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CARLYLE.

EUROPEAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

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Carlyle's Unpublished Lectures.

LECTURES
ON THE
HISTORY OF LITERATURE
OR THE SUCCESSIVE PERIODS OF
EUROPEAN CULTURE
DELIVERED IN 1838

BY
THOMAS CARLYLE

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED

FROM THE ANSTEY MS. IN THE LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY
R. P. KARKARIA

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INTRODUCTION

THE work of Carlyle, which is now published for the first time in the present volume, has lain for more than half a century in manuscript, during which it has been given up as irretrievably lost by all admirers of the great writer's works. "It must ever be a source of regret" says Mr. Wylie in his *Life of Carlyle*, "to the students of Carlyle's writings that while the reporters of the London Press were, in that summer of 1838, busy preserving every word of the orations of men who are already forgotten, a poor fragment is all that has come down to us of a series of lectures which would have thrown so much light on the story of Carlyle's spiritual life" (p. 169). And Mr. J. A. Froude, his literary executor and biographer, refers the curious to the meagre reports in the *Examiner* and other papers of the time (*Life in London*, vol. I, p. 126). One reason why no manuscript of Carlyle exists is that these lectures were not written out, but strictly spoken. He prepared himself carefully for each lecture, but did not *read* to his audience. "He had undertaken to *speak*, and speak he would, or else fail altogether." He usually brought some notes with him to the lecture-room, but never used them. Miss Kate Perry, writing

* In this Introduction I resume some passages which formed part of a paper read by me before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on 31st August 1891.

to Sir Henry Taylor in 1882 about her reminiscences of Carlyle's Lectures of 1840, says: "I remember Jenny imitating him very funnily when looking at his notes. After his hour was over, he said: 'I find I have been talking to you all for one hour and twenty minutes, and not said *one word* of what is down on this sheet of paper—the subject-matter of our lecture to-day. I ask you your indulgence, though you have a good right not to give it to me; so good morning.' I daresay you were present also at that lecture, and remember the amusement it caused" (Correspondence of Sir H. Taylor, ed. Dr. Dowden, p. 400). Later, when he published his course on Heroes, he wrote out the whole for the press after the delivery of the lectures.

But amongst his audience Carlyle had at least one young man who, discerning the great value of what he was hearing, took pains to have full notes of these lectures. About his audience, Carlyle himself, writing to his mother, says: "My audience was supposed to be the best, for rank, beauty, and intelligence, ever collected in London. I had bonnie, braw dames, ladies this, ladies that, though I dared not look at them, for fear they should put me out. I had old men of four-score; men middle-aged, with fine steel-grey beards; young men of the universities, of the law profession, all sitting quite mum there, and the Annandale voice gollying at them" (Froude, *Life in London*, vol. I, p. 140). Among these last was Mr. Thomas Chisholm Anstey,* who

* Thomas Chisholm Anstey, lawyer and politician, was, says Mr. Skiney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the son of one of the earliest settlers in Tasmania, and was born in London in 1816. He was educated at Wellington College and at University College, London, and in Hilary term, 1839, was called to the bar at the Middle Temple. He was greatly affected by the Oxford movement, and was one of the earliest converts to Roman Catholicism that it produced. He was for a short time Professor of law and jurisprudence at the Roman Catholic College of Prior Park, near Bath. Resigning his professorship, he took to politics and became a violent supporter of the extreme section of O'Connell's followers. He was Member of Parliament for Youghal from 1847—52, and distinguished himself by his intemperate attacks on Palmerston's foreign policy. Retiring from politics, in 1854 he was nominated Attorney-General for Hongkong; but on account of his

was then studying law in London and was a little later called to the bar. Anstey was present at all the lectures except the ninth, having been unable to attend on the day on which it was delivered,—“being confined to my bed with a new access of the malaria I brought from Rome,” as he carefully notes in the MS. This lecture, which was on “French Scepticism, and Voltaire and Rousseau,” was therefore not reported by Anstey and consequently does not appear in the present volume; and there is reason to believe that it is now irretrievably lost. But the loss seems to be not very serious, as this missing lecture was, in Carlyle’s own opinion, the weakest of the series. He notes in his Journal: “On Voltaire and French Scepticism is the worst, as I compute, of all. On the day I was stupid and sick beyond expression; also I did not *like* the man, a fatal circumstance of itself. I had to hover vague on the surface. The people seemed content enough. I myself felt sincerely disgusted. That is the word” (Froude I., 137). Moreover, there is an excellent summary of this lecture at the beginning of the tenth, and the subject is one which Carlyle has treated at great length in his published works, in his essays on Voltaire and Diderot, and elsewhere.

The full report that Anstey took of Carlyle’s lectures he had carefully preserved in a small quarto note-book of 214 leaves in his own extensive library; and when this was dispersed at the time of his death in Bombay, it came into the possession

too zealous desire to root out the abuses he found in the government of the Colony, he came into frequent collision with Sir John Bowring, the Governor, and in 1859 had to retire from his post. After some time spent in England, he came to India to practise at the Bombay bar, where he rapidly achieved a great success, and was in 1865 appointed to fill a temporary vacancy on the bench, from which however he had to withdraw owing to controversies with his superiors. In 1866 he returned to England and threw himself into the agitation for Parliamentary reform then going on. In 1868 he returned to Bombay to resume his practice and became very popular with the natives, especially Parsis, whom he defended very ably in what was known as the Tower of Silence case, and amongst whom his name is to this day a household word. He died in Bombay on 12th August 1873. Anstey was the author of several pamphlets on constitutional, legal and political subjects.

of the Bombay Branch Royal Asiatic Society, in whose library it has been lying for the last eighteen years. From this manuscript note-book of Anstey, which appears to be the only* full report of these lectures in existence, this edition has been prepared, and I thank the Society for the permission of using it for this edition accorded to me, through its learned President, the Honourable Sir Raymond West, and its zealous honorary secretary, the Honourable Mr. Javerilal Umiashanker Yajnik. I have altered here and there the punctuation, and throughout the spelling, which is very careless in the manuscript. Carlyle's own way of spelling proper names as found in his other works has been adopted.

The immediate occasion of Carlyle mounting the platform and giving lectures to a 'dandiacal' audience, against whom he had inveighed in *Sartor*, was his straitened pecuniary circumstances. His object was, as he himself says in these lectures of Shakspeare, "to gather a little money, for he was very necessitous" (*infra*, p. 45). Thus it was his poverty consented, not his will. Though by the year 1838 he had done some of his best work, written *Sartor*, which is now the most widely read of his works (Dr. Smiles, *Memoir of Murray*, vol. II, p. 356), and just finished his grand epic of the French Revolution, besides having written some of his best shorter essays, Carlyle had not yet emerged into fame;† the vast public which later on learnt to admire his writings, in spite of their superficial uncouthness and repulsiveness, had not yet arisen. He had yet to educate and almost to create the public taste to appreciate his works. His books, therefore, could either find

* Dr. Dowden published in an article, in the *Nineteenth Century* for May 1881, some extracts from a report of these Lectures in his possession; and this article has been reprinted in his *Transcripts and Studies*, 1887. Dr. Dowden's report is a blundering one, omitting some words which are to be found in the Anstey MS., and its readings, as I have shown elsewhere, are distinctly inferior to the latter. From some of its mistakes, as well as the fact that it also wants the ninth lecture, it would seem that Dr. Dowden's is a careless copy of the Anstey MS.

† Since writing this I find that Mr. Lecky tries to account for this early neglect of Carlyle, in the *Contemporary Review* for September 1891.

no publisher at all, or, if published, bring him no profit whatever. He was, as a consequence, in constant dread of misery and ruin. But amidst this gloom of darkness there was one ray of hope. A prophet has proverbially no honour in his own country. But beyond the Atlantic, in the new home which his countrymen had found for their shattered liberties, they showed greater discernment. Carlyle was honoured there as a rising great teacher. The Americans could appreciate the philosophy of Herr Teufelsdröch, and, what was of more vital importance, could pay in hard dollars for it, much earlier than the British Philistine. Moreover, he had kind friends there, especially the Emersons, who would willingly do everything for him. So Carlyle almost resolved to have nothing more to do with the Old England that had treated him so harshly, and to start for New and kinder England,—“to buy a rifle and spade, and withdraw to the Transatlantic Wilderness, far from human beggaries and basenesses !” as he himself put it vigorously (*Reminiscences*, ed. Froude, vol. II, p. 180). Thus his country was about to lose him just at the time when he had reached the maturity of his powers. Some keen-sighted friends, who knew what a loss and a shame it would be to let such a man go, resolved to keep him back still. It was known that he was going to America in response to an invitation to lecture there. So these friends, chief among whom were Harriet Martineau and the Wilsons, prevailed upon him to remain and lecture at home.

Carlyle had a great horror of mounting the platform, and hated this kind of work. “The excitement of lecturing,” says Mr. Froude, whose *Life* of his great master is worthy to rank by the side of Boswell and Lockhart, Carlyle’s own *Sterling* and Sir George Trevelyan’s *Macaulay*, as one of the very best biographies in any literature, “so elevating and agreeable to most men, seemed to depress and irritate him.” An observer, Sir George Pollock, who had then

just been called to the bar, writes of "Carlyle in the agony of lecturing with firm-set mouth, painful eyes, and his hands convulsively grasped, suffering as one might fancy an Indian would at the stake" (*Personal Reminiscences*, vol. I, p. 177). He himself writes to Emerson: "I shall be in the agonies of lecturing! Ah me! Often when I think of the matter, how my one sole wish is to be left to hold my tongue, and by what bayonets of necessity, clapt to my back, I am driven to that lecture-room, and in what mood, and ordered to speak or die, I feel as if my only utterance should be a flood of tears and blubbing! But that clearly will not do. Then, again, I think it is perhaps better so; who knows?" (*Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerso.*, ed. Prof. Norton, vol. I, p. 156). It was better so, and he was persuaded in the end. "Detestable mixture of prophecy and play-actorism, as I sorrowfully defined it; nothing could well be hatefuller to me; but I was obliged. And she, oh she was my angel, and unwearied helper and comforter in all that; how we drove together, we poor two, to our place of execution; she with a little drop of brandy to give me at the very last, and shone round me like a bright aureola, when all else was black and chaos!" (*Reminiscences*, ed. Froude, vol. II, p. 187). Miss Martineau got together about two hundred friends who consented to listen to him discoursing on German literature, his favourite subject. This was the first course of lectures, and it proved a success, though Henry Taylor, who was present at the first lecture, had augured otherwise. Writing to Miss Fenwick on May 6, 1837, he says: "He was nervous in the extreme, insomuch that he told me nothing but the determination not to be beaten could have brought him through the first lecture. Nervous difficulties take much, of course, from the effect which they might otherwise have; but I doubt whether, under any circumstances, he would have much charm for a fashionable London auditory. He wants

all the arts and dexterities which might propitiate them. But though I fear he has no chance for much success, I think his *naïveté* and the occasional outbreaks of his genius and spirit will save him from being considered as a signal failure. His nervousness makes me dreadfully nervous in listening to him, so that I find it the greatest relief when he is done" (*Correspondence*, ed. Dr. Dowden, p. 81). As it does not appear that this course was reported in full by anyone, it seems to be now lost.

Encouraged by this success, his friends got up a second course. It was to be on the periods of European Culture and the History of Literature. The lectures were to be twelve in number, the subscription for each ticket being two guineas. They were delivered in 17, Edward Street, Portman Square, during the months of April, May, and June, 1838. The first lecture was given on Monday, April 30, and the rest on the succeeding Mondays and Fridays of each week. The portrait which Caroline Fox drew two years later of Carlyle as he appeared while lecturing is graphic, and may be given here: "Carlyle soon appeared and looked as if he felt a well-dressed London crowd scarcely the arena for him to figure in as a popular lecturer. He is a tall, robust-looking man; rugged simplicity and indomitable strength are in his face, and such a glow of genius in it—not always smouldering there, but flashing from his beautiful grey eyes, from the remoteness of their deep setting under that massive brow. His manner is very quiet, but he speaks like one tremendously convinced of what he utters, and who had much—very much—in him that was quite unutterable, quite unfit to be uttered to the uninitiated ear; and when the Englishman's sense of beauty or truth exhibited itself in vociferous cheers, he would impatiently, almost contemptuously, wave his hand, as if that were not the sort of homage which Truth demanded. He began in

a rather low nervous voice, with a broad Scotch accent, but it soon grew firm, and shrank not abashed from its great task" (*Journals and Letters*, vol. I, p. 182). Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, too, was favourably impressed. "The most notable things in your way," wrote he to Aubrey de Vere in 1838, "have been Carlyle's Lectures; they have been perhaps more interesting than anything else, as all picturesque history must be, and he talks as graphically as his French Revolution. His personality is most attractive. There he stands, simple as a child, and his happy thought dances on his lips and in his eyes, and takes word and goes away, and he bids it Godspeed, whatever it be" (*Life of Lord Houghton*, by Mr. Wemyss Reid, vol. I, p. 220). But Carlyle struck another observer quite differently. George Ticknor, the American historian of Spanish literature, was in London while Carlyle was delivering his second course of lectures, and he thus writes of him in his journal: "He is a rather small, spare, ugly Scotchman, with a strong accent which I should think he takes no pains to mitigate. His manners are plain and simple, but not polished, and his conversation much of the severe sort. To-day he spoke, as I think he commonly does, without notes, and therefore as nearly *extempore* as a man can who prepares himself carefully, as it was plain he had done. He was impressive, I think, though such lecturing could not well be very popular; and in some parts, if he were not poetical, he was picturesque. He was nowhere obscure, nor were his sentences artificially constructed, though some of them, no doubt, savoured of his peculiar manner" (*Life of Ticknor*, vol. II, p. 180). "This time," says Mr. Froude, "he succeeded brilliantly, far better than on his first experiment." The money result was nearly £300 after all expenses had been paid,—a great blessing, as Carlyle said, to a man that had been haunted by the squalid spectre of beggary. But a greater blessing was that it had

a great influence on many men who have since become famous. Frederic Denison Maurice, another great 'guide of English thought in matters of faith' in this century, said that "he had been more edified by Carlyle's Lectures of 1838 than by anything he had heard for a long while, and that he had then the greatest reverence for Carlyle" (*Life of Maurice*, by his Son, vol. I, p. 251).

Well may Maurice have been edified, for apart from the subjective interest attaching to them, which must be very great, coming as they do from the most influential and original thinker of the present century in England, these Lectures are very important also for their subject-matter. This subject, which is the survey of European culture from its earliest dawn three thousand years ago down to our own century, including the literatures of every great European nation, ancient and modern, has been very sparsely treated in the English language. There are excellent works on separate periods of European literature, as Hallam's masterly work, and Mr. J. A. Symonds' *Italian Literature of the Renaissance*; again there are comprehensive histories of the literature of particular nations, as Ticknor's *Spanish Literature*, and Mr. Saintsbury's *French Literature*. But there is not a single work which within a moderate compass, or any compass at all, deals with the whole subject as Carlyle here does. The only work from which English readers can get a general view of the whole literature of Europe is the indifferent English translation of a foreign work, Frederic Schlegel's Lectures. Thus the present work can claim to be unique in English literature as regards its subject. Of course, within his very narrow limits Carlyle could not enter into details. But he has sketched the broad outlines in an incisive manner with a master's hand, giving the chief characteristics of each branch of European literature by picking out and treating at some length the most important authors and books.

At the outset of the lectures Carlyle disclaims forming any

theory of his subject, and calls all theorising futile. But his whole treatment is strongly tinged by his peculiar theories, two of these prominently prevailing above the rest. With him belief and faith is the one thing needful in human affairs, and disbelief and doubt the cancer of the mind eating all life and vigour out of it and paralyzing its activity. He judges periods and nations by this standard, and according as belief or doubt prevails, he praises or condemns them. In the history of European culture he views the steady progress of Belief, retarded at certain points by periods of Doubt and Unbelief. He sees in it, as he says, "a striking illustration of the ancient fable of the phoenix" (*infra*, p. 185). The system of belief which prevailed in ancient times gradually died out, and was followed by a period of scepticism and disbelief. Out of its ashes, however, arose Christianity with its new doctrine of belief; but this too in course of time grew effete; scepticism and disbelief gradually waxed stronger till belief seemed to have died out altogether in the latter part of the eighteenth century, a period represented in literature by the writings of Voltaire and the Encyclopædists in France, and the early writings of Goethe, notably *Werther*, in Germany. But again the phoenix rose from its ashes, and a new period of belief began with the beginning of this century, heralded by the later writings of Goethe.

The other theory which runs through these Lectures is Carlyle's well-known view that all great things are unconscious, expressed in Schiller's maxim that "true genius is ever a secret to itself." This is his measure of greatness. According as he finds a man unconscious or conscious of his greatness, he extols or condemns him. Homer is great because he was thoroughly unconscious of doing anything great when he composed his immortal poems. But Virgil, because he was striving in his *Æneid* to produce a great poem rivalling Homer's, is not really great; and is then truly great when he forgets himself most, as in his minor poems, which are

accordingly set above his epic. Shakspeare is truly great because he was supremely unconscious of writing anything that would live after him, and was merely labouring to keep himself alive in London by writing plays for the managers of the theatres; whilst Milton, proudly conscious of his own powers and bent on writing something which the world would not willingly let die, is pronounced a failure. By a wider application of his theory Carlyle comes to the conclusion that "during a healthy, sound, progressive period of national existence there is, in general, no literature at all," and that "it is not till a nation is ready to decline that its literature makes itself remarkable." For literature shows the nation's consciousness of itself, and this is fatal to its greatness. Whatever may be thought of this theory, an introduction to a posthumous work is not the place to criticise it. It is enough to draw attention to it.

In the notes I have verified Carlyle's references and corrected a few slips which he himself would have done had he published this work. References have also been given to recent works, where the reader who cares for more information on the subjects touched by Carlyle may find it. I have been sparing in referring to parallel passages from Carlyle's published works, as they are very numerous and as there is a good general index to these works through which the student can do this for himself. I cannot conclude without acknowledging my obligations to Mr. Henry Curwen, the Editor of the *Times of India*, for the great interest he has taken in this work from the beginning and for reading over the proof-sheets, and to his partner, Mr. C. E. Kane, for the facilities he has put in my way in the printing of the book.

PERIOD FIRST.

LECTURE I.

OF LITERATURE IN GENERAL—LANGUAGE—TRADITION—RELIGIONS—RACES—THE GREEKS: THEIR CHARACTER IN HISTORY; THEIR FORTUNE; PERFORMANCE—MYTHOLOGIES—ORIGIN OF GODS.

[FRIDAY, 27TH APRIL 1838.]

It must surely be an interesting occupation to follow the ^{Literature.} stream of mind from the periods at which the first great spirits of our Western World wrote and flourished down to these times. He who would pursue the investigation, however, must commence by enquiring what it was these men *thought* before he enquires what they *did*, for, after all, they were solely remarkable for mind, thought, opinion—opinion which clothed itself in action. And their opinions have survived in their books. A book affords matter for deep meditation. Upon their shelves books seem queer insignificant things, but in reality there is nothing so important as a book is.* It stirs up the minds of men long after the author has sunk into the grave, and continues to exert its corresponding influence for ages. Authors, unlike heroes, therefore do not need to be illuminated by others; they are of themselves luminous. The thought that was produced to-day, the pamphlet that was published to-day, are only as it were reprints of thoughts that have circulated ever since the world began. And we are interested in its

Its importance and power.

* Cf. the passage from *Sartor Resartus* at the end of this lecture.

history, for the thought is alive with us and it lives when we are dead.

There is a very great difficulty in reducing this generation of thought to a perfect theory, as indeed there is with everything else, except perhaps the stars only, and even they are not reduced to theory—not perfectly at least—for, although the solar system is quite established as such, it seems doubtful whether it does not in its turn revolve round other solar systems ; and so any theory is in fact only imperfect. This phenomenon, therefore, is not to be theorised on ; something, however, is necessary to be done in order to follow the subject and familiarise ourselves with it.*

We shall see this great stream of thought, bearing with it its strange phenomena of literary productions, divide itself into regular periods. And we will commence with the facts to be discovered in the history of the Greeks.

Early inhabitants of Greece.

I. The Greek Records go back as far as 1800 years before our era—that is 3600 years or so from the present time. But they cannot be considered as authentic at that antiquity. When we ask the question—Who were the first inhabitants of Greece ; or were they the same as that modern nation by some called Græci, by others Hellenes, and by us Greeks ?—we can derive no clear account from any source.† They seem to have been called Pelasgi. There is a great controversy whether these Hellenes were Pelasgi, or new settlers from the East. They were probably Pelasgi with whom thought had begun to operate a progress in science and civilization, and these gave their local name Hellenes to the rest, just as was the case with the Angles and the Saxons. We have no good history of Greece. This is not at all remarkable. Greek transactions

* Vide p. 167 *infra*.

† Grote calls this an insoluble problem. "No attested facts are now present to us—none were present to Herodotus and Thucydides even in their age—on which to build trustworthy affirmations respecting the ante-Hellenic Pelasgians." *Greece* Vol. II. p. 264. Cf. Canon Rawlinson in his *Herodotus* Vol. I. p. 690. Curtius, *Hist. of Greece* Vol. I. p. 30. tr. Ward.

had never anything alive—no result—for us ; they were dead entirely. The only points which serve to guide us are a few ruined towns, a few masses of stone, and some broken statuary. In this point of view we can trace three epochs—not more—after the introduction of civilized arts into the country and the formation of societies.

1. The first is the Siege of Troy, which happened in the twelfth century before Christ, and was instituted by the Achaivi as they were then called, or Hellenes. ^{Siege of Troy.} It seems that there is evidence that they were at that time the same as Pelasgi. The siege, as is well known, is said to have been occasioned by Paris carrying off a Greek girl—the famous Helen, wife of Menelaus. Herodotus speaks of many such cases, Io, for example, and Europé.* He remarks very properly that it is really very foolish to go to war for such a reason, as the lady is always sure to be as much to blame herself as her seducer.† Whatever, however, was the reason, this was the first confederate act of the Hellenes in their capacity of an European people. The town was taken and destroyed. The immediate cause which was assigned may or may not have been true, but, by the European Pelasgi, it seems to have been chiefly ascribed to their superiority over Asia ; this was the constant *geste* of the narrative. This event is also important as giving rise to the first valuable work of antiquity after the Bible, the Homeric Poems, comprising the Iliad and the Odyssey. Of the date of 600 years later, we have the marble chronicles now preserved in the University of Oxford, which an Earl of Arundell brought out of the East in the reign of James I, and which arrived here about the year 1627 ; they suffered much during the Civil Wars and were mutilated a long time in the gardens of Arundell House at Lambeth—one of them even was built up by the gardener into the garden

* Herodotus, *Clio* 1. 2.

† *Ibid.* c. 4.

wall. Among the most remarkable was the marble called the Chronicle of Paros, containing a record of some very memorable events.* It is uncertain why it was so called : near the spot where it was found a new colony was founded in 264 B.C., and, as it was the custom to erect these records on such occasions, it is presumed that the above was the date of its erection. Herodotus lived in the 5th century B.C., but it was clearly after that.

Persian
Invasion.

2. The second epoch was that of the Persian Invasion. Greece had then to support itself against the innumerable hosts of the East poured out against her. This is the great *geste* of Herodotus' history,—the gallant resistance of a handful of the Greeks, for they were far from being unanimous. Their fate trembled in the iron scale of Destiny for a while. At Thermopylæ Leonidas repelled the Persians during three days : on the fourth, circumvented by treachery, he was overwhelmed with numbers, he and his troops were cut to pieces—not a man survived. They would not give up the place. One fancies that that monument must have had a wonderful effect for ages after,—the marble lion with the inscription, “O stranger ! tell the Lacedæmonians that we lie here obedient to their laws !” They were ordered to remain, not to quit the post, and there they lay for ever ! But Europe was ever afterwards superior to Persia. The Grecian societies soon afterwards divided more and more until they became a kind of federal republic, but united only by common habits and mainly by their religion. It is a pity that during this time we have but little information as to the influence produced upon them by the aspect of their beautiful country, its lofty mountains and fertile valleys, the gigantic trees which clothed the summits and sides of their craggy

* This inscription is cut in a block of marble, and in its perfect state contained a chronological account of the principal events in Greek history from Cecrops B. C. 1582 to the archonship of Diognetus 264.

precipices, and also beautifully set off by the bright sky which was shining upon them ; as well as the means by which all this was rendered serviceable to them in the ways of daily life.* It is only battles that are marked by historians, but subjects like these are rarely noticed.

They spread themselves abroad in new colonies at this time, ^{Greek Colonies.} but there were already Greek colonies even before that. They had built towns and cities which still exist on the south coast of Italy, or Magna Græcia, as it is generally called ; indeed I am told that the people in the mountains still speak a kind of Greek—up in the Abruzzi. They built Marseilles in France before the Persian Invasion. Herodotus records the Phocæan emigration. They wandered a long time before they could find a convenient spot for their new settlement, but to extinguish all hope of return, their leader took a red-hot ball of iron, and plunged it into the sea, and called the Gods to witness that he and his followers would never return to Phocæa until that ball of iron should float upon the surface.† They afterwards landed at Marseilles and founded a flourishing republic there.

3. The third great epoch, like the other two, has also ^{Greek} reference to the East. It was the flower-time of Greece ; her ^{decadence.} history is as that of a tree, from its sapling state to its decline, and at this period she developed an efflorescence of genius, such as no other country ever beheld ; but it speedily ended in the shedding of her flowers and in her own decay. From that time she has continued to fall, and Greece has never again been such as she then was. About the year 330 B.C. she was subjected to the domination of the king of a foreign State, Macedon. Alexander the Great found little trouble in ruling Greece enfeebled already by the Peloponnesian war,

* Arnold, *History of Rome* Vol. I. p. 415, (1839) was, almost at the same time as Carlyle here, complaining of the imperfect materials for the physical history of Rome.

† Herodotus, *Clio* c. 165.

a war of which one cannot see the reason, except that each contending party seems to have striven merely for its own gain, while their country stood by to see which side of the collision was to grind it down. Philip of Macedon, a strong, active man, had already got it united under him. Under Alexander occurred the memorable invasion of Persia, when Greece exploded itself on Asia. He carried his arms to the banks of the Indus, founded kingdoms, and left them to his followers; insomuch that they continued a remarkable set of people till long afterwards. Nor was it till 1453 that they were finally conquered in Constantinople.

Character
of the
Greeks.

This, then, is the history of Greece. The siege of Troy, the first epoch, took place in the year 1184 before Christ, the battle of Marathon, 490 years B.C., and 160 years later came the Invasion of Persia. Europe was henceforth to develop herself on an independent footing, and it had been so ordered that Greece was to begin that. As to their peculiar physiognomy among nations, they were in one respect an extremely interesting people, but in another unamiable and weak entirely. It has been somewhere remarked, by persons learned in the speculations on what is called the Doctrine of Races, that the Pelasgi were of Celtic descent. However this may be, it is certain that there is a remarkable similarity in character of the French to these Greeks. Their first feature was what we may call the central feature of all others, exciting vehemence,—not exactly strength, for there was no permanent coherence in it as in strength, but a sort of fiery impetuosity, a vehemence never anywhere so remarkable as among the Greeks, except among the French, and there are instances of this both in its good and bad points of view. As to the bad, there is the instance mentioned by Thucydides* of the sedition in Corcyra, which really does read like a chapter out of the

Their
impetuosity.

* Thucydides, Bk. III. c. 81.

French Revolution, in which the actors seem to have been quite regardless of any moment but that which is at hand. There, too, the lower classes were at war upon the higher, or aristocrats as the French would have called them. They suspected a design on the part of the aristocracy to carry them off as slaves to Athens, and on their side it ended in the aristocracy being all shut up in prison. Man after man they were brought out of the prison, and then with staves and pikes they were massacred one after another (this is all told by Thucydides* without his expressing any blame of the proceedings), until those within the prison, finding what was going on, would not come out when summoned, whereupon the mob fired arrows upon them until all were destroyed. In short, the whole scene recalls to the reader the events of September 1792. Another instance, but more justifiable was the following. When Xerxes first invaded Greece, an Athenian, Lycidas, proposed to his citizens to surrender the city, as it was impossible to make head against the Persians. The Athenians assembled, jostled, struck and trampled on him, till he died.† The women of the place hearing this

Their resemblance to the French.

* This is not quite correct. For Thucydides devotes three long chapters (III. 82-84) to reflexions arising out of this massacre, which he condemns in strong terms. He says that the people 'were carried away by their blind rage into the extremes of pitiless cruelty. They were reckless of the future, and did not hesitate to annul those common laws of humanity, to which every individual trusts for his own hope of deliverance should he be ever overtaken by calamity.' (tr. Prof. Jowett).

† Herodotus *Calliope* c. 5. Demosthenes *de Corona* § 259 p. 210 ed. Simcox, tells a similar story of Cyrillus who was stoned ten months before for having advised submission to Xerxes. The Athenian women in like manner stoned his wife. Cicero (*de Officiis* iii. 2) also relates this story. Canon Rawlinson sees 'no reason why both stories may not be true.' The resemblance of these atrocities to some of the most brutal incidents in the history of the French Revolution had already struck Beloe, the translator of Herodotus, before Carlyle. In a note to the passage containing the death of Lycidas he says: 'very soon after the first edition of this work was published, the women of Paris, better distinguished by the name of Poissantes, in every particular imitated their brutality, and whoever differed with them in opinion were exposed to the danger of the *Lanterne*.' Beloe's *Herodotus* Vol. IV. p. 311. ed. 1802.

went to his house, attacked his wife and her children, and stabbed them, too, to death. There was nothing ever like this behaviour or that at Corcyra known in other countries in ancient times, as among the Romans, for example, during their dominant period.

But connected with all this savageness, there was an extraordinary delicacy of taste and genius in them. They had a prompt dexterity in seizing the true relations of objects, a beautiful and quick sense in perceiving the places in which the things lay all round the world, which they had to work with, and which, without being entirely admirable, was in their own internal province highly useful. So the French, with their undeniable barrenness of genius, have yet in a remarkable manner the faculty of expressing themselves with precision and elegance, to so singular a degree that no ideas or inventions can possibly become popularised till they are presented to the world by means of the French language.* And this is true of history and of all things now in the world, of all philosophy and of everything else. But in philosophy, poetry, and all things, the Greek genius displayed itself, with as curious a felicity as the French does in frivolous exercises. Singing or music was the central principle of the Greeks, not a subordinate one, and they were right—what is not musical, is rough, and hard and cannot be harmonised. Harmony is the essence of art and science. The mind moulds to itself the clay and makes it what it will.

Delicacy.

Harmony.

Architecture.

The Pelasgic architecture which still subsists in its huge walls of stones, formed of immense *bolars* piled one upon

* Cf. "The French are great indeed as cooks of everything, whether an idea or lump of meat; they will make something palatable of the poorest notion and the barest bone."—one of Carlyle's sayings recorded by Lord Houghton in his *Commonplace book*, and first published in his recent *Life* by Wemyss Reid, Vol. II. p. 479.

another, presents, I am told, now at the distance of 3,000 years, the evidence of most magnificent symmetry and an eye to what is beautiful. Their poems are equally admirable. Their statuary comprise still the highest things that we have to show for ourselves in that art. Phidias, for example, ^{Sculpture:} ^{Phidias.} had the same spirit of harmony, and the matter of his art was obedient to him. His Jupiter of Elis must have been a memorable work, it seems to me. Phidias superintended the building of that thing, the Parthenon; and perhaps the Elgin marbles received his corrections. When he projected, however, his Jupiter of Elis, his ideas were so confused and bewildered, as to give him great unrest, and he wandered about perplexed that the shape he wished would not disclose itself. But one evening, while wandering in the fields after struggling in pain with his thoughts as usual, and meditating on his design, he saw a group of Grecian maidens approach with jars of water on their heads who began a song in praise of Jupiter. At that instant the thought became a shape, and set free the image which he sought for, and it crystallised, as it were, out of his mind, into marble, and became as symmetry itself. This spirit of harmony operated directly in him, informing all parts of his mind, thence transferring itself into statuary, and seen with the eye, and filling the hearts of all people.

I shall now call your attention to the opinions entertained ^{Greek} ^{Religion and} ^{Mythology.} by the Greeks on all things that concern this world, or what we call their Religion. Polytheism at first sight seems an inextricable mass of confusions and delusions. But there was, no doubt, some meaning in it for the people. It may be explained in one of two ways.*—The first is that the fable was only an allegory to explain the various relations of natural facts—of spiritual facts and material—and much

* Cf. A. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion* Vol. I. c. I. Lecky *Rationalism in Europe* Vol. I. p. 327.

Allegorical
interpretation.

Euhemerism.

learning has been expended on this theory, which is called *Hermenism*.^{*} Bacon himself wrote upon it in his treatise *De sapientia veterum*. But I think that there is nothing or little to be made out of that. To tell fictitious stories of that kind does not seem a natural process in the diffusion of science. No man in such a case would have sat down to make out something, which all the while he knows to be a lie; no serious man would do it. The second opinion is that their gods were simply their kings and heroes whom they afterwards deified. There is more probability in this theory. Man is always venerable to man; great men are sure to attract worship or reverence in all ages, and in ancient times it is not wonderful that sometimes they were accounted as gods. For the most imaginative of us can scarcely conceive the feelings with which the earliest of the human species looked abroad on the world around them. At first doubtless they regarded nothing but the gratification of their wants, as in fact wild people do yet. But the man would soon begin to ask himself, Whence he was? What were his flesh and blood? What he himself was, who was not here a short time ago, who will not be here much longer, but still existing a conscious individual in this immense universe! The theories so formed would be extremely extravagant, and little would suffice to shape this system into Polytheism. For it is really, in my opinion, a blasphemy against human nature to attribute the whole of the system to

^{*} This word is evidently wrong, and Anstey has queried it on the margin. It is difficult to conjecture what word Carlyle could have used, as this allegorical interpretation of Mythology, professed especially by the Stoics (cf. Cicero, *De Nat. Deorum*) in ancient times was not called after the name of any one philosopher as the other theory mentioned by Carlyle is named after Euhemerus. Perhaps Carlyle may have coined '*Hermalem*' from Hermes Trismegistus, in writings attributed to whom, this allegorising of myths is found. cf. Cudworth, *Intellectual System* Chap. IV. xviii. Or perhaps '*Hermannism*' from the German scholar Hermann, who wrote a work '*Ueber das Wesen*', etc.

quackery and falsehood. Divination, for instance, was the grand nucleus round which Polytheism formed itself—the constituted core of the whole matter. All people—private men as well as States—used to consult the Oracle of Dodona, or Delphi, which eventually became the most celebrated of all, on all the concerns of life. Modern travellers have discovered in those places pipes and other secret contrivances, from which they have concluded that these Oracles were constituted on a principle of falsehood and delusion. Cicero,* too, said that he was certain that two augurs could not meet without laughing, and he was likely to know, for he had once been an augur himself. But I confess that, on reading Herodotus, there appears to me to have been very little quackery about it. I can quite readily fancy that there was a great deal of reason in the Oracle. The seat of that at Dodona was a deep, dark, chasm into which the divine entered when he sought the Deity. If he was a man of a devout frame of mind, he must surely have then been in the best state of feeling for foreseeing the future, and giving advice to others; no matter how this was carried on, by divination or otherwise, so long as the individual suffered himself to be rapt in union with a higher Being. I like to believe better of Greece than that she was completely at the mercy of frauds and falsehood in these matters. So before the battle of Marathon an Athenian, Philippides,† set off for Lacedemon for supplies; he ran nearly the whole way. As he was travelling among the mountains near Tegea, he heard the God Pan calling out to him, “Philippides, why do the Athenians neglect me.” He obtained

Divination
not a quack-
ery.

The Oracle
not a fraud.

* Cicero said this not of Augurs for whom he had great respect, but of ‘Haruspices’ upon whom he looked down as “Tusci ac barbari” (*De Nat. Deo*. II. 11). Carlyle refers to the celebrated saying of Cato the Censor, quoted by Cicero *De Divinatione* II. 24. 51. (Cato) “mirari se aiebat, quod non rideret haruspex, haruspiciam quum vidisset;” cf. also *De Nat. Deorum* I. 26. 71. “Cicero, who prided himself so much on being a member of the augurial college, is indignant when a haruspex is admitted into the Senate.”—Prof. Jos. Mayor’s note *ad loc.* † Otherwise Pheidippides.

Belief in
Destiny :

as exem-
plified in the
Prometheus
of Æschylus.

the succours demanded, and returned to Athens, to find his citizens victorious, and on his relating the above circumstance a temple was erected to Pan, and his worship attended to.* Now, when I consider the frame of mind he must have been in, I have no doubt that he really heard in his own mind, that voice of the God of Nature upon the wild mountain side, and that this was not done by quackery or falsehood at all. To this system there was a deeper basis than the mere plan of gods and goddesses, such as Jupiter, Apollo, Minerva, &c. Subordinate functions only were assigned to them. But independently of their idolatry they discovered that truth which is in every man's heart, and to which no thinking man can refuse his assent. They recognised a Destiny—a great, dumb, black power ruling during time, which knew nobody for its master, and in its decrees was as inflexible as adamant, and every one knew that it was there. It was sometimes called *Μοίρα*, or *allotment*, *part*, and sometimes “the Unchangeable.” Their gods were not always mentioned with reverence. There is a strange document on the point—the *Prometheus* of Æschylus. Æschylus wrote three plays on Prometheus, but only one has survived to our times. Prometheus had introduced fire into the world, and he was punished for that ; his design was to make our race a little less wretched than it was. Personally he seems to be a taciturn sort of man, but what he does speak is like a thunderbolt against Jupiter. “These miserable men were wandering about in ignorance of the arts of life, and he taught these to them. It was right in him to do it; Jupiter may launch his thunderbolts and do what he will with him. A time is coming : he awaits his time ! Jupiter can hurl him to Tartarus. His time is coming too. *He* must come down : it is all written

* This is related by Herodotus, *Erato* c. 105 and Pausanias, *Attica* I. 28, 4. Vide Harrison and Verrall, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens* p. 542.

“in the Book of Destiny.” * This curious document really indicates the primeval qualities of man. So Herodotus, who was a clear-headed, candid man, tells us that a Scythian nation, the Getæ,† when it thundered, or the sky was long clouded, used to shoot arrows in the air against the god, and defied him, and were excessively angry with him. Another people,‡ whom he mentions with less credibility, made war on the South Wind ; probably it had blown on them till it made them quite desperate ; they marched against it into the desert, but were never heard of again. These are things alien to our ways of thinking, but they may serve to illustrate Greek life.

I must here conclude my remarks on the character of the Greeks. In my next lecture I shall take a survey of the history of their literature from Homer down to Socrates.

* This ‘Destiny’ is found as a dramatic motive throughout the Greek Drama. “Destiny is the main idea inspiring Ancient Drama : whatever may have been the religion of Greek life, the religion reflected in Greek Tragedy is the worship of Destiny.” Moulton, *Ancient Classical Drama* p. 93.

† ‘When it lightens and thunders, they aim their arrows at the sky, uttering threats against the God.’ *Melpomene* c. 94.

‡ They were the Psylli, a Libyan people. “The south wind had blown for a long time and dried up all the tanks in which their water was stored. Now the whole region within the Syrtis is utterly devoid of springs. Accordingly, the Psylli took counsel among themselves and by common consent made war upon the south wind, so at least the Libyans say, I do but repeat their words—they went forth and reached the desert ; but there the south wind rose and buried them under heaps of sand.” *Ibid.* c. 173. (tr. Rawlinson)

SARTOR ON THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS.

“Visible and tangible products of the Past, again, I reckon-up to the extent of three : Cities, with their Cabinets and Arsenals ; then tilled Fields, to either or to both of which divisions Roads with their Bridges may belong ; and thirdly—*Books*. In which third truly, the last invented, lies a worth far surpassing that of the two others. Wondrous indeed is the virtue of a true Book. Not like a dead city of stones, yearly crumbling, yearly needing repair ; more like a tilled field, but then a spiritual field ; like a spiritual tree, let me rather say, it stands from year to year, and from age to age (we have Books that already number some hundred-and-fifty human ages) ; and yearly comes its new produce of leaves (Commentaries, Deductions, Philosophical, Political Systems ; or were it only Sermons, Pamphlets, Journalistic Essays), every one of which is talismanic and thaumaturgic, for it can persuade men. O thou who art able to write a Book, which once in the two centuries or oftener there is a man gifted to do, envy not him whom they name City-builder, and inexpressibly pity him whom they name Conqueror or City-burner ! Thou too art a Conqueror and Victor ; but of the true sort, namely over the Devil : thou too hast built what will outlast all marble and metal, and be a wonder-bringing City of the Mind, a Temple and Seminary and Prophetic Mount, whereto all kindreds of the Earth will pilgrim.—Fool ! why journeyest thou wearisomely, in thy antiquarian fervour, to gaze on the stone pyramids of Geeza, or the clay ones of Sacchara ? These stand there, as I can tell thee, idle and inert, looking over the Desert, foolishly enough, for the last three-thousand years : but canst thou not open thy Hebrew BIBLE, then, or even Luther’s Version thereof ?”

“Tools ? Hast thou not a Brain, furnished, furnishable with some glimmerings of Light ; and three fingers to hold a Pen withal ? Never since Aaron’s Rod went out of practice, or even before it, was there such a wonder-working Tool : greater than all recorded miracles have been performed by Pens. For strangely in this so solid-seeming World which nevertheless is in continual restless flux, it is appointed that *Sound*, to appearance the most fleeting, should be the most continuing of all things. The WORD is well said to be omnipotent in this world ; man, thereby divine, can create as by a *Fiat*. Awake, arise ! Speak forth what is in thee ; what God has given thee, what the Devil shall not take away. Higher task than that of Priesthood was allotted to no man : wert thou but the meanest in that sacred Hierarchy, is it not honour enough therein to spend and be spent ?”

LECTURE II.

HOMER—THE HEROIC AGES—FROM ÆSCHYLUS TO SOCRATES— DECLINE OF THE GREEKS.

[FRIDAY, 4TH MAY 1888.]

WE must now take a survey of Greek literature, although our time does not afford us much scope for minute description when we have to comprehend a space of more than 500 years.

The first works which we shall notice are the poems of Homer. These treat of that event which, as I mentioned in my last lecture, constitutes the first great epoch of Grecian history—the siege of Troy. The *Iliad*, or song of Ilium, consists of a series of what I call ballad-delineations of the various occurrences which took place there, rather than of a narrative of the event itself. For it begins in the middle of it, and, I might say, ends in the middle of it.* The *Odyssey* relates the adventures and voyages of Odysseus or Ulysses in his return from Troy. Their age, as indicated by the Arundell marbles and still more by Herodotus, was 800 years B.C. At all events, that was the age of the *Iliad*, or perhaps 900.† Joannes Von Müller says of them that they are the oldest books of importance after the Bible: there are none older, even among the Chinese,‡ for, in spite of what has been said about their works, there is no evidence

* *Vide* Dr. W. D. Geddes, *Problem of the Homeric Poems* p. 43.

† The dates assigned to Homer are: B. C. 1164, Dionysius; 962-927, Clinton; 850-776, Grote; 688-86, Theopompus.

‡ The earliest published work in Chinese dates, according to Professor R. K. Douglas, from 1150 B.C., when Wan Wang wrote in prison his *Book of Changes* or the *I-ta-King*, the first and most revered of the famous Nine Classics, which thus seems to be older than Homer.

that any of them are any older than the poems of Homer. Some there are about the same age, but very insignificant, such as Romances or Chronicles. Who this Homer was, or who was the real author of these poems, is almost unknown to us. There is, indeed, a bust of Homer in the Museum, presented by the Earl of Arundell, and there are one or two other busts of him elsewhere ; but we have not the slightest evidence for believing that either of them is a portrait. It is not certain whether his poems were the work of one or many writers. There is a tradition, indeed, of a singer Ὀμηρος, a beggar and blind man, to whom they have been attributed. And the belief in his identity was common till 1780 ; when in Germany, Wolff, who had been employed to write the Prolegomena of a Glasgow * edition of Homer, for the first time started an opinion, which has much startled and confused the learned, that there was no such man as Homer ; that the Iliad had occupied a century or more in its composition ; and that it was the work of various itinerant singers or poets, who came to seek a welcome in the courts of different Grecian princes. For there were at that time thousands of songs about Troy circulated throughout Greece. It was three hundred years after their date, when the first

Wolff's
theory.

* F. W. Wolff (1759-1824) published his *Prolegomena* at Halle in 1795. Wolff was not the first to start the doctrine now called after him. Robert Wood, in his *Essay on the Original Genius of Homer* (1769) had already enforced the chief argument about the art of writing being unknown to Homer, which became, in fact, the very keystone of Wolff's theory. The 'Wolffian doctrine' is thus summarised by Professor Jebb : The Homeric poems were composed without the aid of writing, which in 950 B. C. was either wholly unknown to the Greeks, or not yet employed by them for literary purposes. They were put together, at the beginning of the Greek literary age, out of shorter unwritten songs which had come down from a primitive age. How many of these short songs we are to conceive as due to *one man*, was a minor point. Wolff's belief was that the poet who *began* the series of songs also composed *most* of them, and that the later poets continued the general line of his work. *Vide* Prof. Blackie, *Homer and the Iliad* Vol. I. dissertation vi. Dr. W. D. Geddes, *Problem of the Homeric Poems* c. 2. pp. 7-20.

edition of Homer's poems was published, by the sons of Pisistratus, Hippias and Hipparchus.* This was the first. Lycurgus, indeed, is said by Plutarch † to have already made a collection of them, but what he says is extremely vague and unsupported. The next edition was collected by Alexander the Great, which, with some alterations, is our present edition.‡ There appears to me to be a great improbability that any one would compose an epic except in writing ; other poems were intended for recital, but this was too long to be repeated in one sitting. And on the other hand, they would not have been written if, as was the case, there were then no readers. It is also an established fact that Homer could not write. He talks himself of messages passing from one chief to another when it is clear from his own expressions that they made use, not of letters at all, but of some kind of hieroglyphs. Indeed, the only argument in favour of Homer being the real author is derived from the common opinion on the point, and from the unity of the poem, of which it was once said that it was as unlikely that it should be owing to an accidental concurrence of distinct writers, as that by an accidental arrangement of the types it should have printed itself.§ But I began myself some time ago to read the Iliad, which I had not looked at since I left school ; and I must confess that, from reading alone, I became completely convinced that it was

* This theory that either Pisistratus or Hippias or Hipparchus was the author of the first complete text of Homer is doubtful and vague, cf. Dr. D. B. Monro in *Ency. Brit.* 9th Ed. Vol. XII.

† Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus* (c. 4), repeats the story of Heraclides Ponticus (pupil of Plato) that the poetry of Homer was first brought cir. 776 to the Peloponnesus by Lycurgus, who obtained it from the descendants of Creophylus, and adds that there was already a faint report of the poems in Greece, and that certain detached fragments were possessed by a few.

‡ 'Our common text, we may reasonably believe, is fundamentally the same as that which was known to Aristarchus ; and therefore in all probability, it rests on the same basis as the text which was read by Plato and Thucydides.'—Professor Jebb, *Homer* p. 102.

§ For this illustration, cf. Cicero *De Nat. Deorum* II. 33. *De Div.* I, 23.

Iliad not the work of one man. Knight* himself, one of the warmest adherents of the other side, conceded that the

Want of unity.

Analogy with the Robin Hood ballads.

Odyssey was written by a different hand, and that the Iliad, as we have it, has been much altered by transcribers. In short, he is not at all strong for his own side. But by far the strongest consideration for the opinion is produced by reading the poem itself.† As to its unity, I confess that it seems to me that one may cut out two or three books, without making any alteration in its unity.‡ Its value does not consist in an excellent sustaining of characters. There is not at all the sort of style in which Shakspeare draws his characters, there is simply the cunning man—the great-headed, coarse, stupid man,—the proud man, but there is nothing so remarkable, but that any one else could have drawn the same characters for the purpose of piecing them into the Iliad. We all know the old Italian Comedy—their harlequin, doctor, and colombine. There are almost similar things in the way of characters in the Iliad. Hence if we may compare great things with small, we have an analogous case in this country's literature. We have collections of songs about Robin Hood, a character who lived as an outlaw in Sherwood Forest, and was particularly famous in Nottinghamshire and the North of England. In the fourteenth century, innumerable ballads respecting him were current in this country and especially in the North,—about his disputes with sheriffs, and great quantities of adventures of all sorts, which were sung quite in an independent character by fiddlers and old blindmen. It is only fifty years since a bookseller of York published these ballads in an uniform collection, cut

* Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824), author of the *Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*, published *Prolegomena* to Homer at Leipzig in 1816.

† Bishop Thirlwall said that a study of the details of the Homeric poems leads to the theory of manifold authorship, whilst a study of the general outlines tends to the theory of an original unity.

‡ 'The great authority of Goethe,—upon a question of organic unity,—of great weight,' was in favour of the unity of the poem and against Wolff's theory.—Geddes, *Problem* p. 12.

out parts here, and put in other parts there, and rendered the whole as consistent a poem as the Iliad.* Now, contrasting the melodious Greek mind with the not very melodious English mind, the cithara with the fiddle, and bearing in remembrance that those of the one class were sung in ale-houses, while the others were sung in kings' houses, it really appears that our Robin Hood ballads have received the very same arrangement as that which in other times produced "the tale of Troy divine."†

With Joannes Von Müller I should say that the character of Homer's poems is the best among all poems. For, in the first place, they are the delineation of something more ancient than themselves, and more simple; and, therefore more interesting, as being the impressions of a primeval mind,—the proceedings of a set of men, our spiritual progenitors. The first things of importance in the world's history are mentioned there. Secondly, they possess qualities of the highest character, of whatever age or country. The Greek genius never exceeded what was done by the authors of those poems which are known as the writings of Homer. Those qualities may be reduced to these two heads. First, Homer does not seem to believe his story to be a fiction: he has no doubt of its truth.‡ Now if we only consider what a thing it is to believe, we shall see that it must have been an immense circumstance in favour of Homer. I do not mean to say that Homer could have sworn to the truth of his poems before a jury, far from it; but that he repeated what had survived in tradition and records, and expected

Character
of the poems.

Sincerity.

* Carlyle evidently refers to: "Robin Hood: a collection of all the ancient poems, songs and ballads, now extant, relative to that celebrated English outlaw. In two volumes. London, 1795." This collection which was anonymous was by the well-known antiquary Joseph Riison, who was not however a bookseller of York but Deputy High-Bailiff of the Duchy of Lancaster. A revised collection of the Robin Hood Ballads and Poems was published by J. M. Gutch in 1853. For the analogy of these ballads with Homer, cf. Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides in Life of Johnson* ed. Hill, Vol. v. p. 164.

† Milton, *Il. Penseroso* l. 100.

‡ Cf. Prof. Blackie, *Homer and the Iliad* Vol. I. p. 16.

his readers to believe them, as he did. With regard to that thing which we call machinery such as gods, visions and the like, I must recall to your minds what I said in my last lecture respecting the belief which the Greeks had in their deities. It is of no moment to our question that these stories were altogether false ; but Homer believed them to be true. Throughout the whole of Grecian history we find that any remarkable man—any man to whom anything mysterious attached—was regarded as of the supernatural ; their experience was narrow, and men's hearts opened to the marvellous, not being yet shut up by scepticism. This disposition was favourable to the plastic nature of Rumour, and it (Rumour) in fact, became afterwards one of their gods, and temples were raised to it. Thus Pindar mentions that Neptune Ποσειδᾶν appeared on one occasion at the Nemean Games.* Here it is conceivable that if some aged individual of venerable mien and few words had in fact come thither, his appearance would have attracted attention ; people would have come to gaze upon him, and conjecture have been busy ; it would be natural that a succeeding generation actually reported that a God appeared upon the earth. Therefore I am convinced that Homer believed his narratives to be strictly true.

Music.

Secondly, the poem of the Iliad was actually intended to be sung ; *it sings itself*—not only the cadence but the whole thought of the poem sings itself, as it were ; there is a serious recitative in the whole matter. Now if we take these two things and add them together, the combination makes up the essence of the best poem that can be written. In that pitch of enthusiasm in which the whole was conceived, the very words sing ; in the strong, high emotion, the very words of the voice grow musical. Homer throws in them the expletives of some short sentences. With these two

* It was not at the Nemean Games, which were held in honour of Zeus, that Neptune appeared, but at the Isthmian Games which were held expressly in his honour. Pindar mentions the appearance in his *Olympic Odes* viii. 64.

qualities, Music and Belief, he places his mind in a most beautiful brotherhood, in a sincere contact with his own characters ; there are no reticences; he allows himself to expand with most touching loveliness, and occasionally, it may be with an awkwardness that carries its own apology, upon all the matters which come in view of the subject of his work. And thus he affords the most decisive impression of the truly poetic nature of his genius. We can see it in his very language, his phraseology, and the most minute details of his work. Let us take for instance, the epithets* which he applies to the objects of nature—"the divine sea"† (the beauty of that divine sea was deep in the mind of Homer), "the dark coloured sea," or to the kings' houses which he admired: "the high wainscotted house,"‡ the sounding house. For a very touching instance let us see Agamemnon, when he swears, not merely by the gods, but by "rivers and all objects, stars," &c., and calls on them to witness his oath. He does not say what they *are*, but he feels that he himself is a Mysterious Existence, standing by the side of them, Mysterious Existences.§

There is more of character in his second poem, supposed *Odyssey*. to have been written a century later than the *Iliad*.¶ It treats of a higher state of civilisation. There is an evident alteration, too, in the theology. In the first poem, Pallas is represented as mixing in fights ; in the second, she does not fight at all, *Its unity.* but is Minerva, Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom. From the superior unity of it as a poem, it is impossible that it could have been written by many different people. It makes a deeper impression on one than the *Iliad*, though the genius of it is not greater, perhaps not so great. The heroes are different. Ulysses

* This had been noted by J. Hare in *Guesses at Truth* (1827) p. 40. 71.

† Διὸς ποταμῶδ' *Iliad* B. 522.

‡ ὀφρυγῶν θαλάμῳ *Iliad* I. 582.

§ Cf. the famous passage in *Sartor Resartus*. Bk. III c. ix p. 184.

¶ 'Homeric critics, however, widely differing in their views of the poems as a whole, are nearly unanimous in regarding the *Odyssey* as being decidedly later than the *Iliad*' Dr. W. Leaf, introduction to the English translation of Dr. Schüchhardt's *Schliemann's Excavations* p. xxvi.

Character
of Ulysses.

does not make much figure in the Iliad. He is merely drawn an adroit, shifty, cunning man. But in the Odyssey he becomes of a tragic significance. He is not there the man of cunning stratagem but the "much-enduring" *—a most endearing epithet. We have a touching account of all his experiences in misfortune. He proves himself in the later poem more thoughtful of those who have perished. What, for example, can be more lovely than the scene, when, after escaping the man-devouring Lestrygones, the snares of Circe and other perils, he comes to the end of the old world, the Pillars of Hercules, to consult Tiresias the prophet, and after performing different oblations, among the surrounding shades, he sees the shade of his mother Anticlea; and poor Ulysses stands there, and there is his mother, a pale, ineffectual shade; and he strives to clasp her in his arms, and he finds nothing but air! † In all nations we read and hear of such feelings as that. We go for them into the heart of human nature. The same sentiment, for instance, we meet with in those beautiful lines of the *Queen Mary* :—

O little did my mother think, The day she cradled me,
The lands I was to travel in, The death I was to see.

That, too, is a beautiful burst of anger, where Ulysses, concealed in his own palace, beholds the shameful waste, the wild revel and riot of his wife's unworthy suitors. He is disguised as a beggar, and is known to no one until his old nurse discovers him by a scar in his leg, which she observes while washing his feet. The suitors treated him with insult, and flung bones and all sorts of things at him. Lastly, they tried to bend Ulysses' bow, but the old bow was too strong for them. The old beggar begged hard for a trial; he looked at the bow, and with a fiery kindness and love to his old friend,

* *μακρότης* 'Odyssey, Odyssey E. 171 N. 250. Ω 490 et passim.

† Odyssey A. 202-9:

"Thrice I essayed with eager hands outspread,
Thrice like a shadow or a dream she fled,
And my palm closed on unsubstantial air."

Tr. Worsley.

examined it a long time without saying a word to see if it were in the state in which he left it. Then he shook his rags and, as Homer says,* "He strode mightily across the threshold," and began to address the suitors. "Ye Dogs," he says,—“ye thought that I should never return again “from Troy and ye gave way to your wickedness, ummind-“ful of gods above and men below. But now your time is “come: the extreme limit of death awaits you.” Then his arrows fell thick among them and I believe there was quick work made with the suitors on that occasion! Numbers of traits like this have been collected by Goethe.†

There is an immense number of similes in Homer. Sometimes their simplicity makes us smile, ‡ but there is great kindness and veneration in the smile. Thus where he compares§ Ajax to an ass, Homer does not mean anything like insult in the comparison. But he means to compare him, surrounded as he is by an overwhelming force of Trojans, to an ass getting into a field of corn, while all the boys of the neighbourhood are

* *Ibid.* ☉ *fin.* X init :

“Striped of his rags then leapt the god-like king
On the great threshold, in his hand the bow
And quiver, filled with arrows of mortal sting.

“Dogs, ye denied that I should e'er come back
From Troia's people to my native land.
Long in your pride my house ye rend and wrack,
Yea and ye force the women with violent hand,
And my wife claim while I on earth yet stand,
Nor fear the gods who rule in the wide sky,
Nor lest a mortal in the earth demand
Your price of guilt—and ye are like to die,
Bound you Death's fatal toils inextricably lie.”

Tr. Worsley.

† In his little sketch 'Homer noch einmal,' which contains his matured opinions on the subject.

‡ Cf. Prof. Blackie, *Homer and the Iliad* Vol. I. p. 148 seq.

§ *Iliad* A. 557 ὄνος ἄσθην :

'As when a lazy ass going past a field hath the better of the boys with him, an ass that hath had many a cudgel broken about his sides, and he faroth into the deep crop, and wasteth it, while the boys smite him with cudgels, and feeble is the force of them, but yet with might and main they drive him forth, when he hath had his fill of fodder, even so did the high-hearted Trojans and allies, called from many lands, smite great Aias son of Telamon with darts on the centre of his shield, and ever followed after him.'
tr. Lang, Leaf, and Myers, p. 220.

endeavouring by blows and shouts to drive him away ; but the "slow ass" unheeding them crops away at the quick-growing corn, and will not leave off till he has had his fill. So it is with Ajax and the Trojans. There is a beautiful formula which he always uses when he describes death. "He thumped down falling, and his arms jingled about him."* Now trivial as this expression may at first appear, it does convey a deep sight and feeling of that phenomenon, the fall, as it were, of a sack of clay, and the jingle of armour, the last sound he was ever to make throughout time, who a minute or two before was alive and vigorous, and now falls, a heavy dead mass.

But we must quit Homer. There is one thing, however, which I ought to mention about Ulysses. He is the very model of the type Greek,† a perfect image of the Greek genius, a shifty, nimble, active man, involved in difficulties, but every now and then bobbing up out of darkness and confusion, victorious and intact.

But I must quit this discussion about Homer, and I regret it much. I must omit altogether the insight into heroic times which he affords us—that farmer, grazier life, the pillars of their halls covered with smoke, as he describes them, the stable-yard at the principal portal to those kings' houses, "high-sounding houses," which he so much admires, piled up with the sweepings of the stables, and other curious delineation of manners ;—I must leave all that.

Homer already betokens a high state of civilisation ;‡ in fact, by tradition, and still more by express records, we learn

* 'He falls, earth thunders, and his arms resound.'

Iliad tr. Pope XVI. 990.

† Cf. Geddes, *Problem of the Homeric Poems* p. 50. 'Not only in his virtues, but in his faults, Ulysses exhibits a type of the Greek people in their special weakness ;' also cf. p. 305.

‡ The late Dr. Schliemann's excavations on the sites of Ilium, Mycenæ, &c., have thrown extremely valuable light on the state of civilization depicted in the Homeric poems. For a concise and clear summary of his results vide Dr. Schuchhardt's *Schliemann's Excavations: an archaeological study* ; just translated into English, with an excellent introduction by Dr. Walter Leaf on the bearing of these researches on the Homeric poems.

that the Greek genius had been then for 1,000 years working. As Horace says of their warriors that "there were many brave men before Agamemnon,"* we may say of their authors that there were many beautiful and musical minds before Homer, we have no account of. The language, for example was the best dialect; the most complete language that was ever spoken. If from its precision and excellence the French language is the best adapted to the chat of courts and to compliments, the Greek was no less suited to every kind of composition down to the pointed epigram. Their theology, too, their polity, both of war and peace, presupposes a civilisation of 1,000 years or longer before Homer. After Homer, with the exception of some minstrels, whom I like to fancy of kindred to the Troubadours, on which point I shall say more when I come to the Troubadours, we have nothing in the way of literature for 400 or 500 years. It was an age of wars, convulsions, migrations, about the Heraclides and others. Greece expanded itself in colonisation, however, and other enterprises of an important character. The Greek mind at this epoch was rather philosophical than poetical. Pythagoras and the Seven Wise Men were of this time. What we have of these philosophers is very vague. One man † speculated that the world was made out of fire; another attributed it to the operation of water; ‡ there is something very imaginative about Pythagoras, the greatest man among them. Some of his precepts, which are preserved, our want of information makes us consider entirely absurd and ridiculous. We cannot, for instance, understand the reason for his precept to abstain from beans—*faba abstinere*. § What will immortalise Pythagoras is his discovery

Greek Speculation.

Pythagoras.

* 'Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona Multi.' *Horace Odes* IV. ix. 25.

† Heraclitus of Ephesus.

‡ Thales of Miletus.

§ Cicero *de Divinatione* II. 58: "Faba Pythagora utique abstinere." Horace also refers to this.—*Satires* II. vi. 62.

of the square of the hypotenuse.* It seems that he may rather be said not to have invented it, but imported, for I understand the Hindoos and other people of the East have long known it. It was a discovery, however, which, in an advancing state of science, could not remain long unguessed. But a great part of the wisdom of our world was due to Pythagoras, who acquired it in travelling over the world for information. It may have been latent, and it may not be easy to indicate what precisely we owe to him ; but it was not lost while men were to be found to work and improve on what he had left them. We may observe the like of many men. The print, then, which Pythagoras has left of his genius is the 47th proposition of Euclid. There is also another one we owe to the Greeks. Archimedes discovered that the sphere is two-thirds smaller than the cylinder which contains it.

History :
Herodotus.

Passing from Philosophy to History we come to a remarkable man—Herodotus. He was not exactly the next writer in order of time, as Æschylus preceded him by a few years. His history is divided by his admiring editors into nine books, which they named after the nine Muses ; or rather, the division was made by him, while the designation and admiration were theirs. He was a native of Halicarnassus, and being early engaged in some of the troubles of that place, he was obliged to leave it, and set out on his travels. He attentively studied the history of the various countries he visited, from Egypt to the Black Sea, and he put down everything he learned in writing. For there were no books then, and as he mentions, all the chronicles of importance were inscribed on tablets of brass. At the age of 39 he returned to Greece, and he read his work at the Olympic games, when it excited intense admiration. It is, properly speaking, an Encyclopedia of the various nations, and it displays in a striking manner the innate spirit of harmony that was in the Greeks.

* Diogenes Laertius, *Vita* VIII. 12. cf. Ball, *Short History of Mathematics*.

It begins with Cræsus, the King of Lydia; upon some hint or other it suddenly goes off into a digression on the Persians, and then, *apropos* of something else, we have a disquisition on the Egyptians, and so on. At first we feel somewhat impatient of being thus carried away at the "sweet will" of the author; but we soon find it to be the result of an instinctive spirit of harmony, and we see all these various branches of the tale come pouring down at last in the Invasion of Greece by the Persians. It is that spirit of order which has constituted him the prose-poet of his country.

It is curious to see the world he made for himself. There His veracity. is in general not a more veracious man§, a more intelligent man, than Herodotus. We see as in a mirror that what he writes from his own observation is quite true. But when he does not profess to know the truth of his narratives, it is curious to see the sort of Arabian tales which he collects together, of the nation of one-eyed men,* of Credulity. the female republic, the Amazons,† of the people who live under an air always white with feathers,‡ the Cimmerians,

* The Arimaspi. *Melpomene* c. 27. Herodotus is himself incredulous about the story. "But here, too, I am incredulous, and cannot persuade myself that there is a race of men born with one eye, who in all else resemble the rest of mankind."—*Thalia* c. 116.

† *Melpomene* c. 110-116.—"It has been usual to scout as fables all stories of Amazons or even of any established equality in any nation of women with men. But the travels of Livingstone" and others confirm such stories. Canon Rawlinson's note, Vol. III. p. 22.

‡ Not the Cimmerians but Scythians of the extreme north.—*Melpomene* c. 6. "With respect to the feathers which are said by the Scythians to fill the air, and to prevent persons from penetrating into the remoter parts of the continent, or even having any view of those regions, my opinion is, that in the country above Scythia it always snows. Now, snow when it falls looks like feathers as every one is aware who has seen it come down close to him. The Scythians with their neighbours call the snow-flakes feathers because I think, of the likeness which they bear to them."—*Ibid.* c. 31.

§ His veracity has been much attacked from the times of the pseudo-Plutarch down to our own, in which Dr. Sayce denies it almost passionately, in his recent edition. Cf. however, *Edinburgh Review* 1883.

(yet even here the man's natural shrewdness is often evinced, as when he conjectures that these feathers may have been only the falling snow-flakes): and thus dying away gradually from authentic history into the fabulous. He was a good-natured man, not at all against the Persians; but still there is an emphasis in the way he reports things, where the war with Persia is concerned, and in the speeches, which he attributes to his characters, shows the Greek feeling he had in him. He mentions with very little reproof that Lacedemonian irregularity—how the people took the Persian heralds, who came to demand earth and water in token of submission and flung them into a deep well, telling them that they would find both there in plenty.* His account is the only one we have of that war. It is mainly through him that we became acquainted with Themistocles, that model of the type Greek in prose, as Ulysses was in song. He lived, too, in that which I have called the Flower Period of Greece—fifty years after the Persian Invasion, or 445 B.C., which, counting in the whole 100 years, was the most brilliant period of Grecian History. Themistocles was certainly one of the greatest men in the world. Had it not been for him, the Persians would have unquestionably conquered Greece. It is curious to observe the vacillations of the Greeks at this period: the Greeks wished to run, and not to fight of all. Even, after Leonidas had so gallantly perished, Themistocles had great difficulty in persuading them not to take to flight in their ships: "If once they went out to sea," he said, "all was lost." And then his reply to Eurybiades, which has been by some censured, appears to me to

* They were the heralds of Darius, *Erato* c. 48. Later during the time of Xerxes, the Lacedemonians tried to make amends for their treachery. *Polymnia* cc. 133-137. Herodotus does reprove their conduct and says that the wrath of Talthybia, the patron deity of heralds, fell on them with violence. "In my judgment this was a case wherein the hand of heaven was most plainly manifest."

have been one of the grandest ever made by man.* Eurybiades, in the heat of dispute, shook his staff in a menacing manner at him. "Strike, but hear!" was the only return he made. To have drawn forth the sword by his side and to have smote him dead for such an insult, would have been no more than natural; but any one could have done that! A poor drayman in a pot-house might have done it. But to forbear, to waive his own redress, in order to extinguish resentments and keep the troops united for his country's sake,—this appears to me truly great. Like Ulysses, he displayed an uncommon degree of dexterity on occasions. For instance, when he was chased out of Greece, he betook himself to his worst enemy, the King of the Persians, whose armies he had destroyed, and who had offered a price for his head, but who now had the magnanimity to do him no wrong. At his first audience, the king asked him "what he thought of Greece." Themistocles, who felt that he knew nothing at all he could answer to such a question, replied adroitly "that speech was like a Persian carpet rolled up, which was full of beautiful colours and images, but which required to be unrolled and spread out before the colours or the figures could be seen and appreciated." He therefore requested time to acquire sufficient knowledge of the Persian tongue to be able to afford the King the information he sought in one single view and not in a detached disjointed fashion." The answer satisfied the King. †

Contemporary with Themistocles, and a little prior to Herodotus, Greek tragedy began. *Æschylus*, I define to have been a truly gigantic man,—I mean by this much more

Tragedy:
Æschylus.

* Herodotus does not give this anecdote which is related by Plutarch in his *Life of Themistocles* (c. 11). Grote thinks the story to be a spurious one.—*Greece* Vol. IV. p. 470 note. Plutarch gives the same story somewhat altered in his *Apophthegmata* ii p. 185.

† This story too is not in Herodotus. It is given by Plutarch, p. 88, tr. Clough.

than the mere trivial figure of elocution usually expressed by the word *gigantic*,—one of the largest characters ever known and all whose movements are clumsy and huge, like those of a son of Anak. In short, his character is just that of Prometheus himself, as he has described him. I know no more pleasant thing than to study Æschylus. You fancy that you hear the old dumb rocks speaking to you of all things they had been thinking of since the world began, in their wild, savage, utterances. His Agamemnon opens finely, with the watchman on the top of a high tower, where he has been a year waiting day and night, for the expected telegraph of the success of his countrymen. All at once, while he is yet speaking, the fire begins blazing. It is a very grand scene. Clytemnestra afterwards describes* most graphically that signal fire consuming the dry heath on Mount Ida, then prancing over the billows of the ocean, reflected from mountain top to mountain top, and lastly coming to Salamis. Æschylus had himself borne arms, and he must have been a terrible fighter, quite a Nemean lion, and one says to oneself when one reads his descriptions, “Heaven help the Persians who had to deal with Æschylus.” It is said that when composing, he had on a look of the greatest fierceness. He has been accused of bombast,—from his obscurity he is often exceedingly difficult, but bombast is not the word at all. His words come up from the great volcano of his heart and often he has no voice for it and it copulates his words together, and tears his heart asunder.

The next great dramatist is Sophocles. Æschylus had found
 \ Sophocles. Greek tragedy in a cart under the charge of Thespis, a man of great consideration in his day, but of whom nothing remains to us, and he made it into the regular drama. Sophocles completed the work ; he was of a more cultivated and chastened mind than Æschylus. He translated it into a

* *Agamemnon* ll. 272-307, Plumptre's translation p. 193.

choral peal of melody. Æschylus only excels in his grand bursts of feeling. The *Antigone* is the finest thing of the kind ever sketched by man. Euripides, the next great Euripides. Dramatist, who has sometimes been likened to Racine, and sometimes to Corneille although I cannot see much resemblance to Corneille, at least, carried his compositions occasionally to the very verge of disease, and displays a distinct commencement of the age of speculation and scepticism. He writes often *for the effect's sake*,—not as Homer, or Æschylus, rapt away in the train of action ; but how touching is effect so produced ! He was accused of impiety. In a sceptical kind of man these two things go together very often,—impiety and desire of effect. There is a decline in all kinds of literature when it ceases to be poetical and becomes speculative.

Socrates was the emblem of the decline of the Greeks. His Scepticism: was the mind of the Greeks in its transition state ; he was the Socrates, friend of Euripides. It seems strange to call him so. I willingly admit that he was a man of deep feeling and morality. But I can well understand the idea which Aristophanes had of him—that he was a man going to destroy all Greece with his innovations. To understand this, we have only to go back to what I said in my last lecture on the peculiar character of the Greek system of religion, the crown of all their beliefs. The Greek system, you will remember, was of a great significance and value for the Greeks ; even the most absurd-looking part of the whole, the oracle, this, too, was shown to have been not a quackery, but the result of a sincere belief on the parts of the priests themselves. No matter what you call the process ; if the man believed in what he was about, and listened to his faith in a higher power, surely, by looking into himself apart from earthly feeling, he would be in that frame of mind by far the best adapted for judging correctly and wisely of the Future. They saw the most pious, intelligent, and reverend among them join themselves to this system, and thus was formed a

His unprofitable character.

sort of rude Pagan church to the people. There were also the Greek Games, celebrated in honour of the gods, and under the divine sanction. We shall find that the Greek religion, in short, did essential service to the Greeks. The mind of the whole nation, by its means, obtained a strength and coherence. If I may not be permitted to say that through it the nation became united to the Divine Power, I may at any rate assert that the highest considerations and motives thus became familiar to each person and were put at the very top of his mind. But about Socrates' time this devotional feeling had in a great measure given way. He himself was not more sceptical than the rest; he shows a lingering kind of aim and attachment for the old religion of his country, and often we cannot make out whether he believed in it or not. He must have had but a painful intellectual life,—a painful kind of life altogether, one would think. He was the son of a statuary, and was originally brought up in that art, but he soon forsook it and appeared to give up all doings with the world, excepting such as would lead to its spiritual improvement. From that time he devoted himself to the teaching of morality and virtue, and he spent his life in that kind of mission. I cannot say that there was any evil in this; but it does seem to me to have been a character entirely unprofitable. I have a great desire to admire Socrates, but I confess that his writings seem to be made up of a number of very wire-drawn notions about virtue;—there is no conclusion in him, there is no word of life in Socrates. He was, however, personally a coherent and firm man. After him the nation became more and more sophistical. The Greek genius lost its originality, it lost its poetry, and gave way to the spirit of speculation. Alexander the Great subdued them, and though they fought well under him, and though manufactures and so forth flourished for a long time afterwards, not another man of genius of any very remarkable quality appeared in Greece.

LECTURE III.

THE ROMANS, THEIR CHARACTER, THEIR FORTUNE; WHAT
THEY DID—FROM VIRGIL TO TACITUS—END OF PAGANISM.

[MONDAY, 7TH MAY 1888.]



WE have now been occupied some two days in endeavouring to obtain a view of the practical, spiritual way of life among the Greeks. I shall now endeavour to draw this matter to a conclusion—the survey of the most ancient period of this our Western Europe.

II. We pass now to the Romans. We may say of this nation, that as the Greeks may be compared to the children of antiquity, from their *naïveté* and gracefulness, while their whole history is an aurora, the dawn of a higher culture and civilization, so the Romans were the men of antiquity, and their history, a glorious, warm, laborious day, less beautiful and graceful, no doubt, than the Greeks, but most essentially useful.

We have small time or space to enter largely into the discussion of Roman ways of thinking, but it is a fortunate coincidence that the Romans in their special aspect do not require much discussion. The Roman life, and the Roman opinions are quite a sequel to those of the Greeks; a second edition, we may say, of the Pagan system of belief and action. As authors or promulgators of books, they will comparatively require little of our attention.

Pyrrhus.

The first appearance of the Romans, their entering on the succession of the Greeks, is very picturesque. The Tarentines did certainly send—these too were Greeks from of old, inhabitants of Magna Græcia, of which I spoke in my first lecture ;—the Tarentines sent certainly embassies to Pyrrhus, the King of Epirus in the year 280. He was an ambitious, martial prince, bent on conquering everybody, and therefore well suited for their wishes ; they entreated him “to come over and assist them against a people called “Romans, some barbarians of that name.” Pyrrhus embarked, landed, and gave battle to the Romans. According to Plutarch,* when he saw them forming themselves in order of battle, he said, “why, these barbarians do not fight like barbarians !” And he accordingly afterwards found out, to his cost, that they did not fight like barbarians at all. A few years later he was worsted by the Romans, and again after that his forces were completely destroyed in another engagement. He himself said that “with him for their “General, and Romans for his soldiers, he would conquer “the world !” One hundred years after this, Greece itself was completely subdued by the Romans. In the year before Christ 280, the war with Pyrrhus occurred. The Greek life was shattered to pieces against the harder, stronger, life of the Romans. Corinth was taken and destroyed. Greece had degenerated 100 years before Alexander, when Socrates died ;—we saw symptoms of not at all a healthy state of Greek existence. And now† Corinth was taken and burned, and even Egypt with her Ptolemies, and Antioch with her Selencidæ, fell successively into the power of the Romans. It was just as a beautiful crystal jar becomes dashed to pieces upon the hard rocks,—so inexpressible was the force of the strong Roman energy.

* Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* p. 281, tr. Clough.

† 146 B. C.

According to their own account, they had already been established 280 years before that event, or 750 B. C.* But nothing is certainly known of them before that event. It is now pretty well understood that their ancient historians† were all Greeks, who adopted the annals of those who conquered them. Not long ago that which had been already suspected‡ by antiquaries and learned men was made good to demonstration, by a German scholar, of whom you have no doubt all heard, Niebuhr—that all that story in Livy of Romulus and Remus, the two infants, who were thrown into the Tiber and stranded on its banks, it being then the time of flood, and their being suckled by a she-wolf, and also that story of the king Tarquin, are nothing after all, but a mythus or traditional tale, with a few faint vestiges of meaning in it, but of no significance for the historians; at least it refuses to yield it up to him. As to Niebuhr himself, he has accumulated a vast quantity of quotations and other materials, and, in short, his book is altogether a laborious thing; but he affords, after all, very little light on that early period. One does not find that he makes any conclusion out except destruction.§ And after a laborious perusal of his work, we are forced to come to the conclusion that Niebuhr knew no more of the history of that period than I do. No doubt some human individual built a house for

Early history,
legendary.

Niebuhr.

* The Era of the foundation of Rome is 753 *æc.* Varro and 752 *æc.* Cato.

† Polybius (B.C. 204-122). Dionysius Halicarnassensis, ob. B.C. 7, Diodorus Siculus.

‡ "That what is called the history of the Kings and early Consuls of Rome is to a great extent fabulous, few scholars have, since the time of Beaufort, ventured to deny."—Macaulay's preface to the *Lays of Ancient Rome*, Works, Vol. VIII. p. 445. James Perizonius in the 17th century was the first to see this. Beaufort anticipated Niebuhr in the main points.

§ *Vide* Arnold's refutation of this unjust charge of destructiveness generally brought against Niebuhr. "He has rescued from the dominion of scepticism much which less profound inquirers had before too hastily given up to it; he has restored and established far more than he has overthrown."—*History of Rome* Vol. I. p. 181.

himself in the neighbourhood of what must then have been a desert overgrown with trees and shrubs, perhaps near to the old fountain called afterwards the fountain of Inturna, and probably even then in existence, one of the old fountains of the earth ; but who he was, or how the work went on, we do not know, except that it became the most famous town in the world, except Jerusalem, and destined to make the largest records of any town.

Niebuhr* has shown that the Romans evince the characters of two distinct species of people. First, there are the Pelasgi, a people inhabiting the lower part of Italy from of old—the same race as we have seen in Greece, where they had already become Hellenes. Secondly, there were the Etruscans† or Tuscans, an entirely different race. Joannes Von Müller supposes them to be northern Teutonic or Gothic.‡ They are known by various remains of art, the *terra cotta*, baked earth. Winkelmann describes these remains to be of an Egyptian character, from their gloomy heaviness, austerity and sullenness. To the last moment the Etruscans continued to be the haruspices of the Romans. They themselves were men of a gloomy character, very different from the liveliness and gracefulness of the Greeks. In the Romans we have traces of these two races joined together—the one formed the noblesse, the other the commonalty. The main feature, independently of their works of art, which we observe in the old Etruscans is that they

* *Lectures on the History of Rome* tr. Schmitz, p. 68 lect. xiii. *History of Rome* Vol. I. pp. 6 seq. tr. Hare & Thirlwall.

† “The Etruscans were undoubtedly one of the most remarkable nations of antiquity, the great civilizers of Italy, and their influence not only extended over the whole of the ancient world, but has affected every subsequent age.”—Dennis, *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* Vol. I. p. xc.

‡ “No one has yet succeeded in connecting them with any known race. The most we can say is that several traces apparently reliable, point to the conclusion that the Etruscans may be on the whole included among the Indo-Germana. ‘The Etruscans,’ Dionysius said long ago, ‘are like no other nation in language and manners,’ and we have nothing to add to this statement.”—Mommsen, *History of Rome* Vol. I. p. 127.

were an agricultural people, endowed with a sort of sullen energy, which is shown by the way in which they drained out lakes and marshes, encumbering the soil, and these drains, I am told, are to be traced still.* And in the Roman agricultural writers, such as Cato, Varro, and Columella, we meet with many old precepts which seem quite traditional. We gather from these sources evidence of an intensely industrious thrift—a kind of vigorous thrift, which was in that people. Thus, with respect to the ploughing of the earth, they express it to be a kind of blasphemy against nature to leave a clod unbroken; † and I believe that it is considered still to be good husbandry to pulverise the soil as much as possible. Now, this feeling was the fundamental characteristic of the Roman people before they were distinguished as conquerors. Thrift is a quality held in no esteem, and is generally regarded as mean; it is certainly mean enough, and objectionable from its interfering with all manner of intercourse between man and man. But I must say that thrift, well understood, includes in itself the best virtues that a man can have in this world. It teaches him self-denial, to postpone the present to the future, to calculate his means, and to regulate his actions accordingly; thus understood, it includes all that man can do in his vocation. Even in its worst state, it indicates a great people, I think. The Dutch, for example—there is no stronger people than

Thrift.

* Etruria was in advance of Greece in her social condition and in certain respects in physical civilization. "The health and cleanliness of her towns were insured by a system of sewerage, vestiges of which may be seen on many Etruscan sites; and the Cloaca Maxima will be a memorial, to all times, of the attention paid by the Etruscans to drainage. They drained lakes by cutting tunnels through the heart of mountains, and they diverted the course of rivers to reclaim low and marshy ground. And these grand works are not only still extant, but some are as efficient as ever, after the lapse of so many centuries."—Dennis, *op. cit.*, p. lx.

† Varro *De Re Rustica*, I. 129. Cato, *R. R.* 61. Columella, *R. R.* XI. 2, 8, etc. Virgil, however, was of another opinion with regard to pulverising the soil—*vide* Geor. I. 104. Cf. Adam Dickson, *Husbandry of the Ancients*.

Roman
Religion.

Fate.

Practical
character of
Roman civi-
lisation.

them,—the people of new England, the Scotch, all great nations! In short it is the foundation of all manner of virtue* in a nation. Connected with this principle, there was in the Roman character a great seriousness and devoutness, and it was natural that there should. The Greek religion was light and sportful compared to the Roman. The Roman Deities were innumerable. Varro enumerates thirty thousand divinities. Their notion of Fate, which we observed was the central element of Paganism, was much more productive of consequences than the Greek notion, and it depended entirely on the original character which had been given to this people. Their notion was that Rome was always meant to be the capital of the whole world, that right was on the side of every man who was with Rome, and that therefore it was their duty to do everything for Rome. This belief tended very principally to produce its own fulfilment, nay, it was itself founded on fact. “Did not Rome do so-and-so?” they would reason. That stubborn grinding down of the glebe, which their ancestors practised, ploughing the ground fifteen times to make it produce a better crop than if it were ploughed fourteen times, the same was afterwards carried on by the Romans in all the concerns of their ordinary life, and by it they raised themselves above all other people. Method was their great principle, just as harmony was of the Greeks. The method of the Romans was a sort of harmony, but not that beautiful, graceful thing, which was the Greek harmony. Theirs was the harmony of plan—an architectural harmony—which was displayed in the arranging of practical antecedents and consequences. Their whole genius was practical. Speculation with them was nothing in the comparison. Their vocation was not to teach the sciences,—what sciences they knew they had received from the Greeks ;

* Cf. *Friedrich the Great* Vol. I. 422, II. 561, *Miscellanies* Vol. VI. p. 118, etc.

but to teach practical wisdom, to subdue people into polity.* Pliny declares that he cannot describe Rome: "so great is it that it appears to make Heaven more illustrious, and to bring the whole world into civilisation and obedience under its authority."† This is what it did. It had gone on for 300 years till the time of Pyrrhus, fighting obscurely with its neighbours, and getting one State after another into its power, when the defeat of Pyrrhus gave it all Italy, and rendered that country entirely Roman. Some have thought that the Romans had done nothing else but fight to establish their dominion when they had not the least claim of right, and that they were a mere nest of robbers. But this evidently is a misapprehension. Historians have generally managed to write down such facts as are apt to strike the memory of the vulgar, while they omit the circumstances which display the real character of the Romans. The Romans were at first an agricultural people; they built, it appears, their barns within their walls for protection. But they got incidentally into quarrels with other neighbouring States, and it is not strange that they should have taken the opportunity to compel them by force to adopt their civilisation, such as it was, in preference to the more foolish and savage method of their own. I do not mean to say that the Roman was a mild kind of discipline. Far from that; it was established only by hard contests and fighting; but it was of all the most beneficial. In spite of all that has been said and ought to be said about liberty, it is true liberty to obey the best personal guidance either out of our own head or out of that of some other. True liberty.

* Cf. the celebrated lines of Virgil:

"Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento:
Hæc tibi erunt artes, pacisque imponere morem.
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos."

Æneid VI. 852.

† Probably Carlyle refers to Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* Bk. XXXVII. c. 1, the famous eulogium on the Roman Empire; or perhaps Bk. XXXVI. c. 24 *ibid.*

one would wish to see some fool wandering about at his will, and without any restraint or direction. We must admit it to be far better for him even, if some wise man were to take charge of him, even though by force; although that seems to be but a coarse kind of operation. But fighting was not at all the fundamental principle in their conquests; it was their superior civilisation which attracted the surrounding nations to their centre. If their course had been entirely unwise, all the world would have risen in arms against these domineering tyrants, for ever claiming to be rulers where they had no right at all, and their power could not have subsisted there as it did.

The Carthaginians.

After they had conquered Pyrrhus and before their conflict which took place a century after that with Greece, the event occurred, which was the crowning phenomenon of their history. They found their way into the neighbouring island of Sicily, and there they met with the Carthaginians, another antique state, of great power and prosperity and as far as probabilities went, more likely to subject the whole world than Rome herself was. But it was not so ordered. A collision ensued between them, which lasted 120 years, and constituted the three Punic Wars. It was the hardest struggle Rome ever had—the hardest that ever was. The Carthaginians were as obstinate a people as the Romans themselves. They were of the race called Punic, Panic or Phœnician; an Oriental people, of the family now called Semitic, because descended from Sem, the same kind of people as the Jews,* and as distinguished as the Jews were for being a stiff-necked people. I most sincerely rejoice that they did not subdue the Romans,† but that the Romans got the better of them. We

* "The Hebrews were closely connected with the Phœnicians by nationality, situation and intercourse."—*Ranke, Universal History* Vol. I. p. 62, tr. Frothero.

† Cf. the famous passage in *Arnold, History of Rome* Vol. III. p. 54.

have indications which show that they were a mean people compared with the Romans, who thought of nothing but commerce, would do anything for money, and were exceedingly cruel in their measures of aggrandisement and in other measures. Their rites were of a kind perfectly horrible; their religion was of that sort so often denounced in the Bible, which the Jews were to have nothing to do with. In the siege of Carthage, the Romans relate that they offered their children to Bel, who is the same as Moloch, making them "to pass through the fire unto Moloch"* in the language of Scripture, for they had a statue of the god in metal, which was heated red-hot and they flung these hopeless wretches into his outspread arms. Their injustice was proverbial; the expression "Punic faith" was well justified by the facts. This people, however, determined to exert their whole strength against the Romans. Hannibal, whom Napoleon conceived to be the greatest Captain, the greatest soldier, of antiquity, was certainly a man of wonderful talent and tenacity, maintaining himself for sixteen years in Italy in spite of all the Roman power. He was scandalously treated on his return by his own countrymen. He was a most unfortunate man, banished from Carthage, and at last, to prevent his falling into the hands of his enemies the Romans, he had no resource but poisoning himself. Carthage, however, was taken and was burned for six days.† It reminds us of the destruction of Jerusalem, for, as I have observed, the Jews have always distinguished themselves with the same tenacity and obstinacy, clinging to the same belief, probable or improbable, or even impossible.

How the Romans got on after that, we may see by the Commentaries which Julius Cæsar has left us of his own proceedings; how he spent 10 years in campaigns in Gaul, cautiously

Cæsar's Commentaries.

* Leviticus, XVIII 21.

† Seventeen days. Mommsen, *Rome* Vol. III. p. 89.

planning all his measures before he attempted to carry them into effect. It is, indeed, a most interesting book, and evinces the formidable force of Roman energy; the triumph of the methodic man, over wild and barbarous man, of calm, all-discipline over that valour which is without direction, such as is ready to die, if necessary, but knows nothing better than that.

Roman polity. the ty. withstanding what writers have said, it is clear that we understand what the Roman constitution actually was. Niebuhr has attempted it, but he throws no light at all upon the subject; and I think that, in the absence of information, to draw any inferences on one side or the other, it is extremely unwise. It appears to have been a very tumultuous kind of polity, a continual struggle between the Patricians and the Plebeians, the latter of whom were bent on having the lands of the State equally divided between them and the upper orders. We read of constant secessions to the Aventine, and there was rough work very frequently. Therefore, I cannot join in the lamentations made by some over the downfall of the Republic when Cæsar took hold of it. It had been but a constant struggling scramble for prey, and it was well to end it, and to see the wisest, cleanest and most judicious man of them all place himself at the top of it. The Romans under the empire attained their complete grandeur; their dominion reached from the river Euphrates away to Cadiz, and from the border of the Arabian Desert to Severus' Wall up in the North of England. And what an empire was it!—teaching mankind that they should be tilling the ground as they ought to do, instead of fighting one another! For that is the real thing which every man is called on to do,—to till the ground and not to slay his poor brother man.

* Mommsen's great work on the Roman constitution has now explained its real nature.

Coming now to their literature, we find it to be a copy of ^{Literature and Language,} that of the Greeks ; but there is a kind of Roman worth in many of their books. Their language, too, has a character belonging to Rome. Etymologists have traced many words in it to the Pelasgic, and some have been followed out so far as to the Sanskrit, proving thus the existence in the Romans of the two kinds of blood which I have indicated. Its peculiarly distinguishing character, however, is its imperative and sound structure, finely adapted to command. So in their books, as for instance, the poems of Virgil and Horace, we see the Roman character of a still strength. But their greatest work was written on the face of the planet in which we live, their cyclopean highways, extending from country to country, their aqueducts, their Coliseums, their whole polity.* And how spontaneous ^{nature of their greatest work.} all these things were ; how little any Roman knew what Rome was. There is a tendency in all historians to place a plan in the head of every one of their characters, by which he regulated his actions, forgetting that it is not possible for any man to have foreseen events and to have embraced at once the vast complication of the circumstances that were to happen. It is more reasonable to attribute national progress to a great, deep instinct in every individual actor. Who of us, for example, knows England, though he may contribute to her prosperity ? Every one here follows his own object : one goes to India, another aspires to the army and each after his own ends, but all thus co-operate together after all, one Englishman with another, in adding to the strength and wealth of the whole nation. The wisest Government† has only to direct this spirit into a proper channel, but to believe that it can lay down a plan for the creation of national enterprise, is an entire folly. These incidents form the deep foundation of a national character ;

* Cf. *Past and Present* Bk. III. c. v. † Cf. *ibid.* Bk. IV. c. iv.

when they fail, the nation fails too, just as when the roots of a tree fail, and the sap can mount the trunk and diffuse itself among the leaves no longer, the tree stops too.

During a healthy, sound, progressive period of national existence there is, in general, no literature at all. In a time of active exertion the nation will not speak out its mind. It is not till a nation is ready to decline that its literature makes itself remarkable. And this is observable in all nations. For there are many ways in which a man or a nation expresses itself, besides books. The point is not to be able to write a book; the point is, *to have the true mind* for it. Everything in that case which the nation does will be equally significant of its mind. If any great man among the Romans, Julius Cæsar or Cato, for example, had never done anything but till the ground, they would have acquired equal excellence in that way. They would have ploughed as they conquered. Everything a great man does carries the traces of a great man. Perhaps even there is the most energetic virtue, when there is no talk about virtue at all. I wish my friends here to consider and keep this in view—that Progress and Civilisation may go on unknown to the people themselves, that there may be a primeval feeling of energy and virtue in the founders of a State, whether they can fathom it or not. This feeling gets nearer every generation to be uttered. For though the son only learns such things as his father invented, yet he will discover other things, and teach as well his own, as his father's inventions, in his turn, to his children, and so it will go on working itself out, till it gets into conversation and speech.

All great things are unconscious.

We shall observe precisely this when we come to the reign of Queen Elizabeth. All great things, in short, whether national or individual, are unconscious things.*

* This theory of the unconscious character of real greatness Carlyle had already set forth in his article on *Characteristics* in the "Edinburgh

I cannot get room to insist on this here ; but we shall see them as we go on like seeds thrown out upon a wide, fertile field ; no man sees what they are, but they grow up before us and become great ! What did that man, when he built his house, know of Rome or of Julius Cæsar that were to come ? These were the product of time. Faust of Mentz, who invented printing—that subject of so much admiration in our times—never thought of the results that were to follow. He found it a cheaper way of publishing his Bibles, and he used it for no other purpose than to undersell the other booksellers. In short, from the Christian Religion down to the poorest genuine song, there has been no consciousness in the minds of the first authors of anything of excellence. Shakspeare, too, never seemed to imagine that he had any talent at all, his only object seems to have been to gather a little money, for he was very necessitous. And when we do find consciousness, the thing done is sure to be not a great thing at all ; it is a very suspicious circumstance when anything makes a great noise about itself ; it is like a drum, producing a great deal of sound, but very like to be empty.

I shall here take a short survey of Roman books. The ^{Virgil} poem of Virgil, the *Æneid*, has long enjoyed, and will continue to enjoy, a great reputation. It ranks as an epic poem ; and one, too, of the same sort of name as the *Iliad* of Homer. But I think it entirely a different poem, and very inferior to Homer. There is that fatal consciousness, that knowlege that he is writing an epic,—the plot, the style, all is vitiated by that one fault. The characters, too, are none of them to be compared to the healthy, whole-

Review," 1831 (vide *Miscellanies* Vol. III). Sterling, one of his staunch admirers, criticised this theory embodied in the maxim of Schiller, 'Genius is ever a secret to itself' in his article on Carlyle in the "Westminster Review" for 1839 (reprinted in his *Miscellaneous Essays* ed. J. Hare, Vol. I.).

hearted, robust men of Homer,—the “much enduring” Ulysses, or Achilles or Agamemnon. Æneas, the hero of the poem, is a lachrymose sort of man altogether; he is introduced in the middle of a storm, but, instead of handling the tackle, and doing what he can for the ship, he sits still, groaning over his misfortunes. “Was ever mortal,” he asks, “so unfortunate as I am? Chased from port to port by persecuting Deities who give me no respite!”—and so on; and then he tells them how that he is the “pious Æneas!”* In short he is just that sort of lachrymose man. There is hardly anything of a man in the inside of him. But Virgil succeeded much better in his other poems. His Æneid is not a fair sample of what he could do; his descriptions of natural scenery are very beautiful; and he was a great poet when he did not observe himself, and when he let himself alone. His poetry is soft and sweet. In his women, too, he succeeded wonderfully. His Dido was unmatched by anything that had gone before.† He was a mild and gentle man; born poor and the son of a peasant, he got his education from his father, and he cultivated his paternal inheritance; but, being dispossessed by some soldiers, as he himself tells us, of his estates, he had to go to Rome about it. This was the beginning of his fortunes; he became known to Mæcenas and afterwards to Augustus. He was an amiable man of mild deportment, in so much that the people of Naples, among whom he lived, used to call him “the maid.”‡ He was an amiable man, and always in bad health, much subject to

* ‘Pius Æneas,’ Æneid I. 220. et passim.

† His Dido ‘may compare favourably with the creations of greater masters, with the Deianeira of Sophocles, with the Phædra and the Medea of Euripides. And Virgil’s conception is at once more impassioned than that of Sophocles, and nobler and more womanly than those of Euripides.’ Seilar, *Roman Poets of the Augustan Age* Part I. p. 405.

‡ ‘Cetera sane vita et ore et animo tam probum constat ut Neapoli Parthenias vulgo appellatus sit.’ Life by Suetonius, usually attributed to Donatus. ed. Nettleship, § 11.

dyspepsia, and to all kinds of maladies that afflict men of genius. The effect of his poetry is like that of some laborious mosaic of many years in putting together. There is also the Roman method, the Roman amplitude and regularity, just as these qualities were exhibited in the Empire; but entirely without that abandonment of self which Homer had. His sentiments and descriptive sketches are often borrowed out of Homer or Theocritus. But the style and the poetry of the whole overspreading the work with a beautiful enamel, enable us to judge of what he might have been had he less studied to produce effect. We must, however, conclude that he was, properly speaking, not an epic poet. *

Of Horace, I can afford to say almost nothing. He, too, was ^{Horaco.} a sort of friend of Cæsar. His was a similar history to that of Virgil, and like him, he was not betrayed into perverseness by the possession of great wealth. There was in him the same polish—a “curious felicity”† as one person expresses it. I cannot admire always his moral philosophy. He is sometimes not at all edifying in his sentiments; he belonged to the Epicurean school of philosophy, an unbelieving man, with no thought for anything but how to make himself comfortable and to enjoy himself in this world, until a dark melancholy comes over him, at which time his opinions appear in their most respectable shape; and then he sees the all-devouring death expecting him, he knows well with what

* Carlyle had already in his *Life of Schiller* called Virgil's matter of writing ‘frigid and shallow.’ His adverse criticism of the *Æneid* was in accordance with the most advanced criticism of the time in Germany and England. He follows Niebuhr in depreciating the great Epic and praising the minor poems. “The *Æneid* is a complete failure. He is a remarkable instance of a man mistaking his vocation, his real calling was lyric poetry. It never occurs to me to place Virgil among the Roman Poets of the first order.” Niebuhr, *Lectures* p. 662. For reasons of this depreciation, *vide* Sellar *Roman Poets of the Augustian Age* Part I. c II § 2. Cf. Prof. Nettleship, *Essays in Latin Literature* p. 98.

† *Curiosa felicitas.* Petronius Arbiter—Frg. Tr. 118. 5.

issues ; and at last he takes refuge from the contemplation in Epicurean enjoyment. In his writings he displays a worldly kind of sagacity, but it is a great sagacity.

Ovid. It is remarkable how soon afterwards Roman literature had quite degenerated. Ovid,* the next celebrated poet, has an ever-present consciousness of himself, and is very inferior to Horace or Virgil. From this time we get more and more into self-consciousness and into scepticism, not long afterwards, without being able to find any bottom at all to it. I refer to Seneca and Lucan, his nephew, and the whole family of Senecas. Seneca was originally from Cordova in Spain ; he got into politics and he was Nero's master or tutor. He has left some works on philosophy and there are some tragedies, twelve,† I think, which go by his name. Some of these are said to have been written by his nephew, Lucan ; at all events they were written by one of Seneca's school, and fully imbued with his philosophy. Seneca. Now, if we want an example of a diseased self-consciousness, an exaggerated imagination, a mind blown up with all sorts of strange conceits, the spasmodic state of intellect, in short, of a man morally unable to speak the truth on any subject, we have it in Seneca. He was led away by this strange humour into all sorts of cant and insincerity. He exaggerates the virtues, for instance, to an extreme quite ridiculous, asserting that there is no such thing as vice at all, that man is all-powerful, and like to a god in this world, having it in his power to triumph over evils

* This word is queried in the MS.

† They are eight in number, and are now generally recognised to be Seneca's genuine works. "The identity of manner and thought, as well as of numerous detailed sentences, which can be proved, admits of no doubt on this point. They agree in their chief peculiarities, both with one another and with the prose works of Seneca."—Teuffel, *Roman Literature* Vol. II. p. 50. The mistaken distinction between the tragic poet Seneca and the philosopher originated in an error of Sidonius Apollinaria, Carm. LX. 229 'quorum unus colit hispidum Platona orchestram quatit alter Euripidia.'

and calamities of all kinds by his mere will. And all this while, Seneca* himself was a mere pettifogging courtier, careful of nothing but amassing money, and flattering Nero in all his ways. Indeed it is quite impossible to read such writing as he has left us, without suspecting something; we cannot help saying "all is not right here;" I willingly admit that he had a strong desire to be sincere, and that he endeavoured to convince himself that he was right. But even this, when in connection with the rest, constitutes of itself a fault of a dangerous kind. We may trace it all to that same spirit of self-conceit, pride, and vanity, which is the ruin of all things in this world, and always will be.

The vices of this kind of literature connect themselves in a natural sequence with the decline of Roman virtue altogether. When that people had once come to disbelief in their own Gods, and to put all their confidence in their money, believing that with their money they could always buy their money's worth, this order of things was closely succeeded by moral abominations of the most dreadful kind, such as were not known before, and never since—the most fearful abominations under the sun. But it is curious to observe that such is the power of genius to make itself heard and felt in all times, that the most significant, and the greatest of Roman writers, occurs posterior to these times of Seneca,—I mean Tacitus. In those extraordinary circumstances of Tacitus's times, he displays more of the Roman spirit, perhaps, than

* Macaulay had already in the preceding year (*Edinburgh Review* July 1837) noted this contrast between the philosophy and the life of Seneca, and expressed it in his strong antithetical manner. "The business of a philosopher was to declaim in praise of poverty with two millions sterling out at usury, to meditate epigrammatic conceits about the evils of luxury, in gardens which moved the envy of sovereigns, to rant about liberty, while fawning on the insolent and pampered freedmen of a tyrant, to celebrate the divine beauty of virtue with the same pen which had just before written a defence of the murder of a mother by a son."—*Essay on Bacon, Works* Vol. VI p. 205.

any one before him ; his mind was not hid under all that black mass of blasphemy, covetousness, and villany. He shows it in his estimate of the Germans even ; for it was something new for any Roman to speak favourably of barbarians, or to hold any other opinion of their fellowmen than that every man was born to be a slave to Rome. In the Germans he sees a kind of worth, and seems to contemplate with a sort of shuddering anticipation the time when these Germans were to come and sweep away his corrupted country. "The Germans," he says,* "wage a continual war with one another. May the Gods grant that it may always be so." In the middle of all these facts in the literature of his country, and which correspond so well with what we know of the history of Rome itself, in the middle of all that quackery and puffery coming into play time about, in every department, when critics wrote books to teach you how to hold out your arm and your leg, in the middle of all this absurd and wicked period Tacitus was born, and was enabled to be a Roman after all. He stood like a Colossus at the edge of a dark night, and he saw events of all kinds hurrying past him and plunging, he knew not where, but evidently to no good ; for falsehood and cowardice never yet ended anywhere but in destruction. He sees all this, and he narrates it with grave calmness, giving us quietly his notions of Tiberius and others as he goes on. He does not seem startled but full of deep views, unable to account for it but convinced that it will end well somehow or other ; for he has no belief but the old Roman belief, full of their old feelings of goodness and honesty. He is greatly distinguished from all of that time, greatly distinguished from Livy, who has collected together all the soft and beautiful mythuses of the time and woven

Livy.

* 'Maneat, quaeso, duretque gentibus, si non amor nostri, at certe odium sui, quando urgentibus imperii fatis nihil iam præstare fortuna maius quam potest hostium discordiam.' *Germania*, c. xxxiii. Cf. *Gibbon Vol. I.* p. 369. ed. Smith.

them into a highly interesting history ; but as a historian, was a far inferior man to Tacitus.

I shall now quit the subject of Pagan literature; for after Tacitus all things went on sinking down more and more into all kinds of disease and ruin. After the survey which we have made we come to the conclusion that there is a strange coherance between healthy belief and the outward destiny of a nation. Thus, the Greeks went on with their wars and everything else most prosperously, till they became *conscious* of their condition, till the man became solicitous after other times. Socrates, we saw, is a kind of starting point, from which we trace their fall into confusion and wreck of all sorts. So it was with the Romans. Cato the elder used to tell them "The instant you get the Greek literature among you, there will be an end of the old Roman spirit."* He was not listened to ; the rage for Greek speculation increased ; he himself found it impossible to keep back, although he was very angry about it, and in his old age† he learned the Greek language, and had it taught to his sons. It was too late; nobody could believe any longer, and every one had set his mind on being a man, and thinking for himself. In the middle of all that, the event occurred which I shall repeat in the language of Tacitus, who, after mentioning that in the reign of Nero, Rome was set on fire, and, as was said, by order of that prince, (who did it, most probably, because he wished to build some new streets, and disliked to take the trouble of clearing away the old houses in any other manner),‡

Progress of
Christianity

* Plutarch, *Cato* p. 262 tr. Clough.

† 'The ancients merely give us vague statements that he only began to learn Greek 'in his old age.' The expression must be liberally interpreted if, as seems clear, the whole of his writings showed the influence of Greek literature." Dr. J. S. Reid, *Cicero de Senectute* Introd. p. 22.

‡ This reason was suggested by Suetonius. 'Quasi offensus deformitate veterum ædificiorum et angustiis flexurisq̄ vicorum incendit urbem. *Nero* 38.

Tacitus on
Christians.

and that he sat playing his harp and watching the fire, whereupon a great rumour became raised abroad, goes on to say, as I have almost literally rendered it, from the 15th Annals, 44 Chap. :—" So for the abolishing of that rumour, " he caused to be indicted and afterwards punished with " exquisite pains, a people hated for their wickedness, whom " the vulgar called Christians (*per flagitia invisos*). The " author of that sect was one Christ (*Christus quidam*), who " in the reign of Tiberius was put to death by the Procurator " of Syria, Pontius Pilatus, for his hateful superstition (*super " exitiali superstitione*), whereby being for a time sup- " pressed it broke out again; not only in Judæa, where it first " arose, but spread itself also into other countries, and finally " into Rome itself, where all things wicked and horrible " come at last to gather themselves together."*

Tacitus lived 88 years after the events which he here describes took place. It was given to him to see no deeper into the matter than appears from the above account of it; but he and the great Empire were soon to pass away for ever. And it was this despised sect, this *Christus quidam*—it was in this new character that all the future world lay hid.

This will furnish us with the subject of our next lecture.

* " Ergo abolendo rumori Nero subdidit reos et quæsitissimis poenis adfecit, quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per Procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat; repressaque in præsens exitiabilis superstitio rursum erumpebat, non modo per Iudæam; originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocita aut pudenda conflunt, celebranturque."—*Annales* XV. 44. Cf. Merivale, *Romans under the Empire* Vol. VI. pp. 352, 446; also Gibbon's observations Vol. II. p. 234. ed. Smith. 'Who has ever forgotten these lines of Tacitus? To us it is the most earnest, sad, and sternly significant passage that we know to exist in writing.' Carlyle, *Miscellanies* Vol. II p. 101. ed. 1842.

PERIOD II.

LECTURE IV.

MIDDLE AGES—CHRISTIANITY—FAITH—INVENTIONS—PIOUS
FOUNDATIONS—POPE HILDEBRAND—CRUSADES—THE
TROUBADOURS—THE NIBELUNGEN LIED.

[FRIDAY, 11TH MAY 1838.]

WE have now to direct our attention to a ruder state of man, and we shall observe with what shrewdness man will in this state lay hold of the information and civilization afforded him. For we have traced our subject through the old world and now we come to the new: we investigated at first among the Greeks and next among the Romans the system of Polytheism and Paganism: we have now an equal period of history to survey, that of the modern era, for about 1800 years from the birth of Christ, having already passed through as much before that epoch as we are now from it. We shall therefore commence with what we can call the Transition Period, or period of the formation of this present life of man: that in which all our beliefs, and our general way of existence shape themselves.

The Middle Ages used to be called Ages of Darkness, Rude-
ness, and Barbarity,—“The Millennium of Darkness,” as one Belief and
unbelief.
writer calls them. But it is universally apparent now that these ages are not to be so called. The only writers in the early part of those times, times of convulsions, cruel periods, were Romans; the barbarians who rushed out into the scene of conquest were not given to writing; and accordingly these writers indulge in much abuse of their invaders, and wild

lamentation, recounting the fall of their Empire with a dense shriek of horror and indignation. With them, therefore, the name of Barbarian is a synonym for whatever is bad and base ; to this day the name of " Goth " is so applied even with us the descendants of those conquerors. It was a great and fertile period, however, that invasion of the barbarians and their settlement in the Roman Empire. There is a sentence which I find in Goethe, full of meaning in this regard. " It must be noted," he says, " that Belief and Unbelief are " two opposite principles in human nature. The theme of all " human history, as far as we are able to perceive it, is the con- " test between these two principles." " All periods," he goes on to say, " in which Belief predominates, in which " it is the main element, the inspiring principle of action, " are distinguished by great, soul-stirring, fertile events, " and worthy of perpetual remembrance. And, on the " other hand, when Unbelief gets the upper hand, that age is " unfertile, unproductive, and intrinsically mean, in which " there is no pabulum for the Spirit of man, and no one can " get nourishment for himself." This passage is one of the most pregnant utterances ever delivered, and we shall do well to keep it in mind in these disquisitions on this period. For in the Middle Ages we see the great phenomenon of Belief gaining the victory over Unbelief. And this same remark is altogether true of all things whatever in this world ; and it throws much light on the history of the whole world, and that in two ways : for Belief serves both as a fact itself, and the cause of other facts. It appears only in a healthy mind and is at once an indication of it and the cause of it. For though Doubt may be necessary to a certain extent in order to prepare subject-matter for reflection, it can be after all only a morbid condition of the intellect, and an intermediate one ; but that speculation should *end* in Doubt is wholly unreasonable. It is, as I have said, a morbid

Goethe's
pregnant
utterance.

state ; it is a state of mental paralysis, a highly painful state of mind ; one which the healthy man will not entertain at all, but, if he can do nothing better with it, dismisses altogether. There is no use in it that one can understand except to give the mind something to work on. Belief, then, is the indication and the cause of health ; and when we see it in a whole world we may be sure that the world is able to say and to do something. It is the heart rather than the intellect that Goethe has in mind in the passage quoted. It is the heart after all that most influences. Our knowledge of physics, our whole circle of scientific acquirements, depends on what figure each man will give it and shape to himself in his own heart.

Thus in the Middle Ages, being in contact with fact and reality, in communion with truth and nature, not merely with hearsays and vain formulas, but feeling the presence of truth in the heart—that is the great fact of the time, *Belief!* And this is independent of their dogmas.* In the genuine Pagan times, too, among much that is absurd and reprehensible, we found a great good accomplished by its means. There was there also a *Belief*, which was accompanied by an adjustment of themselves towards these opinions of theirs.* They had discovered and recognised in themselves, whether they expressed it in words or not, the existence of a supreme arrangement, they had not discovered it without perceiving the numerous inconsistencies and contradictions of their religious system. These had doubtless struck them at first, but they had adjusted themselves to that. But their way of religion and life had this kind of *Belief* in it—*Belief* in one's self ! They did not fail to observe what a thing man is ! What a high, royal, nature is given to him ! This appears in particular in later

Belief the characteristic of the Middle Ages.

* For *Belief* and *Opinion*, cf. *Sartor*.

times when the old religion had altogether passed away, and its intellectual results only remained, in their philosophers for instance, and strikingly above all others, in the Stoics, a sect extremely prevalent in Rome ; in later times, all that the Romans had to adhere to in the way of Belief. One sees in their opinions a great truth, but extremely exaggerated ;—that bold assertion, for example, in the face of all reason and fact, that pain and pleasure are the same thing, that man is indifferent to both, that he is a king in this world, and that nothing can conquer him. Still more strikingly it is displayed in a peculiar sort of Stoicism, the Cynic sect of philosophers. There have been few more striking characters than that of Diogenes the Cynic,* adopting the Stoic principle, and carrying it out to its extreme development ; professing to set himself above all accidental circumstances, such as poverty or disgrace, and taking them rather as a sort of schooling, as a lesson he was to learn, and in the best manner he could. D'Alembert pronounces him to have been one of the greatest men of antiquity, although there were in him several things counter to D'Alembert's way of thinking ; decency, for example, was of no significance for him. It is strange to see that remarkable interview—the one, the conqueror of all the world, in his pride and glory and splendour, the other, a poor, needy man, with nothing beside his skin, save the soul that was in him ! Alexander asked him in their interview (for Diogenes had a sharp, sour tongue in his head) “if he could give him anything.” “You can stand out of the sun, and give me light.” That was all Alexander could give Diogenes ! This was certainly a great thing, and altogether worthy to be recognised ; it was much for man !

But if we look into the Christian religion, that dignification of man's life and nature, we shall find indeed this also in it,

* *Cl. Sartor* p. 146.

to believe in one's self, that thing given to him by the creator. But then how unspeakably more human is *this* belief, not held in proud scorn and contempt of other men, in cynical disdain or indignation at their pettinesses, but received by exterminating pride altogether from the mind; and held in degradation, and deep human sufferings sore. There is darkness and affliction in all things around it in its origin. We saw what it appeared to Tacitus, the greatest man of his time, some seventy years after its origin. Its outward history was on a par with its interior meaning; its province was not to encourage pride, but to cut that down altogether. There is a remarkable passage* of Goethe where he calls it, "the Worship of Sorrow," its doctrine "the Sanctuary of Sorrow." "It was the first time," he continues, regarding it simply on its secular side, not in the view of any particular religious sect, but just as the divinest thing that could be looked at,—"it was the "showing to man, that suffering and degradation, the most "hateful to the sensual regard, possessed a beauty which "surpassed all other beauty." It is not our part to touch on sacred things, but we should altogether fail to discover the meaning of this historical period, if we did not lay deeply to heart the meaning of Christianity. In another point of view we may regard it as the Revelation of Eternity, existing in the middle of Time, to man. He stands here between the conflux of two elements, the past and the future. The thing we are at this moment speaking or doing, comes to us from the beginning of days. The word I am this moment speaking came to me from Cadmus of Thebes or some other ancient member of the great family of Adam, and it *will* go on to an endless future. Every man may with truth say that he waited for a whole eternity to be born, and that he has now a whole eternity waiting to see what he will do now that

Contrast
between
Christianity
and Pagan-
ism.

Revelation
of eternity to
man.

* *Vide infra* Lect. XII. p. 191.

he is born ! It is this which gives to this little period of life, so contemptible when weighed against eternity, a significance it never had without it. It is thus an infinite arena, where infinite interests are played out ; not an action of man but will have its truth realised and will go on for ever ! His most insignificant action, for some are more so than others, carries its print of this endless duration. This Truth—whatever may be the opinion we hold on Christian doctrines, or whether we hold upon them a sacred silence or not—we must recognise in Christianity and its belief, independently of all theories. For it was not revealed till then ; and it is not possible to imagine results of a more significant nature than those it produced. One can fancy, how,—with what mute astonishment, the invading barbarians must have paused, when their wild barbarous minds were first saluted with the tidings of that great eternity lying round the world, this Earth before then an unintelligible thing to them—how this wild German people, heated with conquest and wild tumult, paused and took it all in, this doctrine, without argument,—I believe that argument was not at all used ; it was done by the conviction of the men themselves who spoke into convincible minds. And herein is the great distinction of ancient from modern Europe, of modern Europe from all the world besides. It has been truly said by Goethe, that “this is a progress we are all capable of making and destined to make, and from which when made, we can never retrograde.” There may be all manner of arguments and delusions and true and false speculations about it ; but we can well understand the divine doctrine of eternity manifesting itself in time, and time deriving all its meaning from eternity. It only requires a pure heart, and then, if all else were destroyed, if there were even no Bible, and a mere tradition of its having once been, remaining, “from the progress once made we should never retrograde.”

If to this sublime proceeding we add the character of the Northern people, the German people, best suited of all others to receive the faith and maintain it and develop it, being endowed with the largest nature, the deepest affections, if, I say, we add these together we shall have the two leading phenomena of the middle ages, the possibility of great nations constructing themselves, and of all good things coming out of them. It is curious, accordingly, to see with what fertility the matter proceeds ; in two centuries after the people of the North had begun to break in on the South, from Alaric downwards, how quietly do all things settle down into arrangement, in one just way, everything with a new character of its own, and all displaying that shrewdness, which, to refer to the text with which we set out, marks the intellectual efforts of societies in their rude state.

There was that thing we call Loyalty. That attachment ^{Loyalty.} of man to man, indeed, is as old as the existence of man himself ; the kings and chiefs of early times had their dependents, Achilles, for example, had his Myrmidons ; the feeling must exist among men if they are to maintain themselves in society. At the same time, it had never before, nor anywhere, existed in such a shape as it has since appeared in among the modern nations of Europe, the descendants of the Romans and Germans, men of the deepest affections, and imbued with the sacred principle of Christianity, in them resulting in everything great and noble, and in this feeling of loyalty among others. In these times loyalty is much kept out of sight, and little appreciated ; and many minds regard it as a sort of obsolete chimera, looking more to independence or some such thing now regarded as a great virtue. And this is very just, and most suitable to this time of movement and progress. It must be granted at once that to exact loyalty to things so bad as to be not worth being loyal to, is quite an insupportable thing, and one that the world would spurn at once.

This must be conceded. Yet the better thinkers will see that loyalty is a principle perennial in human nature, the highest that unfolds itself there, in a temporal, secular point of view. For there is no other kind of way by which human society can be sweetly constructed, than that feeling of loyalty, whereby those who are *worthy* are revered by those who are *capable* of reverence.* Thus in the middle ages it was the noblest phenomenon, the finest phasis in society anywhere: Loyalty was the foundation of the State.

The Church. Another great cardinal point, a hinge on which all other things were suspended, was the Church: the institution appointed to keep alive the sacred light of religion. No doubt the men of that age held many absurd doctrines; but we must remember that it is not scientific doctrines that constitute belief; it is the sincerity of heart which constitutes the whole merit of belief. Many of their doctrines doubtless were absurd and entirely incredible, but we shall blind ourselves to their significance, if we do not see into them independently of theology. It is curious to trace the phenomena of the Christian Church in early days; how it grows on in neglect and indifference. Besides the remarkable passage out of Tacitus which I read in my last lecture, we have another curious document, probably a little later, the celebrated letter† of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan

* Cf. the exquisite passage of one, who was proud to own Carlyle as a master,—“the friend and guide who has urged me to all chief labour” (pref. to *Munera Pulveris*),—ending: “the noblest word in the catalogue of social virtue is ‘Loyalty,’ and the sweetest which men have learned in the pastures of the wilderness is ‘Fold’.” *Seven Lamps of Architecture* pp. 183-5.

† Pliny, *Epit.* X. 96 (ed. Giering) 97 (vulg.). Its date, according to Pagi, is 111 or 112 A.D. Greswell, *Supp. Dissert.* p. 200, assigns it to 112, and is followed by Merivale and Milman (*History of Christianity* Vol. II. p. 92 n. ed. 1863.) Clinton fixed it to 104.

‡ So ancient and genuine a testimony to the virtue of the first believers, and to the peculiar graces of their life and conversation, is justly regarded

respecting the Christians of Bithynia. It was written prior to the year 100, but there is no date to it. It is very striking to observe how in the middle of that black night which then overspread the earth, of that great darkness, a small light begins to make itself seen. But Pliny could not see anything very important in these people. He writes that "certain persons among them admit that they are Christians ; some say that they were so two or three years ago, but have since left them. But some *did admit* that they were Christians. They were far," he goes on, "from being given to lies and bad practices ;"* (*flagitia*, flagitious practices), "they told him that they met together and exhorted one another on stated days," (doubtless on the Christian Sabbath), "before sunrise precisely to avoid all that : and that after so exhorting themselves, they met together at a friendly repast," (doubtless this was the communion). "That they were quite free and unspotted, however, from the vices with which the world charged them,"—that world itself wholly immersed in those very vices : and he recommends, "that they should be let alone, and should not be persecuted, for he does not think they will last much longer : they had agreed to give up meeting together and to avoid all that would give offence." What is a very remarkable fact, is that he goes on to say, that he "thinks they may go on with their opinions without danger to the State religion ; for that he had recently been refitting the temples, and that they were now more crowded than ever they were, and, in short, that the old spirit was returning

Pliny's testimony to the virtue of the early Christians.

as one of the proudest monuments of our faith. The letter of Pliny, it has been well said, (by Wallon), is the first *Apology for Christianity*.¹ Merivale, *History of the Romans under the Empire* Vol. VIII. p. 147.

* This is not in the text of the letter. Carlyle has probably misunderstood the fourth sentence.

“and that everything would revive.”* This was the character of the Church down to the end of the first century. From that time churches began to spring up everywhere; Synods established, and Bishops in every Church. There is

*This famous letter which, as Melmoth says, is esteemed as almost the only genuine monument of ecclesiastical antiquity relating to the times immediately succeeding the Apostles, having been written within half a century after the death of St. Paul, is loosely paraphrased by Carlyle. The entire letter is quoted here from the text of Kiel (Leipsic, 1870):—

Pliny's famous epistle to Trajan.

“Sollemne est mihi, domine, omnia de quibus dubito ad te referre. Quis enim potest melius vel cunctationem meam regere vel ignorantiam instruere? Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui numquam: ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat aut quaeri. Nec mediocriter haesitavi, sitne aliquod discrimen aetatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differant; detur paenitentiae venia, an ei qui omnino Christianus fuit desisse non prosit; nomen ipsum, si flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohaerentia nomini puniantur. Interim in iis qui ad me tamquam Christiani deferbantur hunc sum secutus modum. Interrogavi ipsos an essent Christiani: confitentes iterum ac tertio interrogavi supplicium minatus: perseverantes duci iussi. Neque enim dubitabam, quaecumque esset quod faterentur, pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt alii similis amentiae, quos, quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos. Mox ipso tractatu, ut fieri solet, diffundente se crimine plures species inciderunt. Propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens. Qui negabant esse se Christianos aut fuisse, cum praesente me deos appellarent et imigini tuae, quam propter hoc iusseram cum simulacris numinum adferri, tunc ac vino supplicarent, praeterea male dicerent Christo, quorum nihil posse cogi dicuntur qui sunt re vera Christiani, dimittendos esse putavi. Alii ab indice nominati esse se Christianos dixerunt et mox negaverunt; fuisse quidem, sed desisse, quidam ante triennium, quidam ante plures annos, non nemo etiam ante viginti. Hi quoque omnes et imaginem tuam deorumque simulacra venerati sunt et Christo male dixerunt. Ad firmabant autem hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suae vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem seque sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent: quibus peractis morem sibi discedendi fuisse, rursusque *coenandi* ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium; quod ipsum facere desisse post edictum meum, quo secundum mandata tua haereticas esse veteram. Quo magis necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministrae dicebantur, quid esset veri et per tormenta quaerere. Nihil aliud inveni quam superstitionem pravam immodicam. Ideo dilata cognitione ad consulendum te decurri. Visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium numerum. Multi enim omnis aetatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus etiam, vocantur in periculum et vocabantur. Neque civitates tantum sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est; quae videtur sisti et corrigi posse. Certe satis constat prope iam desolata templa coepisse celebrari et sacra sollemnia diu intermissa repeti postquam venire victimarum, cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. Ex quo facile est, opinari, quae turba hominum emendari possit, si sit paenitentiae locus.”

no doubt, too, that the seat of the main ecclesiastical power

"It is my invariable rule to refer to you in all matters about which I feel doubtful. Who can better remove my doubts or inform my ignorance? I have never been present at any trials of Christians, so that I do not know what is the nature of the charge against them, or what is the usual punishment. Whether any difference or distinction is made between the young and persons of mature years—whether repentance of their fault entitles them to pardon—whether the very profession of Christianity, unaccompanied by any criminal act, or whether only the crime itself involved in the profession, is a subject of punishment; on all these points I am in great doubt. Meanwhile, as to those persons who have been charged before me with being Christians, I have observed the following method. I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished. I could not doubt that whatever might be the nature of their opinions, such inflexible obstinacy deserved punishment. Some were brought before me, possessed with the same infatuation, who were Roman citizens; these I took care should be sent to Rome. As often happens, the accusation spread, from being followed, and various phases of it came under my notice. An anonymous information was laid before me, containing a great number of names. Some said they neither were and never had been Christians; they repeated after me an invocation of the gods, and offered wine and incense before your statue (which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ; whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into any of these acts. These I thought out to be discharged. Some among them, who were accused by a witness in person, at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned that they had once been Christians, but had now (some above three years, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced the profession. They all worshipped your statue and those of the gods, and uttered imprecations against the name of Christ. They declared that their offence or crime was summed up in this, that they met on a stated day before daybreak, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for any wicked purpose, but never to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, never to break their word, or to deny a trust when called on to deliver it up: after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, and to eat together a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the proclamation of my edict, by which, according to your command, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. In consequence of their declaration, I judged it necessary to try to get at the real truth by putting to the torture two female slaves, who were said to officiate in their religious rites; but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. And so I adjourned all further proceedings in order to consult you. It seems to me a matter deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks, ages, and of both sexes. The contagion of the superstition is not confined to the cities, it has spread into the villages and the country. Still I think it may be checked. At any rate, the temples which were almost abandoned again begin to be frequented, and the sacred rites, so long neglected, are revived, and there is also a general demand for victims for sacrifice, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed, if a general pardon were granted to those who repent of their error."—tr. Church and Brodrigg.

was at Rome, the Bishop of which city had a pre-eminence among the Bishops. This became fully established under Gregory the Great.* At that time the name of the Chief Bishop was not Pope, but Primate.† From Rome he sent his commands to all parts of the Christian world. He it was who sent the monk Augustine with a few other monks to this country, who converted our Saxon ancestors to Christianity. Like all other matters, there were in it contradictions and inconsistencies without end ; but it should be regarded in its ideal.

The greatest height to which it ever did attain in the world was in the time of Pope Hildebrand, about the year 1070, or soon after the conquest of England by William the Conqueror. That was its time of highest perfection. All Europe then was firm and unshaken in the faith. It abounded in churches, and monks and convents, founded for meditation and silent study. That was the ideal of Monachism. It was the age of preachers and teachers of all kinds, sent into all parts of the world to convert all the heathen to Christianity. It was the Church itself for which human society then was constituted : for what were human things in comparison with the eternal world which lay beyond them. Hildebrand was, it appears, though not certainly, the son of a Tuscan peasant‡ ; he was a great and deep thinker ; and at an early period he entered the monastic life, as it was natural he should§ ; for there was no other congenial employment open to him. He became one of the monks in the famous monastery of Clugny. There he soon distinguished himself for his superior attainments, was successively promoted, and

* Vide Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity* Vol. 1. p. 430, ed. 1854.

† The title 'Pope' was of wide and various use before its final limitation to the Roman Pontiff by Gregory VII. in the Council of Rome of 1073. 'Its limitation to the Pope of Rome was gradual, commencing probably in the 6th century.'—Vide Mr. J. Bam Mullinger's article 'Pope' in Smith and Cheetham's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* Vol. II.

‡ Carpenter.

§ Vide Dean Church *St. Anselm* pp. 1-7.

employed by several popes on missions of importance, and at last he became pope himself. One can well see from his history what it was he meant. He has been regarded by some classes of Protestants as the wickedest of men ; but I do hope that we have at this day outgrown all that.* He perceived that the Church was the highest thing in the world, and he resolved that it should be at the top of the whole World, animating human things, and giving them their main guidance. He first published the Decretal Order on the celibacy of the clergy,† determined that they should have nothing to do with worldly affairs, but should work like soldiers enlisted in a sacred cause. There was another pretension made by him, which, indeed, had been the subject of controversy before, but which Hildebrand put forward in quite a new light. That was, that popes, bishops and priests had no right to be invested with their offices by the Emperor of Germany, or any temporal lord, but that being once nominated by the Church, they were thenceforth validly invested with their offices. And this was so, because the world could have no legitimate control in things spiritual. The Emperor of Germany at that time, Henry IV, a young man, and not of sufficient wisdom to know the age, resisted this pretension, and the Pope resisted him, and there ensued great quantities of confused struggling, till at last that event happened in the month of January 1077, at the castle of Canossa, now in ruins, near Reggio in Modena, whither Hildebrand had retired after having excommunicated the Emperor, and freed the Saxons, then in arms against him, from his authority, when Henry became reduced to the painful necessity of coming away to him there, offering to

Conflict
with the
Emperor

and triumph.

* There was about this time a reaction in favour of Hildebrand among Protestant historians. Vide Sir J. Stephen, *Ecclesiastical Biography* p. 1. Guizot was mainly instrumental in this. Vide the excellent essay on Hildebrand and his times in Mr. W. S. Lilly's *Chapters in European History* Vol. I. (pp. 98-196) p. 101.

† Vide Villemain, *Life of Gregory VII.* Vol. I. p. 376. tr. Brockley. Lilly, Vol. I. pp. 150-165.

submit to any punishment the Pope should appoint. His reception was most humiliating ; he was obliged to have all his attendants at some distance, and come himself in the garb of a penitent, with nothing on him but a woollen cloak ; and there to stand for three days in the snow, before he was suffered to come into the Pope's presence !* One would think from all this that Hildebrand was a proud man ; but he was not a proud man at all, and seems, from many circumstances, to have been, on the contrary, a man of very great humility. But here he treated himself as the Representative of Christ and far beyond all earthly authorities ; and he reasoned that if Christ was higher than the Emperor, it was his duty to subject himself to the Church's power, as all Europe obliged him to do. In these circumstances, doubtless, there are many questionable things ; but then there are many cheering things also.

* This scene, the most remarkable in the history of the Middle Ages, is described by Milman in a fine passage : " On a dreary winter morning, with the ground deep in snow, the King, the heir of a long line of Emperors, was permitted to enter within the two outer of the three walls which girded the castle of Canosa. He had laid aside every mark of royalty or of distinguished station ; he was clad only in the thin white linen dress of the penitent and there fasting, he awaited in humble patience the pleasure of the Pope. But the gates did not unclose. A second day he stood, cold, hungry, and mocked by vain hope. And yet a third day dragged on from morning to evening over the unsheltered head of the discrowned King. Every heart was moved except that of the representative of Jesus Christ. Even in the presence of Gregory there were low deep murmurs against his unapostolic pride and inhumanity. The patience of Henry could endure no more ; he took refuge in an adjacent chapel of St. Nicholas, to implore with tears, once again the intercession of the aged Abbot of Clugny. Matilda was present ; her womanly heart was melted ; she joined with Henry in his supplications to the Abbot. ' Thou alone canst accomplish this,' said the Abbot to the Countess. Henry fell on his knees, and in a passion of grief entreated her merciful interference. To female entreaties and influence Gregory at length yielded an ungracious permission for the king to approach his presence. With bare feet, still in the garb of penitence, stood the king, a man of singularly tall and noble person, with a countenance accustomed to flash command and terror upon his adversaries, before the Pope, a grey-haired man, bowed with years, of small unimposing stature."—*Hist. of Latin Christianity* Vol. III. p. 168. Cf. *Villemain, Life* Vol. II. pp. 111-113.

For we see the son of a poor Tuscan peasant, solely by the superior spiritual force that was in him, humble a great Emperor, at the head of the iron force of Europe, and to look at it in a tolerant point of view, it is really very grand ; it is the Spirit of Europe set above the Body of Europe, the Mind triumphant over brute Force. Hildebrand endured great miseries after that ; he was for three years besieged by Henry in the Castle of St. Angelo until he died.* Some have feared† that the tendency of such things is to found a Theocracy, and have imagined that if this had gone on till our days a most abject superstition would have become established.‡ But this is entirely a vain theory : the clay that is about man is always sufficiently ready to assert its rights : the danger is always the other way,—that the spiritual part of man will become overlaid with his bodily part. This, then, was the Church, which, with the Loyalty of the time, were the two hinges of society. And that Society was, in consequence, distinguished from all societies which had preceded it, presenting an infinitely greater diversity of view, a better humanity, a largeness of capacity. This society has since undergone many changes ; but I hope that that spirit may go on for countless ages yet, the spirit which at that period was set agoing.

A strange phasis of the healthy belief, the deep belief of Crusades. the time, were the Crusades. I am far from vindicating the Crusade in a political point of view, but at the same time we should miss the grand apex of that life, if we did not for a moment dwell upon that event. It was a strange thing to see how Peter, a poor monk, recently come home from Syria, but fully convinced of the propriety of the step, set out on his

* At Salerno, May 25, 1085.

† Milman, *op. cit.* Vol. III. pp. 199-201, takes this view and adversely criticises Hildebrand.

‡ Cf. Church, *St. Anselm* pp. 289-291. Lilly, *op. cit.* Vol. I.

Peter the
Hermit.

mission through Europe ; how he talked about it to the Pope; regarding it as a proper and indispensably necessary duty to remove the abomination of Mahometanism from the sacred places, till in 1096 the Council of Clermont was held in Auvergne. One sees Peter riding along, dressed in his brown cloak, with the rope of the penitent tied round him, carrying all hearts, and burning them up with zeal, and stirring up steel-clad Europe till it shook itself at the words of Peter. What a contrast to that greatest of orators, Demosthenes, spending nights and years in the construction of those balanced sentences which are still read with admiration, descending into the smallest details, speaking with pebbles in his mouth, and the waves of the sea beside him ; and all his way of life in this manner occupied during many years, and then to end in simply nothing at all ! For he did nothing for his country with all his eloquence. And then see this poor monk start out here without any art at all, but with something far greater than art. For, as Demosthenes was once asked, “ what was the secret of a true orator ? ” and he replied,—“ Action ! action ! action ! ”—so if I were asked it, I should say, “ Belief ! belief ! belief ! ” He must be first persuaded himself if he wish to persuade other people. The Crusades altogether lasted upwards of 100 years. Jerusalem was taken in 1099. Some have admired them because they served to bring all Europe into communication with itself ; others because it produced the elevation of the middle classes ; but I say that the great result which characterises and gives them all their merit is, that in them Europe for one moment proved its belief, proved that it believed in the invisible world which surrounds the outward, visible world ; that this belief had for once entered into the circumstances of man. This fact, that for once something sacred had entered into the minds of nations, has been more productive of practical results, than any other

could be ; it lives yet, transmitting itself by unseen channels, as all good things do live in this world.

In these ages it is not to be expected that there was any literature. It was a healthy age. We have remarked in the last lecture that the appearance of literature is a sign that the age which produced it is not far from decline and decay. The great principles which animate its development are at work, deep and unconscious, long before they get to express themselves ; and the people follow by instinct its commands. Literature could not exist in such a time when even the nobles and great men were unable to write. Their only mode of signing charters was by dipping the glove-mailed hand into the ink, and imprinting it on the charter. A strong warrior would disdain to write : he had other functions than this. And though writing is one of the noblest utterances, for speech is so, there are other ways besides that of expressing one's self ; and to lead a heroic life is, perhaps, on the whole, a greater thing to do than to write a heroic poem. This was the case of the Middle Ages ; I do not mean to say that the ideal of the age was perfect ; far from that. No age that has yet been has not been one of contradictions, which make the heart sick and sore if the heart be earnest. But I assert that an ideal did exist ; the heroic heart was not then desolate and alone ; it was appreciated ; and its great result was a perpetual struggling forward. That was the real Age of Gold ! We know that in any other way there has never been such thing as an Age of Gold : nothing is to be owned but by human exertion.

But a literature did come at last. I allude to the Troubadours or Trouvères of the 12th century.* These will not detain us long. Theirs was the beautiful childlike

* Vide Sismondi, *Literature of the South of Europe* Vol. I. cc. iv. and v. tr. Boscoe, ed. 1823. *Ency. Brit.* art. 'Provençal Poetry' by Prof. P. Mayer, Vol. XIX. and 'Romance' Vol. XX. Hallam, *Literary History* Vol. I. pp. 33-34.

utterance just waking to speak of chivalry and heroic deeds, and love, in song and music. The people had begun to get able to speak then. This sort of poetry became not much improved afterwards ; it was perfect from the first. Indeed, it could not have received any improvement from succeeding times, for shortly afterwards we observe the rise of a kind of feeling adverse to this spirit of harmony which we shall by and by see get out at last into Protestantism. In the mean time all was one beautiful harmony and religious Unity. In all countries it is astonishing to what an extent music and singing had already gone. The Troubadours and Trouvères belonged to distinct races—the one Norman, with whom were joined our English forefathers, and the other, the Troubadours, were Provençal. This formed a division between them : those from the North or Trouvères sang of chivalrous histories, such as those of Charlemagne, of Arthur, and the Round Table ; while those from the South sang of love, of chivalry, joustings, and so forth.* From want of space I cannot go deeper just now into this subject, but I will just mention that the spirit of these two kinds of ballads have been curiously preserved to us by two poets, who can hardly be said to belong to the Troubadours. Petrarch may be said to have been the Troubadour of Italy, which country had properly none else of its own, though he came a century later than the true Troubadours—I refer to his great genius in sonnets and love-singing. In him was a refined spirit of the Troubadour-poetry ; doubtless it had many faults, but there it is in its more complete shape, as it lay in the melodious mind of Petrarch. This kind of song was cultivated even by Kings and Princes, such as Richard Cœur de Lion and Barbarossa.

* Cf. "It is certain that a romantic imagination was rarely discovered amongst the Troubadours ; whilst the Trouvères, the poets and reciters of tales, invented or perfected all the ancient romances of chivalry. The tales of the Troubadours have nothing romantic or warlike about them. They always relate to allegorical personages, Mercy, Loyalty, and Modesty, whose duty it is to speak and not to act." Sismondi, Vol. I. p. 210.

The other production, to which I have alluded of the Troubadour school is better known by the name of the Nibelungen Lied. This is properly Trouvère. The probable date of this poem is the twelfth century : it is by far the finest poem connected with the Middle Ages* down to Dante. It is of the old heroic German spirit, and sounds true as steel ; it commemorates the adventures of the early chiefs, of Siegfried and king Attila, and of the whole nation from their emigrations downwards, all shadowed out there. It is of the first rate—not perhaps evincing a shining genius but, far better than that, the simple, noble, manly character of its age, full of religion, mercy, and valour ! It was discovered † about sixty years ago but became generally known only forty after that. I advise any of my friends who know German to make this poem their study : a modern German translation of it has been published, but the language of the original is not much older to the German scholar than Chaucer is to us ; and it is by far the finest poem we have of that period.

We must now quit this general investigation of the Middle Ages. But I must in the last place remark that we must not suppose that because the spirit of those ages did not *speak* much, that it has been lost or could ever have been lost. It is not so ordered. There is no good action man can do, that is not summoned up in time to come and kept up there. We lose indeed much of the inconsistencies and contradictions of the times in the lapse of ages. But this, again, is pre-

* "A creation from the old ages, still bright and balmy, if we visit it, and opening into the first history of Europe, of mankind. Thus all is not oblivion ; but on the edge of the abyss, that separates the old world from the new, there hangs a fair rainbow-land ; which also, in curious repetitions of itself, as it were in a secondary and even a tertiary reflex sheds some feeble twilight far into the deeps of the primeval time." Carlyle, *Essay on the Nibelungen Lied*, *Miscellanies* Vol. III. p. 139. Vide Scherer, *Hist. of German Literature* Vol. I. pp. 101-116.

† O. H. Müller first published it in his 'Collection of German Poems from the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,' 1772. A Swiss, Professor Bodmer, had already in 1767 published a fragment of it. There are many modern German translations of the *Lied*, as those by Lachmann and by Simrock.

cisely what we observe of rude natural voices heard singing in the distance. Musicians say that there is nothing so strikingly impressive as to hear a psalm, for instance, sung by untaught voices in the mountains; many inaccuracies no doubt there are in the performance, but in the distance all is true and right, because all false notes destroy one another and are absorbed in the air before they reach us; and only the true notes support one another and come to us. So in the Middle Ages we only get the heroic essence of the whole. Actions only will be found to have been preserved when writers are forgotten. Homer will one day be swallowed up in time, and so will all the greatest writers that have ever lived; and comparatively this is very little matter. But actions will not be destroyed: their influence must live; good or bad, they will live through eternity for the weal or woe of the doer! In particular the good actions will flow on in the course of time, unseen perhaps, but just as a vein of water flowing underground—hidden in general, but at intervals breaking out to the surface in many a well for the refreshment of men.

In our next lecture we shall come to Dante.

LECTURE V.

THE ITALIANS—DANTE—CATHOLICISM—HELL—PURGATORY—
HEAVEN.

[MONDAY, 14TH MAY 1838.]

WE are now arrived at that point of history, where Europe branches off—its great stem branches off—into different nations,—one nation forming itself after another. Each nation of modern Europe distinguishes itself in some measure from all the other nations. The language is the peculiar product of each nation containing something of its own, not supplied from the others ; the function, too, appointed to be done by it,—and the Genius of it,—everything belonging to it characterises each nation. We shall take them in their order.

Formation
of modern
nations.

The first nation which possesses a claim on our solicitude is the Italian nation. It was the latest nation of those that had been overrun by the barbarians, which fashioned itself into something of an articulate result. It has much distinguished itself in Europe,—in ancient as well as modern Europe. It was the first that was notable in literature, in the exposition of opinions, in arts, in all the products of the human intellect. It is also important from being connected with that characteristic of the Middle Ages, the religious feeling then prevalent. It was the latest settled, and the first notable : it was the last modern nation, when the tumult of the northern emigrations subsided. The Lombards conquered Italy in the 6th century.* They were the latest of the German tribes that left their native seats.

Italians.

* *Vide* Gibbon Vol. V. p. 337, Milman, *History of Latin Christianity* Vol. I. p. 427, J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy : Age of the Despots* p. 512.

. . . wrote their history. Lombards, Longobardi (long-beards),—they were a brave, gifted, excellent nation. They ruled in Italy for 150 years, after which time it split itself into a number of small principalities and towns; and so it has unhappily continued ever since.†

Conquest
of the Guis-
cards.

The next memorable event is the conquest of the South of Italy by the Guiscards in the 11th century, some two or three centuries after the final decay of the Lombard power.‡ They were the sons of Tancred de Hauteville, the most impetuous fighters Italy ever had to encounter. The part where they settled was that which we remarked to have been once colonised by Greeks, Magna Græcia, where to this day many Greek usages are still preserved. It is now called Naples (Neapolis, New Town). The Saracens had gained a footing there, and to dislodge them, the Prince of Apulia sent for Guiscard. He and his brother, who was called Iron Arm, came over, and expelled the Saracens eventually. It was a great thing to do: it was not much more than 100 years after these Normans, Northmen, had emerged from the condition of wild Saxon pirates, and settled in France, which was also about one hundred years before the time of William the Conqueror. It was a great feat. Naples was rendered a dependency of Northern Europe and has remained so ever since.

If it had not been for the third memorable circumstance respecting Italy, the existence in it of the Pope, an event not sudden but gradual, (1067 was the age of this political power), the Guiscards would have conquered all Italy. But the Pope had by this time got settled, and had territories of his own, and did not choose to permit the Guiscards to make further encroachments; and accordingly he interdicted their

* The name of the writer is wanting here in the MS. and some space is left blank. Probably Carlyle referred to 'Paul Warnefrid' commonly called 'Paulus Diaconus,' who was a Lombard himself and wrote the history of his nation, *Historia Longobardorum*. Gibbon, from whom evidently Carlyle has derived his short sketches of the early history of the modern nations refers to him in his account, as indeed does every writer on the subject. Cf. Bydberg, *Teutonic Mythology* p. 68.

† Since 1871 it is again united.

‡ Gibbon Vol. VII. p. 114.

progress, and thus doomed Italy to be for ever divided, and, politically speaking, entirely paralysed. If the Pope, or the Guiscards, no matter which, had got ground throughout Italy, the result would have been very happy for her, but it was not her lot.

Lingering still then in Italy, we observe that she occupies ^{Distinguish-} very little place in Europe ; but there is a peculiar character ^{ed Italians.} to Italy, and though Italians complain that their country has not held that influence in Modern Europe, to which, from her position and resources, she is entitled, still I do not think that we should say that her part has not been a great one ; in one respect it has been much greater than that of any other nation. She has produced a far greater number of great men, distinguished in art, thinking, conduct, and everywhere in the departments of intellect. Dante, Raphael, Michael Angelo, among others, are hardly to be paralleled, in the respective department of each of these. In other departments again, there are Columbus, Spinola, and Galileo. And, after all, the great thing which any nation can do is to *produce great men*. It is thus only that it distinguishes itself in reality, and this distinction lasts longer than any other ; a battle would be a comparatively trivial and poor thing.

In our limits, it is impossible to attempt the delineation of the Italian people. But in every people there is to be found some one great product of intellect, and when we shall have explained the significance of that one, we shall not fail to understand all the rest. In this instance we shall take Dante,* one of the greatest men that ever lived ;—perhaps the very greatest of Italians ; certainly one of the greatest. The *Divina Commedia* is Dante's Work. He was from Florence, a town of all others, fertile in great men.† He was born in 1265. Florence had already come into note 200 years before that. It was first founded by Sylla. In the

* With what Carlyle says here of Dante, cf. *Heroes* lect. ii.

† Vide Mrs. Oliphant, *Makers of Florence* introd.

Dante.

Middle Ages it played a great part, and it was there that Dante was born.* His family was one of the greatest in Florence,—that of Durante Alighieri (Durante, since corrupted to Dante). He was well educated. We have mention made of the schoolmaster who taught him grammar, and other great men† of the day, who had to do with him in different branches of education. He was much occupied in public employments in his native town. Twice he was engaged in battle, on one occasion with the Republic of Pisa, I believe; and he was employed in fourteen embassies.‡ It was in his twenty-fifth year that he first fought for Florence in the battle of Arezzo, § I think; and finally he became the Prior, or Chief Magistrate of Florence.¶ We can make nothing of those obscure quarrels, they have no interest for us,—those quarrels of the Guelfs and Ghibellines. We saw the foundation of all that in the quarrel of Hildebrand with the Emperor. Year after year, it went on—generation after generation—the people that favoured the Pope were called Guelfs, those who favoured the Emperor, Ghibellines. The Guelfs were German Princes. The Ghibellines were so named from Weiblin, a town of the Hohenstauffen near Weinsbeig. Their real names were Welfs and Weiblin; Weiblin was made by the Italians into Ghibelline. The Guelfs were the ancestors of the house of Brunswick and of the family on the throne of these realms. I say that we can make nothing out of these quarrels, except that in every town of Italy party hatred raged violently, and each faction

* "I had my birth, and found my home

In the great city hard by Arno fair."—*Inferno* XXIII. 94. I quote throughout from the excellent recent translation of the late Dean Plumptre.

† For his companions of study, *vide* Plumptre, *Dante* Vol. I. p. liv.

‡ Most of these reported by some writers, as those 'to Siena, Genoa, &c., if not altogether relegated to the region of the fabulous, must be looked on as very doubtful.'—Plumptre, *Dante* Vol. I. p. lxiii.

§ Battle of Campaldino, in 1289, which was fought against the city of Arezzo.

¶ Only for two months in 1300.

directed its utmost endeavours to supplant the other.* Dante favoured the side of the Emperor. There being a very small number of families in Florence, the party hatred was proportionally more violent. Banishments of the highest personages were quite common there, and were employed as often as one party was trodden down by its enemies. Dante, accordingly, being then absent upon some embassy, was banished by his enemies. He was then in his thirty-fifth year. He afterwards made some attempt with others of his friends to get back to Florence, and made an attack by arms upon the city; which proving unsuccessful, so exasperated the citizens that nothing could appease them. Dante was then as good as confiscated; he had been fined before that; and there is still to be seen an Act of that time in the archives of Florence, charging all magistrates to burn Dante alive when he should be taken: such violent hatred had they conceived against him. Dante was afterwards reduced to wander up and down Italy, a broken man.† This way of life is difficult to conceive of so violent a mind, a deep feeling, sad and joyful. Thenceforth he had sorrow for his portion. It is very mournful to think of; but at the same time the work he had to do, could not have been done so well, had his lot been less unhappy.‡ He was ever a serious man, always meditating on some religious, moral subject. After his misfortunes, besides, there was no hope extant for him. He tells us that he "had left everything he could love." This gave him double and treble earnestness of character. The world was now all done for him; he looked now only to the great kingdoms of Eternity. It has been disputed whether he had begun the *Divina Commedia* before he left

* *Vide* Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*. Symonds *Renaissance in Italy: Age of the Despots* p. 67.

† He has described his wanderings in the *Convito* 1. 3. cf. Dean Church, *Dante* p. 76.

‡ Cf. J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature*, Vol. II. p. 72: 'Had it not been for Dante's exile, the modern world might have lacked its first and greatest epic.'

Florence. He had, at all events, not written much of it. He completed it in his exile that he might secure to himself powerful friends, who could shelter him, and he therefore got it published, to be descanted on now five hundred years after that, and to continue to be so for one thousand more to come. There are few things that exist worth comparing to it. Æschylus—or, more properly, Homer, Æschylus, Dante, Shakspeare—one really cannot add another great name to these.* Theirs were the utterances out of the great heart of Nature—sincere outpourings of the mind of man. His *Divina Commedia*† assumes at first the form of a vision, though it soon loses it as he proceeds : indeed he nowhere expressly announces it at all, though he begins suddenly as if it were a vision. The three great Kingdoms of Eternity are the subject of the poem : Hell, the place of final expiation of guilt, where a stern, inexorable justice reigns, without pity, charged to inflict punishments for infractions of the Law of the Most High ; Purgatory, a place where the sin of man is under certain conditions cleansed away ; and Paradise, where the soul enjoys felicity for ever. This was the greatest idea that we have ever yet had the experience of entering into the soul of man, more full than any other of the elements of grandeur. And it fell to the lot of one who was singularly appropriated by his way of life for the task. He was a man “full of sorrows,” “a man of woe,” by nature of a serious turn of mind, and rendered doubly and trebly so

*Divina
Commedia.*

* Dr. Hettinger would include Goethe among these. ‘The nearest in matter and form to the *Commedia* though still its inferior, is *Faust*. Dante’s *Commedia* tr. Bowden p. 95 seq.

† The reason why Dante called his poem a ‘Comedy’ is given by himself in his dedication of the *Paradiso* to Can Grande della Scala. “Comedy begins sadly and ends happily, as we see in the Comedies of Terence. The language of comedy, too, is simple and homely. Hence it is plain why the present work is called a ‘comedy,’ for the beginning is dreadful and repulsive, as its subject, which is Hell, but the end, which treats of Paradise, is prosperous, desirable and pleasant, and the style employed is simple and homely, being in the vulgar tongue, which even women understand.”—*Ep. ad Can Grande.*

by his way of life. Accordingly I think that when all records of Catholicism shall have passed away, when the Vatican shall have crumbled into dust, and St. Peter's and Strasburg Minster be no more, for thousands of years to come, Catholicism will survive in this sublime relic of antiquity.

In seeking the character of Dante's poem, we shall admire that grand, natural, moral depth, that nobleness of heart, that grandeur of soul—great in all directions, in his wrath, his scorn, his pity; great above all in his sorrow. That is a fine thing which he says of those in a state of despair. "They have not the hope to die!" *"Non han speranza de morte."** What an idea that is in Dante's mind there of Death! To most persons, death is the most dreaded Being, the King of Terrors; but to Dante to be imprisoned for ever in a miserable complexity, without hope of release, is the most terrible of things. Indeed, I believe, notwithstanding the horror of death, no human creature but would find it to be the most dreadful doom, not to be suffered to die, though he should be decreed to enjoy all youth and bloom immortally. For there is a boundlessness, an endless longing, in the breast, which aspires to another world than this. That, too, is a striking passage where he says of certain individuals that they are "Hateful to God, and to the enemies of God."† There was a deep feeling in Dante of the enormity of that moral baseness, such as had never before gone into the mind of any man. These of whom he speaks were a kind of trimmers, men that had not even the merit to join with the Devil. He adds "*Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa.*"‡ "Let us say nothing

Its character.

* 'Questi non hanno speranza di morte.'—Inferno III. 46. For the text of Dante the Venice edition of 1757 has been used.

† 'A Dio spiacenti ed a'nemici sui.' Ibid. I. 63.

‡ Ibid. I. 51. Perhaps the oftenest quoted line in Dante.

of them, but pass them by." The central quality of Dante was greatness of heart. From this all the others flowed as from a natural source. This must exist in every man that would be great: it is impossible for him to do anything good without it: and by his success we may trace in every writer his magnanimity and his pusillanimity. In Dante there was the greatness of simplicity for one thing. All things are to be anticipated from the nobleness of his moral opinion. Logically speaking, again, Dante had one of the finest understandings; remarkable in all matters of reason; as for instance, in his reflections on Fortune* (Fortuna), Free Will† and the Nature of Sin.‡ He was an original, quick, far-seeing man, possessing a deep insight into all matters, and this, combined with the other quality which we notice, his greatness of heart, constitutes the principal charm in Dante. In the third place, his poem was so musical that it got up to the length of singing itself: his soul was in it; and when we read it, there is a tune which hums itself along. These qualities, a great heart, insight, and song, are the stamp of a genuine poem at all times, which will not be peculiar to any one age, but will be natural in all ages. For, as I observed, it is the utterance of the heart, of life itself, and all earnest men of whatever age will then behold as in a mirror the image of their own convexed beam, and will be grateful to the poet for the brotherhood to him in which they stand. Then as to simplicity, there is in the poem throughout that noble character, insomuch that one would almost suppose that there is nothing great there. For he remains intent upon the delineation of his subject, never guilty of bombastic inflation; and does not seem to think that he is doing anything very remarkable.

* Paradiso XVII. 37.

† Purgatorio XVI. 65-93.

‡ Paradiso XXVI. 115. This he has taken almost literally from St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* ii. 2. 73. 1.

Herein he is very different from Milton. Milton, with all his genius, was very inferior to Dante ; he has made his angels* large, huge, distorted beings ; he has sketched vividly his scenes of heaven and hell, and his faculty is certainly great ; but I say that Dante's was the great thing to do. He has opened the deep, unfathomable wells of woe, that lay in the soul of man ; he has opened the living fountains of hope also, of penitence. And this I say is far greater than towering as high as Teneriffe, or twice as high.

In his delineations, he has a most beautiful, sharp grace, *Inferno.* the quickest, and clearest intellect. It is just that honesty with which his mind was set upon his subject that carries it out. Take, for instance, the scene† of the monster Geryon, with Virgil and Dante ; where he describes how he landed with them in the eighth Circle. He says that it was like "a falcon" in quest of prey "hovering without seeing either the lure or the game ; when the falconer cries *Oimé tu cali*, come down, he descends wheeling round and round, and at a distance disdainful and disobedient." Just so was Geryon, and then "he bolted up like an arrow out of the bow." There are not above a dozen‡ words in this picture, but it is one

* Cf. Lowell's estimate : "Milton's angels are not to be compared with Dante's at once real and supernatural ; and the Deity of Milton is a Calvinistic Zeus, while nothing in all poetry approaches the imaginative grandeur of Dante's vision of God at the conclusion of the *Paradise*. In all literary history there is no such figure as Dante, no such homogeneity of life and work, such loyalty to ideas, such sublime irrecognition of the unessential."—*Among my Books* Vol. I. p. 38 ; also Ruskin, *Modern Painters* Vol. III. p. 29.

† *Inferno* XVII. 127—136 :

And as the falcon after lengthened flight,
Who seeing, neither bird, nor lure, finds blame,
And makes his master cry, "What ! dost alight !"
Whence quick he started, wheels his weary frame,
A hundred times, and settles far apart
From where his master stands, in sullen shame,
So Geryon in the depth our course did stay
Just at the base whence that sheer rock did spring ;
And from the burden freed that on him lay,
Went off as speeds an arrow from the spring.

‡ Terseness is the chief characteristic of Dante's style, *vide* Macaulay *Criticism on Dante Works*, Vol. VII. p. 616 ; Hettinger p. 93.

that will last for ever. So also his description of the city of Dis to which Virgil carries him, possesses a beautiful simplicity and honesty. The light was so dim that the people could hardly see, and "they winked at him, just as people wink their eyes under the new moon," or, "as an old tailor winks threading his needle, when his eyes are not good."* There is a contrast between the subject and this quaint similitude that has a beautiful effect. It brings one home to the subject. There is much reality in this similitude. So his description of the place they were in. "The flakes of fire came down like snow, fixing down on the skins of the people, and burning them black." Among these he sees his old school-master† who taught him grammar, who winked at him in the manner described; but so burnt that he could hardly recognise him. It is very touching.

Story of
Francesca.

There are many of his greatest qualities in the celebrated passage‡ about Francesca, whom he finds in the Circle of Inferno appropriated to those who had erred in love. I many times say that I know nowhere of a more striking passage: if any one would select a passage characteristic of a great man, let him study that. It is as tender as the voice of mothers, full of the gentlest pity; though there is much stern tragedy in it. He appears there both as he was environed outwardly, and as he was in his inward feeling; it is very touching. It is a place without light, "a brown

* And every one

Looked at us as men look at eve when yet
The young moon's crescent in the heaven is shown,
And so upon us they their eyebrows bent
As tailor old at needle's eye doth frown.

Inferno XV. 17-21.

"The two similitudes are characteristically out of the range of poetic elegance. What was wanted was the picture of the 'screwed up' look of intent curiosity, and this they give as nothing else could do."

Plumptre's note, *ad loc.* Cf. Church *Dante* p. 134.

† Brunetto Latini, *ibid* 24 sq.

‡ Inferno V. 73-142. The whole passage is given at the end of the Lecture.

air, which groaned (*muggia*), like a stormy sea.”* There he sees two shadows that he wishes to speak to, and they come to him : he compares them to “doves, whose wings are open and not fluttering.” Francesca, one of these utters her complaint which does not occupy twenty lines, though it is such an one that a man may write a thousand lines about it, and not do ill. It contains beautiful touches of human weakness. She feels that stern justice encircles her all around. “O living creature,” she says, “who hast come so kindly to visit us ;” “if the Creator of the world,” (poor Francesca ! she knew that she had sinned against his inexorable Justice) “if He were our friend, we would pray him for thy peace !” “Love which soon teaches itself to a gentle heart, inspired her Paolo.” (Beautiful, womanly feeling that !) “Love forbids that the person loved shall not love in return.” And so she loved Paolo. “Gehenna† awaits him who destroyed our life,” she adds with female vehemence. Then in three lines she tells the story how they fell in love. “We read one day of Lancelot, how love possessed him ; we were alone ; we regarded one another : when we read of that laughing kiss, he trembling kissed me.” “That day,” she adds, “we read no further.” The whole is beautiful, like a clear piping voice heard in the middle of a whirlwind : it is so sweet, and gentle and good !

Then, the Hunger’s Tower of Ugolino.‡ This however is a much more brutal thing than the punishment of Francesca. But the story of Francesca is all a truth ; he says that he knew her father ; her history becomes a kind of concern in the mind of Dante ; and when he hears her relate it, he

* I came unto a place where light was not,
Which murmurs ever like a storm-vert sea,
When strife of winds in conflict waxes hot.

Ibid 28—30.

† ‘Caïna,’ (the lowest of the circles of hell,) in the original, l. 107.

‡ Inferno XXXIII.

“ falls as a dead body falls.” This too is an answer to a criticism against Dante ; and a paltry criticism it is. Some have regarded the poem as kind of satire upon his enemies, on whom he revenged himself by putting them into hell. Now nothing is more unworthy of Dante than such a theory. If he had been of such an ignoble nature, he never could have written the *Divina Commedia*. It was written in the purest spirit of justice. Thus he pitied poor Francesca and would not have willingly placed her in that torment ; but it was the justice of God’s law that doomed her there.

How beautiful is his description of the coming eve : “ the hour when sorrow awakens in the hearts of sailors who have left their land ; *squilladi lontano* : the dying day !” * No one ever quitted home and loved ones, whose heart does not respond to that.

We must not omit Farinata, † the beautiful illustration of a character much found in Dante. He is confined in the black dome where the heretics dwell. He was the father of one of Dante’s most loved friends. The description ‡ is striking of the Sarcophagi in which these people are inclosed, some red-hot, others brown-hot, “ more or less heated :” (there is nothing in Teneriffe like that) the lids are not to be kept open till the last day, and are then to be sealed down for ever. He hears Dante speaking in the Tuscan dialect, and he accosts him, § He is a man of great haughtiness : || *gran dispetto*; *sdegnoso* : this spirit of defiance of suffering, so remarkable in Æschylus, occurs two or three times in Dante.

* “ The hour was come which brings back yearning new
To those far out at sea, and melts their hearts,
The day that they have bid sweet friends adieu ;
Whereat the pilgrim fresh with strong love starts,
If he perchance hear bells, far off yet clear,
Which seem to mourn the day’s life that departs.

Purgatorio VIII. 1-6. *Cl Church Dante* p. 147.

† *Inferno* X.

‡ *Ibid.* IX. *ad fin.*

§ *Ibid.* X. 41.

|| *Ibid.* X. 36, 41.

Farinata asks him, what news of Florence? For in all his long exile Dante himself thinks continually of Florence which he loves so well; and he makes even those in torment, anxious after what is doing in Florence. Then he asks Dante, "why is he there, and not his son; where is he?" And Dante replies, that perhaps "he *had* distaste for Virgil." "*Had*", Farinata asks, "*Ebbe*?" "does he not live then?"* And as Dante pauses a little without replying, Farinata plunges down and he sees him no more. These sudden abrupt movements are frequent in Dante. He is indeed full of what I can call military movements; many of his gestures are extremely significant. In another place three men "looked at one another like men that believed;" in these words, one sees it all, as it seemed to Dante. This is a feature I do not know how to name well, but it is very remarkable in Dante.

Those passages are very striking where he alludes to his own sad fortunes; there is in them a wild sorrow, a savage tone of truth, a breaking heart, the hatred of Florence, and, with it the love of Florence. In one place,†—"Rejoice, O Florence, that thou art so famous in Hell!" in another place he calls her "well-guided." And his old school-master tells him, "if thou follow thy star, thou canst not miss a happy harbour."‡ That was just it. That star occasionally shone on him from the blue eternal depths, and he felt he was doing something good; but, then, he soon lost it again as he fell back into the trough of the sea, and had to journey on as before. And where his ancestor § predicts his banishment, there is the wild sincerity again,—he must "leave every delightful thing:" "he must learn to dwell on the stairs of another man." Bitter! bitter! poor

* "Come Dicesti, Egli ebbe? non viv' egli ancora? *Ibid.* l. 68.

† *Inferno* XXVI. init. Cf. *Purgatorio* VI. 126 *seq.*

‡ *Inferno* XV. 55.

§ Cacciaguida.

Dante learned what that was, and to have in his exile none but "scoundrelly persons to associate with."*

There are traces, here and there, of a heart one would always wish to see in man. He is not altogether, therefore, an unconscious † man like Shakspeare, but more morbid, and narrower in that; but he does not attempt to compute it. He seems to feel merely the conviction, the humble hope that he shall get to Heaven in the end. A notable passage that on Fame! "No man, if he were Alexander the Great, if he were Dante, if he were all men put together, could get for himself eternal fame." He feels that too. Fame is not of any particular moment to him. That contradiction between the greatness of his mind, and his humble attachment to Florence is difficult of utterance; and it seems as if the spirit of man were hampered with the insufficient dialects this world imposes upon him.

Purgatorio. The *Inferno* has become, of late times, mainly the favourite of the three :‡ it has harmonised well with the taste of the last thirty or forty years, in which Europe has seemed to covet more a violence of emotion, and a strength of convulsion, than almost any other quality. It is, no doubt, a great thing; but to my mind the *Purgatorio* is excellent

* Thou shalt leave all things that most tenderly
Are loved by thee; and this is from the bow
Of exile the first arrow that doth fly.
How salt that bread doth taste thou then shalt know
That others give thee, and how hard the way
Or up or down another's stairs to go.
And that which most upon thy back shall weigh
Will be the mad and evil company
Which in that dreary vale with thee shall stay.

Paradiso XVII. 55-63.

† Cf. *Inferno* IV. 102 when he placed himself 'sixth amid that might of mind'—the great poets of the world. 'Literature,' says Dean Plumptre, 'hardly records an instance of such supreme self-confidence.' 'As publicist and man of letters, he laid stress on the fact that what he did was new, and that he wished not only to be, but to be esteemed, the first in his own walks'. Burckhardt, *Renaissance in Italy* Vol. I. p. 197.

‡ Dante differed from most of his admirers in preferring the *Paradiso* to the *Inferno* which is almost a universal favourite with them, just as Milton preferred the *Paradise Regained* to the universally more popular *Paradise Lost*. Dante himself foresaw this and declared that only few and chosen souls could follow him.—*Paradiso* II. 1. vide Hettinger pp. 101, 195.

also ; and I question even whether it is not a better and a greater thing on the whole. It is very beautiful to see* them get up into that black, great mountain, in the western ocean, where Columbus had not yet been ; and to trace, Giro after Giro, the purification of souls is “ beautiful exceedingly ;” the penitents’ repentance, the humble hope, the peace and joy that is in them. There is no book so moral as this—the very essence of Christian morality. Men have, of course, ceased to believe these things,—that there is the mountain rising up in the ocean there, or that there are those *Malebolgi*, black Gulphs. But still men of any knowledge at all must believe that there exists the inexorable justice of God, and that penitence is the great thing here for man ; for life is but a series of errors made good again by repentance. And the sacredness of that doctrine is asserted in Dante, in a manner more moral than anywhere else. Any other doctrine is with him comparatively not worth affirming or denying. Very touching is that gentle patience, that unspeakable thankfulness, with which the souls expect their release during thousands of years. Cato is keeping the gate. That is a beautiful dawn of morning : the dawn “ drove away the darkness westward ; with a quivering of the sea on the horizon.”

si che, di lontano,
Conobbi il tremolar della marina.†

He seems to seize the word † for it : anybody who has seen the sun rise at sea will recognise it. The internal feeling of the *Purgatorio* keeps pace with that. One man says :—
“ Tell my Giovanna that I think her mother does not love me, now that she has laid aside her weeds.” The parable with which he concludes his lament is as beautiful as it can

* *Purgatorio* III.

† ‘ Near was the dawn its triumph bright to gain
O’er morning’s mist that vanished, so that I
Knew from afar the trembling of the main.

Purgatorio I. 115-7.

‡ Virgil had already seized it. Cf. ‘splendet tremulo sub lumine pontus.’
Æn. VII. 9.

be. Then, too, the relation he stands in to Virgil and Beatrice ; his loyalty, faith and kindly feeling for Virgil's nobleness. Loyalty, we remarked, was the essence of the Middle Ages. Virgil is never angry with him but once, when Dante seems to pay too much attention to two hypocrites quarrelling. "A little more," he says, "and I would quarrel with thee."† Dante owns himself in the wrong, and Virgil then tells him that it is not proper to listen to such things. Beatrice is actually‡ a beautiful little girl whom he had seen in his boyhood at a ball. She was a young child nine years old, when he was ten. He had never heard her speak ; but once, when she was talking to some one at the corner of the street. She was cinctured§ with a garland of olive "nigræ pulchritudinis ;" such was the mood of charity, he says, in which her aspect placed him, that that night when he fell asleep, he dreamed of her. This was at nine o'clock ; for, though it was many years after, he remembered it quite well : they had met but little, but he seemed to know that she loved him as he her ; she married another¶ afterwards, but not willingly. When all else is dark with misery to him, this is the only recollection that is beautiful,¶ for nothing had occurred to have rendered it disagreeable to him ; and his whole soul flies to it. Providence "sent an angel always to interfere when the worst came." In Paradise when Virgil vanishes, and he sees Beatrice, by this time purified from mortal stain, how deep is the expression of his joy !^a How heavily the love he bore her

Paradise.

* Purgatorio, VIII. 80 seqq.

† Inferno XXX. 132.

‡ See Matthew Arnold in *Fraser's Magazine* Vol. LXVII. 1863. Art. 'Dante and Beatrice.'

§ Vita Nuova § 3 Dante says the colour was a 'subdued and comely red.' Cf. Purg. XXX. 37 seq. and Plumptre's note *ad loc.*

¶ Simon d'Bardi.

¶ Cf. the words of Virgil to him in Inferno X. 130 :

"When thou shalt be before that light of bliss

Of her whose beauteous eye doth all survey,

Thy life's true journey then thou shalt not miss."

^a Purg. XXX, XXXI.

weighed upon his heart ! The mother of Beatrice treated him with much seeming harshness (*barbarezza*) ; wasting his very life away with severity ; but it was all through her apprehension that, if she were to give vent to her love for him, she should kill him—it would be too much for him—but he reads in her eye all the while her deep affection, in the flush of joy with which she regards his successes and good actions. One can well understand in this point of view what the Germans say of the three parts of the *Divina Commedia*, viz., that the first is the architectural, plastic part, as of statuary ; the second is the pictorial, or picturesque ; the third is the musical, the melting into music, Song !

But I can afford no more time to speak of Dante. My friends must endeavour to supply the omissions I have been obliged to make, and to expand what I have said over his whole poem. We must quit Italy and Dante altogether with these imperfect remarks.

The Story of Paolo and Francesca de Rimini referred to by Carlyle as the most striking passage in Dante, on p. 82.

And I began : " O Poet, I am bold
 To wish to speak awhile to yonder pair,
 Who float so lightly on the storm-blast cold."
 And he to me : " Thou'lt see them when they fare
 More near to us : then pray them by that love
 That leads them : they will to thy call repair."
 Soon as the winds their forms towards us move,
 My voice I lift : " O souls sore spent and driven,
 Come ye and speak to us, if none reprove."
 And e'en as doves, when love its call has given,
 With open, steady wings to their sweet nest
 Fly, by their will borne onward through the heaven,
 So from the band where Dido was they pressed,
 And came towards us through the air malign,
 So strong the loving cry to them addressed.
 " O living creature, gracious and benign,
 Who com'st to visit, through the thick air perse,
 Us, whose blood did the earth incarnadine,
 Were He our friend who rules the universe,
 We would pray Him to grant thee all His peace,
 Since thou hast pity on our doom perverse.

Of that which thee to hear and speak shall please
 We too will gladly with thee speak and hear,
 While, as it chances now, the wild winds cease.

The land where I was born is situate there
 Where to the sea-coast line descends the Po,
 To rest with all that to him tribute bear.

Love, which the gentle heart learns quick to know,
 Seized him thou seest, for the presence fair
 They robbed me of—the mode still deepens woe.

Love, who doth none beloved from loving spare,
 Seized me for him with might that such joy bred,
 That, as thou seest, it leaves me not e'en here.

Love to one death our steps together led ;
 Caina him who quenched our life doth wait."
 Thus was it that were borne the words they said,

And when I heard those souls in sad estate,
 I bowed my face, and so long kept it low,
 Till spake the poet : " What dost meditate ? "

When I made answer, I began, " Ah woe !
 What sweet fond thoughts, what passionate desire
 Led to the pass whence such great sorrows flow ! "

Then I turned to them and began inquire,
 " Francesca," so I spake, " thy miseries
 A pitying grief that makes me weep inspire.

But tell me, in the time of those sweet sighs,
 The hour, the mode, in which love led you on
 Doubtful desires to know with open eyes."

And she to me : " A greater grief is none
 Than to remember happier seasons past
 In anguish ; this thy Teacher well hath known

But if thou seek'at to learn what brought at last
 Our love's first hidden root to open sight,
 I'll tell, as one who speaks while tears flow fast.

It chanced one day we read for our delight
 How love held fast the soul of Lancelot ;
 Alone were we, nor deemed but all was right ;

Full many a time our eyes their glances shot,
 As we read on ; our cheeks now paled, now blushed
 But one short moment doomed us to our lot.

When as we read how smile long sought for flushed
 Fair face at kiss of lover so renowned,
 He kissed me on my lips, as impulse rushed,

All trembling ; now with me for aye is bound.
 Writer and book were Gallehaut to our will :
 No time for reading more that day we found."

And while one spirit told the story, still
 The other wept so sore, that, pitying, I
 Fainted away as though my grief would kill,

And fell, as falls a dead man, heavily.

LECTURE VI.

ON SPANIARDS—CHIVALRY—GREATNESS OF THE SPANISH
NATION—CERVANTES, HIS LIFE, HIS BOOK—LOPE—
CALDERON—PROTESTANTISM AND THE DUTCH WAR.

[FRIDAY, 18TH MAY 1838.]

.....

IN our last lecture, we saw the remarkable phenomenon of one great mind, making of itself, as it were, the spokesman of his age, and speaking with such an earnestness and a depth that he has become one of the voices of mankind itself, making his voice to be heard in all ages. For he was filled in every fibre of his mind with that principle, belief in the Catholic Church : this was the model by which all things became satisfactorily arranged for him in his mind. We must now leave that altogether abruptly, and come to the next great phenomenon in this history, a new nation,—new products in the human mind. I allude to Cervantes and chivalry. But before I come to that I may observe that Dante's way of thinking was one which, from its very nature, could not long continue. Indeed, it is not given to man that any of his works should long continue,—of the works of his mind any more than the things which he makes with his hand. But there was something in the very nature of Dante's way of thinking, which made it very natural that it should have become greatly altered even in the next generation. Dante's son, even, must have lived in an increased horizon of knowledge, to which the theory of Dante could no longer fit ; as for example, man had then sailed to the western ocean and had found that the mountain of Purgatory was not there at all. Indeed, if we look at it, we shall find that every man is first a learner, then a workman—an apprentice and then a workman—who at first

Progress
inevitable.

schemes out to himself such knowledge as his fathers teach him, into quite a familiar theory ; but the first researches will further widen his circle of knowledge, and he will have certain misgivings as to the theory, the creed, I may call it, of the universe, which he has already adopted—certain suspicions in his own mind that there are inconsistencies and contradictions in his theory not at all satisfactory,—and this will go on increasing, till his theory alters itself, shapes itself to them. In Italy the same Catholic church, which was the mother of the mind of Dante, inspiring it with every feeling and thought that was there, afterwards condemned Galileo to renounce what he knew to be true, because it was at that time supposed to be contrary to the tenets the Church held on the subject, forcing him to be either the martyr of the Inquisition or to deny the truth. Indeed, before that Europe had split itself into all kinds of confusions and contradictions without end, in which we are still enveloped. This in short is the foundation and essence of the progress of the human mind, which, in spite of the exaggerations and misrepresentations which have been made of it, is really that inevitable law for man to go on, and to continue to widen his investigations for thousands of years or even for millions, for there is no limit to it. Any theory of nature then is at most temporary,—but on the other hand, all theories contain something within them which is perennial. In Dante that was Belief, the communion which the heart of hearts can hold with nature. The human soul in fact develops itself into all sorts of opinions, doctrines, which go on nearer and nearer to the truth. All theories approximate more or less to the great theory which remains itself always unknown—and in that proportion contain something which must live. Therefore, whatever opinion we may form of his doctrines, we do not dissent with Dante's piety,—that will always be admired. There is no nation, too, without progress :

some people say that the Chinese are without it ; perhaps they may change less rapidly than other nations, but they must change ; it appears to me to be inevitably necessary. Every philosophy that exists is destined to be embraced, melted down, as it were, into some larger philosophy, which, too, will have to do the same some day.

Cervantes lived more than two centuries after Dante. Though we select him as the more remarkable of his age, there were no doubt before him many other people very valuable in influencing the human mind. All people, indeed, from Charlemagne's time had already made rapid advances in all departments of culture. We may here remark one or two symptoms of that restless effort after advancement then in action everywhere in Europe. First, there was the institution of Universities, which was long before Dante. The University of Paris had come into decided note in the time of Dante. There is a tradition that Dante* himself was at it, as there is a vague tradition that he was at Oxford too, but this last is very doubtful.† These universities of Europe grew up in a very obscure manner, not noted at first, but rising up quite in a natural and spontaneous manner. Some great teacher, such as Abelard, would get into repute with those who were eagerly desirous of learning ; and there would be no other way then of learning his knowledge except to gather round him and hear him expound what knowledge he had in his own department. When any other teacher would be desirous of displaying his own branch of acquirements, he would naturally establish himself in the neighbourhood of the first one ; and so these many teachers would begin to gather themselves together ; till their community should become known generally, and more young men would

* *Vide* Maxwell Lyte, *History of the University of Oxford* pp. 89-91.

† It is probable that he visited London as well as Oxford, *vide* Dean Plumptre in *Contemporary Review* December 1881 pp. 844-847. Cf. also J. A. Symonds, *Introduction to Dante* 2nd Ed.

resort to them ; and till finally the king, as did the King of France, would take notice of them, form them into a corporation, endow them with lands, and style the establishments 'Universitas,'—the place of a complete, settled course of instruction. It was about the ninth* century that Paris was first recognised as an University. Others soon followed, and the system so founded continues down to our times. One cause may be assigned for their existence—the want of books. Books at that period were not easily to be procured, and except by means of lecturing, none could learn what knowledge there was then to be attained. But this want became supplied by another great symptom of European improvement, the invention of the art of printing in the century after Dante ; that is to say, the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries. There are many controversies as to where it was invented, but it is not necessary to examine them here.† Faust brought it into full use in the year 1440. It is one very great fact, productive of important results for mankind, and one which has not clearly unfolded itself yet. But it was by no means a wonder-

Invention of printing.

* "Though there are some traces of public instruction at Paris about the end of the ninth century, it is not certain that we can assume it to be more ancient. For two hundred years more indeed, it can only be said that some persons appear to have come to Paris for the purposes of study. The commencement of this famous University, like that of Oxford, has no record." Hallam *Literary History* Vol. I. p. 12. But it may be said to have risen in the 12th century. For the best recent short account of the Rise of the Universities *vide* Mr. Mullinger's article in *Ency. Brit.* Vol. XXIII. also Prof. Laurie, *Rise of the Universities*.

† The controversies as to when, where, and by whom the art of printing was invented have been carried on for nearly four centuries. The claim of Faust or Fust is now generally given up. Now, the main point of the controversies lies between the two rival claims of Gutenberg and Mainz in Germany, and of Coster and Haarlem in Holland. For the most recent summary of these claims *vide* Mr. J. H. Hessel's excellent article in *Ency. Brit.* Vol. XXIII. His conclusion is that 'as the case stands at present we have no choice but to say that the invention of printing with movable metal types took place at Haarlem, about the year 1445 by Lourens Jansoon Coster.'

ful invention : it was quite a corollary from another great art—writing—a much more wonderful achievement, yet comparatively insignificant too to that admirable gift of speech, that power which man has of expressing his meaning by certain sounds. Another symptom of the change of habits in Europe is the invention of gunpowder, which took place prior to the century before the invention of printing,—two centuries we may say ; but the time of this invention is not known either ; also some attribute it to Friar Bacon, and others to Schwartz.* It does not seem a very beneficent invention this, designed for the destruction of men ; yet, on the whole, it has had immense consequences of the beneficial sort ; for like all other things in military art, it softens the miseries of war ; and, we may add, without entering into any wide conclusions about it, it is really the setting of the soul of man above the body of man, since it has reduced physical strength all to nothing, in the contests between man and man ; insomuch that give the weakest woman a pistol, and she instantly becomes a Goliath, with that pistol in her hand.† A great invention that ! So busy were these ages in their efforts after progress.

Invention of
gun-powder :

its beneficial
effects.

We shall now proceed to look at the Spaniards and the Chivalry. results they realised for themselves in this world of ours. The two great things which we have remarked in the Middle

* The discovery of gunpowder is veiled in great uncertainty, and this very obscurity seems proof of its great antiquity. Sismondi thinks that 'it was known to the Arabians at least a century before any traces of it appear in the European historians.'—*Literature of the South of Europe* Vol. I. p. 78. It is certain that it was not invented, as has been often stated, by the German monk Bertholdus Schwartz, about 1320. Roger Bacon refers to an explosive like gunpowder, *circa* 1267, but it is suggested that he may have got this knowledge from Marcus Græcus who lived about the end of the 8th century. For the knowledge of gunpowder by the ancients *vide* Major Wardell in *Ency. Brit.* Vol. XI. p. 316.

† Cf. "Such I hold to be the genuine use of Gunpowder : that it makes all men alike tall. Nay, if thou be cooler, cleverer than I, if thou have more *Mind*, though all but no *Body* whatever, then canst thou kill me first, and art the taller. Hereby, at last, is the Goliath powerless, and the David resistless ; savage Animalism is nothing, inventive Spiritualism is all."—*Sartor* p. 124.

Ages, first, Christianity—the Catholic religion—and next, Loyalty, had mainly the influence over Dante's work. That same spirit of loyalty obtained, however, a practical illustration of a striking character,—which received the name of chivalry. This, we may say, was the great product of the Spanish nation. It seems very extraordinary that Christianity which is against war altogether, teaching men even not to resist violence, should, with its divine spirit, have even penetrated into war itself, making it in the highest degree noble and beneficial ; that that dark back-ground which lies in every man, and which tells him that he can fight, and makes war at all times possible for man, that even this should have been penetrated with that spirit and raised by it to an elevation—a nobleness, a beauty—quite distinguished from anything in the Pagan world.

Its origin.

The age of Chivalry has been the subject of all kinds of investigations ; but writers have been able to find no physical arrangement for it. It seems to have been produced by the German spirit, united to that of the Christian doctrine. Among the Germans courage in battle was greatly honoured. According to Tacitus,* when a young man aspired to manhood, he was solemnly led into the public assembly, there girt with a sword, and proclaimed a fighter, and a man. This is very analogous to the ceremonies of knighthood, chivalry. This German quality, valour of character, combined with the Christian religion, as well as with another feature of the Germans, their reverence for woman—which also became a feature of chivalry,—these two qualities of the German character, became blended under the sanctifying influence of Christianity, and the whole formed itself into a system of opinions of the most beneficial kind, tempering the horrid madness of war—man meeting to kill man,—and presenting a most beautiful glow of worth,

* *Germania* c. 15.

very different from what was war in old times, where, indeed, there were always certain laws of war (as what can be done without some law or other at any time?); but there was none of that mercy, that noble self-denial, that fidelity to a man, and to the cause of that man, which we see in the Middle Ages.

In the next place, I may observe that probably the Spanish nation was the most fitted for this matter; as it has actually appeared to carry this matter forward to a higher perfection than it attained anywhere else. The Spanish nation had made its appearance in European history more than two centuries before Christ, in the wars of the Carthaginians and Romans.* They were remarkable for their tenacious valour. The Celtiberian nation, the origin of the rest of Spain, had always that character, and to this day they maintain it, in Spain, by the name of Basques†, and, on the other side of the Pyrenees, by that of Gascons. In the Barbarian invasions they at first became mixed with the Goths, and afterwards with the Visigoths,—from these they received their slight admixture of Gothic blood,—and then with the Arabs. In modern times they maintained the nobleness which distinguished them in ancient times; and have often displayed a spirit equal to that they displayed in the siege of Saguntum and Numantia which lasted fourteen years, and the scenes of which are much analogous to those of the siege of Saragossa in our times:‡ a striking instance which shows the characters of nations to be wonderfully tenacious. The Spaniards had less breadth of genius than the Italians, but they had, on the other hand, a lofty sustained enthusiasm in a higher degree than the Italians, with a tinge of what we call romance, a dash of Oriental exaggeration, and a tenacious vigour in prosecuting their objects; of less depth than the Germans, of less of that composed, silent force, yet a great people and of much

tion.

Its romantic character.

* Livy XXII. c. 21. † Vide Guest, *Origines Celticae* Vol. I. p. 76, 69.
‡ Livy XXI. c. 11.

The Cid.

Arabs in
Spain.

knowledge, and at all times calculated to be distinguished. And it was this people that developed the thing we call Chivalry, that system of noble deeds in war, and noble feelings. These sieges of Saguntum and Numantia, and the man Variatus, a Spanish or Portuguese shepherd, who withstood the whole forces of the Romans for 14 years, that same spirit which was in them showed itself early in modern Europe; in the Cid, for example, whose memory is still musical among the people. I am told that they to this day sing ballads about him. A book* has been written about his history by Joannes Von Müller, who really sees good reason to give credit to the popular ballads about his adventures. You all know the famous version of it by Corneille. His real name was Ruy Diaz. He was the contemporary of William the Conqueror; from the first a hard destiny was laid out for him. He had been betrothed to a lady, but their fathers disagreeing, the match was broken off; a contest ensued, in which his father was vanquished. For the purpose of vengeance he fought and conquered her father, merely from a sentiment of filial duty, not from interest; all personal wishes were set at nought, and as to thoughts of personal advantage, it was altogether the reverse,—so when the king had employed him successfully against, he afterwards rejected him altogether from his court. He fought often against the Moors. I may here mention that *Cid*† is a Moorish name, and signifies *master*. No doubt those contests against the Arabs tended very much to keep alive that spirit of chivalry. This people first landed in Spain in the 8th century, and very

* 'Leben des Cid' by J. Von Müller, prefixed to Herder's 'Ballads of the Cid,' 1805. Southey translated the 'Chronicle of the Cid' 1808. Lockhart included some of the Cid ballads in his 'Spanish Ballads' 1823. In 1879 appeared the excellent version of the 'Epic of the Cid' by Mr. John Ormsby, who has since also translated *Don Quixote* (4 vols. 1885).

† "The title of *Cid* is believed to have come to him from the remarkable circumstance, that five Moorish kings or chiefs acknowledged him in battle as their *Seid* or their lord and conqueror."—Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature* Vol. I. p. 14.

soon overran it, and even penetrated into France as far as Poitou, where they were met by Charles Martel, and driven back upon Spain. We may say that they made themselves masters of all Spain; the Christian people took refuge in the mountains, and issuing from thence gradually re-conquered their country,—but that contest lasted 800 years. Notwithstanding their hostility we must confess that they did great things for Spain. They invented the decimal system* ^{The instructors of Europe.} of notation, the greatest boon the world perhaps ever got in that department: also they gave us the azimuth, nadir, zenith; in all sciences they effected great results.† They were the first who translated the Greek books and, in short, were the instructors of Europe in many respects. But in particular we are to remark of them, that they serve especially to illustrate what was said of the Middle Ages, and the effect of belief at that time. That nation ever since the times of their probable founders, Hagar and Ishmael, had been a nation of great energy, but living alone in their deserts, and entirely obscure in that way of life; until Mahomed, ^{Mahomed.} the Prophet of Arabia, appeared. This was in the seventh century. I must say that I regard this man as no impostor‡ at all,—and I am glad to think so for the honour of our human nature—but as an enthusiastic man who had by the powers of his own mind gained a flash of the truth, living a quiet simple life till the age of forty, then striking out into a new path altogether, deeply impressed with the hideousness of Arab idolatry, and full of the great truth, that God was One; in

* "They introduced the notation by means of the digits 1, 2, etc., which we now employ. These numerals appear to be of Indian origin, as is acknowledged by the Arabs themselves."—Whewell, *History of the Inductive Sciences* (1837) Vol. I. p. 230. Cf. Sismondi, *Literature* Vol. I. p. 73.

† Whewell, on the contrary, wrote in the previous year (1837) of 'the sterility of the Arabian genius as to great scientific inventions.' Cf. Kingsley, *Alexandria and her Schools* p. 125.

‡ Cf. the famous defence of Mahomet in *Heroes* Lect. II.

other respects, a poor, infirm mortal, full of sensuality, corruption, and ignorance, as he showed by the reward he promised to the Arabs when he spoke out his system to them. He got them, but with much difficulty, to believe that ; then, within a century afterwards they had spread themselves, like gunpowder ignited by a spark, across the Indus on the one hand and on the other up as far as Poitou. They made besides great proficiency in the arts, poetry, science, and were greatly superior in all these respects to any European nation of the time.*

Cervantes.

In Cervantes we see almost the first record of Spanish literature. Viriatus, the Cid, and the like men, lived silent ; their works spoke for them ; and it is singular that a poor, obscure man should be the only voice which has reached us through so many ages of Spanish history, without which, too, we should never have so accurately known what was the tone of the Spanish soul. His life was not that of a scholar at all, but of a broken, active, hard man of action. He was of a decayed family of gentry of Alcala near Madrid. His birth took place† in 1547 ; being placed at school he soon distinguished himself, insomuch that he was able to obtain employment under the Cardinal Aquaviva, who was then going to Rome ; but the great league being about that time formed between Rome, Spain and Venice against the Turks,

Early life.

he resigned his post and became a soldier, as did many young men and noblemen then, volunteering to serve in the fleet under Colonna and Don John of Austria. The battle of Lepanto was the beginning of his hard experience : there his left arm was cut off by a Turkish scimitar. Returning

* *Vide* Sismondi Vol. I. pp. 48-105.

† At Alcalá de Henares in Castile. "After his fame had spread through the world, there ensued a general scramble throughout the towns and cities of Spain for the honour of having given him birth. Seven cities with the fierce heat which is the special property of religious or literary disputes, contended for this much envied honour." A. J. Duffield, translation of *Don Quixote* Vol. I. p. xiii *Vide* Mr. H. E. Watts' excellent *Life of Cervantes* just published in the "Great Writers" Series, p. 14.

home to Spain, though he had not quitted the army notwithstanding his wound, he was taken captive by a Barbary Corsair, carried to Algiers and there compelled to dig the ground in the service of the rude and cruel Corsair Captivity. his master. Seven years he spent in slavery* and the most grievous suffering, but his cheerful and noble heart kept him up. He spent the whole of this time in devising means to get out of the place. In Don Quixote† he has given us the story of a captive's adventures distinctly resembling his own. Besides this, in a book‡ upon Barbary written by a Spanish priest in the same century, the author, Father Haydo, gives an account of Cervantes' captivity and adventures, of his plans of escape; that he and others lived in a cavern for six months hoping to find means to get away; that he escaped death many times, and in particular on the occasion of his escape into the cavern, when he was detected; that he was then very nearly killed and would have been, had not the Dey of Algiers consented to let him ransom himself for five hundred crowns if he were able. His mother and sister and others then began to contribute towards this amount as it was too much for one of them to bear, and it is very touching to see how one would give fifty crowns, and another, perhaps, not so much, and so on. But the Society of Mercy was then active in ransoming Christian slaves, and among others they were induced to ransom Cervantes.§ He was then in his thirty-fourth year. He married

* *Vide* the beautiful passage on Liberty, *Don Quixote* Part II. c. 58 Duffield Vol. III. p. 541.

† Part I. cc 39-41.

‡ 'La Historia y Topografía de Argel' por D. Diego de Haedo, Valladolid, 1612 folio. This book was overlooked in all inquiries relating to Cervantes till Sarmiento stumbled upon it in 1752. *Vide* Mr. Watts' excellent life of Cervantes in his translation of *Don Quixote* Vol. I.

§ Watts, *Life* p. 42. Cervantes was grateful for this to the disinterested monks and priests who went at the risk of their lives to Algiers to redeem the Christians. Of Father Juan Gil who was instrumental in his own release he writes expressly in high terms in his 'Trato de Argel.'

Poverty.

shortly after, but he made at that time no progress in literature. He was taken up by some of his kindred about Seville who were merchants there, and in their employment he occupied himself with travelling up and down Spain, which by these means he came to know accurately, and could not have known so well in any other way. He finally came to Valladolid to settle, but it is not known why he did so. There is yet a curious document* in the archives of Valladolid which shows the humble condition and small estimation Cervantes was in at this time. A man, it appears from this record, was one night murdered in front of Cervantes' house; Cervantes ran out to give assistance upon hearing the cry; but, being found with the corpse, he was taken up by the police, and carried away from his family, before the magistrates. His house was so mean where he and his family lived on the fourth floor, and their appearance was so haggard and squalid, that he was suspected of being one of the worst characters in the place. Of course, he was cleared of this charge; but it is still a striking record of the state of misery to which he was then reduced. Yet he was always, in spite of all this, as cheerful as any man could be, and the best proof of this is that that very year, some say before that, he produced the first part of *Don Quixote*, being then in his fifty-fourth† year, already in old age. The last part appeared ten years after that, in the year before he died. It has been often‡ remarked that he died on the same day that Shakspeare died. Some grandees and others gave him in his latter years some slight help, the Duke of Lemos for example, for which he was abundantly grateful§ to them,

* *Vide* Watts, *Life* pp. 109—111.

† He was then in his fifty-eighth year. Watts, p. 86.

‡ It was first remarked by Rev. J. Bowle in 1781. "But this is a mistake, the calendar not having then been altered in England, and there being therefore a difference between that and the Spanish calendar of ten days." Ticknor, Vol. II. p. 99 n. Watts, *Life* p. 161. J. Ormsby, *Don Quixote* Vol. I. p. 47.

§ *Vide* dedication of the Second Part of *Don Quixote* to the Duke of Lemos. Duffield, Vol. II. p. 427.

but he was never lifted at any time above the state of poverty and dependence, and was always as he says himself, "the poorest of Spanish poets." Three or four days,* or perhaps two weeks, before his death, he writes to his patron, the Duke of Lemos, expressing warmly his gratitude for his favours to him, and taking leave of him, as he says, with his "foot in the stirrup." His had been a hard condition—full of privations and evils, necessity and difficulty. In none of his literary things, he seems to prosper, but *Don Quixote*, which, indeed, is a most admirable work; and it really seems as if fortune, in return for her many unkindnesses, had given him this high gift, the power of speaking out the spirit that was in him in a way that should rank him among the great voices of the world.

Don Quixote is the very reverse of the character of Dante; *Don Quixote*. but in one respect it is analogous to it;—like it, it is the free utterance from the heart of man and nature. At the outset, Cervantes seems to have contemplated not much more than a satire on chivalry, a burlesque. But as he proceeds the spirit soon grows on him. One may say that in his *Don Quixote* he portrays his own character, representing himself, with good-natured irony, mistaking the illusions of his own heart for realities. But he proceeds ever more and more harmoniously. The first time when he appears to have gone deeply into his subject is the scene with the Goatherds, where *Don Quixote* breaks out into an eulogy† on the golden age full of the finest poetry, although strangely introduced in the middle of the mockery which appears before that. Throughout the delineation of the *Don's* character, and the incidents of the story, there is the

* He died four days after writing this dedicatory epistle. *Vide Sismondi, Literature of the South of Europe* Vol. III. p. 325 tr. Roscoe.

†Pt. I. c. 11: "Happy age and happy times, those to which the ancients gave the name of 'golden.' Not because in them gold, so highly prized in this our age of iron, was to be acquired in that fortunate time without some pain, but rather that those who lived in it were innocent of those two words, *ills* and *mis*. In that holy age all things were in common; no man needed,

vesture of mockery, parody, with a seam of poetry shining through all; and above all we see the good-humoured cheerfulness of the author in the middle of his unfortunate destiny—never provoked with it, no atrabiliar quality ever obtained any mastery in his mind. It was written in satire of the romances of chivalry, it is the only record we have of them; and it is questionable whether any of those* romances would have lasted till now if not noticed there. We have no time at all to dwell upon its merits: there is one

in order to get his ordinary sustenance, to take other trouble than to raise the hand to pluck it from the sturdy oaks, which did freely invite him with their sweet and wholesome fruit. The clear springs and running brooks offered him, in magnificent abundance, their delicious and limpid waters. In the clefts of rocks, and the hollows of trees, did the careful and discreet bees build up their commonwealths, presenting without price to every hand the fruitful harvest of their sweetest toil. The robust cork trees did shed of themselves, without other art than that of their courtesy, their light and ample rinds, with which men did first cover their houses, supported upon rude poles, for no other end than as a defence against the inclemency of the sky. All was peace then, all amity, all concord. The painful share of the bended plough had not yet dared to open and search into the ruthless bowels of our first mother; for she, without being forced, offered, in every part of her fertile and spacious bosom, all that could satisfy, sustain, and delight the children who then possessed her. Then, verily, did the simple and lovely shepherdesses ramble from dale to dale, and from hill to hill, in flowing locks, and with no more apparel than what was necessary to cover modestly that which modesty requires, and hath always required, to be covered. Nor was their decking that which is now used, heightened by purple of Tyre, and of silk puckered in a thousand ways; but leaves of green burdock and ivy, intertwined, with which perhaps they went as proudly, and as well arrayed as do our court dames now, with their rare and outlandish inventions, which their wanton curiosity has discovered.

"Then were the love conceits of the soul decked simply and artlessly, in the same manner and fashion in which it conceived them, and sought no artful strain of words to enhance their value. Nor had fraud, deceit, or malice mingled with truth and sincerity. Justice pursued her own ends, without disturbance or harm from those of wealth and favour, which now so much debase, disturb, and persecute her. As yet arbitrary law had not its seat in the mind of a judge, for there were none to judge or be judged. Maidens and innocence went about, as I have said, whither they would, single and solitary, fearless of stranger licence or wanton intent procuring them damage, and their undoing came of their own will and pleasure."—Tr. Duffield, Vol. I. pp. 126-128.

* A list of these Books of Chivalry is given by Mr. Duffield, Vol. I. lxxi. Cf. Sismondi, Vol. III. pp. 332-337.

thing, however, we should remark—that all the world seems to have a taste for the worth of it, and it is the book the most universally read except the Bible.*

Independently of chivalry it is valuable too as a sort of sketch of the perpetual struggle in the human soul. We have the hard facts of this world's existence, and the ideal† scheme struggling with these in a high, enthusiastic manner, delineated there. And for this there is no wholesome vehicle anywhere, than Irony, the best way in which these ideas can live. If he had given us only a high flown panegyric of the age of gold, he would have found no ear for him. It is the self-mockery in which he envelops it, which reconciles us to the high bursts of enthusiasm, and which will keep the matter alive in the heart, as long as there are men to read it. It is the poetry of comedy. As a finish to all his noble qualities he possessed in an eminent degree the thing Wit and critics call humour, different from wit, mere laughter humour. which indeed seems to be much the same thing, at first, though in fact widely different; and it has been said with much plausibility that the best test is, whether the writer in laughing at the objects of his wit, contemplates to produce an effect of any kind by it, or whether he is merely covering them with sport without being contemplative of any such end.

* "*Don Quixote*, our joyfulest, and all but our deepest, modern book."—*Miscellanies* Vol. IV. p. 192. Cf. Watts, *Life* p. 171.

† This was the view which Bousterwek (*Spanish Literature* p. 334) took of the design of *Don Quixote*, and Sismondi has developed it. "The fundamental idea of *Don Quixote*" says the latter, "is the eternal contrast between the spirit of poetry and that of prose. Men of an elevated soul propose to themselves as the object of life to be the defenders of the oppressed, the champions of justice and innocence. Like *Don Quixote* they find on every side the image of the virtues they worship; they believe that disinterestedness, nobleness, courage, in short, knight-errantry, are still prevalent; and with no calculation of their own powers, they expose themselves for an ungrateful world, they offer themselves as a sacrifice to the laws and rules of an imaginary state of society." *Literature of the South of Europe* Vol. III. p. 328. For the refutation of this view, vide Hallam, *Literary History* Vol. III. pp. 331-34. Vide Watts, *Life* p. 166.

So that if any one wishes to know the difference between humour and wit, the laughter of the fool, which the wise man, by a similitude founded in deep earnestness, calls "the crackling of thorns under a pot,"* let him read Cervantes on the one hand, and on the other, Voltaire, the greatest laughter the world ever knew.†

Calderon. There remain two other characters which (taking leave with great regret of Cervantes) I must now notice. One of these is Lope de Vega, and the other, Calderon. Both contain a certain representation of the spirit of their age although they do not come into actual contact with it. Of Calderon I have not read much, in fact, only one play, and some choice specimens collected in German books; for he is in great favour with the Germans, as much as the old Dramas, Greek and others,—they are extremely fond‡ of Calderon. But I suspect that there is very much of "forced

* Ecclesiastes VII. 6.

† Cf. "Doing all justice to the inexhaustible readiness, the quick force, the polished acuteness of Voltaire's wit, we may remark, at the same time that it was no wise the highest species of employment for such a mind as his: that, indeed, it ranks essentially among the lowest species even of Ridicule. It is at all times mere logical pleasantry; a gaiety of the head, not of the heart; there is scarcely a twinkling of Humour in the whole of his numberless sallies. Wit of this sort cannot maintain a demure sedateness; a grave yet infinitely kind aspect, warming the inmost soul with true loving mirth; it has not even the force to laugh outright, but can only sniff and titter. It grounds itself, not on fond sportful sympathy, but on contempt, or at best, on indifference. It stands related to Humour as Prose does to Poetry; of which, in this department at least, Voltaire exhibits no symptom. True, he is not a buffoon; seldom or never violates the rules, we shall not say of propriety, yet of good breeding: to this negative praise he is entitled. But as for any high claim to positive praise, it cannot be made good. We look in vain, through his whole writings, for one lineament of a *Quixote* or *Shandy*; even of a *Hudibras* or *Battle of the Books*. Indeed it has been more than once observed that Humour is not a national gift with the French, in late times; that since Montaigne's day it seems to have well nigh vanished from among them."—*Miscellanies* Vol. II. p. 167. cf. p. 357, Vol. III. p. 46.

‡ Vide Schlegel, *Dramatic Literature* p. 495 and cf. Hallam, *Literary History* Vol. III. p. 290, Goethe said to Eckermann: 'His pieces are altogether fit for the stage; nothing is to be found in them which is not calculated to have the intended effect. Calderon is the genius who possessed at the same time the greatest intellect' (*Gesprache mit Goethe*, Leipzig, 1837 Vol. I. p. 151.) and cf. Ticknor, Vol. II. pp. 377, 399, 353, also Archbishop Trench, *Essay on Calderon* p. 53.

taste** in this : he did not strike me much, except for the wild, vague shape he gave to his characters. There is in general much of the mystic and vague in Calderón. No doubt that he was a man of great earnestness of mind, and deep genius ; and he was in his day more popular by far than Cervantes.† Also it is clear that his are the best‡ Spanish plays. Of Lope de Vega I can say almost nothing except that he too has obtained a historical name among us. A man of the strangest literary fortune. No man was ever so popular as he was in his day;§ courted by all, and even complimented in a letter from the Pope himself ; insomuch that his name became proverbial for good fortune or excellence, and it was the custom to call a fine day or fine woman, “a Lope day,” “a Lope woman.” He certainly was a man of a strange fertility,|| but of much shallowness too, and greatly inferior to Calderón. Not that he was without genius, which, if properly concentrated, must have become productive of large results ; but it was ill-directed. He wrote one of his plays, he tells us in twenty-four hours ; and I believe he wrote above a hundred in the same space of time ; so that he suffered his genius to be dissipated away in sound, and vague splendour, and he has passed altogether out of our remembrance. He

* This was not the expression but I suppose it was the meaning of a technical word, which I did not catch—Anstey's note.

† He was also extremely jealous of Cervantes as Mr. H. E. Watts tries to prove in his recent *Life*. Mr. Watts also attributes the authorship of the spurious second part of *Don Quixote* by the mysterious “Avellaneda,” to Lope. *Vide* c. xi.

‡ Sismondi judges Calderón harshly, *Literature of the South of Europe* Vol. IV. p. 115. ‘He oversteps the line in every department of art. Truth is unknown to him, and the ideal which he forms to himself offends us from its want of propriety.’ *Vide* Archbishop Trench, *Essay on Calderón* p. 1. seq.

§ *Vide* *Miscellanies* Vol. V. page 345. Cf. Sismondi, Vol. III. p. 481.

|| His fertility is astounding. “The most moderate and certain accounts on this point have almost a fabulous air about them ; so extravagant do they seem. After his death his executor put the number of his plays at 1800 and 400 *actos*. The prodigious facility implied by this is further confirmed by the fact stated by himself in one of his plays, that it was written and acted in five days, and by the anecdotes of Montalón, that he wrote five full-length dramas at Toledo in fifteen days, and one act of another in a few hours of the early morning without seeming to make any effort in either case.”—Ticknor, Vol. II. p. 175. Cf. Hallam, Vol. II. p. 265.

was certainly very successful in obtaining wages : yet he complains very much of them in a letter to his son, who had a great wish to learn literature, wherein he counsels him most earnestly not to think of such a thing, that the life of a literary man is full of bitterness, and of *poverty* ! This last was a singular* complaint to come from him, as he certainly realised an immense sum of money by the profits of his works, and the presents that were made him. Still he was a true poet, in his way.

No great Spanish writer after these.

In the history of Spanish literature there are only these three, Cervantes, Calderon and Lope ; and Cervantes is far above the two others. And it is a curious reflection to make that in so noble a nation, whose whole history is full of valiant actions and occurrences of every description—possessing so much cheerfulness, humanity and quaint generosity—no writer for so many hundred years should have been produced, who could speak the spirit of the nation ; † only Cervantes, an unknown, obscure individual, maimed, for he had lost an arm, and miserably poor. It is universally true that we cannot tell the meaning that is in men and things, till a long time after their day. The Spanish nation was the most distinguished nation in the whole world : America was conquered by very great men of that nation : Cortes—Alexander the Great was not greater than Cortes : Pizarro ; Balbo Nunez, ‡ the discoverer of the Pacific, of whom it is said that when he first beheld it, he rushed into it till the waves reached his middle, flourishing his sword, and took possession of the whole in the name of Spain, with true chivalrous feeling ; and again we see him patching up the

* “ He was thriftless and wasteful ; exceedingly charitable ; and in hospitality to his friends, prodigal. He was therefore almost always embarrassed. At the end of his “ Jerusalem ” he complains of the pressure of his domestic affairs. Yet considering the relative value of money, no poet, perhaps, ever received so large a compensation for his works.”—TICKNOR, Vol. II. p. 251.

† Cf. Bouterwek, *Spanish Literature* Bk. III. c. 1.

‡ Sic in MS. But of course Nunez Balboa is meant.

roof of his hut with leaves, dressed in an old canvas jacket ! They were the most enterprising that the world has seen yet. England and America, full as they are of the spirit of enterprise, do not carry it farther. And therefore I say that it is a strange and almost awful thing to consider, how completely that nation has now passed away, sunk down into an insignificant and altogether mean nation ! Many accounts have been attempted* to be given for this, but even now one does not at all see why it should have so happened : we can only say just this,—that its time was come ; but the law which bound it cannot be understood at all.

Spanish decadence unaccountable.

It is curious to see how Spain broke itself to pieces in that conflict of Catholicism,—chivalry, with the Reformation, commonly called the Dutch War. It is one of the most beautiful and heroic pieces of history to see a poor people, mere fishermen and shepherds, wishing to live quietly within their own dykes, and not to trouble the world at all, but who happening to be among the first to receive a new doctrine, a new truth, then preached in the world, could not get it maintained at all, but the Inquisition burned and branded them for it, and were at last obliged to revolt in consequence against the then king of Spain, Philip the Second, and resisted him successfully during a Thirty Years' War. The result was, what always will be in such a struggle, the triumph of the right cause, of truth and justice over a system of downright falsehood and abomination. The siege of Leyden is a memorable event † ; it was surrounded by Spaniards on all sides and reduced to the last straits by famine ; but it was not yielded ; the defenders declared that they were ready, if necessary, to eat their left arms and fight on with the right ! One day, the poor

Spain ruined by the Dutch War.

Siege of Leyden.

* *Vide* Bouterwek, *Spanish Literature* Bk. III. c. 1. Sismondi, Vol. IV. pp. 100, 247 Buckle, *History of Civilization* Vol. II. p. 592 *seq.*

† It was a double siege from 31st October 1573 to 21st March 1574 and from 25th May to 2nd October 1574. For a graphic account *vide* Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic* Pt. IV. c. 2.

people of the place met the Governor* in his rounds, and told him that they "must surrender, or they would die of hunger." But he told them "not to speak of such a thing, to eat him if they chose ; but not to surrender !" In the end they succeeded as we know in cutting the dykes at Flushing, and letting out the water into the Spanish camp, which they attacked in the confusion, and thus delivered the city. Their resolution was inveterate. They wore, many of them, crescents in their caps to show that they "would be Turks rather than Papists." This struggle lasted for thirty years, and first made the nation remarkable in the world : the whole of it does great credit to the German people to whom they belong.

This leads us naturally to the subject of our next lecture, the German people, and the Reformation.

* The Governor was the heroic burgomaster Van der Werf. This story is told by Motley, Vol. II. p. 557.

LECTURE VII.

THE GERMANS; WHAT THEY HAVE DONE—REFORMATION— LUTHER—ULRICH HUTTEN—ERASMUS.

[MONDAY, 21ST MAY 1838.]

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In our last lecture we had a glimpse at the Dutch war; the war between the Spanish and Dutch nations, and we observed the approach of a new life, the Reformation, and the Spanish power wrecking itself against the power it sought to molest but which instead almost annihilated it. We are naturally led to look a little farther back into the causes of this new order of things, and to notice a new people more interesting to us, their descendants, than any we have yet noticed, the Germans, namely.

The German people has been mentioned in authentic records for the last 2100 years. The earliest notice we have of the Teutonic race is given in Luden's\* History of Germany, in a passage out of Strabo. This work of Strabo's, a sort of journal † of a Marseilles merchant, in which he has noted down such observations as occurred to him in his commercial journeyings, mentions a people called Germans, as a "white complexioned, quiet people, living at the mouth of the Elbe." ‡ What the Germans were before that, or

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\* Luden *Die Geschichte des deutschen Volks*.

† This is incorrect of Strabo, *vide* Sir E. Bunbury, *History of Ancient Geography* Vol. II. pp. 209. seq. In *Friedrich* Vol. I. p. 67. Carlyle mentions Pytheas as a Marseilles commercial commissioner who first reported on Germany.

‡ Strabo describes Germany in Book VII. of his *Geography*. The sentence in the text is not there. "Next after the Keltic nations come the Germans who inhabit the country to the east beyond the Rhine; and these differ but little from the Keltic race, except in their being more fierce, of a larger stature, and more ruddy in countenance." VII. 1. § 2. tr. Hamilton and Falconer.



what they had been doing from immemorial time, can never now be known. But it is clear that they were a race of men designed for great things; perhaps even the height of their destiny is not as yet attained. They became gradually known, as they came into contact with the Romans; as the contact more and more increased, collision more and more increased, till at last the Empire itself was absorbed by them, and the dark anticipation\* of Tacitus realised, that one day Rome would be destroyed by those barbarians. In Tacitus' history, the old, scanty records of German life are very interesting.† Their character was certainly uncivilized, but not at all savage; it had a deep earnestness in it; and was that of a meditative people. The Scandinavian mythology is still a curious document illustrative of many features of the German character. The account given of their form of worship by Tacitus, evinces a very superior species of Paganism, indicative of a deep nature; they worshipped the earth—Thorth or Teuth—from whom they themselves claimed to be descended. The thought of the people was forming its deep words long before they came out into speech. Their whole mythology—that dark vast solitude, the Home of Darkness,—the Home of Light, the Great Hall of Odin, and other such belong to a people having deep things lying in it. The story of the Berserkir, which has attracted the attention of antiquaries during the last fifty years, is the personification, of what lay deep in the German mind—the wild mind of Germany. The Berserkir was one who despised danger and fear, rushed forth fiercely to battle, and, though without armour, trod down hosts of foes like shells under his feet.

Mythology.

Story of the  
Berserkir.

\* *Vide* p. 50. *supra*.

† "Tacitus gives us little positive information of a geographical kind, but his ethnographical account of the German tribes is unquestionably one of the most valuable records of the kind that has been transmitted to us from antiquity; and if his statements cannot in all cases be accepted as trustworthy they must still form the basis of all discussion upon the subject."—*Bunbury, Vol. II. p. 495.*

Hence his name, Berserkir, "Bare Shirt." This character is analogous to much that we find in the Germans ; not certainly a true sample of their feeling is that constant state of explosive fury which marks Berserkir, but yet it illustrates their fundamental character, the strange fierceness, called afterwards by Italians the "Furor Tedesco"—the most dreadful of any—yet rage of that sort defying all danger and obstacle, if kept down sufficiently is as a central fire, which will make all things to grow on the surface above it. Fighting is the only way it displays itself in the Berserkir, but in the Germans at large it appears in many other ways : well, that never it come out in that, "Berserkir Wuth," "Berserkir Wrath," as it is called.\* On the whole it is the best character that can belong to any nation, producing strength of all sorts, and all the concomitants of strength, perseverance, steadiness not easily excited, but when it is called up, it will have its object accomplished. We find it in all their history. Justice, that is another of its concomitants. Strength one may say is justice itself ; the strong man is he that can be Justice. just, that sets every thing in its own rightful place, one above the other. It is the only way to do any thing great and strong. And it is always the boast, and a legitimate one, of this people that they are a just people, framing all their institutions for ends of justice. Trial by jury is essentially German.† Tacitus mentions the existence of an

Trial by jury.

\* "Icelandic *berserkr*, acc. *berserh*, pl-*ir*, of disputed etymology ; Vigfusson and Fritzer show that it was probably—'bear-sark,' 'bear-coat.' A wild Norse warrior of great strength and ferocious courage, who fought on the battle-field with a frenzied fury known as the 'berserker rage.'"—Dr. Murray's *Oxford New English Dictionary*, *sub. voc.* Carlyle refers to this very story often in his *Works*.

† The national origin of the trial by jury is a much disputed point. The various theories that have been advanced as to it are collected by Bishop Stubbs. "Many writers of authority have maintained that the entire jury system is indigenous in England, some deriving it from Celtic tradition based on the principles of the Roman law and adopted by the Anglo-Saxons and Normans from the people they had conquered. Others have

institution precisely analogous to it ; and to this day in one part of Switzerland, there is an old usage of very remote tradition called the "street-court," itself quite a rude jury, by which tradition, if two men meet upon the high road, men travelling on business, say carriers, drovers, and one of them does some injury to the other and they cannot agree about it, they are bound to wait there till seven other persons shall have come up, and these shall judge of the dispute, hence the name "street-court," "road-court," "strasse gericht," and they are to decide it irrevocably. I say that there are all the rudiments of our trial by jury existing there too, in that canton of Switzerland. These few details sufficiently indicate to us what the German character is, and I shall leave you to expand what I have said, in your own minds, over other traits quite as characteristic.

In the  
Middle Ages.

Before the Reformation even, the Germans had already appeared more than once in modern history. First, when Europe itself was completely destroyed by them, when after more than two centuries of confused fighting, they at last made peace among themselves, and joined against Rome, till Europe was altogether abolished and made anew. This first period, however, presents little but a confused delineation of all the influences at that time

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regarded it as a product of that legal genius of the Anglo-Saxons, of which Alfred is the mythic impersonation ; or as derived by that nation from the customs of primitive Germany or from their intercourse with the Danes. One scholar maintains that it was brought by the Norsemen from Scandinavia ; another that it was derived from the processes of the canon law ; another that it was developed on Gallic soil from Roman principles ; another that it came from Asia through the Crusades, a theory which has little more to recommend it than the still wilder supposition that it was of Slavonic origin and borrowed by the Angles and Saxons from their neighbours in Northern Europe. But all these theories on examination show that their inventors have either been misled by superficial coincidences or argue on hypothesis only." *Constitutional History* Vol. I. p. 612. Cf. *Freeman, Norman Conquest* Vol. V. p. 451.

at work in Europe, till the time of Charlemagne. He also was a German, and got all Germany united under him. The modern system of division into kingdoms and principalities came from him. Their next appearance in the world's history was at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century, in Switzerland, for the Swiss are in fact Germans,—this was the age of Dante. They were the first in modern Europe who attempted to establish a regular Government of liberty or freedom. The history of Wilhelm Tell, a beautiful mythus, is grounded on indisputable facts. Most probably the story of the apple is not true ;—indeed it is altogether improbable, as it has been told of others besides Tell ; nor that of Gessler's hat either, according to Joannes Von Müller. But, which is certain, after enduring with extreme patience their wrongs for some space of time, they did contrive to hurl out the Austrian domination, and to establish in its place a regular Government ; this is a thing which reflects great credit on the whole nation of Germans and leads men to admire them more and more, as they reflect upon it. One does not know any instance where the people, during a contest so long and obstinate, have comported themselves so well throughout, enduring their grievances at first, and even sluggishly patient under them, but finally, while these remained as unredressed as ever, rising into a lion-rage with all the spirit of Berserkir against their tyrants. Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, was the last example of their brave resolution. He wanted a kingdom, and for this sole reason contrived to quarrel with them, as he imagined it was quite easy with his knights and men-at-arms to overcome these peasants who fought on foot. He therefore made a quarrel with them, but was altogether defeated in three great battles—Granson, Morat, and Nanci, at which last place he entirely wrecked himself against the Swiss. In the first battle, we are told, they

Charlemagne.

War with  
Burgundy.

knelt down, when they saw Charles' immense army coming as it were to swallow them up, and prayed "that God would that day assist them to fight against their enemies." Comines says that Charles seeing this cried "See they yield!"; but others, who knew them better observed that "they did not much like that species of yielding altogether;" and accordingly they soon found out that there was not much in it to like at all. The Swiss rose like a whirlwind on their enemies, overwhelmed them, and maintained their rights.

Necessity of  
change in  
doctrine.

But the third remarkable appearance of the Germans was at the Reformation, and greater than all; this was in the sixteenth century. I have repeatedly alluded to the necessity of change in matters of doctrine, the impossibility of any creed being perpetual, any theory which man's small mind may form of this great universe being complete, though he should study till all eternity the immensity of which he is a fraction. Any opinion he may form will only satisfy him for a time; it expands itself daily; for progression is the law of every man;—if he be a fool even, still he must have some powers of progress; it is inevitable. And his creed will consequently go on expanding by degrees, till it gets to its extreme limits; or, if not, till he discovers some ideas which are inconsistent with it and produce uneasiness in the mind, to go on increasing, generation after generation, till it comes at last to spoken protest.

Another cause of the ruin of a creed consists in the fact, that when the mind begins to be dubious about it, it will rush with double rapidity towards destruction, for all serious men hate dubiety, view it indeed, but if not satisfied with it, have done with it for ever. They may decline meddling with it for a long time, but what they do know of it is that they will have nothing to do with it: *they* do not want to be popes or priests under any such a system. But there is always a number of inferior men who aim at the rewards

which the Church has to bestow, and, therefore, they willingly adhere to it; and this very circumstance of any such men attaching themselves to any given system is, of itself, a certain and infallible cause of ruin to it. This last circumstance was precisely the case with the Roman Catholic Church at this time: there was no Pope Hildebrand there, ready to sacrifice life itself, to the end that he might make the Church the highest thing in the world. Any one that was inclined to see things in their proper light then, would have decided that it was better to have nothing to do with it; but crouch down in an obscure corner somewhere, and read his Bible, and get what good he can for himself in that way; but have nothing to do with the Machiavelian policy of such a Church. The Popes of that age were such men as Julius II., Borgia, and Leo X., who did indeed maintain the Church, but as to faith in it, they first believed nothing at all, or believed only that they got so many thousand crowns a year by it. The whole world was one chimeral— one miserable Sham. That change, however, had been working more and more since Dante's time. Dante himself has abundant complaints to make about Popes, putting several\* of them into hell and frightful punishments there; and even earlier than Dante in all literary men we see a more and more growing censoriousness of priests and popes; till in the sixteenth century it had become the fixed idea of all intelligent men, followers of manful and honourable views—that priests and monks were an indolent, useless race, who only set themselves against what conduced to human improvement in all departments.

In these circumstances Martin Luther was born in 1483.† Luther.  
His parents were of the poorest people: his father was a poor

\* In *Inferno* XIX. he puts the simoniacal Popes in hell; at the close of the canto he denounces the abuses of the Church. For Dante's relation to the Papacy, for which however he had great respect, *vide* Hettinger, *Dante* p. 399 *seq.*

† With what is said here about Luther *cf.* *Heroes* lect. III.

miner of Mohra near Eisleben in Upper Saxony, where Luther was born on the 10th November 1483. He was a man of the largest intellect and learning born into that century—put down by nature, as it seemed, for the lowest sphere of life, to beat out a little lead ore in his capacity of miner ;—but it was not so appointed. His father, who seems to have been a remarkable man, contrived to send him to a school, where he struggled on in his studies for a long time : it appears that he went with others of the boys, as was their custom, through the various villages, in the interval of study, singing ballads, and getting in this way a few coppers thrown to him : till, at last, a widow cotter—widow of a rich burgher—hearing of his ability, assisted him forward, and got him placed at the university, where he soon distinguished himself. His father wished him to be a lawyer, and he was at first studying for that ; but afterwards, upon seeing a companion\* struck suddenly dead by his father's side, Luther, naturally a serious, melancholy-minded man, was so struck to the heart, at seeing, before his eyes, a dear friend at once hurried away into eternity and infinitude, that the law and the promotions it offered him sunk into a poor, miserable dream in comparison to the great reality before him, and he became a monk, that he might occupy himself wholly with prayer and religion. He became, as he tells us, “a strict and painful monk †,” and this life continued for many years, nearly ten years. He was very miserable in that life, imagining himself doomed to everlasting perdition and he could not see how prayer, saying of masses could save him or get him to heaven. At last one of his brother monks—a pious, good

Early life.

Becomes a monk.

\* ‘His friend Alexis and he had been to see the old Luther people at Mansfeldt ; were got back again near Erfurt when a thunderstorm came on ; the bolt struck Alexis ; he fell dead at Luther's feet.’—*Hervey*.

† ‘Ich bin ein fromm<sup>e</sup>r Mönch gewesen.’

man—told him what was quite new at that time, that the real secret of the thing lay in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. This was the first insight he ever got into it;—that it was not prayer-masses at all that would save him, but falling down in spirit as Scripture says, at the foot of the Cross! At this time, too, he found a Bible, an old Vulgate Bible, in the Convent library, which he read; and in this way he got peace of mind at last; but it seems to have introduced no project of reform at the time. He continued to grow in esteem with everybody. The Elector of Saxony brought him to the university he had just founded\*, hearing of his great talents and learning, and made him one of the professors there. His Convent afterwards sent him to Rome, for he still remained an Augustinian monk, to manage some affairs of the Convent; this was in the time of Pope Julius II.; he was deeply shocked at all he saw there, but was not in the least aware then of the work he was in a few years to do. It is a true saying of Schiller's: "Genius is ever a secret to itself, the strong man is he that is unconscious of his own strength." But, at last, Tetzl, the celebrated Dominican came into Saxony to sell indulgences; he was sent by Pope Leo X., who wanted money for some purpose, some say, to buy jewels for a niece†; and he sold them there beside Luther. Luther soon found it out in the confessional, as he heard frequently from those who came to confess, "that they had no need of repentance for this or that sin, since they had bought indulgences for them." This set Luther to

First visit to Rome.

Indulgences.

\* At Wittenberg.

† Vide *Friedrich* Vol. I. p. 223. It was for the erection of the new St. Peter's at Rome. For an impartial and trustworthy account of this as well as all other matters connected with the Reformation in Germany given here, vide the recent monumental work of Dr. Janssen, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes beim Ausgang des Mittelalters 1381-1688*, in 10 vols. especially Vols. I & II: *Die Allgemeinen Zustände*. This work which has revolutionised current ideas of the history of the Reformation very well needs and deserves to be translated.



preach a sermon against the sale of indulgences at all, in which he asserted that the Church has only power to remit the penalties itself imposes on sin, but not to pardon sin, and that no man has any authority to do that. Tetzel responded to this : and at last Luther saw himself obliged to look deeper into the matter, and to publish his 95 propositions, as to indulgences, denying the foundation of the whole matter altogether, and challenging Tetzel to prove it to him either in reason or Scripture. This occasioned a great ferment in Germany, already in an unsettled state of opinion, and produced several missives from the Pope ; Cardinal Cajetan tried to persuade him to retract, but not succeeding, at last brought him before the Diet of Worms. Luther, on the other hand

Excommuni- was going farther and farther off, as his enemies irritated him, cation. seeking to discover what truth there might be in any of the Church's doctrines, till, finally, being excommunicated by the Pope, he publicly burned the excommunication in the presence of his friends ; and excited thereby a deep murmur of astonished expectancy, among the beholders, but nothing more then, though they could not help feeling that the truth must be with him. A few did stand by him, however ; and finally in the year 1521,—the year after that,—he surrendered himself to the Diet of Worms, where the Emperor had resolved to have him tried ; although he remembered how Huss had been betrayed before, and his safe-conducts violated : it was in the eyes of all a daring, great, fearful enterprise ; but not fearful to Luther, whose life was not to sink into a downy sleep, while he heard the great call of a far other life upon him : so he determined to go,—this was on the 17th April 1521. Charles V. the Emperor and the six Electors were sitting there, and there was he a poor man, son of a poor miner, with nothing but God's truth for his support. His friends met him at the gate and told him not to enter the city, as the danger was great, but he told them deliberately

Diet of Worms.

that "upon the whole he would go in, though there were as many devils in Worms as house tiles!" He accordingly appeared\* and went through an examination on matters of religion, which was winded up by the question, "Would he recant his opinions?" The answer was to be given "to-morrow." He meditated it all the night; next morning, as he passed through the streets, the people were all on [their house-tops calling to him not to deny the truth and saying "whoso denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father."† And there were other voices of that sort which spoke to his heart, but he passed on without a word. In the Council he spoke in reply for two hours and was admired by everybody for his modest sincerity, "As to the retractation he first wished to have explained to him what was wrong in the opinions." They told him that "they had nothing to do with scholastic theology; the question was—would he recant?" To this he answered that "his book was divided into two portions, part of it was his own—part was Scripture. In the former it was possible that there was much error, which, if proved, he was not only willing but eager to retract; but as to the other part, he could not retract it." "It was neither safe nor prudent to do anything against conscience." "Let me," he said, "be convicted of error from the Bible, or let the thing stand as written. Here I take my stand: it is neither safe nor prudent to do anything against conscience. God be my help! Amen!" This speech will be for ever memorable: it was as brave a speech as was ever uttered by man. It was the beginning of things not fully developed even yet, but kindled then just into a flame which shall never be

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\* The Diet of Worms, Luther's appearance there may be considered as the greatest scene in Modern European History; the point indeed from which the whole subsequent history of civilization takes its rise. It is the greatest moment in the Modern History of Men.—*Heroes*.

† Matthew X. 23.

extinguished ; it was the assertion of the right of consulting one's own conscience,—which every new founder of a civilisation must now take along with him,—which has entered largely into all the activity men have had since.

From this council he retired to the convent of Wartburg, under protection of the Elector of Saxony, where he translated the Bible ; and he had twenty-five years of life after this council, a life of wild struggle, busy and harassed. There is no finer proof of his greatness than the way he conducted himself while enjoying the confidence of princes : never was his head affected by it, and no judgment ever proceeded from him that was not that of a worthy and brave man. He kept peace between the parties during his life ; and soon after his death, the war broke out and the Smalcaldic League was formed.\*

Translation  
of the Bible.

At Wartburg, once famous for the Minnesingers, he first translated the Bible into the vulgar tongue since Ulphilas' translation into Gothic made in the 4th century ; † it remains to this day a most admirable translation.

Luther's character, on the whole, is one of the most characteristic in Germany of whatever is best in German

\* This armed League was formed in 1530, sixteen years before his death. But the Emperor whose hands were full elsewhere, did not begin active hostilities with the Lutheran princes till after the peace of Crespy in 1544, only a short time before Luther's death. *Vide* J. Sime, *History of Germany in Ency. Brit.* Vol. X. p. 499.

† This is not correct. The notion that Luther's translation was the first in any vernacular of Europe since the 4th century and that the Bible was inaccessible to the people in the Middle Ages, is now quite exploded. "Up to 1518 there were at least 14 complete translations of the Bible in High German in circulation amongst the people, and 5 in Low German. The Church in no way impeded their circulation as long as party spirit and revolutionists did not misuse it in their interest." *Janssen op. cit.* Vol. I. p. 607. 'A complete and literal translation of the Vulgate existed in Germany perhaps as early as the beginning of the 14th century. The earliest remains of Romance versions are thought to be as old as the 11th century'.—Prof. Robertson Smith in *Ency. Brit.* Vol. III. p. 647. For the discussion of the whole subject, *vide* a learned article in the *Bombay Catholic Examiner*, April 1891.

minds. He is the image of a large, substantial, deep man, <sup>Luther's</sup> that stands upon truth, justice, fairness,—that fears nothing, <sup>character.</sup> considers the right, and calculates on nothing else;—and again does not do it spasmodically, but quietly, calmly,—no need of any noise about it,—adheres to it deliberately, calmly, through good and bad report. Accordingly we find him a good-humoured, jovial, witty man, greatly beloved by everybody, and though “his words were half-battles,” as Jean Paul says,—stronger than artillery, yet among friends he was one of the kindest of men. The wild kind of force that was in him appears in the physiognomy of his portrait by Luke Kranach, his painter and friend,—the rough countenance with all sorts of noble things shining out through it.\* That was precisely Luther as he appears throughout his whole history.

Another great German personage, very different from Erasmus. Luther, but who also deserves to be noticed, is Erasmus,† a Dutchman—for as we observed the Dutch are in fact the same as the Germans, and Erasmus at any rate wrote German and spoke it too. His business with respect to the Reformation was trifling compared to that of Luther. He was sixteen years older than Luther, and born at Rotterdam: he too, like every clear-headed man, was disgusted with that dark ignorance of the monks and satirised them, and at first admitted the necessity of some kind of reformation; but that he should risk his ease and comfort for it, did not enter into his calculations at all.‡ And though he supported Luther

\* ‘A rude plebian face with its huge crag-like brow and bones, the emblem of rugged energy, at first, almost a repulsive face, yet, in the eyes especially there is a wild silent sorrow; an unnameable melancholy, the element of all gentle and fine affections, giving to the rest the true stamp of nobleness.’—*Hores.* Vide Fronde, *Life of Carlyle in London* Vol. II. p. 109.

† For the best and latest account of Erasmus *vide* Janssen *op. cit.* Vol. II. c. 1.

‡ For this accusation of indifference brought against him, *vide* Mark Pattison in *Essay. Brit.*

Early life.

at first, he afterwards quarrelled with him and opposed all his views. He was a great scholar. There was something interesting about his mother's history. His real name had been Diedrich,\* but he took that of Erasmus, "Love-child;"—his mother's was a most tragical life: she had been separated from his father by her friends, and he, believing the rumour of her death, made himself a priest, on hearing of which she sank into an untimely grave. His mother took him to school: poor forlorn woman, she did not know then that he was to become a light of the world! Rudolf Agricola came to the school, and first observing his abilities, took him by the hand, and said: "Study, my little boy, thou shalt be the talk of all men before long." He subsequently came under the notice of the Archbishop of Paris, who brought him over to England; afterwards he came frequently to England; he knew More the Chancellor intimately. He led from this time a wandering kind of life. Mountjoy, our English Ambassador at Paris, was the first to obtain him a pension. He published many books: among others an edition of the Greek testament; but the work he was then best known by was "The Praise of Folly,"† written here in More's house; but it disappoints one who would read it now.

His works.

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\* This word is rightly queried in the MS. His real name was Gerard, but as Gerard in the Dutch language means 'the Beloved,' he followed the fashion of his times and adopted its Greek equivalent "Erasmus" to which the Latin word "Desiderius," of similar import was prefixed.—Drummond, *Life of Erasmus* Vol. I. p. 4.

† 'Encomium Moria' or 'Praise of Folly' was composed during his journey from Italy and written out from his notes in seven days during his stay in More's house in London. It was not destined for publication, but a copy found its way through More or his friends into the hands of the printers at Paris and came out in 1512. Within a few months seven editions were called for and the reprint of 1515, consisting of 1500 copies was sold in a few weeks. It contains the satirical reflections on men and things, which had grown up within him during his recent travels. "It was satire upon follies of all kinds. The bookworm was smiled at for his lantern-jaws and sickly look; the sportsman for his love of butchery; the superstitious were sneered at for attributing strange virtues to images and shrines, for

Also he wrote his "Colloquies,"\* a very ingenious book and of a great delicacy ; indeed, I should say to make my friends understand the character of Erasmus, that he is more like Addison than any writer I could mention who is familiarly known in this country. I have said what his course was towards the Reformation, that at first he approved of Luther, and then disapproved of him.† He was a man certainly of great merit, nor have I much to say against him, yet when I hear historians contrasting him favourably with Luther, and actually upbraiding Luther with him, I must dissent altogether from that, and say that Erasmus is not to be named by the side of Luther : a mere writer of poems, a *litterateur*. There are many things in Erasmus to object to. Franz Horn‡ is very angry too about this setting up of Erasmus, concerning which I for one can desire nothing more than not to get angry too and spasmodic, as Luther himself did in fact succeed in doing. Franz says, "Erasmus belonged to a class of people who are very

Resembles  
Addison.

Luther much  
greater than  
Erasmus.

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worshipping another Hercules under the name of St. George, for going on pilgrimage when their proper duty was at home. The wickedness of fictitious pardons and the sale of indulgences, the folly of prayers to the Virgin in shipwreck or distress, received each a passing censure." Monks, kings and princes, not even the Pope himself was spared from merciless ridicule.—Seebohm, *Oxford Reformers* pp. 125-137. The *Praise* has been recently translated, with the famous illustrations of Holbein, at Glasgow, 1887.

\* This was published in 1526 and was one of his slightest works. Erasmus himself complained of the caprice of fortune, which had made a 'book full of foolish things, bad Latin and solecisms,' his most popular work. It has a great value as describing the manners and opinions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and was much read for its excellent conversational Latin, *vide* Mark Pattison in *Ency. Brit.* The 'Colloquies' have been translated into English by the lexicographer Bailey in 1733.

† He was disgusted by his violence and wild defiance, *vide* Seebohm, *Oxford Reformers* pp. 401—4.

‡ The historian of 'German Poetry and Oratory.' In his *Miscellanies* Vol. I. p. 34 Carlyle quotes the sentence of Horn given here as 'among the best we recollect of him.'

desirous to stand well with God, yet at the same time are very loth to stand ill with the devil,—who will build a church to God, and a chapel by the side of it for the devil”—a sort of position that is really not good in the world !

Ulrich von  
Hutten.

There is a third striking German character whom we must notice,—Ulrich Hutten.\* He was a nobleman by birth,—destined at first by his father, a rather foolish, obstinate man, to be a monk, which not wishing to be, he was then marked out for a lawyer ; but not that either would he be : till at last he got sent by some cousins, who understood him better than his father did, to a school or university of some kind, where he occupied himself with literary pursuits. He wrote many books, both in Latin and German, principally in Latin, and became distinguished and known in his own country : but his life was never easy to him,—he was a struggler all his days, wandering about to Frankfort and other places, and even to Rome. He was much too headlong a man ; he so hated injustice that he did not know how to deal with it, and he became heart-broken by it at last. He had begun before Luther to satirise monkery in his *Epistolæ Obscurorum*,† not entirely written by him ; indeed,

*Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum.*

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\* For Hutten *vide* Janssen *op. cit.* Vol. II. c. 3 pp. 90 seq.

† ‘*Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*,’ the great national satire of Germany, which, as Herder says, “has effected for Germany incomparably more than *Hudibras* for England, or *Gargantua* for France, or the *Knight of La Mancha* for Spain,” first appeared in 1515. “No question in the history of letters has been more variously answered than that touching the conception and authorship of these celebrated epistles, which has been attributed to an individual, to a few, and to many.” Sir W. Hamilton, who himself comes to the conclusion that its authors were three, *viz.*, Hutten, Crotus and Buschius. *Discussions* pp. 203—238. Hutten’s part in the work is hard to make out ; but Straus in his work on him concludes ‘that he had no share in the first part, but that his hand is clearly visible in the second part, which he attributes in the main to him. To him is due the more serious and severe tone of that bitter portion of the satire’.—Dean Kitchin. For the contents and importance of this work, *vide* Janssen *Geschichte etc.*, Vol. II. pp. 56-59.

three or four of the best heads joined with him in it : it is very amusing and full of all kinds of platitudes ; a collection of letters supposed to be written by monks,—one monk writing to another what he intends to do, and laying bare all the details of that miserable, imbecile life. Erasmus, it is related, burst out laughing on reading it, and by this means burst a suppuration in the throat which had formed and endangered his life, a thing therefore of immense consequence to him. He had many struggles to meet. His cousin was basely hanged by the Duke of Wurtemberg, assassinated in a wood in this way for some dark purpose. Hutten indignantly pleaded everywhere against the Duke for this, and even went to war with him, in alliance with the Free Towns then in arms against him. He found it difficult to get any man in office to patronise him. He says of himself that he “hated tumult,” of all kinds. And it was thus a painful and sad position for him, that wish to obey order, while a still higher order commanded him to disobey,—when the standing by that order would be in fact the standing by disorder. Ulrich was miserably disordered all his life, and wholly without guidance. He, a proud nobleman, looked down at first on Luther, a poor monk ; but immediately after the Diet of Worms, he recognised that Luther was a great man, and soon maintained a correspondence with him. He once wrote to Luther,—“Thy work is of God, and will continue ; mine,” (*his* was to free Germany from monkery and oppression) “mine is of man, and will not continue.” He was much courted and flattered by the Emperor of Germany and other Catholic princes, and by Francis even, the King of the French, but he positively refused to quit Luther’s party. A price was set on his head—not exactly that either—but the magistrates of his city had certainly orders to have him sent, bound hand and foot, to Rome, and murderous assassins were hired to murder him ; from all



Franz von  
Sickingen.

which he was obliged to escape by flight. In that journey he met Hoghstraten\*, the head monk whom he had satirised in his "Epistolæ Obscurorum," and who had ever since raised the princes against him: full of rage he dashed down on him, drawing his sword, but when the imbecile being—who had done him all this mischief—uttered a prayer, changing his purpose, he hurled him away and passed on. In this journey too he met with Franz von Sickingen, an extraordinarily interesting character, and introduced by Goethe into his *Berlichingen*; he gave him shelter in his castle, and here the two first read Luther's books and confessed that the thing which he meant all good men should mean. He published books too in this place. The death of Sickingen contains a very noble thing. He had a feud with the Archbishop of Treves, and he defended himself against him in his castle on the Rhine, Landshut, where the Archbishop besieged him. But he could not be overcome at all, till one day, while looking at the state of the defences, he was struck by a musket-ball, and died in twenty-four hours after. The castle at once surrendered, as in him the soul of the defence was taken away. And here comes the noble thing I alluded to: at the point of death, †—while he was already pale with death, the Archbishop came in to see him, the Archbishop who had caused his destruction, and Sickingen at once raised his cap, unmindful of the feud, for his reverence for what was above him was far deeper than that; and this seems to me the noblest, political thing that is recorded of any such a moment as that. Sickingen being killed, Hutten had no resource but again to

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\* He was Prior of the Dominicans and Chief Inquisitor at Cologne.

† On the contrary he seems to have been haughty and intractable to the very end. When visiting him on his death-bed the Archbishop said to him 'wherefore, Franz, have you attacked me and my people?' He replied, 'I have an account to render to a more powerful Lord than you.'—Chaufour-Kestner, *Études* tr. A. Young, p. 143.

wander forth. And then occurred the worst thing \* I have read of Erasmus, who, once, when poor and dependent, flattered Hutten, and obtained his patronage ; but was now living at Basle a rich man, and admitted now to the councils of the Emperor. To him Hutten came for relief, but he would have nothing to do with him. Hutten then wrote to his friends, complaining of this miserable treatment of Erasmus, and Erasmus then gave a false account of it in a work † he published, whereupon Hutten wrote‡ at last to Erasmus, most indignantly exposing the true affair as a miserably shabby thing to have been perpetrated against a poor man, without hope, without money, without friends. Erasmus then took a violent antipathy to Hutten, and wrote § satires upon him ; but it was a poor thing that, and he could not clear himself. Hutten then wandered on, but the hand of death was on him. He came to Zürich, but Erasmus wrote beforehand to the magistrates, warning them against him as a hot-headed person, and they forced him to quit the place ; he left it, and came to a small island¶ in the lake of Zürich ; and died there shortly afterwards. He had maintained a sister up to his death, and at his death there was found in his pocket only one thaler. He died in his thirty-fifth year one of the bravest men Germany ever had, but of a spirit that could not get to

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\* For this quarrel, which was fomented by a common friend, Henry of Eppendorf, and in which Erasmus did not act so basely as here represented, *vide* Drummond, *Life of Erasmus* Vol. II. pp. 118-131.

† Letter to Marcus Laurinus, Feb. 1523.

‡ "Ulrich von Hutten's expostulation with Erasmus of Rotterdam, Priest and Divine," Strasburg, July 1523.

§ "Sponge to wipe away Hutten's Aspersions," September 1523, written before though published accidentally after Hutten's death.

exhibit itself in literature at all,—the rough draft of something excellent, but which could not get out into its full delineation !

This must suffice for what can be said of the Reformation in Germany. In my next lecture I shall resume the subject with reference to a country still more interesting to us, namely, our own country.

## LECTURE VIII.

THE ENGLISH; THEIR ORIGIN, THEIR WORK AND DESTINY—  
ELIZABETHAN ERA—SHAKSPEARE—JOHN KNOX—  
MILTON—BEGINNING OF SCEPTICISM.

[FRIDAY, 25TH MAY 1838.]

IN our last lecture we introduced ourselves to the German Saxons.  
people, the great Teutonic race, and to the great work  
which was entrusted to them to do, by the economy of Pro-  
vidence in this world of ours. We have now to occupy our-  
selves with one particular tribe of the Teutonic race, and  
whether or not the most important, although from the great  
things they have had to do, we might call it the most impor-  
tant of all the other tribes—it is indisputably interesting to  
us above others; for it is our own nation, the Saxons or  
English. This nation, too, first came into decisive notice  
about the time of the Reformation, and as a nation much  
connected with that great event. We shall cast a glance  
over the period which preceded its arriving at the condition of  
an articulately speaking nation, when it began partly to  
understand its own meaning, partly to announce it.

The Saxons are not noticed in the earliest periods by the  
Romans: they are not even mentioned in Tacitus. In  
Ptolemy\* there is but one single line about them. He speaks  
of “the Saxons, a people inhabiting the northern part of the  
“Cimbric Chersonesus,”—the modern Denmark. But they

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\* “The name of the Saxons which was destined to play so important a  
part in later times, appears for the first time in Ptolemy (II. 11 § 11) who  
represents them as occupying the Southern part of the Cimbric Chersonesus

had come into extraordinary notice from their formidable character in the 4th century, and were, along with the Lombards, the chief fighters of the German tribes. As to their piracies, they were addicted early to the sea. The adventurous of the tribe occupied themselves very much with sailing and piracy of all kinds. Their feats in sailing and fighting excited the greatest terror among the Romans. Sidonius Apollinaris\* and Ammianus Marcellinus,† both commemorate the ungovernable temper and wild spirit of the people. Their craft was of a rude description made of wicker and covered with leather. Gibbon describes their habit of ascending the Rhine in these wicker boats, then carrying them on their shoulders across the country to the Rhone, and launching them there make their appearance in a short time at the Straits of Gibraltar. Ammianus Marcellinus speaks much of their fondness for the sea.‡ It is curious to see in this manner the ancestors of our Blakes and Nelsons among these people. In general, indeed, a sea-faring people is required to be one of the strongest of peoples; nothing can be a better measure of the strength of a man than to put him into a ship in the middle of the wild elements, exposed to the rage and variableness of the winds, which he must observe with an ever watchful care and shape himself by them, and watch for and seize every favourable instant for the purpose of his enter-

Fondness for  
the Sea.

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the modern Holstein. They were apparently but an insignificant, and had probably been comprised by earlier writers under the general name of Cimbri." Bunbury, *History of Ancient Geography* Vol. II. p. 538 cf. Gibbon, Vol. III. p. 262 (ed. Smith).

\* Bk. VIII. epist. 6.

† Hist. Rom. XXVII 8. XXX 7.

‡ 'The Saxon boats drew so little water that they could easily proceed fourscore or an hundred miles up the great rivers; their weight was so inconsiderable, that they were transported on wagons from one river to another; and the pirates who had entered the mouth of the Seine, or of the Rhine might descend, with the rapid stream of the Rhone, into the Mediterranean.' Gibbon, Vol. III. p. 264.

§ Hist. Rom. XXVIII. 5.

prise. Accordingly we find that the Dutch and English tribes are the greatest of the Germans. So in Luden or Mascker, I think Mascker, we find the mythus of the creation of the Teutonic people—how one tribe was made out of the mould of the valley of the Danube, another out of water ; but the Saxons out of the rock of the Hartz Mountains !\* They were in fact the hardest of the tribes, and greatly distinguished in that respect from the rest of the Germans. There was a kind of silent ruggedness of nature in them, with the wild Berserkir-rage deeper down in the Saxons than in others. They have a kind of resemblance to the Romans in that respect ; though much of it has not unfolded itself yet, even among the English.† For we have as yet produced no great painter nor any one who has excelled in the highest arts, except Shakspeare : and yet, a nation which has produced a Shakspeare, we may justly conclude to be capable of producing much. Their talent, however, was practical, like that of the Romans—a greatness of perseverance, adherence to a purpose, method, —practical greatness in short. If any seer among them in the year 449,‡ when they landed here in the Isle of Thanet, could have looked forward to 1838, as we can look back to 449, he would have said, as we may say, that great and remarkable as the foundation of Rome certainly was, it was not a greater fact nor so great even, as that humble settlement of the Saxons on these shores : he would have seen our present dominion extending from the Gulf of California, from the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico, away up to the Ganges and Bhramaputra, and descending even to our antipodes : he would have seen these descendants of Saxons conquering more

Characteristic  
myth of their  
creation.

Resemblance  
to the Ro-  
mans in  
their charac-  
ter.

449 & 1838.

\* 'Legend makes the first King of the Saxons, Aschanes, grow up out of the Hartz rocks, by a fountain-head in the midst of the forest. The Saxons themselves take their name from *ashes* (*asazum*, stone).' Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* Vol. II. p. 523 tr. Stallybrass.

† *Vide Past and Present* Bk. III. c. v. 'The English.'

‡ This is the common date of the Saxon Invasion. For the various dates *vide* Guest, *Origines Celticae* Vol. II. pp. 167-9.

Saxon conquest of Britain.

Etymology of the name.

Fights of kites and crows.

than the Romans did, who subdued men, but these subdued the incoherences and difficulties of nature, reclaiming wild and boundless wastes, and converting them into arable land and scenes of civilisation. For about a hundred years, after their landing, Saxons continued arriving. One regrets greatly, that there is no intelligence to be had about this matter, so full of moment, rude energy, and significance. For three hundred years the war with the Britons—ancient possessors of the soil—lasted; these and the Caledonians were gradually driven back into the mountains, and the Lowlands were made into a Saxon country. To this day “Saxon” is the Celtic name for the English: the Highland Scotch apply it to the Lowlanders yet. The name “English” or “Angles” arose out of a small territory from which they originally came, in the Duchy of Schleswig, when to this day it is called “Angleland.” The etymology\* of the name “Saxon” is uncertain, nor is it of any value. The opinion seems to be that it is derived from “Zaks,” a sword, or knife, worn by this people. Nennius has preserved the word of command used by their leader, Hengist, “Meinet hyr Zaxas,” “Take your knives.”†—“Zaks,” is the Westphalian name yet, or was, when Mascker wrote. After these 300 years, there remained yet 300 years more of incessant fighting between the different kingdoms of the Heptarchy. We read of battles, and successions of kings, and one endeavours to remember them, but without success, except so much of this flocking and fighting as Milton gives us, *viz.* that “they were the battles of kites and crows,” for they have no interest for us. Indeed those who took part in this flocking and

\* Jacob Grimm thinks that the Saxons were so called either because they wielded the sword of stone (*saxum*) or placed the god *Saxneat*, son of Woden, at the head of their race. *Teutonic Mythology* Vol. I. p. 204. cf. Gibbon, Vol. III. p. 102 (ed. Bohn) editor's note.

† Hengist appointed his men to be secretly armed, and acquainted them to what intent. The watchword was, *Nemet, eour saxes. that is, draw your daggers.* Milton, *History of England*, Prose Works vol. iv. p. 101 ed. 1806. Milton gives this on the authority of William of Malmesbury.

fighting were making the reverse of a history of England : whoever was up-rooting a thistle, or bramble, or draining out a bog, or building himself a house, or, in short, leaving a single section of order where he had found disorders that man was writing the history of England, the others were only obstructing it. Yet these battles were natural enough. The people who should succeed in keeping themselves at the top of affairs were the fittest to be there : the weakest would maintain themselves for a while ; but when the attack came they would be obliged in every case to surrender to the more force and method that was in the others and which must have triumphed over all the incoherent characters that needed to be regulated by it. A wild kind of intellect as well as courage was shown by each party in his own department, in his own circumstances. Traces of deep feeling are scattered over this history, as indeed over that of all the Germans. For example, there is the speech of Clotaire, the French King, himself a German, and a very remarkable one it is. When he was dying—when he felt himself dying—he exclaimed “ Wa ! Wa ! What great God is this that pulls down the strength of the strongest kings ! ” It was the impression of a wild astonishment in the barbarous mind at the terrible approach of some great unknown thing which he could not escape. There was too an affectionateness, a largeness of soul. In the intervals of these fights of kites and crows, we often see a prince doing all the good he could, arranging every thing as far as it was possible to arrange it. There was one memorable instance of this, Alfred, namely : he was not exactly the first that united the different kingdoms together ; yet we may, on the whole, say that he was the first. He possessed a very great mind, the highest qualification for his office. He lived in a rude, dark age. We all know his fighting against the Danish pirates ; his succeeding, after great

Alfred.



exertions and fightings, to get his crown back to him again ; and how he pacificated the country by treaty and wise policy as much as by war. Then in literature his services were for the age, great : he translated into Saxon many books from the Latin language. He first shaped\* the thing we call the British Constitution,—he laid the foundations of it as it were ; one fancies, too, that he was able to have an instinct into the business ; and in that view to lay out institutions which have already lasted 1100 years. He founded Oxford according to tradition,—not by the name of University, but at any rate he founded schools there.† He was as great a man for this island as Charlemagne was the century before for Europe‡ his influence was not for the moment felt but it has borne abundant fruit in after times. Voltaire said of him that “he was the greatest man in history, for his “self-denial and heroic endeavours on the one hand, and “his mild gentleness combined with that.”§

Norman  
Conquest.

In the next century or a century and-a-half afterwards, Normans gained possession of the throne of England ; an important event which brought this country into more immediate connection with the continent, and produced other results not *all* beneficial in their way. They were the same people.¶

\* ‘The popular error which makes Ælfred the personal author of all our institutions hardly needs a fresh confutation.’—Prof. Freeman, *Norman Conquest* Vol. I. p. 52.

† Mr. Maxwell Lyte calls this a fiction,—‘fictions such as that which represents King Alfred as the founder of the schools at Oxford.’ For an exposure of the ‘baseless legends and impudent fictions’, including forged deeds and bonds brought forth in support of the claim of a very remote antiquity of the University, *vide* his *History of the University of Oxford* c. ix.

‡ ‘The same union of zeal for religion and learning with the highest gifts of the warrior and the statesman is found, on a wider field of action in Charles the Great. But even Charles cannot aspire to the pure glory of Ælfred. Amidst all the splendour of conquest and legislation, we cannot be blind to an alloy of personal ambition of personal vice, to occasional unjust aggressions and occasional acts of cruelty.’—Freeman, *Norman Conquest* Vol. I. p. 52.

§ *Vide* Prof. Freeman’s eloquent eulogy Vol. I. p. 51. ‘There is no other name in history to compare with his.’

¶ Cf. ‘The invader was a disguised kinsman.’—Prof. Freeman, *Norman Conquest* Vol. V. p. 328, *vide* Vol. I. p. 166.

(I say this in contradiction to a vague notion which has circulated that by the conquest England became divided into two peoples,) the same people who had left their country three or four centuries after the Saxon pirates had come to these shores, and in the course of their emigration had learned a new language, by their introduction to the Latin and French, and had generally attained to a higher culture than the Saxons. They endeavoured, too, to introduce the French language in this country, but wholly failed.\* The history of the succeeding periods is but a strange description of elements; there seems to have been nothing but war, at any rate, war was more frequent here than in any other country, and this lasted down to the very neighbourhood of Queen Elizabeth, for it was not till the reign of her grandfather that the kingdom became consolidated. Nay, Scotland was still more remarkable in this respect: it had been continually fluctuating from six centuries before the end of the Heptarchy, now embracing Cumberland, now confined to the Grampians. But in England after the wars of the Roses had been ended things began to change, till at last the whole amalgamated into some destined vital unity; this was Elizabethan begun about the time of Elizabeth, in many respects the Age. summation of innumerable influences, the co-ordination of many things, which till then had been in contest, the first beautiful outflush of energy,—the first articulate, spoken energy. There was Saxon energy before that, in Hengist

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\* The Norman did not deliberately try to introduce the French, nor to root out the English language. "Of all the dreams which have affected the history of the times on which we are engaged, none has led to more error than the notion that William the Conqueror set to work with a fixed purpose to root out the use of the English tongue....No legislative measures were ever passed against the use of the English tongue. The changes which did take place were the natural and silent result of circumstances, nor were those changes by any means sudden or immediate results of the Conquest. In this, as in all other matters, William made no more change than was absolutely necessary for his immediate purposes." Freeman, *History of the Norman Conquest* Vol. V. pp. 506, 508.

and in Horsa, not a spoken energy, but a silent one, not shown in speech, but in work. It was here, as in general, the end of an epoch when it began to speak. The old principle, Feudalism, and the other one, the Catholic religion were beginning to end ; when like the cactus tree, which blooms but once in centuries, so here appeared the blossom of poetry for once ; which done, that energy was to carry itself on according to such laws as are suitable to it, abiding till the time of a future manifestation. Nowhere has such a number of great people been at once produced as here in the Elizabethan era : Bacon, Raleigh, Spenser,—above all Shakspeare. It is not possible for us to go through all these names in our short space, and we must therefore confine our attention to Shakspeare alone.

Shakspeare. Shakspeare is the epitome of the era of Elizabeth, a man in whom that era, as well as other eras, have found a voice : one who gives utterance to many things silent before him and worthy to be called the spokesman of our nation. It is now universally admitted that he must be regarded as the greatest person that has been produced in the literature of modern Europe. The Germans have long been as enthusiastic admirers of him as ourselves, and often more enlightened and judicious ones ; for, there, the highest minds have occupied themselves with criticism of Shakspeare. One of the finest things of the kind ever produced is Goethe's criticism on Hamlet in his *Wilhelm Meister* which many among you are aware of. I may call it the reproduction of Hamlet in a shape addressed to the intellect, as Hamlet is already addressed to the imagination.\* Even the French, in late times, have come over to think in the same way. He was one of the great sons of nature ;—like a Homer, an Æschylus, a Dante, a voice from the inner-

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\* 'It paints to the intellect what already lay painted to the heart and the imagination.' Carlyle, *Miscellanies* Vol. I. p. 76.

most heart of nature. He speaks the dialect of the sixteenth century, in words much more expressive and comprehensive than any used before him ; for knowledge had made great progress in his time, and therefore his language became more complex, and rich in significance.

Any one that takes in his likeness accurately must pronounce him *an Universal man*. There is no tone of feeling that is not capable of yielding melodious resonance to that of Shakspeare. We have the southern, sunny language of his Juliet, the wild northern melancholy of his Hamlet, varied with most piercing feeling and tones of tenderness ; the rude heartfelt humour of his Autolyces and Dogberrys ; and finally, the great stern Berserkir-rage, burning deep down under all, and making all to grow out in the most flourishing way, doing ample justice to all feelings. Not developing any one in particular, but yielding to us all that can be required of him upon every subject. By one word, if I were bound to describe him, I should be inclined to say that his intellect\* was far greater than that of any other man, that had given an account of himself by writing books. I know that there have been distinctions drawn between intellect, imagination, fancy, and so on, and doubtless there are conveniences in that division ; but at the same time we must keep this fact in view, that the mind is *one*, and consists not of bundles of faculties at all, showing ever the same features, however it exhibits itself whether in painting, singing, fighting,—ever with the same physiognomy. And when I hear of the distinction between the poet and the thinker, I really see no difference at all, for the poet is really such by dint of superior vision—by dint of a more deep, serene vision,—and he is a poet solely in virtue of that. Thus I can well understand, how the Duke

An Uni-  
versal man.

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\* Cf. Coleridge's 'myriad-minded Shakspeare.' *Table Talk* Vol. II. p. 301.

of Marlborough once declared\* that all his acquaintance with the history of England was owing to Shakspeare,—one can understand it, I say, for Shakspeare arrived at more of the meaning of history, than many books written on history could have done. His intellect seized at once what the proper object of historial interest was, and put it down there as the leading incident of his play. The trace of intellect is more legible in Shakspeare than in

Bacon. Bacon, indeed, was great, but not to be compared to Shakspeare. *He* not only *sees* the point, but *sees through* it, sympathises with it, and makes it his own. Let us look into the scheme of his works—the play of Hamlet for instance : Goethe found out, and has really

Goethe's commentary. made plausible to his readers, all sorts of harmonies in the structure of his plays with the nature of things, and to have realised in this way all that could be demanded of him. And what is still more excellent, I am sure that Shakspeare himself had no conception at all of any such meaning in his poem, he had no scheme of the kind : he would just look into the story—his noble mind, the deep serene of it, would look in on it as it was in nature by a sort of noble instinct, and in no other way. If he had written a criticism upon it, he would not at all have said what Goethe said about it. And thus, when we hear so much said of the *art* of any great writer, it is not *art* at all ; it is properly *nature*. It is not known to the author himself, but the instinctive behest of his mind. This all-producing earth knows not the symmetry of the oak which springs from it. It is all beautiful ; not a branch is out of its place—all is symmetry there ; but the earth has itself no conception of it, and produced it solely by the virtue that was in itself ! So is the case with Homer. And then critics slip in in the rear of these men, and mark down the practice they followed, and prescribe it to others

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\* The same story is told of Chatham.

for imitation, forgetting that the very thing to be prescribed is the healthy mind of these men, which of itself knows what to put down and what to omit, in the beautiful sympathy of brotherhood with their subject; but not how to follow certain prescribed rules, about beginning in the middle, end or beginning of the subject, and other rules of that sort.

I have generally found that morals in a man are the counterpart of the intellect that is in him.\* In fact morality is the noblest force in his mind, the soul of his soul, and must lay at the root of all the great things he could utter. In Shakspeare, then, there are always the noblest sympathies: no sectarianism, no cruelty, no narrowness, no vain egoism: he is the best illustration we could have of what I am always talking about, about consciousness and unconsciousness. The things great and deep in him, he seems to have no notion of at all. Occasionally we have certain magniloquent passages, which at this day we can scarcely understand, often bombastic, vastly inferior to his ordinary compositions; and these he seems to have imagined extraordinarily great. But in general there is a fervent sincerity in any matter he undertakes, by which one sees at once as through a window into the beautiful greatness of the soul of Man. And as to his life, what a beautiful life was that; amid trials enough to break the heart of any other man! Poverty, and a mean, poor destiny, which, if he were an ambitious man, would have driven him mad; but he would not suffer himself to be subdued by it. And it was fortunate for us: if he had been suffered to live quietly in Warwickshire, his mind was so rich in itself, he would have found such—

“Sermons in stones, and good in everything;”†

that he would probably not have troubled the world at all with his productions. It is thus that in all departments of thought an accidental thing—the action of accident, becomes often of the greatest importance. For the greatest

\* Cf. *Heroes* lect. I. † *As you like It* II. 1.

Shakspeare's  
unconscious-  
ness of his  
greatness.

Conditions  
under which  
human  
things are  
written.

man is always a quiet man by nature ; we are sure not to find greatness in a prurient, noisy man. Thus Shakspeare at first lived, running about the woods in his youth, together with, as we find by dim traditions, all the wild frolics of that age and place,—stealing deer and the like feats of ebullient buoyancy ; till distress sends him to London, to write his immortal plays there ! And I will here, before concluding my remarks on Shakspeare, add a few words on the conditions under which all human things are to be written. We must say that what the poets talk about the harmony of the author's purpose is not true. In Shakspeare's plays, genius is under fetters ; he has in general taken some old story, and used that for the subject of his play, with the mere purpose to gather an audience to the Bankside Theatre. This was the only problem he had to resolve ; nature and his own noble mind did the rest. In consequence of this, we find in some of his pieces many things vague and quite unsatisfactory, and are unable to discover any significance about it ; but ever and anon we see a burst of truth, and are forced to exclaim : “ Yes ! That is true ! That is the “ name and delineation of all human feelings in every age, “ and is everywhere and at all times, true . ”

Knox.

I shall now very reluctantly leave Shakspeare, and direct your notice to another great man, very different from Shakspeare,—John Knox.\* He and Shakspeare lived in the same age ; he was indeed sixty years old when Shakspeare was born ; but at any rate both lived in the same age together. Of him it may be said, that if Shakspeare was the most giant-like man, and the highest of poets, John Knox seems, if one knew him rightly, to have been as entirely destitute of immorality as Shakspeare was of prose. I cannot, however, think that he is to be compared with Luther, as some of the Germans in these days have done, who have set him even

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\* Cf. *Heroes* lect. III.

above Luther, struck with the great veracity of Knox. Luther would have been a great man in other things besides the Reformation ; a great, substantial, massy man, who must have excelled in whatever matter he undertook. Knox had not that faculty, but simply this of standing upon truth entirely. It is not that his sincerity is known to him to be sincerity, but it rises from a sense of the impossibility of any other procedure. He has been greatly abused by many persons for his extremely rough and uncourteous behaviour, for he had a terrible piece of work to do. He has been even represented as struggling for a mere whim of his own, regardless altogether of other things ; but that charge is not true. And as to that moral rigour of his, it is the great thing after all : *given* a sincere man,—you have *given* a thing worth attending to. Since, sincerity,—what is it, but a divorce from earth and earthly feelings ? The sun which shines upon the earth and seems to touch it, does not touch the earth at all ; so the man who is free of earth is the only one that can maintain the great truths of existence, not by an ill-natured talking for ever about truth ; but it is he who does the truth. And this is a great and notable object to be attended to ; for that is the very character of Knox. He was called out to free a people from dark superstitions and degradation, into life and order. It is very notable that at first he had no idea of being a reformer, although he had a clear, sound view that Protestantism must be the true religion, and the Catholic religion false. Though a monk, he determined now to have nothing to do with Catholicism ; and he withdrew from all prominence in the world until he had reached the age of 43—an age of quietude and composure ; when he was being besieged in the castle of St. Andrew's along with his master, whose children he educated, and he had many conferences with his master's chaplain ;\* till, one day, this chaplain, having first consulted

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\* John Rough.



with the people, who were anxious to hear Knox preach too, suddenly addressed them from the pulpit, saying\* that "it was not right for him to sit still when great things were to be spoken; that the harvest was great, but the labourers were few; that he was not so great a man as Knox, and that all were desirous to hear the latter." "Is it not so, brethren?" he asked, to which they assented. Knox then had to rise in his place trembling, and with a pale face, and finally burst into tears, and came down, not having been able to say a word. From this time, he wandered about resisting the destiny that was for him, until at last he dared not refuse any more.† It was a fiery kind of baptism that initiated him: he had become a preacher not three months, when the castle surrendered, and they were all taken prisoners, and worked as galley-slaves in the water of Loire, confined for life there. The chiefs of the conspirators were put in prison. This was the year 1547 or 1549, from which his whole life forward was as a battle. Seven years after we find him escaping from the French galleys, when he came to England. In Luther we often see an overshadowing of despair, and especially towards the end of his life, when he describes himself, "heartily sick of existence, and most desirous that his Master would call him to his rest." Another time he laments the hopelessness of Protestantism," and says "that all sects will rise up at last and only the day of judgment will end it." But there never was anything like this in Knox. He never gave up, even in the water of Loire. They were ordered to hear mass, but though they went to hear it, they could not be prevented from putting on their caps during it. Their virgin

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\* McCrie, *Life of Knox* Vol. I p. 53. ed. 1814.

† 'His countenance and behaviour from that day till the day that he was compelled to present himself in the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart, for no man saw any sign of mirth from him, neither had he pleasure to accompany any mass for many days together.' Knox, *Historic* p. 68.

Mary was once brought for some kind of reverence to the people in the galley, and it was handed to Knox first; but he saw nothing there but a painted piece of wood, "a pented bredd," as he called it in his Scotch dialect; and on their pressing him, he threw it into the water, saying that "the virgin being wooden would swim."\* There was a great deal of humour in Knox, as bright a humour as in Chaucer—expressed in his own quaint Scotch. He wrote the history of the Scotch reformation: by far better than any other history is that autobiography of his. Above all, there is in him a genuine, natural rustiness—a decided earnestness of purpose. His good nature and humour appear in a very striking way; not as a sneer altogether, but as real delight at seeing ludicrous objects. Thus when he describes † the two archbishops quarrelling,—no doubt he was delighted to see the disgrace they brought on their church, but he was chiefly excited by the really ludicrous spectacle of rockets flying about and vestments torn, and the struggle each made to overturn the other.

The sum of the objections made to Knox which have Intolerance. obfuscated and depressed his memory for three centuries seems to be his intolerance;—that he wanted tolerance, and all the qualities that follow out of it; and particularly for his rude, brutal way of speaking to Queen Mary. Now I confess that when I came to read these very speeches, ‡ my opinion of these charges was that they are quite undeserved. It was quite impossible for any man to have done Knox's functions and been civil too: he had either to be uncivil,

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\* Knox gives this humorous incident in his *Historie* p. 83.

† *Hist. of the Reformation.*

‡ *Vide* the account of his interview with Mary in McCrie, *Life of Knox* Vol. II. pp. 88—92. ed. 1814. Carlyle's defence of Knox is the same as McCrie's, p. 98. Hume judges Knox very harshly for his insolence to Mary and for not being affected by 'the youth, beauty and royal dignity of the Queen.' *History of England* Vol. IV. p. 39.

or to give up Scotland and Protestantism altogether. Mary wanted to make of Scotland a mere shooting-ground for her uncles the Guises ; in many respects she seems to have been a weak, light-headed woman, and Knox in the question between civility and duty, was bound to stand by the latter, and not by the former. But his incivility was not at all rude or brutal,—it was nothing more than the statement of what was necessary to be done. It was unfortunate too, for him, that the sovereign was a woman, that he had not a man to deal with ; there would have been less commiseration then, and he would not have been afraid to speak in the same way to a man, if one had been there. It was truly said of him on his death-bed by the Earl of Morton,—“ There he lies, that never feared the face of man.”\* When I look at what he had to do, at the wild people, the barbarous horde, he found it ; and how he left it a quiet, civilised one, and brought down into the meanest minds, into every hut of Scotland, the greatest thoughts that ever were in the mind of men, I cannot but admire him, and expect all honest people to do the same, however they may differ from him in opinion. We cannot expect all men’s opinions to tally with our own, it ought to be enough for us that there is sincerity of belief, of conviction.

Milton.

The third person to whom I have to direct your attention is Milton. He lived a century from Knox : and he may be considered as a summing up—composed, as it were, of the two—of Shakspeare and of Knox. As to Shakspeare, one does not find what religion he was of—an universal believer. Impressed with many things which may be called religious, having reverence for everything that bore the mark of the deity ; but of no particular sect, not particularly Protestant more than Catholic. But Milton was altogether sectarian—a Presbyterian, one might say—he got his knowledge out of

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\* McCrie, Vol. II. p. 234.

Knox ; for Knox's influence was not confined to Scotland ; it was planted there at first, and continued growing in his own country till it filled it, and then it spread itself into England, working great events, and finally, after causing the quarrel between Scotland and Charles II. it ended in the Revolution of 1688—an event the effects of which England benefits by to this day. Milton learned much of Knox. He was partly the religious philosopher, partly the poet. For it must be a little mind that cannot see that he was a poet—one of the wild, Saxon mind full of deep, religious melody that sounds like Cathedral music. However he must not be ranked with Shakspeare : he stands relative to Shakspeare as Tasso or Ariosto does to Dante, as Virgil to Homer. He is conscious of writing an epic, and of being the great man he is. No great man ever felt so great a consciousness as Milton. That consciousness was the measure of his greatness : he was not one of those who reach into actual contact with the deep fountain of greatness. His *Paradise Lost* is not epic in its composition, as Shakspeare's utterances are epic ; it does not come out of the heart of things ; he had not it lying there to pour it out in one gush,—it seems rather to have been welded together afterwards. His sympathies with things are much narrower than Shakspeare's,—too sectarian. In universality of mind there is no hatred ; it rejects doubtless what is displeasing, but not in hatred : for it, everything has a right to exist. Shakspeare was not polemical : Milton was polemical altogether. Milton's disquisitions on these subjects are quite wearisome to us now. *Paradise Lost* is a very ambitious poem, a great picture painted on huge canvas ; but it is not so great a thing as to concentrate our minds upon the deep things within ourselves, as Dante does ; to see what a beautiful thing the life of man is,—to travel with paved street beside us, rather than lakes of fire—this Dante has done and Milton not. There is no life in Milton's

Milton and  
Dante.

characters ; Adam and Eve are beautiful, graceful objects ; but no one has breathed the Pygmalion life into them, they remain cold statues. Milton's sympathies were with things rather than men, the scenery and phenomena of nature, the gardens, the trim gardens, the burning lake ; but as for the phenomena of the mind, he was not able to see them. He has no delineations of mind except Satan, of which we may say that Satan was his own character, the black side of it. I wish however to be understood not to speak at all in disparagement of Milton.

In our next lecture we shall notice French Literature.

Being confined to my bed with a new access of the malaria I brought from Rome I was unable to attend Lecture IX. in which Rabelais was discussed and Voltaire.—*T. C. A. Anstey's note.*

## PERIOD III.

### LECTURE X.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IN ENGLAND.

JOHNSON—DAVID HUME.

[FRIDAY, 1ST JUNE 1838.]

IN our lecture of this day we shall cast an eye upon England during the eighteenth century, a period of wide consequence to us, and therefore most interesting to us now in the nineteenth century.

IN our last lecture we saw the melancholy phenomenon of a system of beliefs which had grown up for 1800 years, and had formed during that period great landmarks of the thought of man, crumbling down at last and dissolving itself in suicidal ruin. And we saw one of the most remarkable nations of men engaged in destroying : nothing growing in the great seed-field of time ; so that well might Goethe say, " My inheritance how bare—Time how bare ! " For everything man does is as seed cast into a seed-field, and then it grows on for ever. But the French sowed nothing. Voltaire, on the contrary, casting firebrands\* among the dry leaves produced the combustions we shall notice by and by. Of Voltaire himself we could make but little, a man of a great vivacity of mind, the greatest acuteness, presenting most brilliant coruscations of genius ; but destitute of depth, scattering himself abroad upon all subjects, but in great things doing nothing except to canker and destroy. This being once conceived—that the whole people had fallen into scepticism,—we can imagine that all other provinces of thought were quite sure of being cultivated in the same

Resumé of  
last Lecture.

Voltaire.

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\* Judges XV. 4.

Formalism and Scepticism the leading intellectual features of Europe in the Eighteenth Century,

unfruitful, desert manner. Politics, for instance—and in France, too, where appeared Mably, Montesquieu and an innumerable host of other writers of the kind,—finally summed themselves up in the *Contrat Social* of Rousseau. The only use to which they put the intellect was not to look outwardly upon nature, and love or hate her, as circumstances required, but to enquire why the thing was there at all, and to account for it, and argue about it. So it was in England too, and in all European countries. The two great features of French intellect were formalism and scepticism. These became the leading intellectual features of all the nations of that century. French literature got itself established in all countries ; one of the shallowest that has ever existed. It never told man anything ; there never was any message it had to deliver him. But, on the other hand, it was the most logically precise of all : it stood on established rules ; and was the best calculated to make its way among nations. Even in Germany it became so popular that for a time it actually seemed to have extirpated the public mind. In England too, and in Spain, where it was introduced by the Bourbon sovereigns, and where the beautiful literature of Cervantes dwindled away before it, so as never to have recovered itself since. It is not because any particular doctrine is questioned, but because society gets unbelieving altogether, and faith gets dwindled altogether into mere chimeras. So that to an observer it might be doubtful whether the whole earth were not hypocritical. He sees the quack established, he sees truth trodden down to the earth everywhere around him\*, in his own office he sees quackery at work, and that part of it which is done by quackery done better than all the rest : till at last he, too, concludes in favour of this order of things, and gets himself enrolled among this miserable set, eager after

\* Vide the famous denunciation of the Eighteenth Century in *Friedrich the Great* Vol. I. p. 11 : ' Century spendthrift, fraudulent-bankrupt ; gone at length utterly insolvent ' &c.

profit, and of no belief, except the belief always held among such persons—that, *money will buy money's worth*, and, that *pleasure is pleasant!* But woe to that land and its people, if for what they do they expect payment at all times! It is bitter to see; such times are extremely painful, as it were, the winter weather of the State. Woe to the State if there come no spring! All men will suffer from it, with confusion in the very heart of them!

In England this baleful spirit was not so deep as in France, and for several reasons.\* One was, that their nature, the Teutonic nature is much slower than the French, much deeper, not so absorbed at any time as the French has been, whether with scepticism or more worthy things. Another reason was that England was a Protestant, free country, and as contra-distinguished from France, a well-regulated country. An Englishman, too, will moderate his opinions, and at any rate keep them to himself. We find many notwithstanding this simply trusting themselves to the examination of the great things of the world, but notwithstanding barely keeping out of this dark region of complete scepticism, and doing many things, hearty and manly, in spite of that. In France, on the contrary, all things were in an extremely bad state, much depending on Jesuits. In the eighteenth century, however, —a century of disputation, if not of complete unbelief, a century of contrariety—here with us there was nothing but argument to be found everywhere. Never before was there so much argument, literary argument in particular; all things were brought down to the one category of argument, from controversies about Dr. Sacheverell, through the whole range

but not very prominent in England, and why.

Controversy the leading feature then.

\* Cf. "If England was morally and spiritually in low estate at this period, she was, at any rate, in better plight than her neighbours. If there were Church abuses in England there were still worse in France. Neither sordid as the age was in England, was it so sordid as in Germany, where a coarse endæmonism and a miscalled illuminism were sapping the foundations of Christianity." Abbey and Overton, *English Church in the Eighteenth Century* Vol. II. p. 54.



of metaphysics, up to the Divine Legation of Moses, Essays on Miracles, and the like, by men like Hume and Paley, and down to the writers of our own time. Nicholson's\* Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century, an interesting book, offers a curious picture of this state of things. Nintenths of his anecdotes are about the church, and church questions, as if the human intellect had nothing to do but with polemics. Now, though I do all honour to logic in its place, I will venture to say that such subjects as these, high subjects of faith in religion, faith in polity, are as good as lost, if there be no other way than by logic to take them up. I must impress upon your minds the words of Goethe : "The Highest is not capable of being spoken in words at all." Ever has deep secrecy been observed in sacred things. Pompey could not understand this, when he sought to discover what veiled thing that was in the Temple of Jerusalem. Among the Egyptians, too, there was the veiled figure of Sais, not to be looked upon. And secrecy denotes importance in much lower things than that. A man who has no secrecy in him is still regarded as having no kind of sense in him for apprehending whatever is greatest and best in the world. I admire much that inscription† in the Swiss Gardens,—“Speech is silvern, silence is golden!” After speech has done its best, silence has to include all that speech has forgotten, or cannot express. Speech is of time—of to-day : eternity is silent. All great things are silent. Whenever they get to be debated on by logic, they are as good as lost. It is impossible to prove faith or morality by speech at all. For logic, if

Logic not  
omnipotent ;

its limita-  
tions.

\* *Sic* in the MS. But of course it is a slip for Nichols' great work, 'Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century.'

† Cf. 'As the Swiss Inscription says : *Sprechen ist silbern Schweigen ist golden* (Speech is silvern, Silence is golden) ; or as I might rather express it : Speech is of Time, Silence is of Eternity.' Sartor p. 151. Cf. *Miscellanies* IV. 51.

we consider it, what does it mean? It pretends to force men to adopt a belief, and yet there is no such constraint possible in that way. Looking at the whole circle of things summoned before logic, I do not find more than one single object taken in by logic entirely, and that is Euclid's Elements. In other respects, logic, speaking accurately, can do no more than define to others what it is you believe; and when you have so done, a mind made like yours, which sees that you believe, will perhaps believe also. But in mathematics, where things are called by certain simple and authorised designations, there alone is it final—as that two and two make four, the half of a semicircle is equal to a right-angle. But where men are not even agreed on the meaning of appellations, the case is different. As, for instance, "Virtue is utility;"—try that. In every different mind there will be a different meaning of the words *virtue* and *utility*. Let them state the belief as they can, but not attempt to confirm it in the narrow bounds of logic. In spite of early training I never do see sorites of logic hanging together, put in regular order, but I conclude that it is going to end in some *niaiserie*, in some miserable delusion.

However imperfect the literature of England was at this period, its spirit was never greater. It did great things; it built great towns, Birmingham and Liverpool, cyclopean workshops, and ships. There was sincerity then at least. Richard Arkwright for instance who invented the spinning jennies,—he was a sincere man; not as in France. Watt, too, was evidently sincere, in that province of activity. Another singular symptom of the earnestness of the period was that thing we now call Methodism.\* It seemed to have

Sincere  
spirit of Eng-  
land.

Methodism.

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\* It was called so almost from its commencement at Oxford. "The regularity of their behaviour led a young collegian to call them Methodists; and 'as the name,' says Wesley, 'was new and quaint, it clung to them immediately, and from that time, all that had any connection with them were thus distinguished.'" Tyerman, *Life and Times of Wesley* Vol. I, p. 66.

Whitefield.

merely gathered up a number of barren formulas, with little inspiration in it, at first, as it exhibited itself in the rude hearts of the common people. Much of its success was due to Whitefield who must have been a man with great things in his heart. He had many dark contests with the spirit of denial that lay about him, before he called his genius forth into action. All the logic in him was poor and trifling, compared to the fire that was in him, unequalled since Peter the Hermit.\*—First he went to Bristol, and preached to the neighbouring coal-miners, who were all heathens yet: but he preached to them till he saw, as he tells us, “thin black cheeks seamed with white tears.”† He came to Scotland, and got money there to convert the heathens; this was a great thing to do, considering the hard, thrifty, cold character of the nation. He came to Glasgow, and preached, and talked about the Indians and their perishing state. “Would they hesitate to contribute of their goods to rescue this poor people?” And thus he warmed the icy people into a flame,—insomuch that not having money enough by them, they ran home for more and brought even blankets, farm-stuff, hams, &c., to the church and piled them in a heap there. This was a remarkable fact, whether it were the work of a good spirit or of the devil. It is wonderful that it did not strike Hume more when he heard Whitefield on the Calton Hill. ‡

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\* Cf. ‘As a popular preacher he appears never to have been equalled in England. This preaching combined almost the highest perfection of acting with the most burning fervour of conviction.’ *Lecky, History of England in the Eighteenth Century* Vol. II. p. 567.

† Gledstone, *Life of Whitefield* p. 113.

‡ “Hume became an admirer of Whitefield’s eloquence, which had a charm for colliers and peers; in his opinion Whitefield was the most ingenious preacher he had ever heard; it was worth going twenty miles to hear him. He gives a remarkable instance of the effect with which Whitefield once employed apostrophe, not, of course, in the drawing-room at Chelsea. Once after a solemn pause, he thus addressed his audience:—‘The attend-

When we look at the literature of the times, we see little *Literature*. of that spirit which is to be sought for in the steam engines. We have no time to mention Dryden, a great poet, put *Dryden*. down in the worst of times, and thus a formalist, a man whose soul was no longer in contact with anything he got to delineate, for ever thinking of the effect he was to produce on the court; and for this end he adopted French plays as the model of his own. He, I say, became a formalist, instead of quietly and silently delineating the thought that was in him. But Dryden must not be censured for it. His poverty was the cause, not his will. He changed to be a Roman Catholic at last. A man of immense intellect: it is displayed in his translation, for example, of the *Æneid*, which contains many beautiful and sounding things.

In Queen Anne's time, after that most disgraceful class of people—King Charles' people—had passed away, there appeared the milder kind of unbelief. Complete Formalism is the character of Queen Anne's reign. But, amid all this, it is strange how many beautiful indications of better things—how many truths were said! Addison was a mere lay-preacher *Addison*. completely bound up in Formalism, but he did get to say many a true thing in his generation; an instance of one formal man doing great things. Steele had infinitely more *naïveté*, but he was only a fellow-soldier of Addison, to whom he subordinated himself more than was necessary. It is a cold vote in Addison's favour that one gives. By far the greatest man of that time, I think,

ant angel is just about to leave the threshold of this sanctuary, and ascend to heaven. And shall he ascend, and not bear with him the news of one sinner, among all this multitude, reclaimed from the error of his way?' To give the greater effect to this exclamation, Whitefield stamped with his foot, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and cried aloud, 'Stop, Gabriel, stop, ere you enter the sacred portals and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God.' This address was accompanied with such animated, yet natural, action, that it surpassed anything I ever saw or heard in any other preacher."—J. P. Gledstone, *Life and Travels of Whitefield* p.378.

Swift.

was Jonathan Swift—Dean Swift,—a man entirely deprived of his natural nourishment, but of great robustness, of genuine Saxon mind, not without a feeling of reverence, though from circumstances it did not awaken in him. For he got unhappily, at the outset, into the church, not having any vocation for it. It is curious to see him arranging, as it were, a little religion to himself. Some man found him one day giving prayers to his servants in a kind of secret manner, which he did, it seems, every morning. For he was determined, at any rate, to get out of cant;\* but a kind of cultivated heathen—no Christianity in him. He saw himself in a world of confusion and falsehood. No eyes were clearer to see into it than his. He was great from being of acrid temperament, painfully sharp nerves, in body as well as soul; for he was constantly ailing, and his mind at the same time was soured with indignation at what he saw around him. He took up therefore what was fittest for him, sarcasm namely; and he carried it quite to an epic pitch. There is something great and fearful in his irony; for it is not always used for effect, or designedly to depreciate;—there seems often to be a sympathy in it with the thing he satirises; it was even impossible for him occasionally so to laugh at any object, without a sympathy with it, a sort of love for it—

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\* Cf. "Were we to choose a name for the one chief topic of his denunciation, it would be that given by Johnson to the object of his hatred, which he called Cant. A preacher [Carlyle] of our own day, with a misanthropy less scathing, but more fretful, than that of Swift, has chosen what might appear a kindred topic in the energy of his invective against Shams. But the Sham is soon fathomed and exposed. Its shell is easily pierced, and the nickname is left to suggest to weak imaginations the depreciation of all that we do not understand. The Shams of one generation are forgotten by the next, or remembered only as the dress in which it pleased our predecessors to masquerade. But who can place bounds to the dominion of Cant? Who can say into what specious theories it does not enter, or what sphere it fails to leave its trail? And yet, though the preacher cannot rid us of it, it must still blanch in all time coming before the calm irony of Swift's humour, before the relentless tragedy of the picture that his genius has drawn." Craik, *Life of Swift* p. 506.

the same love as Cervantes universally shows for his own objects of mirth. In his conduct, there is much that is sad and tragic—highly blamable. But I cannot credit all that is said of his cruel, unfeeling disposition. There are many circumstances to show that by nature he was one of the truest of men; of great pity for his fellow-men; for example, we read that he set up banks for the poor Irish of his neighbourhood, and required nothing of them, but that they should keep their word with him, when they came to borrow. "Take your own time," he said, "but do not come back if you fail to keep the time you tell me." And if they failed, he would tell them, "Come no more to me: if you have not so much method as to keep your time—if you cannot keep your word—what are you fit for?"\* All this proves him to have been a man of much affection, but too impatient of other's infirmities. But none of us can have an idea of the bitter misery which lay in him; given up to ambition, confusion, and discontent, he fell into fatalism at last, and madness,—that was the end of it! The death of Swift was one of the awfulest;† he knew his madness to be coming; a little before his death he saw a tree withered at the top, and he said that, "like that tree, he, too, was dying at the top,"‡ He was well called by Pope,§ "a driveller in a show;" a stern lesson to ambitious people.

\* Scott, *Life of Swift*. p. 424. Johnson uncharitably remarks that Swift 'employed the catchpoll under the appearance of charity.'

† *Vide* Craik, *Life of Swift*. p. 493.

‡ He said this 28 years before his death. So early as 1717 we are informed by Dr. Young that while walking with Swift about a mile out of Dublin, the Dean stopped short. "We passed on," says the author of the *Night Thoughts*, "but perceiving he did not follow us, I went back and found him fixed as a statue and earnestly gazing upwards at a noble elm which, in its uppermost branches, was much withered and decayed. Pointing to it he said, 'I shall be like that tree, I shall die at the top.'" Scott, *Life of Swift* p. 386.

§ *Sic* in MS. But it was Johnson who wrote this a year before Swift's death:

'From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,  
And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show.'

*Vanity of Human Wishes* ll. 315-9.

Sterne.

Another man of much the same way of thinking and very well deserving notice, was Lawrence Sterne. In him also there was a great quantity of good, struggling through the superficial evil. He terribly failed in the discharge of his duties. Still we must admire in him that sportive kind of geniality and affection; still a son of our common mother, not cased up in buckram formulas as the other writers were, clinging to forms and not touching realities. And much as has been talked against him, we cannot help feeling his immense love for things around him, so that we may say of him as of Magdalene, "Much is forgiven him, because he loved much." \* A good, simple being, after all.

Pope.

I have nothing at all in these limits to say of Pope. It is no use to decide the disputed question as to whether he were a poet or not, in the strict sense of the term; in any case, he was one of the finest heads ever known, full of deep sayings and uttering them in the shape of couplets, rhymed couplets.

The two persons who exercised the most remarkable influences upon things during the eighteenth century, were unquestionably Samuel Johnson and David Hume, two summits of a great set of influences, two opposite poles of it;—the one a puller down, of magnificent, far reaching thoughts; the other, most excellent, serious, and a great conservative.

Johnson.

Samuel Johnson in some respects stood entirely alone in Europe. In those years there was no one in Europe like him. For example, the defenders of what existed in France were men who did nothing but mischief, by their falsehoods and insincerity of all kinds. Johnson was a large minded man, an entirely sincere and honest man. Whatever may be the difference of opinion is here entirely insignificant; he must inevitably be regarded as the brother of all honest men, one who held this truth amid the insincerities that lay around him, that, after all, *life was*

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\* Luke VII, 47.

*true yet* ; and he was a man to hold by that truth, and cling to it in the general shipwreck on the sea of eternity. All would be over with him without it. He knew that, and acted up to it. Hardly has any man ever influenced more an existing state of things. He produced in England that resistance to the French Revolution, commonly called Pittism\* by demonstrating its necessity in the most perfect sincerity of heart. A man whose life was in the highest degree miserable, hardly any man, not even Swift in the first part of his life, suffered so much as Johnson. He was a "much-enduring man,"† a man of a most unhealthy body, for ever sick and ailing. When he was at Oxford, a sizar there, so great was his poverty, that he had no shoes to his feet, and used to walk about putting his bare feet into the mud of the streets. A charitable man, seeing this, put a pair of shoes at his door for him, but this irritated Johnson as a reflection on his poverty, and he flung them out of the window rather than use them.‡ Then he fell sick over and over again. Those about him regarded him as a man that had gone mad, and was more fit for Bedlam than anything else. After he left Oxford, he tried to be a schoolmaster, but failed in that and came to London to try his fortune there. There he lived on four-pence a day, sometimes having no home, and reduced to sleep on bulks and steps, at other times to stay in cellars. And I must regard him as one of the greatest heroes, since he was able to keep himself erect amid all that distress. He shook it from him as the lion shakes the dewdrops from his mane. He had no notion of becoming a great character at all ; he only tried not to be killed with starvation ; and though it is mournful to think that a man of the greatest heart should have so much suffered, we must consider

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\* Cf. *Miscellanies* IV. 96. † *Vide supra* p. 22.

‡ *Boswell* Vol. I. p. 77, ed. Hill.



that this suffering produced that enterprise in him. And at last he did get something to do; his object was "not to go about seeking to know the reasons of things, in a world where there is much to be *done*, little to be *known*." And the great thing of all others is what a man can *do* in this world. There is not such a cheering spectacle in the 18th century anywhere, as Samuel Johnson. He contrived to be devout in it; he had a belief and held by it,—a genuine, inspired man.

Boswell.

And it is very great to think that Johnson had one who could appreciate him. Any one must love poor Boswell, who (not fixing his eyes on the vain and stupid things in Boszy's character), remarks that beautiful reverence and attachment he had for Johnson; putting them side by side,—this great mass of a plebeian, and this other conceited Scotch character, full of the absurd pretensions of my country's gentlemen, noting down and treasuring with reverence the sayings and anecdotes of this great, shaggy, dusty pedagogue. And really he has made of these things a book, which is a most striking book, and likely to survive long after him, a kind of epic poem, by which Johnson must long continue in the first ranks of English biography.\*

Hume.

But we must now come to a very different personage, Hume. Hume was born in † the same year with Johnson, whom he so little resembles; he, too, is deserving to be looked at. Very nearly of Johnson's magnitude, and quite as sincere; but in a far duller kind of sense. His eye, unlike Johnson's, was not open to faith. Yet he was of a noble perseverance, a silent strength; and he showed it in his very complicated life as it lay before him. He could not go into commerce, for his habits, as the son of a gentleman, were averse to it. Yet his parents wished him to make money in some way, and he was sent to various things, and finally to Bristol, to be a merchant. But after two years of trying

\* Cf. *Miscellanies* Vol. IV. pp. 42, 52.

† For the contrast between the two, vide *Miscellanies* IV. 111-13.

and struggling with it, he found he could not go on, and he felt a strong thirst to prosecute the cultivation of learning; so that he abandoned the other for that. He tried to get appointed a professor in the University of Edinburgh, but they would not have him; so he retired to live upon sixty pounds a year in a small town in Brittany, called La Flèche, where he began writing books, and thus got distinguished. He was not at any time patronised by any considerable class of persons; though latterly he was noticed by a certain class,—the rich people *did* look after him at last. But a general recognition in his day he never got; his chief work, the History of England, failed to get buyers.\* He bore it all like a stoic, like a heroic, silent man he was; and then proceeded calmly to the next thing he had to do. I have heard old people, who remembered Hume well, speak of his great good humour † under trials, the quiet strength of it; the very converse in this of Dr. Johnson, whose coarseness was equally strong with his heroism. Then as to his methodicalness, no man ever had a larger view than Hume,—he always knows where to begin and end. In his history he frequently rises, though a cold man naturally, into a kind of epic height as he proceeds. His delineation of the Commonwealth, for example, where all is delineated as with a crayon,—one sees there his large mind, moreover, not without its harmonies. As to his scepticism, that

\* This was at the beginning. When the first volume, which treated of the early Stuart period, was published, he says, 'I was assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation and even detestation. After the first ebullitions of their fury were over, what was still more mortifying, the book seemed to sink into oblivion. Mr. Millar told me, that in a twelvemonth, he sold only 45 copies of it.—*My Own Life*. But the later volumes were better received, and the whole work soon became popular. *Vide* Burton, *Life of Hume* Vol. I. p. 414. Hume's *Letters to Strahan* ed. B. Hill pp. 13-15.

† As he says of himself 'even my love of literary fame, my ruling passion never soured my temper, notwithstanding my frequent disappointments.'—*My Own Life*. For several anecdotes of his good humour *vide* Burton, *Life of Hume* Vol. II. pp. 437 seq.

is perfectly transcendental, working itself out to the very end. He starts with Locke's *Essay*, thinking, as was then generally thought, that logic is the only way to the truth.\* He began with this, and went on : in the end he exhibited to the world his conclusion, that there was nothing at all credible or demonstrable ; the only thing certain to him being that he himself existed and sat there, and that there were some species of things in his own brain. Any other man was to him only a spectrum, not a reality. Now it was right that this should be published ; for if that were *all* that lay in scepticism,—the making *that* known was extremely beneficial to us, he did us great service in that. Then all would see what was in it, and accordingly would give up the unprofitable† employment of spinning cobwebs of logic in their brain,—no one would go on spinning them much longer. Hume, too, is very remarkable as one of the three historians we have produced, for his *History*,—an able work for the time showing far more insight than either Robertson or Gibbon.

Robertson. Robertson was, in fact, as Johnson thinks him, a shallow man. In his conversations with Boswell and him, we have

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\*Cf. "Hume and he alone among contemporary thinkers, followed logic wherever it led him. His scepticism completes the critical movement of Locke. It marks one of the great turning-points in the history of thought. From his writings we may date the definite abandonment of the philosophical conceptions of the preceding century, leading in some cases, to an abandonment of the great questions as insoluble, and in others, to an attempt to solve them by a new method. All later thinkers who have not been content with the mere dead bones of extinct philosophy, have built up their systems upon entirely new lines." Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* Vol. I. p. 43. "Adopting the premises and method of Locke, Hume cleared them of all illogical adaptations to popular belief and experimented with them on the body of professed knowledge, as one only could do who had neither any twist of vice nor any bias for doing good, but was a philosopher because he could not help it." T. H. Green, Introduction to Hume, *Works* Vol. I. p. 2.

† 'Milking the bull' as Johnson put it vigorously though coarsely *Boswell* Vol. I. p. 444. ed. Hill.

him always contradicting Robertson ; yet there was a power of arrangement in Robertson ; no one knew better where to begin a story, and where to stop. This was the greatest quality in him ; *that*, and a soft, sleek style. On the whole, he was merely a politician, open to the common objection to all the three, that total want of belief ; and worse in Robertson, a minister of the Gospel, preaching, or pretending to preach. A poor notion of moral motives he must have had ; in his description† of Knox, for instance, he can divine no better motive for him than a miserable hunger—love of plunder—and the influence of money ; and so with regard to Hume also.

The same is remarkable of Gibbon, in a still more contemptible way ;—a greater historian than Robertson, but not so great as Hume. With all his swagger and bombast, no man ever gave a more futile account of human things, than he has done of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire ; assigning no profound cause for these phenomena, nothing but diseased nerves, and all sorts of miserable motives, to the actors in them.‡

So that the world seemed then to present one huge imbroglio of quackery, and men of nobleness could only despise and sneer at it. On Friday next, not Monday, we shall resume this discussion, and shall remark the downfall and consummation of scepticism ; for, thank God, its time was short !

\* Johnson did not think so very alightingly of Robertson, vide *Boswell* ed. Hill, Vol. II. p. 80, Vol. V. p. 897.

† *History of Scotland*.

‡ When towards the close of his life Carlyle re-read Gibbon, he remarks in the present strain in his journal : " I have finished Gibbon with a great deduction from the high esteem I have had of him ever since the old Kircaldy days, when I first read the twelve volumes of poor Irving's copy in twelve consecutive days. A man of endless reading and research, but of a most disagreeable style, and a great want of the highest faculties (which indeed are very rare) of what we could call a classical historian, compared with Herodotus, for instance, and his perfect clearness and simplicity in every part." J. A. Froude, *Carlyle's Life in London* Vol. II. p. 461.

## LECTURE XI.

### CONSUMMATION OF SCEPTICISM—WERTERISM—THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

[FRIDAY, 8TH JUNE 1836.]

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WE traced the history of scepticism in literature in our last lecture down to David Hume, the greatest of all the writers of his time and in some respects the worthiest. Today we shall delineate the finishing, the consummation of Scepticism.

It is very strange to look at scepticism in contrast with the <sup>Hume and</sup> thing which preceded it, to contrast, for example, David <sup>Dante.</sup> Hume with Dante, two characters distant by five centuries from one another, two of the greatest minds in their respective departments—the mind of both was to do the best that could be had in the circumstances;—to contrast them I say, and see what Dante made of it, and what Hume made of it. Dante saw a solemn law in the universe, pointing out his destiny, with an awful and beautiful certainty, and he held to it. Hume could see nothing in the universe but confusion, and he was certain of nothing, but his own existence; yet he had instincts which were infinitely more true than the logical part of him; and so he kept himself quiet in the middle of it all, and did no harm to any one. For, as to his books, he believed that they were true, and therefore to publish them he was bound,—he was bound to do what seemed right to him; he had no other business for his intellect than this; and moreover, as I have observed, in publishing them he did an useful service for humanity.

Scepticism a  
disease of  
the mind.

But scepticism, however much called for at that time, particularly in France, cannot be considered other than a disease of the mind;—a fatal condition to be in, it seems to me, or at best useful only as a means to get at knowledge. For the thing is, not to find out what is *not true*, but what *is true*. Surely that is the real design of man's intelligence! But as to this overspreading our whole mind with logic, it was altogether a false and unwarranted attempt, considering logic as the only means to attain to truth, and that things did not exist at all, except some one stood up and could mark the place they occupied in the world, forgetting that it is always great things that do not speak at all. If a truth must not be believed, except demonstrable by logic, we had better go away without it altogether. And it was not only the disbelievers in religion that were sceptic at that time, but the whole system of mind was sceptic. The defenders of Christianity were sceptics, too, for ever trying to prove the truth of their doctrines by logical evidences. What is the use of attempting to prove motion? The old philosopher was right, who got up and began to walk instead.\* So with religion; it may seem plausible, but it is a vain attempt to demonstrate by logical arguments what must always be unspeakable.

Theorising  
futile.

But this habit had in the eighteenth century gone over all provinces of thought. Nothing but that was serviceable or useful in the eyes of that generation,—an indication of an unhealthy mind, that system of trying to make out a theory on every subject. It is good doubtless that there should always be some theory formed, with a view to the apprehension of

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\* Thus giving rise to the oft-quoted phrase '*sollicitus ambulando*.' The story is told in connection with the famous ingenious logical puzzle known as the fallacy of Achilles and the Tortoise, in which though according to mathematics Achilles is never to pass the tortoise in the race, the apparent impossibility is solved by allowing two competitors to make a trial. For a solution of this fallacy, which baffled the ingenuity of so great a thinker as Sir W. Hamilton, who called it insoluble, *vide* Mill, *System of Logic* Vol. II. p. 393.

its subject ; but for any other view it is impossible. For example, there is a kind of theory in what we have been following out, what we call the History of European Culture ; we use it for facility of arrangement. But there is a wide difference between a theory of this kind, and a theory by which we profess to account for it and give the reasons for its being there at all. Accordingly there is only one theory, as I observed at the beginning of these lectures, which has been most triumphant, that of the planets. On no other subject has any theory succeeded so far ; yet even that is not perfect. The astronomer knows one or two planets, we may say, but he does not know what they are, where they are going, or whether the solar system is not itself drawn into a larger system of the kind. In short, with every theory, the man who knows something about it knows mainly this,—that there is much uncertainty in it, great darkness about it, extending down to infinite deeps, in a word, that he does not know what it is. Let him take the stone, for example the pebble that lies under his feet. He knows that it is a stone, broken out of rocks old as the creation ; but what that pebble *is*, he knows not,—he knows nothing at all about that. This system of making a theory about everything was what we can call an enchanted state of mind. That man should be misled, that he should be deprived of knowing the truth that this world is a reality and not a huge confused hypothesis, that he should be deprived of this by the very faculties given him to understand it, I can call by no other name than enchantment. Every thing was placed upon the single table of logic ; one could hardly go anywhere without meeting some portentous theory or other. Even the very centre of all was brought to that level,—Morals. There was a theory of virtue and vice, duty and the contrary of that. This will come to be thought one day an extraordinary sort of procedure. When I

Theory of morals in that age.

think of this, it seems to me more and more that morality is the very centre of the existence of man; that there is nothing for a man but that which it is his duty to do; it is the life, the harmonious existence of any man, the good that is in him. No man can know how to account for it; it is the very essence and existence of himself. However in the last century they had a theory for that too, by which it was defined to consist in what they called *sympathies*,\* the necessary attraction subsisting between the inclination and the thing to be done. For all spiritual things were to be deduced from something visible and material; and thus our morality became reduced to our sympathies for others and other things. This was the doctrine of Adam Smith, and of (A. B.)† older than Smith, and by him this habit of morality had been termed *moral sense*,—the natural relish for certain actions, a sort of palate, by the taste of which the nature of anything might be determined. Hume considered virtue to be the same as expediency, profit; that all useful things were virtues, that people in olden times found the utility of the thing, and met, or whether they met or not, in any case agreed together that for the sake of keeping society together, they would patronise such things as were useful to one another and consecrate them by some strong sanction; and that that was the origin of virtue,‡—the most

Hume's  
theory of  
expediency.

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\* "Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. *Sympathy*, though its meaning was perhaps originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any other passion whatever."—Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* pt. I sec. 1. Smith makes *sympathy* the ultimate appeal as regards the moral value of actions.

† *Sic* in MS. But clearly either Shaftesbury or Hutcheson is meant. Vide J. A. Farrer, *Adam Smith* p. 24.

‡ "Reflection on the general loss caused by the instability of every one's possessions leads to a 'tacit convention, entered into by all the members of a society, to abstain from each other's possessions'; and thereupon 'immediately arise the ideas of justice and injustice; as also those of property, right and obligation.' 'It is only from the selfishness and confined generosity of man, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his



melancholy theory ever propounded. In short it was the highest exhibition of scepticism—that total denial of everything not material, not demonstrable by logic. The result was to convince man that he was not of heaven,—the paltriest conclusion. Tell that to the savage, the red man of the forest; tell him that he is not of heaven,—not of God but a mere thing of matter, and he will spurn you in his indignation at the base platitude. Besides morality, every-<sup>Theory of</sup>thing else was in the same state; all things showed what an <sup>physica.</sup> unhealthy, poor thing the world had become. All was brought down to a system of cause and effect, of one thing pushing another thing on, 'by certain laws of physics,—gravitation,—a visible material kind of shoving. A dim huge, immeasurable steam-engine they had made of this world; and as Goethe says "Heaven became a Gas; God a Force; the Second World a Grave!" We cannot understand how this delusion could have become so general, all men thinking in so deplorable a manner and looking down in contempt on those who had gone before them. But it was working itself out towards issues beneficial for us all. Voltaire and Rousseau became in the end triumphant over every thing, destroying, but substituting nothing, attacking Jesuitism and imagining they were doing good by it; cutting down, burning up, because they were applauded for it;—they had always at their back people to cry out "Well done!"—But these having passed away, and error having once been admitted to be erroneous, and the world everywhere reduced by them to that dire condition, I say, that in that huge universe,

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wants, that justice derives its origin.' . . . This account bears the marks of descent from Hobbes, and if read without due allowance, might convey the notion that society first existed without any sort of justice, and that afterwards its members, finding universal war inconvenient, said to themselves, 'Go to; let us abstain from each other's goods.' T. H. Green, Introduction to the Moral Part of Hume's 'Treatise of Human Nature, Works Vol. I. pp. 363-364.

Werterism. become one vast steam-engine, as it were, the new generation that followed must inevitably have found it a very difficult position to be in, and perfectly insupportable for them to be doomed to live in such a place of falsehood and chimera. And that was in fact the case with them ; and it led to the second great phenomenon we have to notice,—the introduction of Werterism.

Time when  
*Werter* was  
written.

Let us first look at the very centre of it, at Werter himself. *Werter* is the first book in which there is any decided proof of its existence in the European mind. *Werter* was written by Goethe in 1775\*. It was a time of a haggard condition†;—no genuine hope in men's minds ; all outwards was false. The last war, for example, the Seven Years' War, the most absurd of wars ever undertaken, on no public principle ;—a contest between France and Germany, from Frederic the Great wanting to have Silesia, and Louis XV. wanting to give Madame de Pompadour some influence in the affairs of Europe : and 50,000 men were shot for that purpose !

Goethe.

Under these circumstances, Goethe then of the age of 25, wrote this work, at Frankfort-on-Maine. A man of the liveliest imagination and one who participated deeply in all the influences then going on ; not altogether brought up in scepticism, but in fact very well acquainted with religious people from his youth, and among them, with a lady named Madame von Klettenberg, a follower of Tinzendorf, whom he always highly esteemed, and whom he is said to have afterwards described by the saintly lady in *Wilhelm Meister*. But in fact he studied all sorts of things and this among the rest. And when at last he grew into manhood and looked around him on what was passing, he was filled with unspeakable sadness ; felt himself as it were flung back on himself, no

\* It was written in the early part of 1774, Goethe, born in 1749, being 25 years of age. Düntzer, *Life of Goethe* Vol. I. p. 234.

† " It was indeed a strange epoch ; the unrest was the unrest of disease and its extravagances were morbid symptoms," etc. Lewes, *Life of Goethe* p. 132.

sympathies in any one with his feelings, and his aspirations treated as chimeras which could not realise themselves at all. And he brooded with silence long over this ; he has described it all in a clear manner, a beautiful, soft manner. He was destined for a profession—to be a lawyer—and though much disinclined for it, he went accordingly to the University of Leipzig. Here he spent some time : till\* finally *Werter*.<sup>†</sup> one of the scholars, who had been violently attached to the bride of another man, put an end to himself in despair. This gave him the idea of *Werter*.<sup>†</sup> The sense of his own dark state, and that of all others, rushed upon him now more forcibly than ever ; and it produced this book, the voice of what all men wanted to speak at that time, of what oppressed the hearts of all, and of this young man in particular. It accordingly soon became generally read ; it was translated into English among other languages. Sixty years ago young ladies here were never without all sorts of sketches on articles used at their toilets, of Charlotte and Werter and so on. Goethe himself was in possession of tea-cups ornamented with pictures of Charlotte. I suppose that the story itself is known to every one of you. Yet our English version<sup>‡</sup> does no

\* The account given here of the origin of *Werter* is somewhat inaccurate. Goethe was at Leipzig from 1765—1768, while the suicide was committed on October 29th, 1772, in Wetzlar, when Goethe, after his 'wanderings', was there. The scholar was Jerusalem, a son of the famous preacher at Osnabrück ; but he was at Leipzig only from 1765—1767, and at the time of his suicide was living as Secretary of Legation in Wetzlar. *Vide* Düntzer, *Life of Goethe* Vol. I. pp. 80, 202. Jerusalem was in love with another man's wife, Charlotte, just as Goethe, at that time, was with Lotte, the wife of Kestner, at Wetzlar.

† *Vide* the passage from Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* B. III. quoted by Carlyle in *Miscellanies* Vol. I. pp. 275-281.

‡ "The translation by which the work has become familiarised in this country, was made from the French, a medium wholly incapable of maintaining the vigorous strength of the original. Well may it be styled a 'faint and garbled version,' by a competent authority, who farther observes that the German Werther is a very different person from his English namesake. His sorrows in the original are recorded in a tone of strength and sarcastic emphasis, of which the other offers no vestige, and intermingled with touches of painful thought, glimpses of a philosophy deep as it is bitter, which our sagacious translator has seen proper wholly to omit." H. G. Bohn, preface to first English translation. *Cf. Miscellanies* Vol. I. p. 265. Lewes called it 'the execrable English version' p. 151.

justice to the work. It was made I believe from a French translation ; and it is altogether unlike the original. There is often a sharp tone, a redeeming turn of bitter satire in it, but it has become in general wearisome now to young people ; it was not so in those times. Werter we may take to have been Goethe's own character,\* an earnest man, of deep affections, for ever meditating on the phenomena of this world and obtaining no solution ; till at last he goes into sentimentality, and tries that among other influences.† By degrees he gets more and more desperate at his imprisonment, rages more and more against the evils around him, and at length blows his brains out and ends the novel in that way. This was the beginning of the thing which immediately afterwards was going on through all Europe.‡ Only till lately this country knew anything else ; the thing which was

Suicide.

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\* Cf. ' Werther is not Goethe. Yet though he is not Goethe, there is one part of Goethe living in Werther.' *Lewes, Life of Goethe* p. 150.

† " Werther is a conscientious, good man, who even as a child loved to indulge in dreams and fancies. School and restraints of every kind were hateful to him. His one idea is to revel in the most refined spiritual pleasures, reading sympathetic poets, listening to good music, drawing, enjoying nature, holding intercourse with simple, good people, and revealing his inmost soul, and all his joys and sorrows to a single friend. He writes an ardent and passionate style, reflects on what he observes, and in talking about it easily grows excited. He respects religion, but derives no support therefrom. He thinks of God as a loving, pitiful Father, and he is full of love for his fellow-men, provided they do not repel him. He has a deep sense of the evil in the world, and he wishes that men would not arbitrarily poison the pleasures which are granted them. His oversensitive nature is easily wounded, and feeling himself to be misunderstood by those around him, he seeks solitude or associates with children and people of the lower classes. He follows every dictate of his heart, has no self-control and no energy, lives a life not of action but of feeling, and like a true child of his age, prides himself on his wealth of sentiment. With all these qualities he has a peculiar attraction for people, and has excited the love of women without returning it ; now it is his fate to be in love himself, but without any prospect of possession, for he loves a woman who is first bride, then wife of another. This is the rock on which he is wrecked ; his passion consumes him, and as it is the strongest force in his nature, and he is impotent to fight against his feelings, he chooses to commit suicide rather than endure life of enforced renunciation." *Scherer, History of German Literature* Vol. II. p. 107.

‡ Cf. A. Hayward, *Goethe* p. 102.

not *that*, was accounted no better than confusion and delusion. And they were right. *If* the world were really no better than what Goethe imagined it to be, there was nothing for it but suicide.\* If it had nothing to support itself upon, but these poor sentimentalities, view-huntings, trivialities, this world was really not fit to live in. But in the end the conviction that his theory of the world was wrong, came to Goethe himself, greatly to his own profit, greatly to the world's profit.

However this new phenomenon flamed up, and next produced the *Robbers*, five years† later than *Werter*, a play by Schiller, full of all sorts of wild things.‡ The Robber is a student at College, kept by his brother from his inheritance, for ever moralising on the rule of life, and the conclusion he comes to is that life is one huge Bedlam, with no rule at all, and that a brave man can do nothing with it but revolt against it. So he becomes a robber, rages and storms continually to the end of the piece, and finally kills himself or does as good. The same sort of thing as *Werter*, but more remarkable for that rage against the world and the determination to alter it. Goethe says that it quite shocked him, this play of Schiller.

Schiller's  
*Robbers.*

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\* See the conversation between *Werter* and *Albert* on suicide in *Werter*.

† Seven years later in 1781.

‡ "The iron despotism which weighed upon his country and upon Schiller himself personally, would necessarily instil revolutionary sentiments into the mind of this disciple of Rousseau, who was panting for nature and liberty. Adopting a motto derived from Hippocrates, he recommended blood and iron as the best remedies for a corrupt world. The hero of his first drama, the enthusiastic young robber, Moor, like Goethe's *Götz*, has recourse to force on his own responsibility. He has all the feelings of a *Werther*, and like *Werther* he falls foul of society. *Werther* turns the destroying weapon against himself, but Moor directs it against society. He is a rebel, like the Satan of Milton and *Klopstock*, and a vagabond, like Goethe's *Crugantino*, but while love and reconciliation lead *Crugantino* back to the bosom of his family, the shameful intrigues of an unnatural brother turn Moor into a robber and a murderer." Scherer, *History of German Literature* Vol. II. p. 116.

Werterism  
in England :  
Byron.

There was a similar phasis in the literature of our own country, if we would look at it. I allude to the works of Byron. This poet is full of indignant reprobation for the whole universe, of rage and scowl against it, as a place not worthy that a generous man should live in it. He seems to have been a compound of the Robber and Werter put together ; he has produced more responses than any other phasis of Werterism had ever done.\*

This sentimentalism was the ultimatum of scepticism ; therefore we are bound to welcome it, however absurd it may be. For it cannot be true, that theory of the universe ; if it were, there would be no other conclusion to come to than that of Werter, to kill one's self, namely, no other way for it than by one general simultaneous suicide, for all mankind to put an end to it, to return to the bosom of their fathers with a sort of dumb protest against it. There was therefore a deep sincerity in this sentimentalism, not a right kind of sincerity perhaps, but still a struggling towards it, and we are forced to observe how like all this was to the sceptical time of Rome. That spirit raging there, in Byron and Schiller, and in Goethe's *Werter*, trying its utmost to produce a loud noise, thinking it impossible for anything to be quiet and strong too ; so in Rome, we have in her sceptical times the tragedies of Seneca, full of nothing but simultaneous rage and storm, ending in suicide too, and not unreasonably either. There was no way for men but it.

*Götz von  
Berlichingen.*

But we must now pay attention to another thing which followed closely on Werterism, another book of Goethe's published the year† after the *Robbers*—*Götz von Berlichingen*,

\* " Byron was our English Sentimentalist and Power-man ; the strongest of his kind in Europe ; the wildest, the gloomiest, and, it may be hoped, the last." *Miscellanies* Vol. I. p. 273.

† This is not correct. Goethe wrote *Götz* in six weeks in 1771 ; and the play was remodelled and published in 1773. *The Robbers* was published in 1781, *cicé* Düntzer, *Life of Goethe* Vol. I. pp. 167, 211, 218.

the subject of which was an old German Baron of the time of Maximilian, Charles V.'s grandfather, who revoked the law of duel. Götz for contravening his ordinance in this lost his right hand, to supply which, he had an iron hand, a machine, made and fitted to his arm, whence he was called the Iron-hand. He was a real character and has left memoirs of himself.\* This curious feature joins itself alongside of *Werter* and the *Robbers*—this delineation of a wild, fierce time—not as being the sketches of what a rude, barbarous man would appear in the eyes of a philosophical man of civilised times, but with a sort of natural regret at the hard existence of Götz, and a genuine esteem for his manfulness and courage. By this new work Goethe began his life again; he had struck again the chord of his own heart, of all hearts. Walter Scott† took it up here too and others.‡ But the charm

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\* "The historical Götz, a robber-knight and a leader in the peasant-wars of the sixteenth century, had employed the enforced leisure of his later days in writing an autobiography in defence of his life and conduct. He represented himself as an honest but much misunderstood and slandered person, a man who had always followed right and justice, and had never fought but in defence of the weak. His record of himself was printed, and falling into Goethe's hands, was completely believed by him. He took the old knight just as he had described himself, and determined to rescue him from oblivion, just as Lessing was so fond of doing to forgotten worthies.

. . . Protestant sympathies are reflected in the piece and the poet draws a by no means flattering picture of a clerical court, and gives a lamentable description of the condition of the Empire at that period; no one can find justice, each must shift for himself, and the blame of this disorder lies with the independent princes, against whom even the Emperor can do nothing. Götz is a good Imperialist, but he hates bad sovereigns, and though he should succumb in the struggle, still with his dying breath he will invoke success for the cause of Liberty. In this play Goethe championed the cause of freedom against the tyrants of Germany, and contrasted the honest, patriotic, chivalrous life of his hero, with the corrupt life of the courts." Scherer, *History of German Literature* Vol. II. p. 96. Cf. Lewes, *Life of Goethe* pp. 106—111.

† Scott translated it in 1802.

‡ "Sir Walter Scott's first literary enterprise was a translation of *Götz*, and if genius could be communicated like instruction we might call this work of Goethe's the prime cause of *Marmion* and *Lady of the Lake* with all that has followed from the same creative hand. Truly a grain of seed that has lighted on the right soil!"—A writer quoted by Carlyle, *Miscellanies* Vol. I. p. 265.

there is in Goethe's *Götz* is unattainable by any other writer. In Scott it was very good but by no means so good as in *Götz*. It was the beginning of a happier turn to the appreciation of something genuine, as we shall notice in our next lecture. This new work however had come in the reign of quacks and dupes, when a good man was a kind of alien, unable to do the good that lay in him. We must accept this with a kind of cheerfulness. A system of thought, whether of belief or no belief, which results to end in suicide, must come to an end ; that custom of judging what was right and proper in a man by the cut of his clothes, or by anything at all, but the heart God had placed in him. We come now therefore to the last act of scepticism, which was to sweep it all away. It was to go on but little longer : it was nearly out here, too ; more so in France than elsewhere. Still a clear light enables us to trace its path. We may say that scepticism there had consummated itself. These sceptical influences had principally developed themselves on books ; if they had done nothing worse, it would have been of very trifling moment. But it is the infallible result of scepticism that it produces not only bad, unsound thought, but bad, unsound action too. When the mind of man is sick, how shall anything about him be healthy ? His conduct, too, is therefore sick ; which indeed he partly feels is false himself, for there is no reality in it. The things accordingly that went on then reduce themselves to two things, first, respect for the opinion of other people ; secondly, sentimentalism. The first of these is in itself very right ; but to do nothing at all, without first consulting others as to whether it be moral or not, is exceedingly blameable. We say of such a man, "all is over with that man if he is not able to do morality without help." What is the use of always asking about morality ? He has a certain light given to himself to walk by ; yet he must have a great



deal of talk with others about it, as if the world could keep him right by watching over him. The world will never keep him right, will never prevent him, when unseen, from breaking into drawers and stealing.

The next thing, sentimentalism, plays a great part in the latter periods of Scepticism. It had become necessary. It endeavoured to trace out pleasure at least in a thing where there was nothing better. The writers of this class were Rousseau, Diderot, and the rest of their school. Diderot was not at all an exemplary man ; far from that. One has no business to call him virtuous at all.\* Yet in all his books there is an endless talk about the "Pleasure of Virtue," and "how miserable the vicious must be,"—quite as with Seneca.† Then the work they made about Dilettantism, the beauties of art ; an everlasting theme in that day.

In one word, there was then an universal manifestation of *consciousness* ; every one conscious of something beautiful in himself. And that we remark in Werter among others, that fine eye, the love of graceful things, which he knows he has ; and thinks very desirable that other men should know it too. It is really egoism. Just like a man taking out the most precious things he has in his house, and hanging them on the front wall of it, that others may see. He himself can derive no benefit from them all the while they are there, at all, but only when he gets them back in his own house again. The most fatal thing in men is that recognising of their advantages ; all founded in that cursed system of self-conceit, I can call it by no other name ; it has never existed but for the ruin of a man.

\* "Diderot is not what we call indelicate and indecent ; he is utterly unclean, scandalous, shameless, sansculottic—samoeidic." *Miscellanies* Vol. IV. p. 326. Mr. Morley tries to palliate this. "Diderot was no worse than his neighbours, though we may well be sorry that a man of his generous sympathies and fine impulse was no better than his neighbours." *Diderot* Vol. I. p. 248.

† Cf. *Miscellanies* Vol. IV. p. 312. Diderot wrote a life and vindication of Seneca. *Vide* Morley, *Diderot* Vol. II. pp. 235-239.

All this went on more and more. It had gained everywhere a footing. The consequence was that men in public offices thought no more of their duties; each gave his business the go-by, when he found no emolument in it. It was long since any serious attempt had been made to renovate the state of affairs. The duty was not done, though the wages were taken. In that country—France—where Scepticism was at its highest extent, we can well conceive the end of the last century,—the crisis which then took place: the prurience of self-conceit; the talk of illumination; the darkness of confusion. The story of the Diamond Necklace for example, Goethe, that remarkable character, a close observer of the French Revolution, who understood better than any man the meaning of it, regarded this strange incident of the Necklace as so much “half-burned flax in a powder magazine.”\* It was but a spark amid this combustible matter. Such a depth of wickedness was there then in men!

Rousseau.

Another symptom that this Scepticism was about to end was the new French kind of belief,—belief in the new doctrine of Rousseau, though he did not begin it,—that had been already done by Mably, Montesquieu, Robertson and other writers on what they called *Constitution*. But Rousseau, a kind of half-mad man, but of tender pity too, struggling for sincerity through his whole life, till his own vanity and egoism drove him quite blind and desperate, Rousseau, I say, among these writers was the first to come to the conclusion of the *Contrat Social*. But before that, he wrote essays on the savage state, that it was better to live there than in that state of society around him. We have a curious anecdote given by himself in his *Confessions* of the manner in which he first formed his political opinions.† He had been

\* Vide Carlyle's essay on the Necklace in *Miscellanies* Vol. V.

† *Confessions* Bk. IV.

wandering about somewhere\* in the south of France, and being very tired and hungry he called at a cottage and asked for food. They told him they had none. He persisted in asking for some, "were it only a crust of bread;" and at last the cottager gave him some black mouldy bread, and water. He took this with thanks, spoke in a cheerful and conversible manner, and won upon the heart of his host. Whereupon the latter told him to stop; and he opened a press, and took from it some extremely good food which he set before him, telling him that he was obliged to keep very secret the possession of what comforts he had, "or he would soon have no food for his mouth, nor clothes to his back," which the king's tax-gatherer would not seize, or his lord's bailiff. From that time, Rousseau says,† he became a democrat. He began, at first, as I said, disquisitions on savage society. Then followed a kind of revocation of that, a summing up of his ideas in the *Contrat Social*,—the fundamental idea of the French Revolution, by which a final stop was put to the course of this Scepticism, and all things came to their ultimatum.

The French Revolution was one of the frightfullest French phenomena ever seen among men. Goethe who lived in the middle of it, as it were, declared that when it broke out and for years after, he thought it "like to sweep himself away with it, and the landmarks of every thing he best  
Revolution.

\* Near Lyons.

† "What the peasant said to me on this subject (of which I had not the smallest idea) made an impression on my mind that can never be effaced, sowing seeds of that inextinguishable hatred which has since grown up in my heart against the vexations these unhappy people suffer, and against their oppressors. This man, though in easy circumstances, dared not eat the bread gained by the sweat of his brow and could only escape destruction by exhibiting an outward appearance of misery! I left his cottage with as much indignation as concern, deploring the fate of those beautiful countries, where nature has been prodigal of her gifts, only that they may become the prey of barbarous exactors." *Confessions* Bk. IV. Eng. Transl. (1861) p. 132. Cf. John Morley *Rousseau* Vol. I. p. 67.

knew," into one wild, black darkness and confusion. However he at last got to know it better than any other one of his time. It was after all a new revelation of an old truth to this unfortunate people; they beheld indeed the truth clad in hell-fire; but they got the truth. This was how it ended. But it began in all the golden radiance of hope, the belief that if men would but meet and arrange in some way the constitution, that then a new heaven and new earth would come down together in this world; for they supposed that we were all arranged right enough *personally*; only that we needed the arrangement of the *constitution*. Accordingly they arranged it in the most perfect sincerity of heart. It is impossible to doubt this sincerity; take for example the Federation of 1790,\* undertaken in the real spirit of fraternity; a scene of the most infantine simplicity, men falling each on the other's neck with tears of brotherly affection; and all swore that they would keep that law. All classes were rejoiced at the intelligence of this. For the upper class of people it was the joyfulest of news. Now at last they had got something to *do*. To them, therefore, more even than to the lower classes, these news were joyful: certainly to *starve* to death is hard, but not so hard as to *idle* to death. These people were therefore glad; no nation was ever so glad. This was in 1790.

Two years and six weeks after that, the September massacres began! They had never been contemplated when the Revolution commenced; no man friendly to the Revolution had any idea of it. But these people had no principle in what they did, but the idea of their duty to give happiness to themselves and one another;—that was their virtue. This is not a true notion of virtue. A man who would be virtuous must not expect to find happiness here; we cannot flatter him that virtue is to give him temporal happiness:

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\* *Vide* Carlyle, *French Revolution* Vol. II. Bk. I. c. xi.

it is too often allied to physical suffering. We can say then How he be-  
 as to these phenomena of the French Revolution in general, came a demo-  
 that where dishonest and foolish people are, there will always crat.  
 be dishonesty and folly. We cannot distil knavery into  
 honesty.

The next fact we have to notice is, that in such a consum- Europe and  
 mation Europe would infallibly rise against it, and try to put the Revolu-  
 it down and it actually did so. Nor could Europe avoid it. tion.  
 Europe had a right to do what it did, just as the French Re-  
 volution, which it tried to crush, had a right to be. For the  
 poor people, ground down to the lowest stage of oppression  
 and misery, had a right to rise and strive to be rid of it. They  
 had rather be shot than endure it any longer. And Europe,  
 which saw that this could not end with France but that the  
 interests of all its nations were to be transacted on that arena,  
 had a right too to put it down if it could. And there was no  
 way to adjust these two rights, except to fight it out,—that  
 dismal conclusion! Europe therefore assembled and came  
 round France, and tried to crush the Revolution; but could  
 not crush it at all. It was the primeval feeling of nature  
 they came to crush; round it the old spirit of fanaticism had  
 rallied; and it stood up and asserted itself; and made Europe  
 know, even in the marrow of its bones, that it was there.  
 Buonaparte set his foot on the necks of the nations of Europe!

Buonaparte himself was a Reality, at first, though after- Napoleon.  
 wards he turned all wrong and false. But his appreciation  
 of the French Revolution was a good one, that it was “the  
 “career open to talents”\*; not simply, as Siéyes supposed, a  
 thing consisting of two chambers, or of one chamber. And  
 this in fact is the aim of all good government in these days,  
 to get every good, able man into action. All Europe tends  
 there, to put the ablest man in a situation to do good.

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\* Cf. his maxim frequently quoted by Carlyle, ‘*la carrière ouverte aux talents.*’ Cf. *Heroes* lect. VI.

Buonaparte at last set himself up, put out the Bourbons, set up the Buonapartes. But the thing could not be done. He made wars, and went about plundering everybody ; and the consequence was that, as all the *sovereigns* had been provoked before, France provoked every *man* now ! In Germany at last he stirred up that old Berserkir-rage against him, by which he burned himself up in a day ; and France then got ordered back into its own boundaries.

Thus the French Revolution was only a great outburst of the truth, that this world was not a mere chimera, but a great reality—this earth. Scepticism was ended ; and the way laid open to new things, whenever they should offer. In my next lecture, I think, I shall show you that there *is* a new thing. We shall perceive the streaks of something better developing itself in Europe.

## PERIOD IV.

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### LECTURE XII.

OF MODERN GERMAN LITERATURE—GOETHE AND HIS WORKS—  
SCHILLER—JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

[MONDAY, 11TH JUNE 1888.]

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DURING the last two or three lectures we have brought the history of that particular phenomenon of European culture which we are obliged to denominate scepticism, down to its last manifestation, the great, but not at all universally-understood phenomenon of the French Revolution,—the burning-up of scepticism—an enormous phenomenon. It was, we said, the inevitable consummation of such a thing as scepticism. The life of man cannot subsist on doubt, on denial: it subsists only on belief, attaching itself to bring out of any particular theory what life it offers. The French Revolution began some centuries before it finally broke out; a rude condition, to go through all Europe, a fiery phenomenon to go through all the world; it was indispensable! Yet frightful as it was in itself, and as productive of a bloody twenty-five years' war, we ought to welcome it; it was the price of what is indispensable to our existence: and at that time the world at whatever price must have got done with scepticism. The human mind cannot for ever live in bitter sneering contrast with what lies about it; it must turn back at last to communion once more with nature. It was therefore a cheering thing; a priceless worth was in it. By it the European family got its feet once more out of the mists and clouds of logic, and got down again to a firm

footing on the ground. It is now nearly twenty-five years since the first act of this drama finished, and Napoleon who, from being the 'great armed Soldier of Democracy,'\* became at last a poor egoist and with his ambition and rapacities provoked the whole earth, got flung out in the end to St. Helena, as an instrument which providence had once made use of, but had done with now. It becomes then interesting for us to enquire what we are to look for now; in what condition has this consummation left the minds of men? Are we to reckon on a new period of things, of better, infinitely extending hopes, or is scepticism still to go on in the same phasis through Europe? To these questions we shall direct our attention to-day.

In the first place I must remark that if we admit the French Revolution to be such a thing as it really is we shall see that such a continuance of old things had become altogether impossible,† that all things predicted of it had come to pass, that men had shaken off their formulas, and awoke out of the nightmare that had so long gone on crushing the life out of them, that state of paralysis: and that so awakened, man like as in the fable of Antæus gathered strength and life once more as he touched the earth and its realities. If we look over the history of Europe, both prior to the French Revolution, and since, we see good in store for us; the political world, if not better regulated, still regulated by a reality; and, independently of that, the spiritual side of things undergoing a great change also, by means of the modern school in German literature, a literature presenting a character far more cheering to us than any literature that has appeared for a long series of generations.

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\* Cf. *Miscellanies* Vol. V. p. 248.

† Cf. the famous denunciation of the Eighteenth Century. 'The grand universal Suicide named the French Revolution by which the Eighteenth Century terminated its otherwise worthless existence,' etc. *Friedrich* Vol. I. p. 11.



In the second place, we can notice here a striking illustration of the ancient fable of the Phoenix. The ancients had a wise meaning in all these fables, far deeper than any of their philosophies have. All things are mortal in this world : everything that exists in time, exists with the law of change and mortality imprinted upon it ; it is the story of the Phoenix, which periodically, after a thousand years, becomes a funeral pyre of its own creation, and so out of its own ashes becomes a new Phoenix. It is the law of all things. Paganism, for example, in its time, produced many great things, brave and noble men, till it at last came to fall and crumble away into a mere disputatious philosophy. And so down to the Protestant system. For the middle ages in this respect answered to the heroic ages of old Greece : and as Homer had lived, so Dante lived. Similarly the destruction of the Roman system of Paganism, (for the Romans had their distinct system, very different from that of the Greeks), like the introduction of Protestantism, was followed by its own period of Werterism, a kind of blind struggle in it against the evils that lay around it, and ending at last in what was infinitely more terrific than any French Revolution, that wild in-bursting of all the barbarous peoples into the old world, long spell-bound by the Roman name, but now determined not to endure any longer the domination of so degraded and profligate a race ; when, I say, these barbarians gathered themselves and burst in on that world and consumed it,—the awfulest period ever known. And just so in later times the French Revolution, that bursting in of the masses, who could not starve, could not submit to it, but must rise up and get rid of the oppression that weighed them down ; this, I say, is little less remarkable while it lasts, until there is found force enough in society to subdue it.

End of Paganism and the end of Scepticism both violent.

These things therefore before being now finished and lying German behind us, we now, naturally enough, might enquire what Literature.

new doctrine it is that is now proposed to us, what is the meaning of German literature? But this question is not susceptible of an immediate answer. It is one of the chief qualities of German literature, that it has no particular theory at all in the front of it; and very little of theory is to be had, posted there, offered for sale to us. The men who constructed the German literature had quite other objects in view. Their object was not to teach the world, but to work out in some manner an enfranchisement for their own souls, to save themselves from being crushed down by the world. And, on the contrary, seeing here what I have been always convinced I saw, the blessed, thrice blessed phenomenon of men unmaimed in all that constitutes man, able to believe and be in all things men; seeing this, I say, there is here the thing that has all other things presupposed in it. It needed but the first time to have been ever done; the second time they would have found it a great deal easier to do.

As to their particular doctrines, there is nothing definite or precise to be said. How they thought or felt, how they proposed to bring in the heroic age again, how they did their task, can only be learned by dint of reading and studying long what it is these men found it good to say. Doubtless there are few here who are as yet sufficiently acquainted with the language to make that study. But I hope it will be not many years before it will be difficult to get any audience to be gathered here to have a lecture upon the Literature of Germany without having read its chief productions. To explain them best, I can only think of the revelation, for I call it no other, that these men made to me. It was to me like the rising of a light in the darkness which lay around and threatened to swallow me up. I was then in the very midst of Werterism,—the blackness and darkness of death. There was one thing in particular which struck me in Goethe.

First revelation of it to Carlyle.

It is in his *Wilhelm Meister*. He had been describing an association of all sorts of people of talent, formed to receive propositions and give responses to them ; all which he described with a sort of seriousness at first, but with irony at the last. However those people had long had their eye on Wilhelm Meister, with great cunning, watching over him at a distance at first, and not interfering with him too soon. At last the man who was entrusted with the management of the thing, took him in hand, and began to give him an account of how the association acted. Now this is the thing which as I said so much struck me. He tells Wilhelm Meister that "a number of applications for advice were daily made to the Association, which were answered thus and thus. *But that many people wrote in particular for recipes of happiness.* All that," he adds "was laid on the shelf, and not answered at all." Now this thing gave me great surprise when I read it. What! I said, is it not the *recipe* of happiness that I have been seeking all my life? And is not it precisely because I have failed in finding it that I am now miserable and discontented? Had I supposed, as some people do, that Goethe was fond of paradoxes,—that this was consistent with the sincerity and modesty of the man's mind—I had certainly rejected it without further trouble ; but I could not think it. At length after turning it up a great while in my own mind, I got to see that it was *very true*, what he said ; that it was the thing all the world was in error in.\* No man has the right to ask for a *recipe* of happiness ; he can do without happiness. There is something better than that. All kinds of men who have done great things, priests, prophets, sages, have had in them something higher than the love of happiness to guide them to spiritual clearness and perfection,—a far better thing than happiness. Love of happiness is but a kind of hunger at the best : a craving because I have not

\* *Vide Sartor* Bk. II. c. ix. cf. Matthew Arnold, *Discourses in America* pp. 198 seq.

enough of sweet provision in this world. If I am asked what that higher thing is, I cannot at once make answer; I am afraid of causing mistake.\* There is no name I can give it that is not to be questioned. I could not speak about it; there is no name for it, but pity for that heart that does not feel it. There is no good volition in that heart. This higher thing was once named "the Cross of Christ,"—not a happy thing *that* surely,—"The Worship of sorrow," named, by the old heroic martyrs, named in all the heroic sufferings, all the heroic acts of men. I do not mean to say that the whole creed of German Literature can be reduced to this one thing: it would be absurd to say so. But that was the commencement of it. And just as William Penn said of the Pagan system, that Christianity was not come to destroy what was true in it, but to purify it of the errors, and then to embrace it within itself, so I began to see, with respect to this world of ours, that the Phoenix was not burnt wholly up when its ashes were scattered in the French Revolution; but that there was yet some thing immortal in all things that were genuine, which now survived; and for the future to cherish all hopes. For it is the special nature of man to have comfort by him, to aid and support himself. If there is any one of you here, now prosecuting the same kinds of studies as I then did, and has not arrived at it yet by the way of his own (for there are many ways to it), he will, when he first discovers this high truth, be anxious to know what it is, and get better and better acquainted with it, and I trust that you also may be enabled to realise to yourselves what I have realised to myself. I shall now proceed to point out one or two figures in German literature, one or two men who have been the chief speakers in it.

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\* Cf. *Miscellanies* Vol. III. pp. 53, 57.

Of the philosophers of Germany, the metaphysicians of Carlyle's Germany, I shall say nothing at present. I studied them experience of once attentively, but I found that I got nothing out of them. German me-

One may just say of them that they are precisely opposite to Hume :—Hume starting out of materialism and sensualism, certain of nothing, except that he himself was alive ; while the Germans on the contrary start from the principle, “ that there is an universal truth in things,”—spiritualism ; that to try to go about seeking evidences for belief, is like one who would search for the sun at noon-day, by the light of a farthing rushlight. “ Blow out your rushlight,” they say, “ and you will soon see the sun.” But this study of metaphysics, I say, had only the result, after bringing me rapidly through different phases of opinion, at last to deliver me altogether out of metaphysics. I found it altogether a frothy system : no right beginning to it, no right ending, I began with Hume and Diderot, and as long as I was with them I ran at atheism, at blackness, at materialism of all kinds. If I read Kant, I arrived at precisely opposite conclusions, that all the world was spirit, namely,—that there was nothing material at all anywhere. And the result was what I have stated, that I resolved for my part on having nothing more to do with metaphysics at all.

The first writer I shall notice is Goethe. The appearance of Goethe. such a man at any given era, is in my opinion the greatest thing that can happen in it : a man who has the soul to think, and be the moral guide of his own nation, and of the whole world. All people that live under his influence, gather themselves round him : and therefore, although many writers made their appearance in Germany after him, Goethe was the man to whom they looked for inspiration ; they took from him the colour they assume. I can have little to say of him in these limits. I can say of him the same as I said of

Goethe and  
Shakspeare.

Shakspeare.\* There has been no such man as himself since Shakspeare: he was not like Shakspeare; yet in some respects he came near to Shakespeare; in his clearance, tolerance, human depth. He too was a devout man. If you grant a devout man, you grant a wise man. No man has a seeing eye, without first having had a seeing heart. Otherwise the genius of man is but spasmodic and frothy. I should say therefore that the thing one often hears, "that such and such a man is a wise man, but a man of a base heart," is altogether an impossibility, thank Heaven! Virtue is the palladium of our intellects. If wickedness were consistent with wisdom, we should often have the devil in this world of ours regulating all our affairs; but the thing is impossible. Thus all the things in Shakspeare breathe of wisdom and morality, and all are *one*. So if you grant me Goethe's worth, you grant me all things besides it. Indeed we may find his greatness in this one fact. We saw his *Werter* and *Berlichingen* appear, those fountain-heads of that European literature, which has been going on ever since. Goethe himself soon got out of that altogether, and he resolved to be sincere once more; being convinced that it was all wrong, nonsense, mean, and paltry: and that if there was nothing better to be done with it, he ought to hold his tongue about it altogether. This was to feel like one who was to become one of the kings of this world. Accordingly for twenty years after that, while all Germany was raging, as we saw, and the whole people had in a manner become one set of desperate, whiskered man-haters, Goethe held his peace: fame to him was little in comparison with an enfranchised soul. His next work (for *Faust*, properly speaking, belongs to the *Werter* period) was *Wilhelm Meister* published in the year 1795. This is a strange book; and, though it does not fly away on the winds like *Werter*, it is even stranger than

*Wilhelm  
Meister.*

\* For Shakspeare and Goethe, *vide Miscellanies* Vol. IV, pp. 92 seq. cf. Lewes, *Life of Goethe* pp. 53-54.

*Werter*. At this time the man has got himself organised at last, built up; his mind adjusted to what he cannot cure: not suicidally grinding itself to pieces. But there was no piety yet in him. It is very curious to observe, how, at this time, ideal, art, painting, poetry, were in his view the highest things: goodness being only included in it. There is even no positive recognition of a God, but only of a stubborn force; really a kind of heathen thing. Still there is some belief: belief in himself, that most useful of all beliefs. He got that when his strength was at its highest. As his mind gets higher, more concentrated in itself, (for Goethe lived very silent, the most silent of men) in its own privacy, it becomes more serious too, uttering tones of most beautiful devoutness; recognition of all things that are true in the world. For example, in the continuation\* of his *Wilhelm Meister*, written when he was near seventy years old, there is a chapter that has been called the best chapter ever yet written on Christianity,†—I never met anywhere with a

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\* Lewes thinks very little of this *Wanderjahre*. *Life* p. 532, cf. A. Hayward, *Goethe* p. 178.

† "That last Religion which arises from the reverence of what is beneath us; that veneration of the contradictory, the hated, the avoided, we give to each of our pupils, in small portions, by way of profit, along with him into the world, merely that he may know where more is to be had, should such a want spring up within him. I invite you to return hither at the end of a year to attend our general Festival, and see how far your son is advanced: then shall you be admitted into the *Sanctuary of Sorrow*."

"Permit me one question," said Wilhelm: "as you have set up the life of this divine Man for a pattern and example, have you likewise selected his sufferings, his death, as a model of exalted patience?"

"Undoubtedly we have," replied the Eldest. "Of this we make no secret, but we draw a veil over those sufferings, even because we reverence them so highly. We hold it a damnable audacity to bring forth that torturing Cross, and the Holy One who suffers on it, or to expose them to the light of the Sun, which hid its face when a reckless world forced such a sight on it; to make these mysterious secrets, in which the *divine depth of Sorrow* lies hid, and play with them, fondle them, trick them out, and rest not till the most reverend of all solemnities appear vulgar and paltry. Let so much for the present suffice."—*Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre* chap. xi.

"To our judgment there is a fine and pure significance in this whole delineation; such phrases even as 'the Sanctuary of Sorrow,' 'the divine

better. It is out of that that I quoted\* that beautiful phrase applied to Christianity,—“the Worship of Sorrow,” also styled by him “the Divine Depth of Sorrow.” Also in the *West-Oestlicker Divan*. last book of all he ever wrote, the most considerable book, in a poetical view,—the *West-Oestlicker Divan*†—we have the same display of pious feeling. Yet it is in form a Mahomedan-Persian series of delineations, but its whole spirit is Christian; it is that of Goethe himself, the old poet who goes up and down, singing little snatches of his feelings on different things. It grows extremely beautiful as it goes on; full of the finest things possible which sound like “the jingling of bells when the Queen of the Fairies rides abroad.” The whole gathers itself up in the end into what Goethe thinks on matters at large. But we can see that what he spoke is not the thousandth part of what lay in him. It is in fact the

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depth of Sorrow,' have of themselves a pathetic wisdom for us; as indeed a tone of devoutness, of calm, mild, priestlike dignity pervades the whole. In a time like ours, it is rare to see, in the writings of cultivated men, any opinion whatever bearing any mark of sincerity on such a subject as this: yet it is and continues the highest subject, and they that are highest are most fit for studying it, and helping others to study it.”—*Miscellaneous* Vol. I. p. 304.

\* *Vide* p. 57 *supra*.

† “In 1812 and 1813 Joseph von Hammer published a translation of Hafis' ‘*Divan*’ or collection of poems. This gave Goethe the idea for his *Divan* which he began in 1814 and published in 1819. The poems are arranged according to a definite order in twelve books, and soar from earthly love, hatred and enjoyment to the heights of Paradise. At the end there are some short elucidatory essays, embracing a wide field of reflection. The whole work is, one might almost say, phenomenal, so deep and suggestive are the poet's thoughts. Goethe pretends to be taking refuge in the East from a world in which thrones are falling, kingdoms trembling; but in the Eastern world it is the analogies with the West, which attract him, and while calling himself a fugitive he really never leaves home. . . . The foreign dress is throughout but a slight disguise; the style of Persian poetry is imitated, but never too slavishly, by pregnant sayings and surprising combinations; the Oriental element penetrates the Western element like a rare perfume, without altering it in substance. Islamism is assumed to be the dominant religion, but behind it there appears the old Persian Nature-worship, just as Goethe's Pantheism appears behind Christianity.”—Scherer, *German Literature* Vol. II. p. 273. *Vide* Lewes, *Life of Goethe* p. 522. The *Divan* written in his 65th year was not the last book he wrote; the Second Part of *Faust* was completed in his 81st year.



principal charm in him that he has the meaning to speak what is to be spoken—to be silent on what is not to be spoken.

Alongside of Goethe we must rank Schiller. By-the-bye, I have said nothing about the objections sometimes made to Goethe. It is a mortifying thing to feel that want of recognition among men which a great writer is subject to. Not that Goethe has not had in general an ample recognition; but still there are men, whose ideas are not nonentities at all, but who very much differ about Goethe and his character. One thing that has been said of him very strangely is, that in all his writing he appears “too happy”;—a most amazing accusation against a man: much more against Goethe, who tells us that in his youth he could often have run a dagger into his heart. He could at any time have been as miserable, if he liked, as these critics could wish; but he very wisely kept his misery to himself; or rather misery was to him the problem he had to solve, the work he had to do. Thus when somebody on seeing his portrait, exclaimed, *Voilà un homme qui a eu beaucoup de chagrins* he instantly replied, ‘No; but of one rather who has turned his sufferings into useful work.’\* Another objection made to him has been that he never took part in the political troubles of his time; never acted either as a reformer or a conservative. And he did right not to meddle with these miserable disputes. † To expect this of his genius would be like asking the moon to come out of the heavens, and become a mere street torch, and to go out then.

Schiller has been more generally admired than Goethe: and Schiller, no doubt he was a noble man. But his qualification for literature was in every way narrower than Goethe’s. The principal characteristic of Schiller is a chivalry of thought, des-

\* *Vide Miscellanies* Vol. I. p. 262.

† *Vide Miscellanies* Vol. IV. p. 197. Lewes, *Life of Goethe* pp. 367, 513; Herman Merivale, *Historical Studies* pp. 175-179.

cribed by Goethe as "the Spirit of Freedom," struggling ever forward to be free. It was this which produced the *Robbers*. Goethe says that "the very shape of his body, and the air with which he walked, showed the determined lover of freedom; one who could not brook the notion of slavery"—and that, not only under men, but under any thing else. But Schiller notwithstanding this, in my opinion, could not have written one good poem, if he had not met with Goethe. At the time of their meeting he had last written his play of *Don Karlos*; a play full of high-sounding but startling things,—the principal character, Mendoza, in particular, talks very grandly and largely throughout. It is well described as being like to "a lighthouse, high, far—seen, and withal empty." It is in fact very like what the people of that day, the Girondists of the French Revolution, were always talking about the *bonheur du peuple*, and the rest. To this point then Schiller had arrived; when being tired of this kind of composition, he left poetry, apparently for ever, and wrote several very sound historical books, and nothing else. Goethe, who was ten years older than Schiller, first met him at this period.\* He did not court an acquaintance with him; in fact he says himself that he "disliked Schiller," and kept out of his way as much as possible. Schiller also disliked Goethe for his "cold impassivity," and tried to avoid him too. However they happened to come together, and a mutual friendship ensued. And it was very creditable to Schiller, how he attached himself to Goethe, and sought his instructions; and how he got light out of Goethe. There was always something, however, *monastic* in Schiller. He never attempted to bring the great page of life into poetry, but would retire into corners and deal with it there. He was too aspiring, too restless; it brought

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\* Vide Carlyle, *Life of Schiller* p. 78.

him to the bed of sickness. He could not live in communion with earth. It is melancholy to read how in his latter days he used to spend whole nights in his garden-house, drinking wine-chocolate,—a beverage of which I can form no notion,—to excess. There he was often seen by his neighbours declaiming and gesticulating ; and writing his tragedies. His health became completely destroyed by it ; and finally he died at the age of forty. There was a nobleness in Schiller, a brotherly feeling, a kindness of sympathy for what is true and just. There was a kind of silence, too, at the last. He gave up his talk about the “*bonheur du peuple*,” and tried to see if he could *make* them happier instead. Accordingly his poems became better and better after his acquaintance with Goethe. His *Wilhelm Tell* was the best thing he ever wrote : there runs a kind of melody through it ; the descriptions of the herdsmen of the Alps are exquisite. It is a kind of Swiss thing itself ; at least there are passages in it which are quite in that character. It properly finishes at the fourth act : the fifth was afterwards added, as the rules of the drama obliged him to write it ; but this, though it may have been considered a fault, is not a fault for the reader.

The third great writer in modern German literature, whom Jean Paul I intend to notice, is Jean Paul Friedrich Richter. Richter was a man of a large stature too,—he seems indeed to be greater than either ; but in my opinion he was far inferior to Goethe. He was a man of hard life ; miserable enough for the people even who complain of Goethe. I do not mean that he was unhappy in any particular circumstance ; but what I do say is that he had not gained a complete victory over the world as Goethe had done. Goethe was a strong man, as strong as the mountain rocks, but as soft as the greensward upon those rocks, and like them continually

His difficult  
but gorgeous  
style.

bright and sun-beshone. Richter on the contrary was what he has been called a "half-made" man ; he struggled with the world but was never completely triumphant over it. But one loves Richter ; he is most universally to be loved indeed, provided one can get to read him. But that is a great proviso ! For his style is as confused and unintelligible, as Goethe's is the best of styles ; like the clear harmony of Xenophon ; but far deeper than Xenophon. As he is the best of the Germans for style, Richter is the worst : he cannot get half the things said that he has to say—a confused, strange, tumultuous style. It is like some tangled American forest, where the axe has never been, and no path lies through it. For my part I tried to understand him over and over again, before I succeeded. But I got finally to perceive his way of thinking, and I found a strange kind of order in him at last ; and it was quite easy after that to make him out. His is a most gorgeous style ; not an articulate voice, but like the sound of cataracts falling among the wild pine forests. It goes deep to the human heart. A man of a great intellect, great heart, great character,—all exemplified in his way of life. His father had been a clergyman who dying, when he was young, had left him in charge to his mother, a foolish woman, by whom his patrimony was completely wasted. In his twenty-fifth year he entered the University of Leipzig. He was at this time of a strange nature ; there was a sort of affectation in him : not only he had not words to express his ideas, but those he had were not good enough. He found the professors in his eyes very feeble individuals. He met there however, Ernesti the distinguished scholar, for whom he had a great regard. Yet his college life was one of great privations. He says : in gaols "the prisoner's allowance is bread and water ; I had the latter but not the former"—plenty of water, but no bread ! Yet he was a cheerful, indomitable

man amid it all ; he held his peace and struggled on, determined to wait his time. That time came. The people of the college had thought him mad, but he soon proved to them that he was not a madman. For he bestirred himself, and wrote books which became very successful. I recommend my friends here that know German to read his novels, to struggle through his difficulties of style, and get acquainted with him. He has among other qualities that of great joyousness. There is more joyous laughter in the heart of His joyous Richter than in any other German writer. Goethe has it to a certain extent, and Schiller too ; but Richter goes into it with all his heart. It is a deep laughter,—a wild laughter ; and connected with that, there is the deepest seriousness. Thus his *Dreams*\*—they are as deep as those of Dante ; dreams of annihilation ;—not surpassed perhaps except by the Prophetic books of the Bible.

There are yet many more writers besides those I have named, but I have not time for them. What can I do ? I can but invite my friends to get acquainted with them, and find out for themselves the nature of the belief that is in these men. They will find in them not a theory, not the demonstration of motion, but they will see men walking, which is far better !

I shall add but a few words on our prospects of what is next to come. I think therefore that we have much reason to hope about the future. Great things are in store for us. The world has but begun to enter on this new course ; and wise men will, I trust, continue to come and devote themselves to it. This hope assures me when I see people in a

\* " The reader has heard much of Richter's *Dreams*, with what strange prophetic power he rules over that chaos of spritual Nature, bodying forth a whole world of Darkness, broken by pallid gleams, or wild sparkles of light, and peopled with huge, shadowy, bewildered shapes, full of grandeur and meaning. No Poet known to us, not Milton himself, shows such a vastness of Imagination ; such a rapt, deep, Old-Hebrew spirit, as Richter in these scenes."—*Miscellanies* Vol. II. p. 369.

deep distress about it. For I feel that it is possible for us to be free ; to attain to the possession of a spiritual freedom, compared with which, political enfranchisement is but a name ; not living on any longer in a blind sensualism and egotism, but succeeding to get out, and be free, out of this state of nightmare and paralysis. It is my hope that the words which were spoken by Richter in the end of the eighteenth century are to come true in this. It is a most remarkable passage, and I must endeavour to give it you. He had been saying that on the outgates of European history he thought he could read, inscribed—a similar inscription to that which the Russians had engraved on the iron gate of Derban,\* “ Here goes the road to Constantinople”,—that so, on the outgates of events he could also read, “ Here goes the road to virtue.” “ But as yet,” he goes on to say, “ as yet are struggles ; it is now the twelfth hour of the night” (it was indeed an awful period) ; “ birds of darkness are on the wing” (evil and foul things were meditated on) ; “ the spectres uproar ; the dead walk ; the living dream. Thou, Eternal Providence, wilt cause the day to dawn ! ”

I cannot close this lecture better than by repeating these words of Richter : “ Thou, Eternal Providence, wilt cause the day to dawn.”

Farewell !

Nothing now remains for me but to take my leave of you—  
a sad thing at all times that word, but doubly so in this case.

\* Sic in MS. and Anstey has queried it. It should be ‘ Cherson ’ as may be seen from Richter’s *Hesperus* where the passage occurs. The whole passage is given by Carlyle in his essay on Jean Paul, *Miscellanies* Vol. II. p. 369 : ‘ But there will come another era,’ says Paul, ‘ when it shall be light, and man will awaken from his lofty dreams, and find his dreams still there, and that nothing is gone save his sleep. The stones and rocks, which two veiled Figures (Necessity and Vice), like Deucalion and Pyrrha, are casting behind them, at Goodness, will themselves become men.

‘ And on the Western-gate (‘ *Abendthor* evening-gate’) of this century stands written : Here is the way to Virtue and Wisdom, as on the Western-gate at Cherson stands the proud Inscription ; here is the way to Byzance.

‘ Infinite Providence, Thou wilt cause the day to dawn.’ ‘ But as yet, struggles the twelfth-hour of the night ; the nocturnal birds of prey are on the wing, spectres uproar, the dead walk, the living dream.’

When I think of what you are, and of what I am, I cannot help feeling that you have been very kind to me. I will not trust myself to say how kind. But you have been as kind to me as ever audience was to man ; and the gratitude which I owe you comes to you from the bottom of my heart. May God be with you all !

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