives to reproduce actual facts (especially in respect to manners and peculiarities, which are much less exposed to doubt and contradiction than are concrete facts), restores what the chroniclers have lopped off, harmonises what they have collected, divines and supplies their omissions, fills their gaps with imaginary scenes which have the colour of the time, groups what they have left scattered about, sets in motion anew the threads of Providence which work the human marionettes, clothes the whole with a form at once poetical and natural, and imparts to it that vitality of truth and brilliancy which gives birth to illusion, that prestige of reality which arouses the enthusiasm of the spectator, and of the poet first of all, for the poet is sincere. Thus the aim of art is almost divine: to bring to life again if it is writing history, to create if it is writing poetry.

It is a grand and beautiful sight to see this broad development of a drama wherein art powerfully seconds nature; of a drama wherein the plot moves on to the conclusion with a firm and unembarrassed step, without diffuseness and without undue compression; of a drama, in short, wherein the poet abundantly fulfills the multifold object of art, which is to open to the spectator a double prospect, to illuminate at the same time the interior and the exterior of mankind: the exterior by their speech and their acts, the interior, by asides
and monologues; to bring together, in a word, in the same picture, the drama of life and the drama of conscience.

It will readily be imagined that, for a work of this kind, if the poet must _choose_ (and he must), he should choose, not the _beautiful_, but the _characteristic_. Not that it is advisable to "make local colour," as they say to-day; that is, to add as an afterthought a few discordant touches here and there to a work that is at best utterly conventional and false. The local colour should not be on the surface of the drama, but in its substance, in the very heart of the work, whence it spreads of itself, naturally, evenly, and, so to speak, into every corner of the drama, as the sap ascends from the root to the tree's topmost leaf. The drama should be thoroughly impregnated with this colour of the time, which should be, in some sort, in the air, so that one detects it only on entering the theatre, and that on going forth one finds one's self in a different period and atmosphere. It requires some study, some labour, to attain this end; so much the better. It is well that the avenues of art should be obstructed by those brambles from which everybody recoils except those of powerful will. Besides, it is this very study, fostered by an ardent inspiration, which will ensure the drama against a vice that kills it--the _commonplace_. To be commonplace is the failing of short-sighted, short-breathed poets. In this tableau of the stage, each figure must be held down to its most prominent, most individual, most precisely defined characteristic. Even the vulgar and the trivial should have an accent of their own. Like God, the true poet is present in every part of his work at once. Genius resembles the die which
stamps the king's effigy on copper and golden coins alike.

We do not hesitate--and this will demonstrate once more to honest men how far we are from seeking to discredit the art--we do not hesitate to consider verse as one of the means best adapted to protect the drama from the scourge we have just mentioned, as one of the most powerful dams against the irruption of the commonplace, which, like democracy, is always flowing between full banks in men's minds. And at this point we beg the younger literary generation, already so rich in men and in works, to allow us to point out an error into which it seems to have fallen--an error too fully justified, indeed, by the extraordinary aberrations of the old school. The new century is at that growing age at which one can readily set one's self right.

There has appeared of late, like a penultimate branching-out of the old classical trunk, or, better still, like one of those excrescences, those polypi, which decrepitude develops, and which are a sign of decomposition much more than a proof of life--there has appeared a strange school of dramatic poetry. This school seems to us to have had for its master and its fountain-head the poet who marks the transition from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the man of wearisome description and periphrases--that Delille who, they say, toward the close of his life, boasted, after the fashion of the Homeric catalogues, of having _made_ twelve camels, four dogs, three horses, including Job's, six tigers, two cats, a chess-board, a backgammon-board, a checker-board, a billiard-table, several winters, many summers, a multitude of springs, fifty sunsets, and so many
daybreaks that he had lost count of them.

Now, Delille went into tragedy. He is the father (he, and not Racine, God save the mark!) of an alleged school of refinement and taste which flourished until recently. Tragedy is not to this school what it was to Will Shakespeare, say, a source of emotions of every sort, but a convenient frame for the solution of a multitude of petty descriptive problems which it propounds as it goes along. This muse, far from spurning, as the true French classic school does, the trivial and degrading things of life, eagerly seeks them out and brings them together. The grotesque, shunned as undesirable company by the tragedy of Louis the Fourteenth's day, cannot pass unnoticed before her. _It must be described_, that is to say, ennobled. A scene in the guard-house, a popular uprising, the fish-market, the galleys, the wine-shop, the _poule au pot_ of Henri Quatre, are treasure-trove in her eyes. She seizes upon this canaille, washes it clean, and sews her tinsel and spangles over its villainies; _purpureus assuitur pannus_. Her object seems to be to deliver patents of nobility to all these _roturiers_ of the drama; and each of these patents under the great seal is a speech.

This muse, as may be imagined, is of a rare prudery. Wonted as she is to the caresses of periphrasis, plain-speaking, if she should occasionally be exposed to it, would horrify her. It does not accord with her dignity to speak naturally. She _underlines_ old Corneille for his blunt way of speaking, as in,--
"_A heap of men_ ruined by debt and crimes."

"Chimene, _who'd have thought it_? Rodrigue, _who'd have said it_?"

"When their Flaminius _haggled with_ Hannibal."

"Oh! do not _embroil_ me with the Republic."

She still has her “Tout beau, monsieur!” on her heart. And it needed many "seigneurs" and "madames" to procure forgiveness for our admirable Racine for his monosyllabic "dogs!" and for so brutally bestowing Claudius in Agrippina's bed.

This Melpomene, as she is called, would shudder at the thought of touching a chronicle. She leaves to the costumer the duty of learning the period of the dramas she writes. In her eyes history is bad form and bad taste. How, for example, can one tolerate kings and queens who swear? They must be elevated from mere regal dignity to tragic dignity. It was in a promotion of this sort that she exalted Henri IV. It was thus that the people's king, purified by M. Legouve, found his "ventre-saint-gris" ignominiously banished from his mouth by two sentences, and that he was reduced, like the girl in the old _fabliau_, to the necessity of letting fall from those royal lips only
pearls and sapphires and rubies: the apotheosis of falsity, in very truth.

The fact is that nothing is so commonplace as this conventional refinement and nobility. Nothing original, no imagination, no invention in this style; simply what one has seen everywhere--rhetoric, bombast, commonplaces, flowers of college eloquence, poetry after the style of Latin verses. The poets of this school are eloquent after the manner of stage princes and princesses, always sure of finding in the costumer's labelled cases, cloaks and pinchbeck crowns, which have no other disadvantage than that of having been used by everybody. If these poets never turn the leaves of the Bible, it is not because they have not a bulky book of their own, the _Dictionnaire de rimes_. That is the source of their poetry--_fontes aquarum_.

It will be seen that, in all this, nature and truth get along as best they can. It would be great good luck if any remnants of either should survive in this cataclysm of false art, false style, false poetry. This is what has caused the errors of several of our distinguished reformers. Disgusted by the stiffness, the ostentation, the _pomposo_, of this alleged dramatic poetry, they have concluded that the elements of our poetic language were incompatible with the natural and the true. The Alexandrine had wearied them so often, that they condemned it without giving it a hearing, so to speak, and decided, a little hastily, perhaps, that the drama should be written in prose.
They were mistaken. If in fact the false is predominant in the style as well as in the action of certain French tragedies, it is not the verses that should be held responsible therefore, but the versifiers. It was needful to condemn, not the form employed, but those who employed it: the workmen, not the tool.

To convince one's self how few obstacles the nature of our poetry places in the way of the free expression of all that is true, we should study our verse, not in Racine, perhaps, but often in Corneille and always in Moliere. Racine, a divine poet, is elegiac, lyric, epic; Moliere is dramatic. It is time to deal sternly with the criticisms heaped upon that admirable style by the wretched taste of the last century, and to proclaim aloud that Moliere occupies the topmost pinnacle of our drama, not only as a poet, but also as a writer.

_Palmas vere habet iste duas_.

In his work the verse surrounds the idea, becomes of its very essence, compresses and develops it at once, imparts to it a more slender, more definite, more complete form, and gives us, in some sort, an extract thereof. Verse is the optical form of thought. That is why it is especially adapted to the perspective of the stage. Constructed in a certain way, it communicates its relief to things which, but for it, would be considered insignificant and trivial. It makes the tissue of style finer and firmer. It is the knot which stays the thread. It is the girdle which holds up the garment and gives it all its folds. What could nature and the true lose, then, by entering into verse? We ask...
the question of our prose-writers themselves—what do they lose
in Moliere's poetry? Does wine—we beg pardon for another trivial
illustration—does wine cease to be wine when it is bottled?

If we were entitled to say what, in our opinion, the style of dramatic
poetry should be, we would declare for a free, outspoken, sincere
verse, which dares say everything without prudery, express its meaning
without seeking for words; which passes naturally from comedy to
tragedy, from the sublime to the grotesque; by turns practical and
poetical, both artistic and inspired, profound and impulsive, of
wide range and true; verse which is apt opportunely to displace the
caesura, in order to disguise the monotony of Alexandrines; more
inclined to the _enjambement_ that lengthens the line, than to the
inversion of phrases that confuses the sense; faithful to rhyme, that
enslaved queen, that supreme charm of our poetry, that creator of
our metre; verse that is inexhaustible in the verity of its turns
of thought, unfathomable in its secrets of composition and of grace;
assuming, like Proteus, a thousand forms without changing its type and
character; avoiding long speeches; taking delight in dialogue; always
hiding behind the characters of the drama; intent, before everything,
on being in its place, and when it falls to its lot to be _beautiful_,
being so only by chance, as it were, in spite of itself and
unconsciously; lyric, epic, dramatic, at need; capable of running
through the whole gamut of poetry, of skipping from high notes to
low, from the most exalted to the most trivial ideas, from the most
extravagant to the most solemn, from the most superficial to the most
abstract, without ever passing beyond the limits of a spoken scene; in
a word, such verse as a man would write whom a fairy had endowed with
Corneille's mind and Molière's brain. It seems to us that such verse
would be as fine as prose.

There would be nothing in common between poetry of this sort and that
of which we made a post mortem examination just now. The distinction
will be easy to point out if a certain man of talent, to whom the
author of this book is under personal obligation, will allow us to
borrow his clever phrase: the other poetry was descriptive, this would
be picturesque.

Let us repeat, verse on the stage should lay aside all self-love, all
exigence, all coquetry. It is simply a form, and a form which should
admit everything, which has no laws to impose on the drama, but on the
contrary should receive everything from it, to be transmitted to the
spectator—French, Latin, texts of laws, royal oaths, popular phrases,
comedy, tragedy, laughter, tears, prose and poetry. Woe to the poet
whose verse does not speak out! But this form is a form of bronze
which encases the thought in its metre beneath which the drama is
indestructible, which engraves it more deeply on the actor's mind,
warns him of what he omits and of what he adds, prevents him from
changing his role, from substituting himself for the author, makes
each word sacred, and causes what the poet has said to remain vivid
a long while in the hearer's memory. The idea, when steeped in verse,
suddenly assumes a more incisive, more brilliant quality.
One feels that prose, which is necessarily more timid, obliged to wean
the drama from anything like epic or lyric poetry, reduced to dialogue
and to matter-of-fact, is a long way from possessing these resources.
It has much narrower wings. And then, too, it is much more easy of
access; mediocrity is at its ease in prose; and for the sake of a few
works of distinction such as have appeared of late, the art would very
soon be overloaded with abortions and embryos. Another faction of
the reformers incline to drama written in both prose and verse, as
Shakespeare composed it. This method has its advantages. There might,
however, be some incongruity in the transitions from one form to the
other; and when a tissue is homogeneous it is much stouter. However,
whether the drama should be written in prose is only a secondary
question. The rank of a work is certain to be fixed, not according to
its form, but according to its intrinsic value. In questions of this
sort, there is only one solution. There is but one weight that can
turn the scale in the balance of art—that is genius.

Meanwhile, the first, the indispensable merit of a dramatic writer,
whether he write in prose or verse, is correctness. Not a mere
superficial correctness, the merit or defect of the descriptive
school, which makes Lhomond and Restaut the two wings of its Pegasus;
but that intimate, deep-rooted, deliberate correctness, which is
permeated with the genius of a language, which has sounded its roots
and searched its etymology; always unfettered, because it is sure
of its footing, and always more in harmony with the logic of the
language. Our Lady Grammar leads the one in leading-strings; the other
holds grammar in leash. It can venture anything, can create or invent
its style; it has a right to do so. For, whatever certain men may have
said who did not think what they were saying, and among whom we must
place, notably, him who writes these lines, the French tongue is not
_fixed_ and never will be. A language does not become fixed. The human
intellect is always on the march, or, if you prefer, in movement,
and languages with it. Things are made so. When the body changes, how
could the coat not change? The French of the nineteenth century can no
more be the French of the eighteenth, than that is the French of the
seventeenth, or than the French of the seventeenth is that of the
sixteenth. Montaigne's language is not Rabelais's, Pascal's is
not Montaigne's, Montesquieu's is not Pascal's. Each of the four
languages, taken by itself, is admirable because it is original. Every
age has its own ideas; it must have also words adapted to those ideas.
Languages are like the sea, they move to and fro incessantly. At
certain times they leave one shore of the world of thought and
overflow another. All that their waves thus abandon dries up and
vanishes. It is in this wise that ideas vanish, that words disappear.
It is the same with human tongues as with everything. Each age adds
and takes away something. What can be done? It is the decree of fate.
In vain, therefore, should we seek to petrify the mobile physiognomy
of our idiom in a fixed form. In vain do our literary Joshuas cry out
to the language to stand still; languages and the sun do not stand
still. The day when they become _fixed_, they are dead.--That is why
the French of a certain contemporary school is a dead language.

Such are, substantially, but without the more elaborate development
which would make the evidence in their favour more complete, the
present ideas of the author of this book concerning the drama. He is far, however, from presuming to put forth his first dramatic essay as an emanation of these ideas, which, on the contrary, are themselves, it may be, simply results of its execution. It would be very convenient for him, no doubt, and very clever, to rest his book on his preface, and to defend each by the other. He prefers less cleverness and more frankness. He proposes, therefore, to be the first to point out the extreme tenuity of the thread connecting this preface with his drama. His first plan, dictated by his laziness, was to give the work to the public entirely unattended _el demonio sin las cuernas_, as Yriarte said. It was only after he had duly brought it to a close, that at the solicitations of a few friends, blinded by their friendship, no doubt, he determined to reckon with himself in a preface—to draw, so to speak, a map of the poetic voyage he had made, to take account of the acquisitions, good or bad, that he had brought home, and of the new aspects in which the domain of art had presented itself to his mind. Someone will take advantage of this admission, doubtless to repeat the reproach already uttered by a critic in Germany, that he has written "a treatise in defence of his poetry." What does it matter? In the first place he was much more inclined to demolish treatises on poetry than to write them. And then, would it not be better always to write treatises based on a poem, than to write poems based on a treatise? But no, we repeat that he has neither the talent to create nor the presumption to put forth systems "Systems," cleverly said Voltaire, "are like rats which pass through twenty holes, only to find at last two or three which will not let them through." It would have been, therefore, to undertake a useless task and one much beyond his strength. What he has pleaded, on the contrary, is the freedom of
art against the despotism of systems, codes and rules. It is his habit
to follow at all risks whatever he takes for his inspiration, and to
change moulds as often as he changes metals. Dogmatism in the arts is
what he shuns before everything God forbid that he should aspire to
be numbered among those men, be they romanticists or classicists, who
compose works according to their own systems, who condemn themselves
to have but one form in their minds, to be forever proving
something, to follow other laws than those of their temperaments and
then natures. The artificial work of these men, however talented they
may be, has no existence so far as art is concerned. It is a theory,
not poetry.

Having attempted, in all that has gone before, to point out what, in
our opinion, was the origin of the drama, what its character is, and
what its style should he, the time has come to descend from these
exalted general considerations upon the art to the particular case
which has led us to put them forth. It remains for us to discourse to
the reader of our work, of this Cromwell; and as it is not a subject
in which we take pleasure, we will say very little about it in very
few words.

Oliver Cromwell is one of those historical characters who are at once
very famous and very little known. Most of his biographers--and among
them there are some who are themselves historical--have left that
colossal figure incomplete. It would seem that they dared not assemble
all the characteristic features of that strange and gigantic prototype
of the religious reformation, of the political revolution of England.
Almost all of them have confined themselves to reproducing on a larger scale the simple and ominous profile drawn by Bossuet from his Catholic and monarchical standpoint, from his episcopal pulpit supported by the throne of Louis XIV.

Like everybody else, the author of this book went no further than that. The name of Oliver Cromwell suggested to him simply the bare conception of a fanatical regicide and a great captain. Only on prowling among the chronicles of the times, which he did with delight, and on looking through the English memoirs of the seventeenth century, was he surprised to find that a wholly new Cromwell was gradually exposed to his gaze. It was no longer simply Bossuet's Cromwell the soldier, Cromwell the politician; it was a complex, heterogenous, multiple being, made up of all sorts of contraries—a mixture of much that was evil and much that was good, of genius and pettiness; a sort of Tiberius-Dandin, the tyrant of Europe and the plaything of his family; an old regicide, who delighted to humiliate the ambassadors of all the kings of Europe, and was tormented by his young royalist daughter; austere and gloomy in his manners, yet keeping four court jesters about him; given to the composition of wretched verses; sober, simple, frugal, yet a stickler for etiquette; a rough soldier and a crafty politician; skilled in theological disputation and very fond of it; a dull, diffuse, obscure orator, but clever in speaking the language of anybody whom he wished to influence; a hypocrite and a fanatic; a visionary swayed by phantoms of his childhood, believing in astrologers and banishing them; suspicious to excess, always threatening, rarely sanguinary; a strict observer of Puritan rules,
and solemnly wasting several hours a day in buffoonery; abrupt and
contemptuous with his intimates, caressing with the secretaries whom
he feared, holding his remorse at bay with sophistry, paltering with
his conscience, inexhaustible in adroitness, in tricks, in resources;
mastering his imagination by his intelligence; grotesque and sublime;
in a word, one of those men who are "square at the base," as they
were described by Napoleon, himself their chief, in his mathematically
exact and poetically figurative language.

He who writes these lines, in presence of this rare and impressive
_ensemble_, felt that Bossuet's impasioned sketch was no longer
sufficient for him. He began to walk about that lofty figure, and he
was seized by a powerful temptation to depict the giant in all his
aspects. It was a rich soil. Beside the man of war and the statesman,
it remained to draw the theologian, the pedant, the wretched poet,
the seer of visions, the buffoon, the father, the husband, the human
Proteus—in a word, the twofold Cromwell, _homo et vir_.

There is one period of his life, especially, in which this strange
personality exhibits itself in all its forms. It is not as one might
think at first blush, the period of the trial of Charles I, instinct
as that is with depressing and terrible interest; but it is the moment
when the ambitious mortal boldly attempted to pluck the fruit of that
monarch's death; it is the moment when Cromwell, having attained what
would have been to any other man the zenith of fortune—master of
England, whose innumerable factions knelt silently at his feet; master
of Scotland, of which he had made a satrapy, and of Ireland, which he
had turned into a prison; master of Europe through his diplomacy and
his fleets--seeks to fulfil the dream of his earliest childhood, the
last ambition of his life; to make himself king. History never had a
more impressive lesson in a more impressive drama. First of all, the
Protector arranges to be urged to assume the crown: the august farce
begins by addresses from municipalities, from counties; then there
comes an act of Parliament. Cromwell, the anonymous author of the
play, pretends to be displeased; we see him put out a hand toward the
sceptre, then draw it back; by a devious path he draws near the throne
from which he has swept the legitimate dynasty. At last he makes up
his mind, suddenly; by his command Westminster is decked with flags,
the dais is built, the crown is ordered from the jewelers, the day is
appointed for the ceremony.--Strange denouement! On that very day,
in presence of the populace, the troops, the House of Commons, in
the great hall of Westminster, on that dais from which he expected
to descend as king, suddenly, as if aroused by a shock, he seems to
awaken at the sight of the crown, asks if he is dreaming, and what the
meaning is of all this regal pomp, and in a speech that lasts three
hours declines the kingly title.

Was it because his spies had warned him of two conspiracies formed
by Cavaliers and Puritans in concert, which were intended, taking
advantage of this misstep, to break out on the same day? Was it
an inward revolution caused by the silence or the murmurs of the
populace, discomposed to see their regicide ascend the throne? Or was
it simply the sagacity of genius, the instinct of a far-seeing, albeit
unbridled ambition, which realizes how one step forward changes a
man's position and attitude, and which dares not expose its plebeian
structure to the wind of unpopularity? Was it all these at once?
This is a question which no contemporaneous document answers
satisfactorily. So much the better: the poet's liberty is the more
complete, and the drama is the gainer by the latitude which history
affords it. It will be seen that here the latitude is ample and
unique; this is, in truth, the decisive hour, the turning-point in
Cromwell's life. It is the moment when his chimera escapes from
him, when the present kills the future, when, to use an expressive
colloquialism, his destiny _misses fire_. All of Cromwell is at stake
in the comedy being played between England and himself.

Such then is the man and such the period of which we have tried to
give an idea in this book.

The author has allowed himself to be seduced by the childlike
diversion of touching the keys of that great harpsichord.
Unquestionably, more skillful hands might have evoked a thrilling
and profound melody--not of those which simply caress the ear--but of
those intimate harmonies which stir the whole man to the depths of his
being, as if each key of the key-board were connected with a fibre
of the heart. He has surrendered to the desire to depict all those
fanaticisms, all those superstitions--maladies to which religion is
subject at certain epochs; to the longing to "make playthings of all
these men," as Hamlet says. To set in array about and below Cromwell,
himself the centre and pivot of that court, of that people, of that
little world, which attracts all to his cause and inspires all with
his vigour, that twofold conspiracy devised by two factions which
detest each other, but join hands to overthrow the man who blocks
their path, but which unite simply without blending; and that Puritan
faction, of divers minds, fanatical, gloomy, unselfish, choosing
for leader the most insignificant of men for such a great part, the
egotistical and cowardly Lambert; and the faction of the Cavaliers,
featherheaded, merry, unscrupulous, reckless, devoted, led by the
man who, aside from his devotion to the cause, was least fitted to
represent it, the stern and upright Ormond; and those ambassadors,
so humble and fawning before the soldier of fortune; and the court
itself, an extraordinary mixture of upstarts and great nobles
vying with one another in baseness; and the four jesters whom the
contemptuous neglect of history permitted me to invent; and Cromwell's
family, each member of which is as a thorn in his flesh; and Thurloe,
the Protector's Achates; and the Jewish rabbi, Israel Ben-Manasseh,
spy, usurer, and astrologer, vile on two sides, sublime on the third;
and Rochester, the unique Rochester, absurd and clever, refined and
crapulous, always cursing, always in love, and always tipsy, as he
himself boasted to Bishop Burnet--wretched poet and gallant gentleman,
vicious and ingenuous, staking his head and indifferent whether
he wins the game provided it amuses him--in a word, capable of
everything, of ruse and recklessness, calculation and folly, villainy
and generosity; and the morose Carr, of whom history describes but
one trait, albeit a most characteristic and suggestive one; and those
other fanatics, of all ranks and varieties: Harrison, the thieving
fanatic; Barebones the shopkeeping fanatic; Syndercomb, the bravo;
Garland the tearful and pious assassin; gallant Colonel Overton,
intelligent but a little declamatory; the austere and unbending
Ludlow, who left his ashes and his epitaph at Lausanne; and lastly,
"Milton and a few other men of mind," as we read in a pamphlet of 1675
(_Cromwell the Politician_), which reminds one of "a certain Dante" of
the Italian chronicle.

We omit many less important characters, of each of whom, however, the
actual life is known, and each of whom has his marked individuality,
and all of whom contributed to the fascination which this vast
historical scene exerted upon the author's imagination. From that
scene he constructed this drama. He moulded it in verse, because he
preferred to do so. One will discover on reading it how little
thought he gave to his work while writing this preface--with what
disinterestedness, for instance, he contended against the dogma of the
unities. His drama does not leave London; it begins on June 25, 1657,
at three in the morning, and ends on the 26th at noon. Observe that he
has almost followed the classic formula, as the professors of poetry
lay it down to-day. They need not, however, thank him for it. With the
permission of history, not of Aristotle, the author constructed his
drama thus; and because, when the interest is the same, he prefers a
compact subject to a widely diffused one.

It is evident that, in its present proportions, this drama could not
be given at one of our theatrical performances. It is too long. The
reader will perhaps comprehend, none the less, that every part of it
was written for the stage. It was on approaching his subject to study
it that the author recognized, or thought that he recognized, the
impossibility of procuring the performance of a faithful reproduction
of it on our stage, in the exceptional position it now occupies,

between the academic Charybdis and the administrative Scylla, between

the literary juries and the political censorship. He was required
to choose: either the wheedling, tricky, false tragedy, which may be
acted, or the audaciously true drama, which is prohibited. The first
was not worth the trouble of writing, so he preferred to attempt
the second. That is why, hopeless of ever being put on the stage,
he abandoned himself, freely and submissively, to the whims of
composition, to the pleasure of painting with a freer hand, to the
developments which his subject demanded, and which, even if they keep
his drama off the stage, have at all events the advantage of making it
almost complete from the historical standpoint. However, the reading
committees are an obstacle of the second class only. If it should
happen that the dramatic censorship, realizing how far this harmless,
conscientious and accurate picture of Cromwell and his time is removed
from our own age, should sanction its production on the stage, in that
case, but only in that case, the author might perhaps extract from
this drama a play which would venture to show itself on the boards,
and would be hissed.

Until then he will continue to hold aloof from the theatre. And even
then he will leave his cherished and tranquil retirement soon enough,
for the agitation and excitement of this new world. God grant that he
may never repent of having exposed the unspotted obscurity of his name
and his person to the shoals, the squalls and tempests of the pit,
and above all (for what does a mere failure matter?) to the wretched
bickerings of the wings; of having entered that shifting, foggy,
stormy atmosphere, where ignorance dogmatizes, where envy hisses, where cabals cringe and crawl, where the probity of talent has so often been misrepresented, where the noble innocence of genius is sometimes so out of place, where mediocrity triumphs in lowering to its level the superiority which obscures it, where one finds so many small men for a single great one, so many nobodies for one Talma, so many myrmidons for one Achilles! This sketch will seem ill-tempered perhaps, and far from flattering; but does it not fully mark out the distance that separates our stage, the abode of intrigues and uproar, from the solemn serenity of the ancient stage?

Whatever may happen, he feels bound to warn in advance that small number of persons whom such a production might attract, that a play made up of excerpts from _Cromwell_ would occupy no less time than is ordinarily occupied by a theatrical performance. It is difficult for a _romantic_ theatre to maintain itself otherwise. Surely, if people desire something different from the tragedies in which one or two characters, abstract types of a purely metaphysical idea, stalk solemnly about on a narrow stage occupied only by a few confidents, colourless reflections of the heroes, employed to fill the gaps in a simple, unified, single-stringed plot; if that sort of thing has grown tiresome, a whole evening is not too much time to devote to delineating with some fullness a man among men, a whole critical period: the one, with his peculiar temperament, his genius which adapts itself thereto, his beliefs which dominate them both, his passions which throw out of gear his temperament, his genius and his beliefs, his tastes which give colour to his passions, his habits
which regulate his tastes and muzzle his passions, and with the
innumerable procession of men of every sort whom these various
elements keep in constant commotion about him; the other, with
its manners, its laws, its fashions, its wit, its attainments, its
superstitions, its events, and its people, whom all these first causes
in turn mould like soft wax. It is needless to say that such a picture
will be of huge proportions. Instead of one personality, like that
with which the abstract drama of the old school is content, there will
be twenty, forty, fifty,—who knows how many?—of every size and of
every degree of importance. There will be a crowd of characters in the
drama. Would it not be niggardly to assign it two hours only, and
give up the rest of the performance to opera-comique or farce? to cut
Shakespeare for Bobeche?—And do not imagine that, if the plot is well
adjusted, the multitude of characters set in motion will cause fatigue
to the spectator or confusion in the drama. Shakespeare, abounding in
petty details, is at the same time, and for that very reason, imposing
by the grandeur of the _ensemble._ It is the oak which casts a most
extensive shadow with its myriads of slender leaves.

Let us hope that people in France will ere long become accustomed to
devote a whole evening to a single play. In England and Germany there
are plays that last six hours. The Greeks, about whom we hear so much,
the Greeks—and after the fashion of Scuderi we will cite at
this point the classicist Dacier, in the seventh chapter of his
_Poetics._—the Greeks sometimes went so far as to have twelve or
sixteen plays acted in a single day. Among a people who are fond of
spectacles the attention is more lively than is commonly believed
The _Mariage de Figaro_, the connecting link of Beaumarchais's great trilogy, occupies the whole evening, and who was ever bored or fatigued by it Beaumarchais was worthy to venture on the first step toward that goal of modern art at which it will be impossible to arrive in two hours, that profound, insatiable interest which results from a vast, lifelike and multiform plot. "But," someone will say, "this performance, consisting of a single play, would be monotonous, would seem terribly long"—Not so. On the contrary it would lose its present monotony and tediousness. For what is done now? The spectator's entertainment is divided into two or three sharply defined parts. At first he is given two hours of serious enjoyment, then one hour of hilarious enjoyment, these, with the hour of entr' actes, which we do not include in the enjoyment make four hours. What would the romantic drama do? It would mingle and blend artistically these two kinds of enjoyment. It would lead the audience constantly from sobriety to laughter, from mirthful excitement to heart breaking emotion, "from grave to gay, from pleasant to severe." For, as we have already proved, the drama is the grotesque in conjunction with the sublime, the soul within the body, it is tragedy beneath comedy. Do you not see that, by affording you repose from one impression by means of another, by sharpening the tragic upon the comic, the merry upon the terrible, and at need calling in the charms of the opera, these performances, while presenting but one play, would be worth a multitude of others? The romantic stage would make a piquant, savoury, diversified dish of that which, on the classic stage, is a drug divided into two pills.
The author has soon come to the end of what he had to say to the reader. He has no idea how the critics will greet this drama and these thoughts, summarily set forth, stripped of their corollaries and ramifications, put together _currente calamo_, and in haste to have done with them. Doubtless they will appear to "the disciples of La Harpe" most impudent and strange. But if perchance, naked and undeveloped as they are, they should have the power to start upon the road of truth this public whose education is so far advanced, and whose minds so many notable writings, of criticism or of original thought, books or newspapers, have already matured for art, let the public follow that impulsion, caring naught whether it comes from a man unknown, from a voice with no authority, from a work of little merit. It is a copper bell which summons the people to the true temple and the true God.

There is to-day the old literary regime as well as the old political regime. The last century still weighs upon the present one at almost every point. It is notably oppressive in the matter of criticism. For instance, you find living men who repeat to you this definition of taste let fall by Voltaire: "Taste in poetry is no different from what it is in women's clothes." Taste, then, is coquetry. Remarkable words, which depict marvellously the painted, _mouchete_, powdered poetry of the eighteenth century--that literature in paniers, pompons and falbalas. They give an admirable resume of an age with which the loftiest geniuses could not come in contact without becoming petty, in one respect or another; of an age when Montesquieu was able and apt to produce _Le Temple de Gnide_, Voltaire _Le Temple du Gout_.

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Jean-Jacques _Le Devin du Village_.

Taste is the common sense of genius. This is what will soon be demonstrated by another school of criticism, powerful, outspoken, well-informed,—a school of the century which is beginning to put forth vigorous shoots under the dead and withered branches of the old school. This youthful criticism, as serious as the other is frivolous, as learned as the other is ignorant, has already established organs that are listened to, and one is sometimes surprised to find, even in the least important sheets, excellent articles emanating from it. Joining hands with all that is fearless and superior in letters, it will deliver us from two scourges: tottering _classicism_, and false _romanticism_, which has the presumption to show itself at the feet of the true. For modern genius already has its shadow, its copy, its parasite, its _classic_, which forms itself upon it, smears itself with its colours, assumes its livery, picks up its crumbs, and, like _the sorcerer’s pupil_, puts in play, with words retained by the memory, elements of theatrical action of which it has not the secret. Thus it does idiotic things which its master many a time has much difficulty in making good. But the thing that must be destroyed first of all is the old false taste. Present-day literature must be cleansed of its rust. In vain does the rust eat into it and tarnish it. It is addressing a young, stern, vigorous generation, which does not understand it. The train of the eighteenth century is still dragging in the nineteenth; but we, we young men who have seen Bonaparte, are not the ones who will carry it.
We are approaching, then, the moment when we shall see the new criticism prevail, firmly established upon a broad and deep foundation. People generally will soon understand that writers should be judged, not according to rules and species, which are contrary to nature and art, but according to the immutable principles of the art of composition, and the special laws of their individual temperaments. The sound judgment of all men will be ashamed of the criticism which broke Pierre Corneille on the wheel, gagged Jean Racine, and which ridiculously rehabilitated John Milton only by virtue of the epic code of Pere le Bossu. People will consent to place themselves at the author’s standpoint, to view the subject with his eyes, in order to judge a work intelligently. They will lay aside—and it is M. de Chateaubriand who speaks—"the paltry criticism of defects for the noble and fruitful criticism of beauties." It is time that all acute minds should grasp the thread that frequently connects what we, following our special whim, call "defects" with what we call "beauty." Defects—at all events those which we call by that name—are often the inborn, necessary, inevitable conditions of good qualities.

Scit genius, natale comes quæ temperat astrum.

Who ever saw a medal without its reverse? a talent that had not some shadow with its brilliancy, some smoke with its flame? Such a blemish can be only the inseparable consequence of such beauty. This rough stroke of the brush, which offends my eye at close range, completes the effect and gives relief to the whole picture. Efface one and you
efface the other. Originality is made up of such things. Genius is necessarily uneven. There are no high mountains without deep ravines. Fill up the valley with the mountain and you will have nothing but a steppe, a plateau, the plain of Les Sablons instead of the Alps, swallows and not eagles.

We must also take into account the weather, the climate, the local influences. The Bible, Homer, hurt us sometimes by their very sublimities. Who would want to part with a word of either of them? Our infirmity often takes fright at the inspired bold flights of genius, for lack of power to swoop down upon objects with such vast intelligence. And then, once again, there are _defects_ which take root only in masterpieces; it is given only to certain geniuses to have certain defects. Shakespeare is blamed for his abuse of metaphysics, of wit, of redundant scenes, of obscenities, for his employment of the mythological nonsense in vogue in his time, for exaggeration, obscurity, bad taste, bombast, asperities of style. The oak, that giant tree which we were comparing to Shakespeare just now, and which has more than one point of resemblance to him, the oak has an unusual shape, gnarled branches, dark leaves, and hard, rough bark; but it is the oak.

And it is because of these qualities that it is the oak. If you would have a smooth trunk, straight branches, satiny leaves, apply to the pale birch, the hollow elder, the weeping willow; but leave the mighty oak in peace. Do not stone that which gives you shade.
The author of this book knows as well as any one the numerous and
gross faults of his works. If it happens too seldom that he corrects
them, it is because it is repugnant to him to return to a work that
has grown cold. Moreover, what has he ever done that is worth
that trouble? The labor that he would throw away in correcting the
imperfections of his books, he prefers to use in purging his intellect
of its defects. It is his method to correct one work only in another
work.

However, no matter what treatment may be accorded his book, he
binds himself not to defend it, in whole or in part. If his drama is
worthless, what is the use of upholding it? If it is good, why defend
it? Time will do the book justice or will wreak justice upon it. Its
success for the moment is the affair of the publisher alone. If then
the wrath of the critics is aroused by the publication of this essay,
he will let them do their worst. What reply should he make to them?
He is not one of those who speak, as the Castilian poet says, "through
the mouths of their wounds."

Por la boca de su herida.

One last word. It may have been noticed that in this somewhat long
journey through so many different subjects, the author has generally
refrained from resting his personal views upon texts or citations of
authorities. It is not, however, because he did not have them at his
"If the poet establishes things that are impossible according to the rules of his art, he makes a mistake unquestionably; but it ceases to be a mistake when by this means he has reached the end that he aimed at; for he has found what he sought."--"They take for nonsense whatever the weakness of their intellects does not allow them to understand. They are especially prone to call absurd those wonderful passages in which the poet, in order the better to enforce his argument, departs, if we may so express it, from his argument. In fact, the precept which makes it a rule sometimes to disregard rules, is a mystery of the art which it is not easy to make men understand who are absolutely without taste and whom a sort of abnormality of mind renders insensible to those things which ordinarily impress men."

Who said the first? Aristotle. Who said the last? Boileau. By these two specimens you will see that the author of this drama might, as well as another, have shielded himself with proper names and taken refuge behind others' reputations. But he preferred to leave that style of argument to those who deem it unanswerable, universal and all-powerful. As for himself, he prefers reasons to authorities; he has always cared more for arms than for coats-of-arms.

_October_, 1827.

[Footnote A: Victor Hugo (1802-1883) the chief of the romantic school
in France, issued in the Preface to "Cromwell" the manifesto of the
movement. Poet, dramatist, and novelist, Hugo remained through a
long life the most conspicuous man of letters in France; and in the
document here printed he laid down the principles which revolutionized
the literary world of his time.]

PREFACE TO LEAVES OF GRASS

BY WALT WHITMAN. (1855)[A]

America does not repel the past or what it has produced under
its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old
religions ... accepts the lesson with calmness ... is not so impatient
as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to opinions and
manners and literature while the life which served its requirements
has passed into the new life of the new forms ... perceives that the
corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house
... perceives that it waits a little while in the door ... that it was
fittest for its days ... that its action has descended to the stalwart
and well shaped heir who approaches ... and that he shall be fittest
for his days.

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth, have
probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are
essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto
the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler
largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man
that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here
is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action
untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details
magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which
forever indicates heroes.... Here are the roughs and beards and
space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the
performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous
audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective
spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific
and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own the riches of
the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows
from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish
or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies ... but the genius of
the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures,
nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors,
nor even in its newspapers or inventors ... but always most in the
common people. Their manners speech dress friendship--the freshness and
candor of their physiognomy--the picturesque looseness of their carriage
... their deathless attachment to freedom--their aversion to anything
indecorous or soft or mean--the practical acknowledgment of the citizens
of one state by the citizens of all other states--the fierceness of
their roused resentment--- their curiosity and welcome of novelty--their
self-esteem and wonderful sympathy--their susceptibility to a
slight--the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand
in the presence of superiors--the fluency of their speech--their delight
in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of
soul ... their good temper and open handedness--the terrible
significance of their elections--the President's taking off his hat to
them, not they to him--these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the
gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.

The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a
corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen.
Not nature nor swarming states nor streets and steamships nor
prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice
for the ideal of man ... nor suffice the poet. No reminiscences may
suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have
the best authority the cheapest ... namely from its own soul. This is
the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present
action and grandeur and of the subjects of poets.--As if it were
necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern
records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall
behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of
any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and
what has transpired since in North and South America were less than
the small theatre of the antique or the aimless sleepwalking of the
middle ages! The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and
finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and
all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy
the breed of full sized men or one full sized man unconquerable and
simple.
The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions ... he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit responds to his country's spirit ... he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes. Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia and Ohio and St. Lawrence with the Falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where they spend themselves more than they embouchure into him. The blue breadth over the inland sea of Virginia and Maryland and the sea off Massachusetts and Maine and over Manhattan bay and over Champlain and Erie and over Ontario and Huron and Michigan and Superior, and over the Texan and Mexican and Floridian and Cuban seas, and over the seas off California and Oregon, is not tallied by the blue breadth of the waters below more than the breadth of above and below is tallied by him. When the long Atlantic coast stretches longer and the Pacific coast stretches longer he easily stretches with them north or south. He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them. On him rise solid growths that offset the growths of pine and cedar and hemlock and live oak and locust and chestnut and cypress and hickory and limetree and cottonwood and tuliptree and cactus and wildvine and tamarind and persimmon ... and tangles as tangled as any canebrake or swamp ... and forests coated with transparent ice, and icicles hanging from boughs and crackling in the wind ... and sides and peaks of mountains ... and pasturage sweet and free as savannah or upland or prairie ... with flights and songs and screams that answer those
of the wild pigeon and high-hold and orchard-oriole and coot and
surf-duck and red-shouldered-hawk and fish-hawk and white ibis
and Indian-hen and cat-owl and water-pan and qua-bird and
pied-sheldrake and blackbird and mockingbird and buzzard and condor
and night-heron and eagle. To him the hereditary countenance descends
both mother's and father's. To him enter the essences of the real
things and past and present events--of the enormous diversity
of temperature and agriculture and mines--the tribes of red
aborigines--the weather-beaten vessels entering new ports or making
landings on rocky coasts--the first settlements north or south--the
rapid stature and muscle--the haughty defiance of '76, and the war
and peace and formation of the constitution ... the Union always
surrounded by blatherers and always calm and impregnable--the
perpetual coming of immigrants--the wharf-hem'd cities and superior
marine--the unsurveyed interior--the loghouses and clearings and wild
animals and hunters and trappers ... the free commerce--the fisheries
and whaling and gold-digging--the endless gestation of new states--the
convening of Congress every December, the members duly coming up from
all climates and the uttermost parts ... the noble character of the
young mechanics and of all free American workmen and workwomen ... the
general ardor and friendliness and enterprise--the perfect equality of
the female with the male ... the large amativeness--the fluid movement
of the population--the factories and mercantile life and laborsaving
machinery--the Yankee swap--the New York firemen and the target
excursion--the Southern plantation life--the character of the
northeast and of the northwest and southwest--slavery and the
tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition
to it which shall never cease till it ceases or the speaking of
tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression of the
American poet is to be transcendent and new. It is to be indirect and
not direct or descriptive or epic. Its quality goes through these to
much more. Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their
eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so
the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has
vista. Here comes one among the well beloved stonecutters and plans
with decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of
the future where there are now no solid forms.

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff
most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the
greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much
as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable
man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or
fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing
in its place is bad. He bestows on every object or quality its fit
proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse
and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land ... he
supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace
is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich,
thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture
and the arts and commerce--lighting the study of man, the soul,
immortality--federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health,
freetrade, intertravel by land and sea ... nothing too close, nothing
too far off ... the stars not too far off. In war he is the most
deadly force of the war. Who recruits him recruits horse and foot ...
he fetches parks of artillery the best that engineer ever knew. If the
time becomes slothful and heavy he knows how to arouse it ... he can
make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat
of custom or obedience or legislation he never stagnates. Obedience
does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands
turning a concentrated light ... he turns the pivot with his finger
... he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes
and envelopes them. The time straying towards infidelity and
confections and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith ... he
spreads out his dishes ... he offers the sweet firmfibred meat that
grows men and women. His brain is the ultimate brain. He is no arguer
... he is judgment. He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun
falling around a helpless thing. As he sees the farthest he has the
most faith. His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things. In
the talk on the soul and eternity and God off of his equal plane he
is silent. He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and
denouement ... he sees eternity in men and women ... he does not see
men or women as dreams or dots. Faith is the antiseptic of the soul
... it pervades the common people and preserves them ... they
never give up believing and expecting and trusting. There is that
indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person
that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius. The
poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as
sacred and perfect as the greatest artist.... The power to destroy or
remould is freely used by him, but never the power of attack. What is
past is past. If he does not expose superior models and prove himself
by every step he takes he is not what is wanted. The presence of the
greatest poet conquers ... not parleying or struggling or any prepared
attempts. Now he has passed that way see after him! There is not left any vestige of despair or misanthropy or cunning or exclusiveness or the ignominy of a nativity or color or delusion of hell or the necessity of hell ... and no man thenceforward shall be degraded for ignorance or weakness or sin.

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into anything that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer ... he is individual ... he is complete in himself ... the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus ... he does not stop for any regulation ... he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning. What is marvellous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftness softly and duly without contusion or jostling or jam.

The land and sea, the animals fishes and birds, the sky of heavens and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes ... but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects,... they expect him
to indicate the path between reality and their souls. Men and women perceive the beauty well enough ... probably as well as he. The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people. They can never be assisted by poets to perceive ... some may but they never can. The poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul. The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs and roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain. If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough ... the fact will prevail through the universe ... but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost.

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward
the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any
man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and
with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in
the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine
all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss
whatever insults your own soul; and your very flesh shall be a great
poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the
silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes
and in every motion and joint of your body.... The poet shall not
spend his time in unneeded work. He shall know that the ground is
always ready ploughed and manured ... others may not know it but he
shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall
master the trust of everything he touches ... and shall master all
attachment.

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest
poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance
happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and
persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What baulks or breaks
others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy.
Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to
his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is
rapport with in the sight of the daybreak or a scene of the winter
woods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round
the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and
expanse ... he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute
or suspicious lover ... he is sure ... he scorns intervals. His
experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing
can jar him ... suffering and darkness cannot--death and fear cannot.
To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten
in the earth ... he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore
or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love and of
all perfection and beauty.

The fruition of beauty is no chance of hit or miss ... it is
inevitable as life ... it is as exact and plumb as gravitation. From
the eyesight proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds
another hearing and from the voice proceeds another voice eternally
curious of the harmony of things with man. To these respond
perfections not only in the committees that were supposed to stand for
the rest but in the rest themselves just the same. These understand
the law of perfection in masses and floods ... that its finish is
to each for itself and onward from itself ... that it is profuse and
impartial ... that there is not a minute of the light or dark nor an
acre of the earth and sea without it--nor any direction of the sky
nor any trade or employment nor any turn of events. This is the reason
that about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and
balance ... one part does not need to be thrust above another. The
best singer is not the one who has the most lithe and powerful organ
... the pleasure of poems is not in them that take the handsomest
measure and similes and sound.

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the
greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and
scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read. To do this well is to compete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there ... and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication. Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet ... he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson ... he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions ... he finally ascends and finishes all ... he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond ... he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown ... by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterward for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals ... he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity ...
nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To
carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give
all subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very
uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and
insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of
the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the
flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved
it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations
and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the gray gull
over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall
leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun
journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with
any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest
poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts
and things without increase or diminution and is the free channel of
himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not
have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in
the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing
hang in the way not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for
precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or
soothe I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as
regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from
my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by
my side and look in the mirror with me.

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be
proved by their unconstraint. A heroic person walks at his ease
through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not. Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers savans musicians inventors and artists, nothing is finer than silent defiance advancing from new free forms. In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behavior, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft; or any craft, he is greatest for ever and for ever who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one. The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another ... and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them. What do you think is the grandeur of storms and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl on, I tread master here and everywhere, Master of the spasms of the sky and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of all terror and all pain.

The American bards shall be marked for generosity and affection and for encouraging competitors.... They shall be kosmos ... without monopoly or secrecy ... glad to pass anything to any one ... hungry
for equals night and day. They shall not be careful of riches and
privilege ... they shall be riches and privilege ... they shall
perceive who the most affluent man is. The most affluent man is
he that confronts all the shows he sees by equivalents out of the
stronger wealth of himself. The American bard shall delineate no class
of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most
nor truth most nor the soul most nor the body most ... and not be for
the eastern states more than the western or the northern states more
than the southern.

Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on the
greatest poet but always his encouragement and support. The outset
and remembrance are there ... there the arms that lifted him first and
brace him best ... there he returns after all his goings and comings.
The sailor and traveller ... the anatomist chemist astronomer
geologist phrenologist spiritualist mathematician historian and
lexicographer are not poets, but they are the lawgivers of poets and
their construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem. No
matter what rises or is uttered they sent the seed of the conception
of it ... of them and by them stand the visible proofs of souls ...
always of their fatherstuff must be begotten the sinewy races of
bards. If there shall be love and content between the father and the
son and if the greatness of the son is the exuding of the greatness
of the father there shall be love between the poet and the man of
demonstrable science. In the beauty of poems are the tuft and final
applause of science.
Great is the faith of the flush of knowledge and of the investigation
of the depths of qualities and things. Cleaving and circling here
swells the soul of the poet yet is president of itself always. The
depths are fathomless and therefore calm. The innocence and nakedness
are resumed ... they are neither modest nor immodest. The whole theory
of the special and supernatural and all that was twined with it or
educed out of it departs as a dream. What has ever happened ... what
happens and whatever may or shall happen, the vital laws enclose all
... they are sufficient for any case and for all cases ... none to be
hurried or retarded ... any miracle of affairs or persons inadmissible
in the vast clear scheme where every motion and every spear of grass
and the frames and spirits of men and women and all that concerns
them are unspeakably perfect miracles all referring to all and each
distinct and in its place. It is also not consistent with the reality
of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more
divine than men and women.

Men and women and the earth and all upon it are simply to be taken as
they are, and the investigation of their past and present and future
shall be unintermitted and shall be done with perfect candor. Upon
this basis philosophy speculates ever looking towards the poet,
ever regarding the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness never
inconsistent with what is clear to the senses and to the soul. For the
eternal tendencies of all toward happiness make the only point of sane
philosophy. Whatever comprehends less than that ... whatever is less
than the laws of light and of astronomical motion ... or less than
the laws that follow the thief the liar the glutton and the drunkard
through this life and doubtless afterward ... or less than vast
stretches of time or the slow formation of density or the patient
upheaving of strata--is of no account. Whatever would put God in
a poem or system of philosophy as contending against some being or
influence is also of no account. Sanity and ensemble characterize
the great master ... spoilt in one principle all is spoilt. The great
master has nothing to do with miracles. He sees health for himself in
being one of the mass ... he sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To
the perfect shape comes common ground. To be under the general law is
great, for that is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is
unspeakably great and that all are unspeakably great ... that nothing
for instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them up
well ... that to be is just as great as to perceive or tell.

In the make of the great masters the idea of political liberty is
indispensable. Liberty takes the adherence of heroes wherever men and
women exist ... but never takes any adherence or welcome from the rest
more than from poets. They are the voice and exposition of liberty.
They out of ages are worthy the grand idea ... to them it is confided
and they must sustain it. Nothing has precedence of it and nothing can
warp or degrade it. The attitude of great poets is to cheer up slaves
and horrify despots. The turn of their necks, the sound of their feet,
the motions of their wrists, are full of hazard to the one and hope
to the other. Come nigh them awhile and though they neither speak nor
advise you shall learn the faithful American lesson. Liberty is poorly
served by men whose good intent is quelled from one failure or two
failures or any number of failures, or from the casual indifference
or ingratitude of the people, or from the sharp show of the tushes of power, or the bringing to bear soldiers and cannon or any penal statutes. Liberty relies upon itself, invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement. The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent advance and retreat ... the enemy triumphs ... the prison, the handcuffs, the iron necklace and anklet, the scaffold, garrote and leadballs do their work ... the cause is asleep ... the strong throats are choked with their own blood ... the young men drop their eyelashes toward the ground when they pass each other ... and is liberty gone out of that place? No never. When liberty goes it is not the first to go nor the second or third to go ... it awaits for all the rest to go ... it is the last.... When the memories of the old martyrs are faded utterly away ... when the large names of patriots are laughed at in the public halls from the lips of the orators ... when the boys are no more christened after the same but christened after tyrants and traitors instead ... when the laws of the free are grudgingly permitted and the laws for informers and bloodmoney are sweet to the taste of the people ... when I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master--and when we are elated with noble joy at the sight of slaves ... when the soul retires in the cool communion of the night and surveys its experience and has much extasy over the word and deed that put back a helpless innocent person into the gripe of the gripers or into any cruel inferiority ... when those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not yet--when the swarms of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions
for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the
judiciary or congress or the presidency, obtain a response of love and
natural deference from the people whether they get the offices or no
... when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a
high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat
unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart
... and when servility by town or state or the federal government or
any oppression on a large scale or small scale can be tried on without
its own punishment following duly after in exact proportion against
the smallest chance of escape ... or rather when all life and all the
souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth--then
only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the
earth.

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentrate in the
real body and soul and in the pleasure of things they possess the
superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance. As they emit
themselves facts are showered over with light ... the daylight is lit
with more volatile light ... also the deep between the setting and
rising sun goes deeper many fold. Each precise object or condition or
combination or process exhibits a beauty ... the multiplication table
its--old age its--the carpenter's trade its--the grand opera its--the
hugehulled cleanshaped New-York clipper at sea under steam or full
sail gleams with unmatched beauty.... the American circles and large
harmonies of government gleam with theirs ... and the commonest
definite intentions and actions with theirs. The poets of the kosmos
advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and
stratagems to first principles. They are of use ... they dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit. You large proprietor, they say, shall not realize or perceive more than any one else. The owner of the library is not he who holds a legal title to it having bought and paid for it. Any one and every one is owner of the library who can read the same through all the varieties of tongues and subjects and styles, and in whom they enter with ease and take residence and force toward paternity and maternity, and make supple and powerful and rich and large.... These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them. In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books and newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or anything to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies, is a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially, it is so great it must never be made ridiculous. Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed ... but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air, and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are most beautiful without ornament ... Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology. Clean and vigorous children are jetted and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day ... Great genius and the people of these states must never be demeaned to romances. As soon as histories
are properly told there is no more need of romances.

The great poets are also to be known by the absence in them of tricks and by the justification of perfect personal candor. Then folks echo a new cheap joy and a divine voice leaping from their brains: How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor. Henceforth let no man of us lie, for we have seen that openness wins the inner and outer world and that there is no single exception, and that never since our earth gathered itself in a mass have deceit or subterfuge or prevarication attracted its smallest particle or the faintest tinge of a shade--and that through the enveloping wealth and rank of a state or the whole republic of states a sneak or sly person shall be discovered and despised ... and that the soul has never once been fooled and never can be fooled ... and thrift without the loving nod of the soul is only a foetid puff ... and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite or star, nor upon the asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in that condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life, nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality, nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth.

Extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health, large hope and comparison and fondness for women and children, large
alimentiveness and destructiveness and causality, with a perfect sense
of the oneness of nature and the propriety of the same spirit applied
to human affairs ... these are called up of the float of the brain of
the world to be parts of the greatest poet from his birth out of his
mother's womb and from her birth out of her mother's. Caution seldom
goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen was the
citizen who applied himself to solid gains and did well for himself
and for his family and completed a lawful life without debt or crime.
The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the
economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than
to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the
latch of the gate. The premises of the prudence of life are not
the hospitality of it or the ripeness and harvest of it. Beyond the
independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money, and of a
few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil
owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing
and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great
being as a man is to the toss and pallor of years of money-making with
all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceits
and underhanded dodgings, or infinitesimals of parlors, or shameless
stuffing while others starve ... and all the loss of the bloom and
odor of the earth and of the flowers and atmosphere and of the sea,
and of the true taste of the women and men you pass or have to do with
in youth or middle age, and the issuing sickness and desperate revolt
at the close of a life without elevation or naiveté, and the ghastly
chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great fraud
upon modern civilization and forethought, blotching the surface and
system which civilization undeniably drafts, and moistening with tears
the immense features it spreads and spreads with such velocity before
the reached kisses of the soul.... Still the right explanation
remains to be made about prudence. The prudence of the mere wealth and
respectability of the most esteemed life appears too faint for the eye
to observe at all when little and large alike drop quietly aside at
the thought of the prudence suitable for immortality. What is wisdom
that fills the thinness of a year or seventy or eighty years to wisdom
spaced out by ages and coming back at a certain time with strong
reinforcements and rich presents and the clear faces of wedding-guests
as far as you can look in every direction, running gaily toward you?
Only the soul is of itself ... all else has reference to what ensues.
All that a person does or thinks is of consequence. Not a move can a
man or woman make that effects him or her in a day or a month or any
part of the direct lifetime or the hour of death but the same affects
him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The
indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit
receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one
name of word or deed ... not of venereal sores or discolorations ...
not the privacy of the onanist ... not of the putrid veins of gluttons
or rumdrinkers ... not peculation or cunning or betrayal or murder ...
no serpentine poison of those that seduce women ... not the foolish
yielding of women ... not prostitution ... not of any depravity of
young men ... not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means ...
not any nastiness of appetite ... not any harshness of officers to
men or judges to prisoners or fathers to sons or sons to fathers or
of husbands to wives or bosses to their boys ... not of greedy looks
or malignant wishes ... nor any of the wiles practised by people upon
themselves ... ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme but
it is duly realized and returned, and that returned in further
performances ... and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity
or personal force ever be anything else than the profundest reason,
whether it bring argument to hand or no. No specification is necessary
... to add or subtract or divide is in vain. Little or big, learned
or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the
first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it,
all that a male or female does that is vigorous and benevolent and
clean is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of
the universe and through the whole scope of it for ever. If the savage
or felon is wise it is well ... if the greatest poet or savan is wise
it is simply the same ... if the President or chief justice is wise it
is the same ... if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it is no more
or less ... if the prostitute is wise it is no more nor less. The
interest will come round ... all will come round. All the best actions
of war and peace ... all help given to relatives and strangers and the
poor and old and sorrowful and young children and widows and the sick,
and to all shunned persons ... all furtherance of fugitives and of the
escape of slaves ... all the self-denial that stood steady and aloof
on wrecks and saw others take the seats of the boats ... all offering
of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake
or opinion's sake ... all pains of enthusiasts scoffed at by their
neighbors ... all the vast sweet love and precious sufferings of
mothers ... all honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded
... all the grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose
fragments of annals we inherit ... and all the good of the hundreds of
far mightier and more ancient nations unknown to us by name or date or
location ... all that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or
no ... all that has at any time been well suggested out of the divine
heart of man or by the divinity of his mouth or by the shaping of his
great hands ... and all that is well thought or done this day on any
part of the surface of the globe ... or on any of the wandering stars
or fixed stars by those there as we are here ... or that is henceforth
to be well thought or done by you whoever you are, or by any
one--these singly and wholly inured at their time and inure now and
will inure always to the identities from which they sprung or shall
spring ... Did you guess any of them lived only its moment? The world
does not so exist ... no parts palpable or impalpable so exist ... no
result exists now without being from its long antecedent result,
and that from its antecedent, and so backward without the farthest
mentionable spot coming a bit nearer the beginning than any other
spot.... Whatever satisfies the soul is truth. The prudence of the
greatest poet answers at last the craving and glut of the soul, is
not contemptuous of less ways of prudence if they conform to its ways,
puts off nothing, permits no let-up for its own case or any case, has
no particular sabbath or judgment-day, divides not the living from
the dead or the righteous from the unrighteous, is satisfied with the
present, matches every thought or act by its correlative, knows no
possible forgiveness or deputed atonement ... knows that the young man
who composedly perilled his life and lost it has done exceeding well
for himself, while the man who has not perilled his life and retains
to old age in riches and ease has perhaps achieved nothing for himself
worth mentioning ... and that only that person has no great prudence
to learn who has learnt to prefer real longlived things, and favors
body and soul the same, and perceives the indirect assuredly following
the direct, and what evil or good he does leaping onward and waiting
to meet him again--and who in his spirit in any emergency whatever
neither hurries or avoids death.

The direct trial of him who would be the greatest poet is to-day. If
he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic
tides ... and if he does not attract his own land body and soul to
himself, and hang on its neck with incomparable love and plunge his
Semitic muscle into its merits and demerits ... and if he be not
himself the age transfigured ... and if to him is not opened the
eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations and
processes and animate and inanimate forms, and which is the bond of
time, and rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness
in the swimming shape of to-day, and is held by the ductile anchors
of life, and makes the present spot the passage from what was to what
shall be, and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an
hour and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave--let him
merge in the general run and wait his development.... Still the final
test of poems or any character or work remains. The prescient poet
projects himself centuries ahead and judges performer or performance
after the changes of time. Does it live through them? Does it still
hold on untired? Will the same style and the direction of genius to
similar points be satisfactory now? Has no new discovery in science or
arrival at superior planes of thought and judgment and behavior fixed
him or his so that either can be looked down upon? Have the marches of
tens and hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the
right hand and the left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and long
after he is buried? Does the young man think often of him? and the
young woman think often of him? and do the middle aged and the old
think of him?

A great poem is for ages and ages in common, and for all degrees and
complexions, and all departments and sects, and for a woman as much as
a man and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man
or woman but rather a beginning. Has any one fancied he could sit at
last under some due authority and rest satisfied with explanations and
realize and be content and full? To no such terminus does the greatest
poet bring ... he brings neither cessation or sheltered fatness and
ease. The touch of him tells in action. Whom he takes he takes
with firm sure grasp into live regions previously unattained ...

thenceforward is no rest ... they see the space and ineffable sheen
that turn the old spots and lights into dead vacuums. The companion
of him beholds the birth and progress of stars and learns one of the
meanings. Now there shall be a man cohered out of tumult and chaos ...
the elder encourages the younger and shows him how ... they too shall
launch off fearlessly together till the new world fits an orbit for
itself and looks unabashed on the lesser orbits of the stars and
sweeps through the ceaseless rings and shall never be quiet again.

There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait
awhile ... perhaps a generation or two ... dropping off by degrees.

A superior breed shall take their place ... the gangs of kosmos and
prophets _en masse_ shall take their place. A new order shall arise
and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own
priest. The churches built under their umbrage shall be the churches
of men and women. Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects to-day, symptoms of the past and future.... They shall not deign to defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.

The English language befriends the grand American expression ... it is brawny enough and limber and full enough ... on the tough stock of a race who through all change of circumstance was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance ... it is the dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh express the inexpressible.

No great literature nor any like style of behavior or oratory or social intercourse or household arrangements or public institutions or the treatment of bosses of employed people, nor executive detail or detail of the army and navy, nor spirit of legislation or courts or police or tuition or architecture or songs or amusements or the costumes of young men, can long elude the jealous and passionate instinct of American standards. Whether or no the sign appears from
the mouths of the people, it throbs a live interrogation in every
freeman's and freewoman's heart after that which passes by or this
built to remain. Is it uniform with my country? Are its disposals
without ignomimous distinctions? Is it for the ever growing communes
of brothers and lovers, large, well-united, proud beyond the old
models, generous beyond all models? Is it something grown fresh out of
the fields or drawn from the sea for use to me today here? I know
that what answers for me an American must answer for any individual or
nation that serves for a part of my materials. Does this answer? or is
it without reference to universal needs? or sprung of the needs of
the less developed society of special ranks? or old needs of pleasure
overlaid by modern science or forms? Does this acknowledge liberty
with audible and absolute acknowledgment, and set slavery at nought
for life and death? Will it help breed one goodshaped and wellhung
man, and a woman to be his perfect and independent mate? Does it
improve manners? Is it for the nursing of the young of the republic?
Does it solve readily with the sweet milk of the nipples of the
breasts of the mother of many children? Has it too the old ever-fresh
forbearance and impartiality? Does it look for the same love on the
last born and on those hardening toward stature, and on the errant,
and on those who disdain all strength of assault outside their own?

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away. The
coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great
can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great. The
swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float
off and leave no remembrance. America prepares with composure and
goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect
that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist,
the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite ... they are not
unappreciated ... they fall in their place and do their work. The soul
of the nation also does its work. No disguise can pass on it ... no
disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only
towards as good as itself and toward the like of itself will it
advance half-way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has
the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and
wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of
its poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If
the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his
country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.

[Footnote A: Walt Whitman (1819-1892), the most original of American
poets, was born in West Hills, Long Island, educated in the Brooklyn
Public Schools, and apprenticed to a printer. As a youth he taught
in a country school, and later went into journalism in New York,
Brooklyn, and New Orleans. The first edition of "Leaves of Grass"
appeared in 1855, with the remarkable preface here printed. During the
war he acted as a volunteer nurse in the army hospitals, and, when it
closed, he became a clerk in the government service at Washington. He
continued to write almost till his death.]

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
History, within a hundred years in Germany, and within sixty years in France, has undergone a transformation owing to a study of literatures.

The discovery has been made that a literary work is not a mere play of the imagination, the isolated caprice of an excited brain, but a transcript of contemporary manners and customs and the sign of a particular state of intellect. The conclusion derived from this is that, through literary monuments, we can retrace the way in which men felt and thought many centuries ago. This method has been tried and found successful.

We have meditated over these ways of feeling and thinking and have accepted them as facts of prime significance. We have found that they were dependent on most important events, that they explain these, and that these explain them, and that henceforth it was necessary to give them their place in history, and one of the highest. This place has been assigned to them, and hence all is changed in history--the aim, the method, the instrumentalities, and the conceptions of laws and of causes. It is this change as now going on, and which must continue to go on, that is here attempted to be set forth.
On turning over the large stiff pages of a folio volume, or the yellow leaves of a manuscript, in short, a poem, a code of laws, a confession of faith, what is your first comment? You say to yourself that the work before you is not of its own creation. It is simply a mold like a fossil shell, an imprint similar to one of those forms embedded in a stone by an animal which once lived and perished. Beneath the shell was an animal and behind the document there was a man. Why do you study the shell unless to form some idea of the animal? In the same way do you study the document in order to comprehend the man; both shell and document are dead fragments and of value only as indications of the complete living being. The aim is to reach this being; this is what you strive to reconstruct. It is a mistake to study the document as if it existed alone by itself. That is treating things merely as a pedant, and you subject yourself to the illusions of a book-worm.

At bottom mythologies and languages are not existences; the only realities are human beings who have employed words and imagery adapted to their organs and to suit the original cast of their intellects. A creed is nothing in itself. Who made it? Look at this or that portrait of the sixteenth century, the stern, energetic features of an archbishop or of an English martyr. Nothing exists except through the individual; it is necessary to know the individual himself. Let the parentage of creeds be established, or the classification of poems, or the growth of constitutions, or the transformations of idioms, and we have only cleared the ground. True history begins when the historian has discerned beyond the mists of ages the living, active man, endowed with passions, furnished with habits, special in voice, feature, gesture and costume, distinctive and complete, like anybody that you
have just encountered in the street. Let us strive then, as far as possible, to get rid of this great interval of time which prevents us from observing the man with our eyes, _the eyes of our own head_. What revelations do we find in the calendared leaves of a modern poem? A modern poet, a man like De Musset, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, or Heine, graduated from a college and traveled, wearing a dress-coat and gloves, favored by ladies, bowing fifty times and uttering a dozen witticisms in an evening, reading daily newspapers, generally occupying an apartment on the second story, not over-cheerful on account of his nerves, and especially because, in this dense democracy in which we stifle each other, the discredit of official rank exaggerates his pretensions by raising his importance, and, owing to the delicacy of his personal sensations, leading him to regard himself as a Deity. Such is what we detect behind modern _meditations_ and _sonnets_.

Again, behind a tragedy of the seventeenth century there is a poet, one, for example, like Racine, refined, discreet, a courtier, a fine talker, with majestic perruque and ribboned shoes, a monarchist and zealous Christian, "God having given him the grace not to blush in any society on account of zeal for his king or for the Gospel," clever in interesting the monarch, translating into proper French "the _gaulois_ of Amyot," deferential to the great, always knowing how to keep his place in their company, assiduous and respectful at Marly as at Versailles, amid the formal creations of a decorative landscape and the reverential bows, graces, intrigues, and fineness of the braided seigniors Who get up early every morning to obtain the reversion of an
office, together with the charming ladies who count on their fingers
the pedigrees which entitle them to a seat on a footstool. On this
point consult Saint-Simon and the engravings of Perelle, the same as
you have just consulted Balzac and the water-color drawings of Eugene
Lami.

In like manner, on reading a Greek tragedy, our first care is
to figure to ourselves the Greeks, that is to say, men who lived
half-naked in the gymnasia or on a public square under a brilliant
sky, in full view of the noblest and most delicate landscape, busy in
rendering their bodies strong and agile, in conversing together, in
arguing, in voting, in carrying out patriotic piracies, and yet idle
and temperate, the furniture of their houses consisting of three
earthen jars and their food of two pots of anchovies preserved in oil,
served by slaves who afford them the time to cultivate their minds and
to exercise their limbs, with no other concern that that of having
the most beautiful city, the most beautiful processions, the most
beautiful ideas, and the most beautiful men. In this respect, a statue
like the “Meleager” or the “Theseus” of the Parthenon, or again a
sight of the blue and lustrous Mediterranean, resembling a silken
tunic out of which islands arise like marble bodies, together with
a dozen choice phrases selected from the works of Plato and
Aristophanes, teach us more than any number of dissertations and
commentaries.

And so again, in order to understand an Indian Purana, one must begin
by imagining the father of a family who, “having seen a son on his
son's knees," follows the law and, with ax and pitcher, seeks solitude under a banyan tree, talks no more, multiplies his fastings, lives naked with four fires around him under the fifth fire, that terrible sun which endlessly devours and resuscitates all living things; who fixes his imagination in turn for weeks at a time on the foot of Brahma, then on his knee, on his thigh, on his navel, and so on, until, beneath the strain of this intense meditation, hallucinations appear, when all the forms of being, mingling together and transformed into each other, oscillate to and fro in this vertiginous brain until the motionless man, with suspended breath and fixed eyeballs, beholds the universe melting away like vapor over the vacant immensity of the Being in which he hopes for absorption. In this case the best of teachings would be a journey in India; but, for lack of a better one, take the narratives of travelers along with works in geography, botany, and ethnology. In any event, there must be the same research. A language, a law, a creed, is never other than an abstraction; the perfect thing is found in the active man, the visible corporeal figure which eats, walks, fights, and labors. Set aside the theories of constitutions and their results, of religions and their systems, and try to observe men in their workshops or offices, in their fields along with their own sky and soil, with their own homes, clothes, occupations and repasts, just as you see them when, on landing in England or in Italy, you remark their features and gestures, their roads and their inns, the citizen on his promenades and the workman taking a drink. Let us strive as much as possible to supply the place of the actual, personal, sensible observation that is no longer practicable, this being the only way in which we can really know the man; let us make the past present; to judge of an object it must be
present; no experience can be had of what is absent. Undoubtedly, this sort of reconstruction is always imperfect; only an imperfect judgment can be based on it; but let us do the best we can; incomplete knowledge is better than none at all, or than knowledge which is erroneous, and there is no other way of obtaining knowledge approximatively of bygone times than by _seeing_ approximatively the men of former times.

Such is the first step in history. This step was taken in Europe at the end of the last century when the imagination took fresh flight under the auspices of Lessing and Walter Scott, and a little later in France under Chateaubriand, Augustin Thierry, Michelet, and others. We now come to the second step.

II

On observing the visible man with your own eyes what do you try to find in him? The invisible man. These words which your ears catch, those gestures, those airs of the head, his attire and sensible operations of all kinds, are, for you, merely so many expressions; these express something, a soul. An inward man is hidden beneath the outward man, and the latter simply manifests the former. You have observed the house in which he lives, his furniture, his costume, in order to discover his habits and tastes, the degree of his refinement or rusticity, his extravagance or economy, his follies or his cleverness. You have listened to his conversation and noted the
inflexions of his voice, the attitudes he has assumed, so as to judge
of his spirit, self-abandonment or gayety, his energy or his rigidity.

You consider his writings, works of art, financial and political
schemes, with a view to measure the reach and limits of his
intelligence, his creative power and self-command, to ascertain the
usual order, kind, and force of his conceptions, in what way he
thinks and how he resolves. All these externals are so many avenues
converging to one center, and you follow these only to reach that
center; here is the real man, namely, that group of faculties and of
sentiments which produces the rest. Behold a new world, an infinite
world; for each visible action involves an infinite train of
reasonings and emotions, new or old sensations which have combined to
bring this into light and which, like long ledges of rock sunk deep
in the earth, have cropped out above the surface and attained their
level. It is this subterranean world which forms the second aim, the
special object of the historian. If his critical education suffices,
he is able to discriminate under every ornament in architecture, under
every stroke of the brush in a picture, under each phrase of literary
composition, the particular sentiment out of which the ornament, the
stroke, and the phrase have sprung; he is a spectator of the inward
drama which has developed itself in the breast of the artist or
writer; the choice of words, the length or shortness of the period,
the species of metaphor, the accent of a verse, the chain of
reasoning--all are to him an indication; while his eyes are reading
the text his mind and soul are following the steady flow and
ever-changing series of emotions and conceptions from which this text
has issued; he is working out its _psychology_. Should you desire to
study this operation, regard the promoter and model of all the high
culture of the epoch, Goethe, who, before composing his "Iphigenia" spent days in making drawings of the most perfect statues and who, at last, his eyes filled with the noble forms of antique scenery and his mind penetrated by the harmonious beauty of antique life, succeeded in reproducing internally, with such exactness, the habits and yearnings of Greek imagination as to provide us with an almost twin sister of the "Antigone" of Sophocles and of the goddesses of Phidias. This exact and demonstrated divination of bygone sentiments has, in our days, given a new life to history. There was almost complete ignorance of this in the last century; men of every race and of every epoch were represented as about alike, the Greek, the barbarian, the Hindoo, the man of the Renaissance and the man of the eighteenth century, cast in the same mold and after the same pattern, and after a certain abstract conception which served for the whole human species. There was a knowledge of man but not of men. There was no penetration into the soul itself; nothing of the infinite diversity and wonderful complexity of souls had been detected; it was not known that the moral organization of a people or of an age is as special and distinct as the physical structure of a family of plants or of an order of animals. History to-day, like zoology, has found its anatomy, and whatever branch of it is studied, whether philology, languages or mythologies, it is in this way that labor must be given to make it produce new fruit. Among so many writers who, since Herder, Ottfried Mueller, and Goethe have steadily followed and rectified this great effort, let the reader take two historians and two works, one "The Life and Letters of Cromwell" by Carlyle, and the other the "Port Royal" of Sainte-Beuve. He will see how precisely, how clearly, and how profoundly we detect the soul of a man beneath his actions and
works; how, under an old general and in place of an ambitious man vulgarly hypocritical, we find one tormented by the disordered reveries of a gloomy imagination, but practical in instinct and faculties, thoroughly English and strange and incomprehensible to whoever has not studied the climate and the race; how, with about a hundred scattered letters and a dozen or more mutilated speeches, we follow him from his farm and his team to his general's tent and to his Protector's throne, in his transformation and in his development, in his struggles of conscience and in his statesman's resolutions, in such a way that the mechanism of his thought and action becomes visible and the ever renewed and fitful tragedy, within which wracked this great gloomy soul, passes like the tragedies of Shakespeare into the souls of those who behold them. We see how, behind convent disputes and the obstinacy of nuns, we recover one of the great provinces of human psychology; how fifty or more characters, rendered invisible through the uniformity of a narration careful of the proprieties, came forth in full daylight, each standing out clear in its countless diversities; how, underneath theological dissertations and monotonous sermons, we discern the throbings of ever-breathing hearts, the excitements and depressions of the religious life, the unforeseen reaction and pell-mell stir of natural feeling, the infiltrations of surrounding society, the intermittent triumphs of grace, presenting so many shades of difference that the fullest description and most flexible style can scarcely garner in the vast harvest which the critic has caused to germinate in this abandoned field. And the same elsewhere. Germany, with its genius, so pliant, so broad, so prompt in transformations, so fitted for the reproduction of the remotest and strangest states of human thought; England, with its
matter-of-fact mind, so suited to the grappling with moral problems, to making them clear by figures, weights, and measures, by geography and statistics, by texts and common sense; France, at length, with its Parisian culture and drawing-room habits, with its unceasing analysis of characters and of works, with its ever ready irony at detecting weaknesses, with its skilled finesse in discriminating shades of thought--all have plowed over the same ground, and we now begin to comprehend that no region of history exists in which this deep sub-soil should not be reached if we would secure adequate crops between the furrows.

Such is the second step, and we are now in train to follow it out. Such is the proper aim of contemporary criticism. No one has done this work so judiciously and on so grand a scale as Sainte-Beuve; in this respect, we are all his pupils; literary, philosophic, and religious criticism in books, and even in the newspapers, is to-day entirely changed by his method. Ulterior evolution must start from this point. I have often attempted to expose what this evolution is; in my opinion, it is a new road open to history and which I shall strive to describe more in detail.

III

After having observed in a man and noted down one, two, three, and then a multitude of sentiments, do these suffice and does your knowledge of him seem complete? Does a memorandum book constitute a
psychology? It is not a psychology, and here, as elsewhere, the search for causes must follow the collection of facts. It matters not what the facts may be, whether physical or moral, they always spring from causes; there are causes for ambition, for courage, for veracity, as well as for digestion, for muscular action, and for animal heat. Vice and virtue are products like vitriol and sugar; every complex fact grows out of the simple facts with which it is affiliated and on which it depends. We must therefore try to ascertain what simple facts underlie moral qualities the same as we ascertain those that underlie physical qualities, and, for example, let us take the first fact that comes to hand, a religious system of music, that of a Protestant church. A certain inward cause has inclined the minds of worshipers toward these grave, monotonous melodies, a cause much greater than its effect; that is to say, a general conception of the veritable outward forms of worship which man owes to God; it is this general conception which has shaped the architecture of the temple, cast out statues, dispensed with paintings, effaced ornaments, shortened ceremonies, confined the members of a congregation to high pews which cut off the view, and governed the thousand details of decoration, posture, and all other externals. This conception itself again proceeds from a more general cause, an idea off human conduct in general, inward and outward, prayers, actions, dispositions of every sort that man is bound to maintain toward the Deity; it is this which has enthroned the doctrine of grace, lessened the importance of the clergy, transformed the sacraments, suppressed observances, and changed the religion of discipline into one of morality. This conception, in its turn, depends on a third one, still more general, that of moral perfection as this is found in a perfect God, the impeccable judge, the stern overseer,
who regards every soul as sinful, meriting punishment, incapable of virtue or of salvation, except through a stricken conscience which He provokes and the renewal of the heart which He brings about. Here is the master conception, consisting of duty erected into the absolute sovereign of human life, and which prostrates all other ideals at the feet of the moral ideal. Here we reach what is deepest in man; for, to explain this conception, we must consider the race he belongs to, say the German, the Northman, the formation and character of his intellect, his ways in general of thinking and feeling, that tardiness and frigidity of sensation which keeps him from rashly and easily falling tinder the empire of sensual enjoyments, that bluntness of taste, that irregularity and those outbursts of conception which arrest in him the birth of refined and harmonious forms and methods; that disdain of appearances, that yearning for truth, that attachment to abstract, bare ideas which develop conscience in him at the expense of everything else. Here the search comes to an end. We have reached a certain primitive disposition, a particular trait belonging to sensations of all kinds, to every conception peculiar to an age or to a race, to characteristics inseparable from every idea and feeling that stir in the human breast. Such are the grand causes, for these are universal and permanent causes, present in every case and at every moment, everywhere and always active, indestructible, and inevitably dominant in the end, since, whatever accidents cross their path being limited and partial, end in yielding to the obscure and incessant repetition of their energy; so that the general structure of things and all the main features of events are their work, all religions and philosophies, all poetic and industrial systems, all forms of society and of the family, all, in fine, being imprints bearing the stamp of
There is, then, a system in human ideas and sentiments, the prime motor of which consists in general traits, certain characteristics of thought and feeling common to men belonging to a particular race, epoch, or country. Just as crystals in mineralogy, whatever their diversity, proceed from a few simple physical forms, so do civilizations in history, however these may differ, proceed from a few spiritual forms. One is explained by a primitive geometrical element as the other is explained by a primitive psychological element. In order to comprehend the entire group of mineralogical species we must first study a regular solid in the general, its facets and angles, and observe in this abridged form the innumerable transformations of which it is susceptible. In like manner, if we would comprehend the entire group of historic varieties we must consider beforehand a human soul in the general, with its two or three fundamental faculties, and, in this abridgment, observe the principal forms it may present. This sort of ideal tableau, the geometrical as well as psychological, is not very complex, and we soon detect the limitations of organic conditions to which civilizations, the same as crystals, are forcibly confined. What do we find in man at the point of departure? Images or representations of objects, namely, that which floats before him internally, lasts a certain time, is effaced, and then returns after contemplating this or that tree or animal, in short, some sensible object. This forms the material basis of the rest and the development
of this material basis is twofold, speculative or positive, just as
these representations end in a _general conception_ or in an _active
resolution_. Such is man, summarily abridged. It is here, within these
narrow confines, that human diversities are encountered, now in the
matter itself and again in the primordial twofold development. However
insignificant in the elements they are of vast significance in the
mass, while the slightest change in the factors leads to gigantic
changes in the results. According as the representation is distinct,
as if stamped by a coining-press, or confused and blurred; according
as it concentrates in itself a larger or smaller number of the
characters of an object; according as it is violent and accompanied
with impulsions or tranquil and surrounded with calmness, so are
all the operations and the whole running-gear of the human machine
entirely transformed. In like manner, again, according as the
ulterior development of the representation varies, so does the whole
development of the man vary. If the general conception in which this
ends is merely a dry notation in Chinese fashion, language becomes
a kind of algebra, religion and poetry are reduced to a minimum,
philosophy is brought down to a sort of moral and practical common
sense, science to a collection of recipes, classifications, and
utilitarian mnemonics, the mind itself taking a whole positive
turn. If, on the contrary, the general conception in which the
representation culminates is a poetic and figurative creation, a
living symbol, as with the Aryan races, language becomes a sort of
shaded and tinted epic in which each word stands as a personage,
poesy and religion assume magnificent and inexhaustible richness,
and metaphysics develops with breadth and subtlety without
any consideration of positive bearings; the whole intellect.
notwithstanding the deviation and inevitable weaknesses of the effort, is captivated by the beautiful and sublime, thus conceiving an ideal type which, through its nobleness and harmony, gathers to itself all the affections and enthusiasms of humanity. If, on the other hand, the general conception in which the representation culminates is poetic but abrupt, is reached not gradually but by sudden intuition, if the original operation is not a regular development but a violent explosion--then, as with the semitic races, metaphysical power is wanting; the religious conception becomes that of a royal God, consuming and solitary; science cannot take shape, the intellect grows rigid and too headstrong to reproduce the delicate ordering of nature; poetry cannot give birth to aught but a series of vehement, grandiose exclamations, while language no longer renders the concatenation of reasoning and eloquence, man being reduced to lyric enthusiasm, to ungovernable passion, and to narrow and fanatical action. It is in this interval between the particular representation and the universal conception that the germs of the greatest human differences are found. Some races, like the classic, for example, pass from the former to the latter by a graduated scale of ideas regularly classified and more and more general; others, like the Germanic, traverse the interval in leaps, with uniformity and after prolonged and uncertain groping. Others, like the Romans and the English, stop at the lowest stages; others, like the Hindoos and Germans, mount to the uppermost.

If, now, after considering the passage from the representation to the idea, we regard the passage from the representation to the resolution, we find here elementary differences of like importance and of the same
order, according as the impression is vivid, as in Southern climes,
or faint, as in Northern climes, as it ends in instantaneous action
as with barbarians, or tardily as with civilized nations, as it
is capable or not of growth, of inequality, of persistence and of
association. The entire system of human passion, all the risks of
public peace and security, all labor and action, spring from these
sources. It is the same with the other primordial differences; their
effects embrace an entire civilization, and may be likened to those
algebraic formulae which, within narrow bounds, describe beforehand
the curve of which these form the law. Not that this law always
prevails to the end; sometimes, perturbations arise, but, even when
this happens, it is not because the law is defective, but because it
has not operated alone. New elements have entered into combination
with old ones; powerful foreign forces have interfered to oppose
primitive forces. The race has emigrated, as with the ancient
Aryans, and the change of climate has led to a change in the whole
intellectual economy and structure of society. A people has been
conquered like the Saxon nation, and the new political structure
has imposed on its customs, capacities, and desires which it did not
possess. The nation has established itself permanently in the midst
of downtrodden and threatening subjects, as with the ancient Spartans,
while the necessity of living, as in an armed encampment, has
violently turned the whole moral and social organization in one unique
direction. At all events, the mechanism of human history is like this.

We always find the primitive mainspring consisting of some widespread
tendency of soul and intellect, either innate and natural to the race
or acquired by it and due to some circumstance forced upon it. These
great given mainsprings gradually produce their effects, that is to
say, at the end of a few centuries they place the nation in a new
religious, literary, social, and economic state; a new condition
which, combined with their renewed effort, produces another condition,
sometimes a good one, sometimes a bad one, now slowly, now
rapidly, and so on; so that the entire development of each distinct
civilization may be considered as the effect of one permanent force
which, at every moment, varies its work by modifying the circumstances
where it acts.

V

Three different sources contribute to the production of this
elementary moral state, _race, environment_, and _epoch._ What we call
_race_ consists of those innate and hereditary dispositions which man
brings with him into the world and which are generally accompanied
with marked differences of temperament and of bodily structure. They
vary in different nations.

Naturally, there are varieties of men as there are varieties of
cattle and horses, some brave and intelligent, and others timid and of
limited capacity; some capable of superior conceptions and creations,
and others reduced to rudimentary ideas and contrivances; some
specially fitted for certain works, and more richly furnished with
certain instincts, as we see in the better endowed species of dogs,
some for running and others for fighting, some for hunting and others
for guarding houses and flocks. We have here a distinct force; so
distinct that, in spite of the enormous deviations which both the
other motors impress upon it, we still recognize, and which a race
like the Aryan people, scattered from the Ganges to the Hebrides,
established tender all climates, ranged along every degree of
civilization, transformed by thirty centuries of revolutions, shows
nevertheless in its languages, in its religions, in its literatures,
and in its philosophies, the community of blood and of intellect
which still to-day binds together all its offshoots. However they may
differ, their parentage is not lost; barbarism, culture and grafting,
differences of atmosphere and of soil, fortunate or unfortunate
occurrences, have operated in vain; the grand characteristics of the
original form have lasted, and we find that the two or three leading
features of the primitive imprint are again apparent under the
subsequent imprints with which time has overlaid them. There is
nothing surprising in this extraordinary tenacity. Although the
immensity of the distance allows us to catch only a glimpse in a
dubious light of the origin of species,[1] the events of history throw
sufficient light on events anterior to history to explain the almost
unshaken solidity of primordial traits. At the moment of encountering
them, fifteen, twenty, and thirty centuries before our era, in an
Aryan, Egyptian, or Chinese, they represent the work of a much greater
number of centuries, perhaps the work of many myriads of centuries.
For, as soon as an animal is born it must adapt itself to its
surroundings; it breathes in another way, it renews itself
differently, it is otherwise stimulated according as the atmosphere,
the food, and the temperature are different. A different climate
and situation create different necessities and hence activities of a
different kind; and hence, again, a system of different habits, and,
finally, a system of different aptitudes and instincts. Man, thus compelled to put himself in equilibrium with circumstances, contracts a corresponding temperament and character, and his character, like his temperament, are acquisitions all the more stable because of the outward impression being more deeply imprinted in him by more frequent repetitions and transmitted to his offspring by more ancient heredity.

So that at each moment of time the character of a people may be considered as a summary of all antecedent actions and sensations; that is to say, as a quantity and as a weighty mass, not infinite, since all things in nature are limited, but disproportionate to the rest and almost impossible to raise, since each minute of an almost infinite past has contributed to render it heavier, and, in order to turn the scale, it would require, on the other side, a still greater accumulation of actions and sensations. Such is the first and most abundant source of these master faculties from which historic events are derived; and we see at once that if it is powerful it is owing to its not being a mere source, but a sort of lake, and like a deep reservoir wherein other sources have poured their waters for a multitude of centuries.

When we have thus verified the internal structure of a race we must consider the _environment_ in which it lives. For man is not alone in the world; nature envelops him and other men surround him; accidental and secondary folds come and overspread the primitive and permanent fold, while physical or social circumstances derange or complete the natural groundwork surrendered to them. At one time climate has had its effect. Although the history of Aryan nations can be only
obscurely traced from their common country to their final abodes, we can nevertheless affirm that the profound difference which is apparent between the Germanic races on the one hand, and the Hellenic and Latin races on the other, proceeds in great part from the differences between the countries in which they have established themselves—the former in cold and moist countries, in the depths of gloomy forests and swamps, or on the borders of a wild ocean, confined to melancholic or rude sensations, inclined to drunkenness and gross feeding, leading a militant and carnivorous life; the latter, on the contrary, living amidst the finest scenery, alongside of a brilliant, sparkling sea inviting navigation and commerce, exempt from the grosser cravings of the stomach, disposed at the start to social habits and customs, to political organization, to the sentiments and faculties which develop the art of speaking, the capacity for enjoyment and invention in the sciences, in art, and in literature. At another time, political events have operated, as in the two Italian civilizations: the first one tending wholly to action, to conquest, to government, and to legislation, through the primitive situation of a city of refuge, a frontier _emporium_, and of an armed aristocracy which, importing and enrolling foreigners and the vanquished under it, sets two hostile bodies facing each other, with no outlet for its internal troubles and rapacious instincts but systematic warfare; the second one, excluded from unity and political ambition on a grand scale by the permanency of its municipal system, by the cosmopolite situation of its pope and by the military intervention of neighboring states, and following the bent of its magnificent and harmonious genius, is wholly carried over to the worship of voluptuousness and beauty. Finally, at another time, social conditions have imposed their stamp as, eighteen centuries ago,
by Christianity, and twenty-five centuries ago, by Buddhism, when, around the Mediterranean as in Hindostan, the extreme effects of Aryan conquest and organization led to intolerable oppression, the crushing of the individual, utter despair, the whole world under the ban of a curse, with the development of metaphysics and visions, until man, in this dungeon of despondency, feeling his heart melt, conceived of abnegation, charity, tender love, gentleness, humility, human brotherhood, here in the idea of universal nothingness and there under that of the fatherhood of God. Look around at the regulative instincts and faculties implanted in a race; in brief, the turn of mind according to which it thinks and acts at the present day; we shall find most frequently that its work is due to one of these prolonged situations, to these enveloping circumstances, to these persistent gigantic pressures brought to bear on a mass of men who, one by one, and all collectively, from one generation to another, have been unceasingly bent and fashioned by them, in Spain a crusade of eight centuries against the Mohammedans, prolonged yet longer even to the exhaustion of the nation through the expulsion of the Moors, through the spoliation of the Jews, through the establishment of the Inquisition, through the Catholic wars; in England, a political establishment of eight centuries which maintains man erect and respectful, independent and obedient, all accustomed to struggling together in a body under the sanction of law; in France, a Latin organization which, at first imposed on docile barbarians, than leveled to the ground under the universal demolition, forms itself anew under the latent workings of national instinct, developing under hereditary monarchs and ending in a sort of equalized, centralized, administrative republic under dynasties exposed to revolutions. Such
are the most efficacious among the observable causes which mold the primitive man; they are to nations what education, pursuit, condition, and abode are to individuals, and seem to comprise all, since the external forces which fashion human matter, and by which the outward acts on the inward, are comprehended in them.

There is, nevertheless, a third order of causes, for, with the forces within and without, there is the work these have already produced together, which work itself contributes toward producing the ensuing work; beside the permanent impulsion and the given environment there is the acquired momentum. When national character and surrounding circumstances operate it is not on a _tabula rasa_, but on one already bearing imprints. According as this _tabula_ is taken at one or at another moment so is the imprint different, and this suffices to render the total effect different. Consider, for example, two moments of a literature or of an art, French tragedy under Corneille and under Voltaire, and Greek drama under AESchylus and under Euripides, Latin poetry under Lucretius and under Claudian, and Italian painting under Da Vinci and under Guido. Assuredly, there is no change of general conception at either of these two extreme points; ever the same human type must be portrayed or represented in action; the cast of the verse, the dramatic structure, the physical form have all persisted. But there is this among these differences, that one of the artists is a precursor and the other a successor, that the first one has no model and the second one has a model; that the former sees things face to face, and that the latter sees them through the intermediation of the former, that many departments of art have become more perfect, that
the simplicity and grandeur of the impression have diminished, that
what is pleasing and refined in form has augmented—in short, that
the first work has determined the second. In this respect, it is with
a people as with a plant; the same sap at the same temperature and
in the same soil produces, at different stages of its successive elaborations, different developments, buds, flowers, fruits, and seeds, in such a way that the condition of the following is always that of the preceding and is born of its death. Now, if you no longer regard a brief moment, as above, but one of those grand periods of development which embraces one or many centuries like the Middle Ages, or our last classic period, the conclusion is the same. A certain dominating conception has prevailed throughout; mankind, during two hundred years, during five hundred years, have represented to themselves a certain ideal figure of man, in mediaeval times the knight and the monk, in our classic period the courtier and refined talker; this creative and universal conception has monopolized the entire field of action and thought, and, after spreading its involuntary systematic works over the world, it languished and then died out, and now a new idea has arisen, destined to a like domination and to equally multiplied creations. Note here that the latter depends in part on the former, and that it is the former, which, combining its effect with those of national genius and surrounding circumstances, will impose their bent and their direction on new-born things. It is according to this law that great historic currents are formed, meaning by this, the long rule of a form of intellect or of a master idea, like that period of spontaneous creations called the Renaissance, or that period of oratorical classifications called the Classic Age, or that series of mystic systems called the Alexandrine and Christian
epoch, or that series of mythological efflorescences found at the
origins of Germany, India, and Greece. Here as elsewhere, we are
dealing merely with a mechanical problem: the total effect is a
compound wholly determined by the grandeur and direction of the forces
which produce it. The sole difference which separates these moral
problems from physical problems lies in this, that in the former the
directions and grandeur cannot be estimated by or stated in figures
with the same precision as in the latter. If a want, a faculty, is
a quantity capable of degrees, the same as pressure or weight, this
quantity is not measurable like that of the pressure or weight. We
cannot fix it in an exact or approximative formula; we can obtain or
give of it only a literary impression; we are reduced to nothing and
citing the prominent facts which make it manifest and which nearly, or
roughly, indicate about what grade on the scale it must be ranged at.
And yet, notwithstanding the methods of notation are not the same
in the moral sciences as in the physical sciences, nevertheless,
as matter is the same in both, and is equally composed of forces,
directions, and magnitudes, we can still show that in one as in the
other, the final effect takes place according to the same law. This is
great or small according as the fundamental forces are great or small
and act more or less precisely in the same sense, according as the
distinct effects of race, environment and epoch combine to enforce
each other or combine to neutralize each other. Thus are explained the
long impotences and the brilliant successes which appear irregularly
and with no apparent reason in the life of a people; the causes of
these consist in internal concordances and contrarieties. There was
one of these concordances when, in the seventeenth century, the social
disposition and conversational spirit innate in France encountered
drawing-room formalities and the moment of oratorical analysis; when, in the nineteenth century, the flexible, profound genius of Germany encountered the age of philosophic synthesis and of cosmopolite criticism. One of these contrarieties happened when, in the seventeenth century, the blunt, isolated genius of England awkwardly tried to don the new polish of urbanity, and when, in the sixteenth century, the lucid, prosaic French intellect tried to gestate a living poesy. It is this secret concordance of creative forces which produced the exquisite courtesy and noble cast of literature under Louis XIV. and Bossuet, and the grandiose metaphysics and broad critical sympathy under Hegel and Goethe. It is this secret contrariety of creative forces which produced the literary incompleteness, the licentious plays, the abortive drama of Dryden and Wycherly, the poor Greek importations, the gropings, the minute beauties and fragments of Ronsard and the Pleiad. We may confidently affirm that the unknown creations toward which the current of coming ages is bearing up will spring from and be governed by these primordial forces; that, if these forces could be measured and computed we might deduce from them, as from a formula, the characters of future civilization; and that if, notwithstanding the evident rudeness of our notations, and the fundamental inexactitude of our measures, we would nowadays form some idea of our general destinies, we must base our conjectures on an examination of these forces. For, in enumerating them, we run through the full circle of active forces; and when the race, the environment, and the moment have been considered,—that is to say the inner mainspring, the pressure from without, and the impulsion already acquired,—we have exhausted not only all real causes but again all possible causes of movement.
There remains to be ascertained in what way these causes, applied to a nation or to a century, distribute their effects. Like a spring issuing from an elevated spot and diffusing its waters, according to the height, from ledge to ledge, until it finally reaches the low ground, so does the tendency of mind or soul in a people, due to race, epoch, or environment, diffuse itself in different proportions, and by regular descent, over the different series of facts which compose its civilization.[3] In preparing the geographical map of a country, starting at its watershed, we see the slopes, just below this common point, dividing themselves into five or six principal basins, and then each of the latter into several others, and so on until the whole country, with its thousands of inequalities of surface, is included in the ramifications of this network. In like manner, in preparing the psychological map of the events and sentiments belonging to a certain human civilization, we find at the start five or six well determined provinces--religion, art, philosophy, the state, the family, and industries; next, in each of these provinces, natural departments, and then finally, in each of these departments, still smaller territories until we arrive at those countless details of life which we observe daily in ourselves and around us. If, again, we examine and compare together these various groups of facts we at once find that they are composed of parts and that all have parts in common. Let us take first the three principal products of human intelligence--religion, art, and philosophy. What is a philosophy but a conception of nature and of its
primordial causes under the form of abstractions and formulas? What
underlies a religion and an art if not a conception of this same
nature, and of these same primordial causes, under the form of more
or less determinate symbols, and of more or less distinct personages,
with this difference, that in the first case we believe that they
exist, and in the second case that they do not exist. Let the reader
consider some of the great creations of the intellect in India, in
Scandinavia, in Persia, in Rome, in Greece, and he will find that art
everywhere is a sort of philosophy become sensible, religion a sort
of poem regarded as true, and philosophy a sort of art and religion,
desiccated and reduced to pure abstractions. There is, then, in the
center of each of these groups a common element, the conception of
the world and its origin, and if they differ amongst each other it is
because each combines with the common element a distinct element;
here the power of abstraction, there the faculty of personifying with
belief, and, finally, the talent for personifying without belief. Let
us now take the two leading products of human association, the Family
and the State. What constitutes the State other than the sentiment
of obedience by which a multitude of men collect together under the
authority of a chief? And what constitutes the Family other than the
sentiment of obedience by which a wife and children act together
under the direction of a father and husband? The Family is a natural,
primitive, limited state, as the State is an artificial, ulterior, and
expanded Family, while beneath the differences which arise from the
number, origin, and condition of its members, we distinguish, in the
small as in the large community, a like fundamental disposition of
mind which brings them together and unites them. Suppose, now, that
this common element receives from the environment, the epoch, and the
race peculiar characteristics, and it is clear that _all the groups_
into which it enters will be proportionately modified_. If the
sentiment of obedience is merely one of fear,[4] you encounter, as in
most of the Oriental states, the brutality of despotism, a prodigality
of vigorous punishments, the exploitation of the subject, servile
habits, insecurity of property, impoverished production, female
slavery, and the customs of the harem. If the sentiment of obedience
is rooted in the instinct of discipline, sociability, and honor,
you find, as in France, a complete military organization, a superb
administrative hierarchy, a weak public spirit with outbursts of
patriotism, the unhesitating docility of the subject along with
the hot-headedness of the revolutionist, the obsequiousness of the
courtier along with the reserve of the gentleman, the charm of refined
conversation along with home and family bickerings, conjugal equality
together with matrimonial incompatibilities under the necessary
constraints of the law. If, finally, the sentiment of obedience is
rooted in the instinct of subordination and in the idea of duty, you
perceive, as in Germanic nations, the security and contentment of
the household, the firm foundations of domestic life, the slow
and imperfect development of worldly matters, innate respect for
established rank, superstitious reverence for the past, maintenance
of social inequalities, natural and habitual deference to the law.
Similarly in a race, just as there is a difference of aptitude for
general ideas, so will its religion, art, and philosophy be different.
If man is naturally fitted for broader universal conceptions and
inclined at the same time to their derangement, through the nervous
irritability of an over-excited organization, we find, as in India, a
surprising richness of gigantic religious creations, a splendid bloom
of extravagant transparent epics, a strange concatenation of subtle, imaginative philosophic systems, all so intimately associated and so interpenetrated with a common sap, that we at once recognize them, by their amplitude, by their color, and by their disorder, as productions of the same climate and of the same spirit. If, on the contrary, the naturally sound and well-balanced man is content to restrict his conceptions to narrow bounds in order to cast them in more precise forms, we see, as in Greece, a theology of artists and narrators, special gods that are soon separated from objects and almost transformed at once into substantial personages, the sentiment of universal unity nearly effaced and scarcely maintained in the vague notion of destiny, a philosophy, rather than subtle and compact, grandiose and systematic, narrow metaphysically but incomparable in its logic, sophistry, and morality, a poesy and arts superior to anything we have seen in lucidity, naturalness, proportion, truth, and beauty. If, finally, man is reduced to narrow conceptions deprived of any speculative subtlety, and at the same time finds that he is absorbed and completely hardened by practical interests, we see, as in Rome, rudimentary deities, mere empty names, good for denoting the petty details of agriculture, generation, and the household, veritable marriage and farming labels, and, therefore, a null or borrowed mythology, philosophy, and poesy. Here, as elsewhere, comes in the law of mutual dependencies. A civilization is a living unit, the parts of which hold together the same as the parts of an organic body. Just as in an animal, the instincts, teeth, limbs, bones, and muscular apparatus are bound together in such a way that a variation of one determines a corresponding variation in the others, and out of which a skillful naturalist, with a few bits, imagines and reconstructs an
almost complete body, so, in a civilization, do religion, philosophy, the family scheme, literature and the arts form a system in which each local change involves a general change, so that an experienced historian, who studies one portion apart from the others, sees beforehand and partially predicts the characteristics of the rest. There is nothing vague in this dependence. The regulation of all this in the living body consists, first, of the tendency to manifest a certain primordial type, and, next, the necessity of its possessing organs which can supply its wants and put itself in harmony with itself in order to live. The regulation in a civilization consists in the presence in each great human creation of an elementary productor equally present in other surrounding creations, that is, some faculty and aptitude, some efficient and marked disposition, which, with its own peculiar character, introduces this with that into all operations in which it takes part, and which, according to its variations, causes variation in all the works in which it cooeperates.

VII

Having reached this point we can obtain a glimpse of the principal features of human transformations, and can now search for the general laws which regulate not only events, but classes of events; not only this religion or that literature, but the whole group of religions or of literatures. If, for example, it is admitted that a religion is a metaphysical poem associated with belief; if it is recognized, besides, that there are certain races and certain environments in which belief, poetic faculty, and metaphysical faculty display
themselves in common with unwonted vigor; if we consider that
Christianity and Buddhism were developed at periods of grand
systematizations and in the midst of sufferings like the oppression
which stirred up the fanatics of Cevennes; if, on the other hand, it
is recognized that primitive religions are born at the dawn of human
reason, during the richest expansion of human imagination, at times
of the greatest naïveté and of the greatest credulity; if we consider,
again, that Mohammedanism appeared along with the advent of poetic
prose and of the conception of material unity, amongst a people
destitute of science and at the moment of a sudden development of the
intellect--we might conclude that religion is born and declines, is
reformed and transformed, according as circumstances fortify and bring
together, with more or less precision and energy, its three generative
instincts; and we would then comprehend why religion is endemic in
India among specially exalted imaginative and philosophic intellects;
why it blooms out so wonderfully and so grandly in the Middle Ages,
in an oppressive society, amongst new languages and literature; why
it develops again in the sixteenth century with a new character and an
heroic enthusiasm, at the time of an universal renaissance and at the
awakening of the Germanic races; why it swarms out in so many bizarre
sects in the rude democracy of America and under the bureaucratic
despotism of Russia; why, in fine, it is seen spreading out in the
Europe of to-day in such different proportions and with such special
traits, according to such differences of race and of civilizations.
And so for every kind of human production, for letters, music, the
arts of design, philosophy, the sciences, state industries, and
the rest. Each has some moral tendency for its direct cause, or a
concurrence of moral tendencies; given the cause, it appears; the
cause withdrawn, it disappears; the weakness or intensity of the cause is the measure of its own weakness or intensity. It is bound to that like any physical phenomenon to its condition, like dew to the chilliness of a surrounding atmosphere, like dilatation to heat.
Couples exist in the moral world as they exist in the physical world, as rigorously linked together and as universally diffused. Whatever in one case produces, alters, or suppresses the first term, produces, alters, and suppresses the second term as a necessary consequence.
Whatever cools the surrounding atmosphere causes the fall of dew.
Whatever develops credulity, along with poetic conceptions of the universe, engenders religion. Thus have things come about, and thus will they continue to come about. As soon as the adequate and necessary condition of one of these vast apparitions becomes known to us our mind has a hold on the future as well as on the past. We can confidently state under what circumstances it will reappear, foretell without rashness many portions of its future history, and sketch with precaution some of the traits of its ulterior development.

VIII

History has reached this point at the present day, or rather it is nearly there, on the threshold of this inquest. The question as now stated is this: Given a literature, a philosophy, a society, an art, a certain group of arts, what is the moral state of things which produces it? And what are the conditions of race, epoch, and environment the best adapted to produce this moral state? There is a distinct moral state for each of these formations and for each of
their branches; there is one for art in general as well as for each
particular art; for architecture, painting, sculpture, music, and
poetry, each with a germ of its own in the large field of human
psychology; each has its own law, and it is by virtue of this law that
we see each shoot up, apparently haphazard, singly and alone, amidst
the miscarriages of their neighbors, like painting in Flanders and
Holland in the seventeenth century, like poetry in England in the
sixteenth century, like music in Germany in the eighteenth century.
At this moment, and in these countries, the conditions for one art and
not for the others are fulfilled, and one branch only has bloomed out
amidst the general sterility. It is these laws of human vegetation
which history must now search for; it is this special psychology of
each special formation which must be got at; it is the composition of
a complete table of these peculiar conditions that must now be worked
out. There is nothing more delicate and nothing more difficult.
Montesquieu undertook it, but in his day the interest in history was
too recent for him to be successful; nobody, indeed, had any idea
of the road that was to be followed, and even at the present day
we scarcely begin to obtain a glimpse of it. Just as astronomy, at
bottom, is a mechanical problem, and physiology, likewise, a chemical
problem, so is history, at bottom, a _problem of psychology_. There is
a particular system of inner impressions and operations which fashions
the artist, the believer, the musician, the painter, the nomad,
the social man; for each of these, the filiation, intensity, and
interdependence of ideas and of emotions are different; each has his
own moral history, and his own special organization, along with some
master tendency and with some dominant trait. To explain each of these
would require a chapter devoted to a profound internal analysis, and
that is a work that can scarcely be called sketched out at the present
day. But one man, Stendhal, through a certain turn of mind and a
peculiar education, has attempted it, and even yet most of his readers
find his works paradoxical and obscure. His talent and ideas were
too premature. His admirable insight, his profound sayings carelessly
thrown out, the astonishing precision of his notes and logic, were not
understood; people were not aware that, under the appearances and
talk of a man of the world, he explained the most complex of internal
mechanisms; that his finger touched the great mainspring, that he
brought scientific processes to bear in the history of the heart, the
art of employing figures, of decomposing, of deducing, that he was the
first to point out fundamental causes such as nationalities, climates,
and temperaments, in short, that he treated sentiments as they should
be treated, that is to say, as a naturalist and physicist, by making
classifications and estimating forces. On account of all this he
was pronounced dry and eccentric and allowed to live in isolation,
composing novels, books of travel and taking notes, for which he
counted upon, and has obtained, about a dozen or so of readers. And
yet his works are those in which we of the present day may find the
most satisfactory efforts that have been made to clear the road I have
just striven to describe. Nobody has taught one better how to observe
with one's own eyes, first, to regard humanity around us and life as
it is, and next, old and authentic documents, how to read more than
merely the black and white of the page, how to detect under old print
and the scrawl of the text the veritable sentiment and the train
of thought, the mental state in which the words were penned. In his
writings, as in those of Sainte Beuve and in those of the German
critics the reader will find how much is to be derived from a literary
document, if this document is rich and we know how to interpret it, we will find in the psychology of a particular soul, often that of an age, and sometimes that of a race. In this respect, a great poem, a good novel, the confessions of a superior man, are more instructive than a mass of historians and histories, I would give fifty volumes of charters and a hundred diplomatic files for the memoirs of Cellini, the epistles of Saint Paul, the table talk of Luther, or the comedies of Aristophanes. Herein lies the value of literary productions. They are instructive because they are beautiful, their usefulness increases with their perfection and if they provide us with documents, it is because they are monuments. The more visible a book renders sentiments the more literary it is, for it is the special office of literature to take note of sentiments. The more important the sentiments noted in a book the higher its rank in literature, for it is by representing what sort of a life a nation or an epoch leads, that a writer rallies to himself the sympathies of a nation or of an epoch. Hence, among the documents which bring before our eyes the sentiments of preceding generations, a literature, and especially a great literature, is incomparably the best. It resembles those admirable instruments of remarkable sensitiveness which physicists make use of to detect and measure the most profound and delicate changes that occur in a human body. There is nothing approaching this in constitutions or religions; the articles of a code or of a catechism do no more than depict mind in gross and without finesse; if there are any documents which show life and spirit in politics and in creeds, they are the eloquent discourses of the pulpit and the tribune, memoirs and personal confessions, all belonging to literature, so that, outside of itself, literature embodies whatever is good elsewhere. It is mainly in
studying literatures that we are able to produce moral history, and arrive at some knowledge of the psychological laws on which events depend.

I have undertaken to write a history of a literature and to ascertain the psychology of a people; in selecting this one, it is not without a motive. A people had to be taken possessing a vast and complete literature, which is rarely found. There are few nations which, throughout their existence, have thought and written well in the full sense of the word. Among the ancients, Latin literature is null at the beginning, and afterward borrowed and an imitation. Among the moderns, German literature is nearly a blank for two centuries.[7] Italian and Spanish literatures come to an end in the middle of the seventeenth century. Ancient Greece, and modern France and England, alone offer a complete series of great and expressive monuments. I have chosen the English because, as this still exists and is open to direct observation, it can be better studied than that of an extinct civilization of which fragments only remain; and because, being different, it offers better than that of France very marked characteristics in the eyes of a Frenchman. Moreover, outside of what is peculiar to English civilization, apart from a spontaneous development, it presents a forced deviation due to the latest and most effective conquest to which the country was subject; the three given conditions out of which it issues--race, climate, and the Norman conquest--are clearly and distinctly visible in its literary monuments; so that we study in this history the two most potent motors of human transformation, namely, nature and constraint, and we study
them, without any break or uncertainty, in a series of authentic and complete monuments. I have tried to define these primitive motors, to show their gradual effects, and explain how their insensible operation has brought religious and literary productions into full light, and how the inward mechanism is developed by which the barbarous Saxon became the Englishman of the present day.

[Footnote A: Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (b. 1828; d. 1893) was one of the most distinguished French critics of the nineteenth century. He held the chair of esthetics at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and wrote a large number of works in history, travel, and literary criticism. His "History of English Literature" is the most brilliant book on the subject ever written by a foreigner, and in this introduction he expounds the method of criticism which has come to be associated with his name, and in accordance with which he seeks to interpret the characteristics of English authors.]

[Footnote 1: Darwin, "The Origin of Species." Prosper Lucas, "De l'Heredite."]

[Footnote 2: Spinoza, "Ethics," part iv., axiom.]

[Footnote 4: "L'Esprit des Lois," by Montesquieu; the essential principles of the three governments.]

[Footnote 5: The birth of the Alexandrine philosophy is due to contact with the Orient. Aristotle's metaphysical views stand alone. Moreover, with him as with Plato, they afford merely a glimpse. By way of contrast see systematic power in Plotinus, Proclus, Schelling, and Hegel, or again in the admirable boldness of Brahmanic and Buddhist speculation.]

[Footnote 6: I have very often made attempts to state this law, especially in the preface to "Essais de Critique et d'Histoire." ]

[Footnote 7: From 1550 to 1750.]