VARIOUS

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Содержание

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ENGLISH LANDSCAPE – CONSTABLE. [1]

The appearance of the second edition of Leslie's *Life of Constable* invites attention to this truly English and original artist. We have read this volume with much interest. It is a graceful homage paid by a great living painter to the memory of one who is no more: a kindly, and, as we believe, an honest testimony to the moral and professional worth of one whose works stand out with a striking and distinct character in the English school of landscape-painting, and which, we are confident, will retain the place which they have slowly gained in public estimation, as long as a feeling of pictorial truth, in its more elevated sense, and as distinct from a mere literal imitation of details, shall continue to endure. Mr Leslie has accomplished his task with skill as well

[1] *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, Esq., R.A.* Composed chiefly of his Letters. By C. R. Leslie, R.A. Second Edition. Longmans.

as good sense; for, keeping the labours of the editor entirely in the background, he has made Constable his own biographer – the work consisting almost entirely of extracts from his notes, journals, and correspondence, linked together by the slenderest thread of narrative. Story indeed, it may be said, there was none to tell; for, among the proverbially uneventful lives of artists, that of Constable was perhaps the least eventful. His birth – his adoption of painting as a profession (for he was originally destined *pulverem collegisse* in the drier duties of a miller) – his marriage, after a long attachment, on which parents had looked frowningly, but which the lovers, by patient endurance and confidence in each other, brought to a successful issue – his death, just when he had begun to feel that the truth and originality of his style were becoming better appreciated both abroad and at home; these, with the hopes, and fears, and anxieties for a rising family, which diversify the married life with alternate joys and sorrows, form, in truth, the only incidents in his history. The incidents of a painter's life, in fact, are the foundation of his character, the gradual development to his own mind of the principles of his art; and with Constable's thoughts and opinions, his habits of study, the growth of his style – if that term can be applied to the manner of one whose great anxiety it was to have no distinguishable *style* whatever – with his manly, frank, affectionate, and somewhat hasty disposition, with his strong self-reliance, and, as we may sometimes think, his overweening self-esteem – his strength of mind and his weaknesses – this

volume makes us familiarly acquainted.

Constable was born in 1776, at East Bergholt in Sussex. His father was in comfortable circumstances, as may be gathered from the fact, that the artist (one of six children) ultimately inherited £4000 as his share of the succession. He was thus entirely exempted from the *res angusta* with which artists have so often to labour; although, with the characteristic improvidence of his profession, we still find that he had enough to do to make both ends meet. Born delicate, he grew up a strong and healthy boy, and was intended by his father, who had succeeded by purchase or inheritance to sundry wind and water mills, for a miller. Nay, for about a year, Constable actually performed that duty at one of his father's mills, and, it is said, faithfully and assiduously. Yet he contrived to turn even this episode in his life to some advantage. He treasured up a multitude of mental studies of clouds and skies, which, to the wind-miller, are always objects of peculiar interest, and acquired that familiarity with mills and their adjuncts which justified his brother's observation – "When I look at a mill painted by John, I see that it will *go round*, which is not always the case with those by other artists."

Even before his short trial of a miller's life, his love of drawing and painting had shown itself; but, receiving little countenance from his father, he had established a little sanctuary of his own in a workshop of a neighbouring plumber and glazier, John Dunthorne, a man of some intelligence, and himself an indefatigable artist on an humble scale. His mother, who seems

from the first to have had something like a prophetic anticipation of his future eminence, procured him an introduction to Sir George Beaumont, who frequently visited his mother, the dowager Lady Beaumont, then residing at Dedham. The sight of a beautiful Claude – "The Hagar" – which Sir George generally carried with him when he travelled, and of some water-colour drawings by Girtin, which Sir George advised him to study as examples of truth and breadth, seem to have determined his wavering resolution to become a painter; and the combined influence of Claude and Girtin may, indeed, be traced more or less during the whole course of his practice. His father appeared at last to have given a reluctant consent, and the mill was abandoned for the painting-room, or rather for the study of nature in the open air, among the forest glades and by the still streams of Suffolk.

Suffolk, certainly, might not appear at first sight to be the place which one would choose for the education of a great painter. Mountains it has none; to the sublimity arising from lake or precipice, or the desolate expanse of moor and fell, it has no pretension; from the spots where Constable chiefly studied, even the prospect of old ocean was shut out; the country presented, as he himself describes it, only gentle declivities, luxuriant meadow flats, sprinkled with flocks and herds, quiet but clear streams, villages, farms, woodlands —

"The slow canal, the yellow-blossom'd vale,

The willow-tufted bank and gliding sail."

What influence scenery of a higher class might have had on Constable's mind, it is not easy to decide; as it was, the narrow circuit of a few miles round Bergholt, within which the materials of his pictures are chiefly found, became for him the epitome of English nature; and he associated the very ideal of beauty with those quiet nooks and scenes of tranquillity and amenity, where he had first exercised his pencil, and amidst which in after life he loved to linger.

And in truth, to a creative mind – for "it is the soul that sees," and renders back its vision – how much of beauty, picturesque variety, nay, under certain aspects and conditions of the atmosphere, how much of grandeur existed within this narrow circle! A friend of ours has maintained an ingenious thesis, that there is no such thing as a bad day in nature; though whether, after the aspect of the present summer, he retains his opinion, we think may be questioned. Constable certainly held a similar theory with regard to beauty in landscape. "Madam," said he to a lady who had denounced some object as ugly – "there is nothing ugly. I never saw an ugly thing in my life; for let the form of an object be what it may, light, shade, and perspective will always make it beautiful." This, indeed, was the talisman with which he worked; *light and shade*– the magic of *chiaro-scuro* applied to the simple elements of form which the rich pastures and woods of Suffolk afforded, and a power of exhibiting the

varied influences and character of the skies, which, if it has been equalled by Turner, Calcott, and Fielding, has certainly never been surpassed by any British landscape-painter.

Let us glance at some of those pictures of tranquil English nature which Constable's landscapes afford; – not professing to follow the details of any particular picture, but embodying from recollection a few of their leading features, as exhibited under those lights or atmospheric effects, which he generally selected as in harmony with the sentiment of his scenes.

We are standing, for instance, on a broken foreground, across which the brier, the dog-rose, and the white bindweed have clasped themselves in fantastic tendrils. The white hemlock shoots up rankly by the hedge, and the tall bulrush and water-lily mark the course of the little stream which is sliding noiselessly past among the grass. It is early morning, as we see by the long oblique shadows. Yet industry is already at work. The wheel of that weather-stained and lichen-covered mill – call it Flatford if you will – is in motion, and the dripping water, glancing in the morning sun, descends from the cogs in a shower of diamonds. The stream that supplies the mill is crossed further down by a rustic bridge, as picturesque as it is inconvenient. Beyond, and towards the centre, a long wooded lane stretches out towards the horizon, close and overarching at top, but with the sunbeams straggling in between the trunks, and checkering the cool road with a network of light and shadow. About midway, a small spring, trickling from a bank, has been collected in a

rude stone trough, for the refreshment of panting horse and wayworn traveller; beside which two market wains – the one on its way to the neighbouring town, the other returning from it – have stopped. The horses are watering; the waggoners gossiping over the news, or smoking together the calumet of peace; while a group of urchins, in whom the embryo ostler or future strapper are easily detected, are looking on with that interest in all that concerns horseflesh which distinguishes the rising members of an agricultural population. Beyond the lane are gentle hills, "rounded about by the low wavering sky" – some smoke indicating the market-town, and the spire of the village church leading the eye out of the picture, and crowning the cheerful serenity of the landscape.

The day advances, and the scene is changed. In the foreground we have a building-yard by the river. Boats and barges are seen in their rise, progress, decline, and fall; – some completed, some exhibiting merely their skeletons upon the stocks; some blistering in the sun beside the broken pier; some, which have seen better days, now entirely out of commission, and falling to pieces among the mud; – placed in all attitudes, and projecting broad and picturesque shadows along the ground. But these shadows are soft and transparent, not dark and cutting; for the sultry haze which rises steaming from all around, makes the summer sunshine veiled and dim. All nature is in a state of indolence. The lazy Stour sleeps beneath his fringes of elm and willow: a deep-laden barge comes leisurely along, as if anxious not to disturb his

slumbers: the horse has plainly enough to do to make out his four miles an hour; and there is a dog on deck who seems nervous about hydrophobia. The man at the bow, depressing his head and elevating the lower part of his person to an American angle of elevation, has thrown his sturdy limbs across yon well-stuffed sacks of wheat, on their way to Flatford mill. Mercy on us! what can that fellow in the stern be about, pretending to steer? Just as we suspected – fast asleep, with his hand on the helm.

Another change – from the building-yard to the corn-field. The wind has risen as the day advanced, and driven off to the west the veil of vapour which had concealed the sun. The clouds ride high in heaven; and we see by their roll and motion that there is a refreshing air astir; – and there is need of it in this field of golden grain, framed, as it were, in the solid green of those groves, and over which the gray tower of Dedham church (which somehow or other finds its way into all these combinations of scenery) rises straight and motionless against the rounded forms of the ever-shifting sky. All here speaks of bustle and cheerful activity, peace and plenty. It is impossible to look at the scene, and think for a moment of the repeal of the corn-laws. Behind the stalwart band of reapers lie the heaps of sheaves that have already fallen beneath their sickle; the tall grain, swept by the wind, waves firm before them like a hostile rank yet unbroken; while the *lord*, as he is called in Suffolk, or leading man among the reapers and mowers, stands in advance of the rest, as if urging a final charge. In truth, there has been rather a lull among the

workmen; for, breezy as the day is, still it is hot – the dinner-hour is nigh, and there is a visible anxiety evinced for the arrival of the commissariat. At last it is seen in the offing: the reapers, "sagacious of their quarry from afar," gather new vigour from the sight; and yonder tall fellow – an Irishman, we are positive even at this distance – seizing his sickle like one inspired, is actually working double tides.

But stay, we have got into wilder quarters, and here has been a storm. Ay, we thought the clouds, after such a sultry morning, were not rolling themselves into those ominous grey volumes for nothing. Broken ground lies before us in front, seemingly part of an old gravel-pit, down which winds a break-neck path, lost at yonder turning. Beneath us, a level flat, where the sullen verdure of the vegetation betrays the marshy, reedy, sterile character of the soil. Pools of water, here and there set amidst the swampy green, reflect the dark and watery clouds that are scudding above them. The lavender, the water-lily, the mallow, the fern, the fox-glove, luxuriate here; abundant food for botany, but not exactly in the place one would choose for botanizing – particularly, as is the case this moment, within an hour of sundown. Beyond the flat, the traces of a range of low hills, their outline at present lost in rain. Overhead, a spongy sky, darkening into a lurid gloom to the right; for there the laden thunder-clouds are about to discharge their freight; and right underneath, in the middle distance, an unhappy windmill, which has shortened sail during the preparatory blast, stands

glimmering like a ghost through the gloom, obviously on the eve of the deluge. What may be the probable fate of the miller and his men in this conjuncture, humanity, of course, declines to contemplate; but, turning towards the left, sees the sun struggling through the opening eyelids of the clouds, the leaden hue of the sky on the right breaking off into a lustrous haze, and a rainbow growing into form and colour, which, as it spans the dripping landscape from east to west, gives token of a goodly day to-morrow.

These are but a few of the combinations which even this limited range of scenery evidently presented to the eye and fancy of a man like Constable; nor is it wonderful, after all, that to such materials, unpretending as they seem, an artist embued with a genuine love of nature should have succeeded in imparting a peculiar charm, and a never-ending freshness and variety. Amidst scenes of the sane tranquil cast did Hobbima and Waterlo find the subjects of those soothing pictures, the spell of which is acknowledged equally by the profound student of art and the simple admirer of nature. Scenes not materially different in their character did Ruysdael envelope in grandeur, depicting, as Constable expresses it in one of his lectures, "those solemn days peculiar to his country, and to ours, when, without storm, large rolling clouds scarcely permit a ray of sunlight to break the shades of the forest." And amidst the selfsame scenes – the same forest-lanes, and brooks, and woods, and waters – with the same happy accompaniments of rustic incidents, occupations, or

amusements – did Constable's predecessor, Gainsborough, find his academy.

Very early in Constable's career, he adopted the principle which regulated through life the character of his painting. "There is room enough," he writes, after considering the Exhibition of 1802 – "*There is room enough for a natural painter*. The great vice of the present day is bravura – an attempt to do something beyond the truth. Fashion always had, and always will have, its day; but truth in all things only will last, and can only have just claims on posterity." Here, indeed, he felt, and justly, that there was an opening for him in the school of English landscape. Gainsborough, who had first communicated truth and life to the treatment of the genuine scenery of England, was no more. It is true, the grosser absurdities of the Smiths of Chichester, and the other compounders of landscapes *secundum artem*, with which we are familiar in the engravings of Woollet, in whose performances a kind of pictorial millennium appears to be realized; where the English cottage stands side by side with the Italian villa, and Norfolk bumpkins are seen making love to Arcadian shepherdesses knitting beneath the pillars of a Doric temple – these noxious grafts of a conventional taste upon the healthy stem of our native landscape-painting had disappeared. But still, the influence of this conventional taste in a great measure remained – shown in the established belief that *subject* made the picture, and necessitating, as was supposed, the exclusive adoption of certain established modes of composition,

colouring, and treatment, from which the hardy experimentalist who should first attempt to deviate was sure, for a time at least, to encounter opposition; or, what was more probable, entire neglect.

"In art," says Constable, writing in 1829, "there are two modes by which men aim at distinction. In the one, by a careful application to what others have accomplished, the artist imitates their works, or selects and combines their various beauties; in the other, he seeks excellence at its primitive source, nature. In the first, he forms a style upon the study of pictures, and produces either imitation or eclectic art; in the second, by a close observation of nature, he discovers qualities existing in her which have never been portrayed before, and thus forms a style which is original. The results of the one mode, as they repeat that with which the eye is already familiar, are soon recognised and estimated; while the advances of the artist on a new path must necessarily be slow – for a few are able to judge of that *which deviates from the usual course, or are qualified to appreciate original studies*." In this passage is contained, both the principle of Constable's painting, and the history of its results: for, strange as it may seem, so little do general observers look at nature with an observing and pictorial eye – so much are their ideas of what it contains received at second-hand, by reflection from pictures – that the forms under which artists have combined to represent her (forms representing, it may be, a portion of the truth, but certainly not the whole truth) have, in the great majority of cases, superseded the stamp and authority of nature; and truth itself,

where it did not steal in under a conventional garb, has been refused admittance by more than one committee of taste. "What a sad thing," Constable writes to Leslie, "that this lovely art is so wrested to its own destruction! Used only to blind our eyes, and to prevent us from seeing the sun shine, the fields bloom, the trees blossom, the foliage rustle; while old black rubbed-out and dirty canvasses take the place of God's own works!"

With his mind made up as to the course to be adopted, Constable betook himself to the study of nature on the spot. Careful *drawing* was his first object, as the substance to which the embodiment of colour and chiaroscuro was to be applied, and without which, though there might be effect, there could be no truth. His studies of trees and foreground are said to have been eminently beautiful. These, however, he loved to exhibit in their vernal, rather than their autumnal character. "I never did admire the autumnal tints, even in nature – so little of a painter am I in the eye of common connoisseurship. I love the exhilarating freshness of spring." Buildings he did not court, but rather avoided – though in later life he grappled successfully even with architectural detail, as in his pictures of Salisbury Cathedral;[2] but, in general, he dealt with it sparingly. Shipping and coast-scenes he considered "more fit for execution than for

[2] Even there we see that he viewed the matter as a task, and piqued himself only on having succeeded in a *tour-de-force*. Writing to Archdeacon Fisher, he says – "It was the most difficult subject in landscape I ever had on my easel. I have not flinched at the windows, buttresses, &c.; but I have still kept to my grand organ, colour, and have as usual made my escape in the evanescence of chiaroscuro." – (P. 109.)

sentiment." What he luxuriated in was the study of atmospheric effects, and the principles of light and shadow as applied to his sylvan and pastoral landscapes. "I hold the genuine pastoral feeling of landscapes," said he, writing in 1829 to his friend Archdeacon Fisher, "to be very rare, and difficult of attainment. It is by far the most lovely department of painting, as well as of poetry." "Painting," he says in another letter, "is with me but another word for feeling, and I associate my careless boyhood with all that lies on the banks of the Stour. These scenes made me a painter, and I am grateful." "Whatever may be thought of my art, it is my own; and I would rather possess a freehold, though but a cottage, than live in a palace belonging to another."

Thus feeling intensely the charm of nature – and confident that by the vivid representation of pastoral English landscape, he could enable it to exercise upon other minds something of the same spell which it produced on his own – his whole efforts, as he says himself, were directed to forget pictures, and to catch if possible the precise aspect which the scenery which he endeavours to portray presented at the moment of study. And here particularly it is, that the genius of Constable is visible. A man of less reach of mind, beginning, as he did, with this minute attention to the vocabulary of detail, would probably have ended there. We should have had a set of pictures perfectly painted in parts, but forming no consistent whole. All general effect would have been sacrificed to the impression to be produced by particulars. The very love of nature often leads to this error

– as in the once-popular Glover, and many others. But no one had a fuller sense than Constable, that by this means pictures never can be created; that literal imitation of the details of nature is a delusion; because not only is the medium we use entirely inadequate, but paint as we may, with the most microscopic minuteness of detail, the thousand little touches and reflexes of light and shade, which soften and harmonize all things in nature, are essentially evanescent, and incapable of being transferred to canvass. He felt that a certain *substitute* for nature, awakening a corresponding impression upon the mind, was all that he could be afforded by painting – that the spirit and not the letter of her handwriting was to be imitated. The object of painting, as he himself expressed it, "was to realize, but not to feign: to remind, but not to deceive."

Hence, while he perfectly succeeded in catching the spirit of the spot – so much so, that Mr Leslie, visiting the scenes of his pictures for the first time after his death, declares, "that he was absolutely startled by the resemblance" – he yet exercised over the whole that creative, at least compounding art, which arrayed the objects in the forms most harmonious to the eye, and grouped the details into a whole, telling in the most effective manner the story, or conveying the impression it was intended to create. The composition of a picture, he used to say, "was like a sum in arithmetic – take away, or add the smallest item, and the whole was certain to be wrong."

As a consequence, we think, of this conviction, that nature is

not to be *literally imitated* in her colours or forms, but that some compromise is to be found, by which, though on a lower key, a similar impression is to be made on the eye, and through that on the mind, is the general abstinence from positive colour, which distinguishes Constable's paintings. It was not that he adopted the conventional orange and brown of the continental school, or shrank from endeavouring to carry the full impression of the dewy verdure of English landscape. For these subterfuges in art he had an abundant contempt. "Don't you find it very difficult to determine," said Sir George Beaumont, (who, with all his fine feelings of art, certainly looked at nature through a Claude Lorraine medium,) "where to place *your brown tree*?" "Not in the least," was Constable's answer, "for I never put such a thing into a picture." On another occasion, when Sir George was recommending the colour of an old Cremona fiddle as a good prevailing tone for every thing, Constable answered the observation by depositing an old Cremona on the green lawn in front of the house at Cole-Orton. But what we mean is this – that to produce the effect which green or red produces in nature, it does not follow that green or red are to be used in art, and that the impression of these colours will often be better brought out by tints in which but a very small portion of either is to be found.

Mr Leslie has remarked this peculiarity in several of Constable's pictures. Speaking of Constable's *Boat-building*, he observes – "In the midst of a meadow at Flatford, a barge is seen on the stocks, while, just beyond it, the river Stour glitters

in the still sunshine of a hot summer's day. This picture is a proof, that in landscape, what painters call warm colours are not necessary to produce a warm effect. It has, indeed, no positive colour, and there is much of gray and green in it; but such is its atmospheric truth, that the tremulous vibration of the heated air near the ground seems visible." Again, with regard to a small view from Hampstead heath. "The sky is of the blue of an English summer day, with large but not threatening clouds of a silvery whiteness. The distance is of a deep blue, and the near trees and grass of the freshest green; for Constable could never consent to patch up the verdure of nature to obtain warmth. These tints are balanced by a very little warm colour on a road and gravel-pit in the foreground, a single house in the middle distance, and the scarlet jacket of a labourer. Yet I know no picture in which the mid-day heat of summer is so admirably expressed; and were not the eye refreshed by the shade thrown over a great part of the foreground by some young trees that border the road, and the cool blue of water near it, one would wish in looking at it for a parasol, as Fuseli wished for an umbrella when standing before one of Constable's showers."

It was probably the manner of Constable's execution, as much as any thing else, which for a time interposed a serious obstacle to his success; particularly with artists or persons accustomed to attend to the executive detail of painting. "My pictures will never be popular," he said, "for they have no handling; but I do not see *handling* in nature." His aim, in fact, though we must admit it

was not always successful, was to exhibit art, but not artifice – to efface all traces of the mere mode of execution – to conceal the handwriting of the painter, and to imitate those mysterious processes by which nature produces her effects, where all is shadowy, glimmering, indefinable, yet pregnant with suggestion. In Turner more than any other modern artist – for in this respect we think he far excelled Constable – is this alchymy of art carried to perfection. Look closely at his pictures, and a few patches, dashes, and streaks only are visible, which seem a mere chaos of colour; but retire to the proper distance, what magnificent visions grow into shape; how the long avenue lengthens out for miles; how the sun-clad city brightens on the mountain – the stream descends *from* the eye – the distance spreads out into infinity! – all these apparently unmeaning spots or accidents of colour, in which it is difficult to detect the work of the hand or pencil at all, being, in fact, mysterious but speaking hieroglyphics, based on profound combinations of colour and light and shadow, and full of the finest harmonies to all who can look at nature with the eye of imagination.

Constable, a we have said, was not always successful in this, the most hazardous of all attempts in painting. If the touches of pure white, which he seemed to scatter on his trees as if from a half-dry brush, sometimes assisted the dewy effect which he loved to produce, they very often, from the absence of that power of *just calculation* which Turner seems so unerringly to possess, produced a spotty effect, as if the trees had been here

and there powdered with snow. Very frequently he exchanged the pencil for the palette knife, in the use of which he was very dexterous, but which, Mr Leslie admits, he occasionally carried to a blamable excess, loading his pictures with a *relievo* of colour, and provoking the remark, that if he had not attained breadth, he had at least secured thickness.

On the whole, Constable, though now and then missing his object – sometimes, it would seem, as in his skies, from overlabouring his effect, and trying too studiously to arrest and embody fleeting effects – was eminently successful in the result at which he aimed – that of conveying vividly, and almost irresistibly, the sentiment and delineative character of the scene. We have already quoted Fuseli's well-known remark, when standing before one of his showery pictures. "I feel the wind blowing on my face," was honest Jack Banister's remark, (no bad judge by the by,) while contemplating another of his breezy scenes, with the rolling clouds broken up by means of sunshine, and the bending trees turning out their lighter lining to the gale. "Come here," was the remark of a French painter, in the exhibition of the Louvre in 1824; "look at this picture by an Englishman —*it is steeped in dew*." "We never ask," said Mr Purton, "whether his figures be well or ill placed; *there they are, and unless they choose to move on, there they must remain*." This truth and artlessness, and natural action or repose of his figures, only equalled in the English landscape by those of Gainsborough and Collins, he probably owed, in

some measure, to an observation of an early acquaintance – Antiquity Smith, as he was nicknamed by his brother artists, who, at the commencement of his studies, had given him this judicious advice: – "Do not set about *inventing* figures for a landscape *taken* from nature; for you cannot remain an hour on any spot, however solitary, without the appearance of some living thing, that will, in all probability, accord better with the scene and time of day than will any invention of your own."

With Constable's strong natural tastes, and his long-considered views of landscape – at least that landscape for which he felt a vocation – it may be doubted whether he would have gained any thing by an acquaintance with continental scenery, leading, as it generally does, to the adoption of a certain fixed mode of treatment, or even by a more familiar intercourse with the grander features of our own country. He seems to have felt that his originality was, in some degree, connected with the *intimacy* of his acquaintance with that domestic nature, the study of which he chiefly cultivated, and which was matured by constant repetition and comparison of impressions. A circuit of a few miles, in fact, bounds his bosky bourne from side to side; a circuit of a few hundred yards embraces the subject of nearly half his favourite studies. "The Dutch," he says in one of his journals, "were *stay-at-home* people; *hence* the source of their originality."

"In the education of an artist," says Mr Leslie with great good sense, "it is scarcely possible to foresee what circumstances will prove advantageous or the reverse; it is on looking back only that

we can judge of these things. Travelling is now the order of the day – and it may sometimes prove beneficial; but to Constable's art, there can be little doubt that the confinement of his studies with the narrowest bounds in which, perhaps, the studies of an artist ever were confined, was in the highest degree favourable; for a knowledge of atmospheric effects will be best attained by *a constant study* of the same objects, under every change of seasons and of the times of day. His ambition, it will be borne in mind, was not to paint many things imperfectly, but to paint a few well."

A motto, in truth, worthy of any of the seven sages – applicable to many things besides painting – and which can scarcely be applied in vain to any. *Not many things imperfectly, but a few well!*

With these imperfect remarks on the general character of Constable's pictures, we pass at once to a few extracts from the correspondence, which, as we have already said, makes up the substance of the present volume. Among the letters, by much the most striking and amusing are those of Constable's early and steady friend, Archdeacon Fisher – an admirable judge of art, and himself a very respectable artist. His excellent sense – his kindness – his generosity – which laboured to make its object forget the boon, or at least the benefactor; his strong attachment to his order, yet with a clear perception of the drawbacks inherent in the English hierarchical system; the caustic and somewhat cynical turn of his remarks on contemporary art – communicate great spirit, liveliness, and interest to his letters.

In many things he resembles Paley, of whom he seems to have been a warm admirer. He had a thorough appreciation of the excellences of Constable, both moral and professional; but he had a keen eye also to the occasional weaknesses, want of method, and inattention to trifles, which now and then disfigured them. "Pray," he enquires on one occasion, "how many dinners a-week does your wife get you to eat at a regular hour and like a Christian?" "Where real business is to be done," said he, speaking of and to Constable, on another occasion, "you are the most energetic and punctual of men. In smaller matters – such as putting on your breeches – you are apt to lose time in deciding which leg shall go in first."

Such an adviser and critic was of the utmost use to Constable; for he never failed to convey to him his candid impressions and advice – and they were generally just, though not always followed. Being of opinion that Constable was repeating too often the same effects, he writes: "I hope you will diversify your subject this year as to time of day. Thomson, you know, wrote not four summers, but four seasons. People get tired of mutton at top, mutton at bottom, and mutton at the side, though of the best flavour and size." This was touching a sore point, and Constable replies: "I am planning a large picture, and I regard all you say; but I do not enter into that notion of varying one's plans to keep the public in good-humour. Change of weather and effect will always afford variety. What if Vander Velde had quitted his sea-pieces, or Ruysdael his waterfalls, or Hobbima his native woods?

The world would have lost so many features in art. I know that you wish for no material alteration; but I have to combat from high quarters – even from Lawrence – the plausible argument, that *subject* makes the picture. Perhaps you think an evening effect might do; perhaps it might start me some new admirers, but I should lose many old ones. I imagine myself driving a nail: I have driven it some way, and, by persevering, I may drive it home; by quitting it to attack others, though I may amuse myself, I do not advance beyond the first, while that particular nail stands still. No one who can do any one thing well, will be able to do any other different thing equally well; and this is true even of Shakspeare, the greatest master of variety." Constable was in a condition, in fact, to quote the Archdeacon against himself; for in 1827 Fisher had written: "I must repeat to you an opinion I have long held, that no man had ever more than one conception. Milton emptied his mind in the first part of *Paradise Lost*. All the rest is transcript of self. The *Odyssey* is a repetition of the *Iliad*. When you have seen one Claude, you have seen all. I can think of no exception but Shakspeare; he is always varied, never mannered."

Here is a graphic sketch by Constable of one who had known better days, and whom it is probable those conversant with art about that time may recognise. We shall not fill up the asterisks. "A poor wretched man called to see me this morning. He had a petition to the Royal Academy for charitable assistance – it was * * *. His appearance was distress itself, and it was awful to behold

to what ill conduct may bring us; yet calamity has impressed even on this man an air of dignity: he looked like Leslie's Don Quixote. When I knew him at the Bishop's he wore powder, had a soft subdued voice, and always a smile, which caused him to show some decayed teeth; and he carried a gold-headed cane with tassels. Now, how changed! His neck long, with a large head, thin face, nose long, mouth wide, eyes dark and sunken, eyebrows lifted, hair abundant, straight, erect, and very greasy, his body much emaciated and shrunk away from his dismal black clothes, and his left arm in a sling from a fall, by which he broke the left clavicle. I shall try the Artists' Fund for him. I cannot efface the image of this ghostly man from my mind."

Here are two clerical sketches as a *pendant*, by Fisher: – "I write this sitting in commission upon a dispute between a clergyman and his parishioners, and compose while the parties argue. There is a brother parson arguing his own case, with powder, white forehead, and a very red face, like a copper vessel newly tinned. He is mixing up in a tremulous note, with an eager bloodshot eye, accusations, apologies, statements, reservations, and appeals, till his voice sounds on my ear as I write like a distant waterfall."

"* * * and * * * have been together on the visitation for three weeks. They have neither broken bread nor spoken together, nor, I believe, seen one another. What a mistake our Oxford and Cambridge apostolic missionaries fell into when they made Christianity a stern haughty thing! Think of St Paul with a full-

blown wig, deep shovel-hat, apron, round belly, double chin, deep cough, stern eye, rough voice, and imperious manner, drinking port-wine, and laying down the law as to the best way of escaping the observation of the Curates' Residence Act!" The Archdeacon himself was not without a little vanity, however, on the subject of his sermons, and once received a quiet hit from Constable on the subject. Having preached an old sermon once, (which he was not aware that Constable had heard before,) he asked him how he liked it. "Very much indeed, Fisher," replied Constable; "*I always did like that sermon.*"

Like most men of original mind, Constable had a very just and manly taste in other matters besides painting. He read but few poets, but he read these with understanding and hearty enjoyment. To arouse his attention, it was necessary that they should be original and vigorous. For the mere artistic skill or cultivated taste displayed by some of the popular poets of the day, he had no sympathy. Of Milman, for instance, he writes: "It is singular that I happened to speak of Milman. No doubt he is learned, *but it as not fair to encumber literature*. The world is full enough of what has been already done; and as in the art there is plenty of fine painting, but very few good pictures, so in poetry there is plenty of fine writing, and I am told his is such, and, as you say, gorgeous, *but it can be compared. Shakspeare cannot, nor Burns, nor Claude, nor Ruysdael; and it has taken me twenty years to find this out.*" It was on this principle that he classed together Dutch and Italian art – Claude and Ostade, Titian and Ruysdael.

For, different as their modes of execution were, they fulfilled his prime condition of having furnished the world with something self-consistent, independent, and original. "Every truly original picture," he would say, "is a separate study, and governed by laws of its own; so that what is right in one would be often literally wrong if transferred to another."

It may be anticipated that Constable, who had no half opinions on any subject, would know his own worth, and rate himself at his due value. To his friend Fisher he does not hesitate to praise his own pictures with a *naïveté* that is amusing, but which was in harmony with his general severity and dislike of affectation. He would not even affect a false modesty, but spoke of his own performances as he would have done of those of others. "My Lock," he says in one of his letters, "is now on the easel: it is silvery, windy, and delicious – all health, and the absence of any thing stagnant, and is wonderfully got together. The print will be very fine." "My new picture of Salisbury," he writes in another, "is very beautiful; but when I thus speak of my pictures, remember it is *to you*, and only in comparison with myself." Mr Leslie mentions that he had retained these and similar effusions contrary to the advice of one with whose opinion on other points he generally coincided. He has guessed rightly; for, without such revelations, we should be but imperfectly acquainted with the man. He adds with truth, "The utterance of a man's real feelings is more interesting, though it may have less of dignity than belongs to a uniform silence on the subject of self; while the

vanity is often no greater in the one case than in the other."

Of his tender, domestic, affectionate disposition, almost every letter in this volume exhibits proofs. We cannot better illustrate this than by quoting some passages from his letters to his wife while on a visit to Sir George Beaumont at Cole-Orton: while these letters exhibit one of the most delightful pictures of the country life of an accomplished gentleman, an excellent artist, and a kind patron. It is true, that between Sir George and Constable not a few differences in point of taste existed; the baronet was rather an ingenious eclectic than an original painter; his natural belief was, that beyond the pale of Claude and Wilson, an artist's salvation was at least doubtful; but he was too accomplished, too keen-sighted an observer not to be shaken in his theories by the sight of high and original art, and too liberal not to admit at last – as Toby did in the case of the fly – that the world was wide enough for both.

"*To* Mrs Constable

"*November 2d.*– The weather has been bad; but I do not at all regret being confined to this house. The mail did not arrive yesterday till many hours after the time, owing to some trees being blown down, and the waters out. * * * I am now going to breakfast before the Narcissus of Claude. How enchanting and lovely it is! far, very far, surpassing any other landscape I ever beheld. Write to me. Kiss and love

my darlings. I hope my stay will not exceed this week."

In one of his letters from Cole-Orton to his wife, Constables says: —

> "Sir George rises at seven, walks in the garden before breakfast, and rides out about two – fair or foul. We have had breakfast at half-past eight; but to-day we began at the winter hour – nine. We do not quit the breakfast-table directly, but chat a little about the pictures in the room. We then go to the painting-room, and Sir George most manfully sets to work, and I by his side. At two, the horses are brought to the door. I have had an opportunity of seeing the ruins of Ashby, the mountain stream and rocks (such Everdingens!) at Grace-Dieu, and an old convent there – Lord Ferrers' – a grand but melancholy spot. At dinner we do not sit long; Lady Beaumont reads the newspaper (the *Herald*) to us; and then to the drawing-room to tea; and after that comes a great treat. I am furnished with some portfolios, full of beautiful drawings or prints, and Sir George reads a play in a manner the most delightful. On Saturday evening it was, 'As You Like It;' and I never heard the 'seven ages' so admirably read before. Last evening, Sunday, he read a sermon, and a good deal of Wordsworth's 'Excursion.' Some of the landscape descriptions in it are very beautiful. About nine, the servant comes in with a little fruit and a decanter of water; and at eleven we go to bed. I always find a fire in my room, and make out about an hour longer, as I have every thing there – writing-desk, &c. – and I grudge a moment's unnecessary sleep in this place. You would laugh to see my bed-room,

I have dragged so many things into it – books, portfolios, prints, canvasses, pictures, &c."

"*November 9.*– How glad I was, my dear love, to receive your last kind letter, giving a good account of yourself and our dear babies. * * * Nothing shall, I hope, prevent my seeing you this week; indeed I am quite nervous about my absence, and shall soon begin to feel alarmed about the Exhibition. * * * I do not wonder at your being jealous of Claude. If any thing could come between our love, it is him. I am fast advancing a beautiful little copy of his study from nature of a little grove scene. If you, my dearest love, will be so good as to make yourself happy without me for this week, it will, I hope, be long before we part again. But, believe me, I shall be the better for this visit as long as I live. Sir George is never angry, or pettish, or peevish, and though he loves painting so much, it does not harass him. You will like me a great deal better than you did. To-morrow Southey is coming with his wife and daughter. I know you would be sorry if I were not to stay and meet him, he is such a friend of Gooch's; but the Claudes, the Claudes, are all, all, I can think of here. * * * The weather is so bad that I can scarcely see out of the window, but Friday was lovely. I shall hardly be able to make you a sketch of the house, but I shall bring you much, though in little compass, to show you. * * * Thursday was Sir George's birth-day. Sixty-nine, and married almost half a century. The servants had a ball, and I was lulled to sleep by a fiddle."

"*November 18.*– My dearest love, * * * I was very glad to hear a very nice account of you and my dear babies. * * *

I shall finish my little Claude on Thursday; and then I shall have something to do to some of Sir George's pictures, that will take a day or two more, and then home. * * * I sent you a hasty shabby line by Southey, but all that morning I had been engaged on a little sketch in Miss Southey's album of this house, which pleased all parties here very much. Sir George is loath to part with me. He would have me pass Christmas with him, and has named a small commission which he wished me to execute here; but I have declined it, as I am desirous to return. Sir George is very kind, and I have no doubt meant this little picture to pay my expenses. I have worked so hard in the house, that I never went out of the door last week, so that I am getting quite nervous. But I am sure my visit here will be ultimately of the greatest advantage to me, and I could not be better employed to the advantage of all of us, by its making me so much more of an artist. * * * The breakfast bell rings. I now hasten to finish, as the boy waits. I really think seeing the habits of this house will be of service to me as long as I live. Every thing so punctual. Sir George never looks into his painting-room on a Sunday, nor trusts himself with a portfolio. Never is impatient. Always rides or walks for an hour or two, at two o'clock; so will I with you, if it is only into the square. I amuse myself, every evening, making sketches from Sir George's drawings about Dedham, &c. I could not *carry* all his sketch-books. * * * I wish I had not cut myself out so much to do here; but I was greedy with the Claudes."

In his next letter to his wife, Constable deplores the facility

with which he allowed his time to be consumed by loungers in his painting-room – an evil his good-nature to the last entailed on him. Mrs Constable in one of her letters had said: – "Mr **** was here nearly an hour on Saturday, reading the paper and talking to himself. I hope you will not admit him so often. Mr ****, another lounger, has been here once or twice."

"*Cole-Orton Hall, November. 21st.*– My dearest love, I am as heartsick as ever you can be at my long absence from you, and all our dear darlings, but which is now fast drawing to a close. In fact, my greediness for pictures made me cut out for myself much more work than I ought to have undertaken at this time. One of the Claudes would have been all that I wanted, but I could not get at that first, and I had been here a fortnight before I began it. To-day it will be done, with perhaps a little touch on Saturday morning. I have then an old picture to fill up some holes in. But I fear I shall not be able to get away on Saturday, though I hope nothing shall prevent me on Monday. I can hardly believe I have not seen you, or my Isabel, or my Charley, for five weeks. Yesterday there was another very high wind and such a splendid evening as I never before beheld at this time of the year Was it so with you? But in London nothing is to be seen, worth seeing, in the NATURAL way.

"I certainly will not allow of such serious interruptions as I used to do from people who devour my time, brains and every thing else. Sir George says it is quite serious and alarming. Let me have a letter on Sunday, my last day here, as I want to be made comfortable on my journey,

which will be long and tiresome, and I shall be very nervous as I get near home; therefore, pray let me have a good account of you all. I believe some great folks are coming here in December, which Sir George dreads, as they so much interfere with his painting habits; for no artist can be fonder of the art."

"*November 25th.*– My very dearest love, I hope nothing will prevent my leaving this place to-morrow afternoon and that I shall have you in my arms on Thursday morning, and my babies; Oh, dear! how glad I shall be. I feel that I have been AT SCHOOL, and can only hope that my long absence from you may ultimately be to my great and lasting improvement as an artist, and indeed in every thing. If you have any friends staying with you, I beg you will dismiss them before my arrival."

We have already said we have no intention of going through the meagre incidents in the life of Constable. He was elected an Academician in 1829 after the death of his wife, which took place the year before. Much as he was pleased at the attainment of the honour, he could not help saying, "It has been delayed till I am solitary and cannot impart it." He could not add with Johnson, "until I am *known* and do not *want it*;" for probably no painter of equal genius was at that time less generally known in his own country. Two days before, he writes, "I have just received a commission to paint a *mermaid* for a *sign to an inn* in Warwickshire! This is encouraging, and affords no small solace after my previous labours on landscape for twenty years."

His death took place in 1837.

"On Thursday the 30th of March, I met him at a general assembly of the Academy; the night, though very cold, was fine, he walked a great part of the way home with me. The most trifling occurrences of that evening remain on my memory. As we proceeded along Oxford Street, he heard a child cry on the opposite side of the way: the griefs of childhood never failed to arrest his attention, and he crossed over to a little beggar girl who had hurt her knee; he gave her a shilling and some kind words, which, by stopping her tears, showed that the hurt was not very serious, and we continued our walk. Some pecuniary losses he had lately met with had disturbed him, but more because they involved him with persons disposed to take advantage of his good feelings, than from their amount. He spoke of these with some degree of irritation, but turned to more agreeable subjects, and we parted at the west end of Oxford Street, laughing. I never saw him again alive.

"The whole of the next day he was busily engaged finishing his picture of Arundel Mill and Castle. One or two of his friends who called on him saw that he was not well, but they attributed this to confinement and anxiety with his picture, which was to go in a few days to the Exhibition. In the evening he walked out for a short time on a charitable errand connected with the Artists' Benevolent Fund. He returned about nine o'clock, ate a hearty supper, and, feeling chilly, had his bed warmed – a luxury he rarely indulged in. It was his custom to read in bed; between ten and eleven he had read himself to sleep, and his candle, as usual, was

removed by a servant. Soon after this, his eldest son, who had been at the theatre, returned home, and, while preparing for bed in the next room, his father awoke in great pain, and called to him. So little was Constable alarmed, however, that he at first refused to send for medical assistance. He took some rhubarb and magnesia, which produced sickness, and he drank copiously of warm water, which occasioned vomiting, but the pain increasing, he desired that Mr Michele, his near neighbour, should be sent for, who very soon attended. In the mean time Constable had fainted, his son supposing he had fallen asleep. Mr Michele instantly ordered some brandy to be brought; the bed-room of the patient was at the top of the house, the servant had to run down-stairs for it, and before it could be procured life was extinct; and within half an hour of the first attack of pain.

"A *post-mortem* investigation was made by Professor Partridge, in the presence of Mr George Young and Mr Michele, but, strange to say, the extreme pain Constable had suffered could only be traced to indigestion, no indications of disease were any where discovered, sufficient, in the opinion of those gentlemen, to have produced at that time a fatal result. Mr Michele, in a letter to me, describing all he had witnessed, says, 'It is barely possible that the prompt application of a stimulant might have sustained the vital principle, and induced reaction in the functions necessary to the maintenance of life.'

"Constable's eldest son was prevented from attending the funeral by an illness brought on by the painful excitement he had suffered; but the two brothers of the deceased,

and a few of his most intimate friends, followed the body to Hampstead,[3] where some of the gentlemen residing there, who had known Constable, voluntarily joined the procession in the churchyard. The vault which contained the remains of his wife was opened, he was laid by her side, and the inscription which he had placed on the tablet over it,

'Eheu! quam tenui e filo pendet
Quidquid in vitâ maxime arridet!'

might will be applied to the loss his family and friends had now sustained. The funeral service was read by one of those friends, the Rev. T. J. Judkin, whose tears fell fast on the book as he stood by the tomb."

[3] "I cannot but recall here a passage in a letter to Mr Fisher, written by Constable nearly ten years before his death, in which, after speaking of having removed his family to Hampstead, he says, 'I could gladly exclaim, here let me take my everlasting rest!'"

[4] One of the greatest and most memorable of the Turkish princes was Mahmood the Ghaznavide, who reigned in the eastern provinces of Persia, A.D. 997-1028. His father, Sebactagi, arose from the condition of a slave to the command of the city and province of Ghazna. In the fall of the dynasty of the Sammanides, the fortune of Mahmood was confirmed. For him the title of *sultan* (signifying *lord* and *master*) was first invented, and his kingdom was enlarged from Transoxiana to the neighbourhood of Ispahan, from the shores of the Caspian to the mouth of the Indus. The prowess and magnificence of Mahmood, his twelve expeditions into Hindostan, and the holy wars he waged against the idol-worship of that country, in one of which he destroyed an image of peculiar sanctity at Diu or Du in Guzerat, and carried off the gates of Somnauth, (so recently, once more, become a trophy of triumph and defeat,) the vast treasures amassed in his campaigns, and the extent and greatness of the Ghaznavide empire, have always been favourite subjects with Eastern historians. The instance of his justice recorded in the verses, is given by Gibbon, from whose history this note is chiefly taken.Ghazna, from being the emporium of India, and the metropolis of a vast dominion, had almost shrunk from the eye of the geographer, until, under the modified appellation of Ghizni, it again emerged into importance in our Affghan war. A curious crowd of associations is suggested by the fact, that the town which gave its name to a dynasty that shook the successors of Mahomet on their thrones, now confers the dignity of Baron on a native of one of the obscurest villages in Ireland – Lord Keane of Ghizni, *and* of Cappoquin in the county of Waterford.

Mahmood the Ghazavide. [4]

By B. Simmons

I

Hail to the morn that reigneth
Where Kaff,[5] since time began
Allah's eternal sentinel,
Keeps watch upon the Sun;
And through the realms of heaven,
From his cold dwelling-place,
Beholds the bright Archangel
For ever face to face!
Kaff smiles – the loosen'd morning
On Asia is unfurl'd!

[5] Kaff of late years is considered to have been more a creation of Eastern mythology, than a genuine incontestable mountain. Its position is supposed to be at the highest point of the great Hindoo-Kosh range. Such was its astonishing altitude, that, says D'Herbelot, "vous trouvez souvent dans leurs anciens livres, pour exprimer le lever du soleil, cette façon de parler, *aussitôt que cet astre parût sur la cime du Mont Cáf, le monde fut éclairé de sa lumière*: de même pour comprendre toute l'etendue de la terre et de l'eau, ils disent *Depuis Cáf à Cáf*– c'est à dire, d'une de ses extremités à l'autre."

Sind[6] flashes free, and rolls a sea
Of amber down the world!
Lo! how the purple thickets
And arbours of Cashmere
Beneath the kindling lustre
A rosier radiance wear!
Hail to the mighty Morning
That, odorously cool,
Comes down the nutmeg-gardens
And plum-groves of Cabool!
Cold 'mid the dawn, o'er Ghazna,
The rivall'd moon retires;
As on the city spread below,
Far through the sky's transparent glow,
A hundred gold-roof'd temples throw
Their crescents' sparkling fires.

II

The Imam's cry in Ghazna
Has died upon the air,
And day's great life begins to throng
Each stately street and square.
The loose-robed turban'd merchants —

[6] The name of Sind, Attok, or Indus, is applied indifferently to the mighty stream that forms the western boundary of Hindostan.

The fur-clad mountaineers —
The chiefs' brocaded elephants —
The Kurdmans' group of spears —
Grave men beneath the awning
Of every gay bazar
Ranging their costly merchandise,
Shawl, gem, and glittering jar —
The outworn files arriving
Of some vast Caravan,
With dusky men and camels tall,
Before the crowded khan; —
All that fills kingly cities
With traffic, wealth, and din,
Resounds, imperial Ghazna,
This morn thy walls within.

III

All praise to the First Sultan,
Mahmood the Ghaznavide!
His fame be like the firmament,
As moveless and as wide!
Mahmood, who saw before him
Pagoda'd Bramah fall —
Twelve times he swept the orient earth
From Bagdad to Bengal;

Twelve times amid their Steppes of ice
He smote each Golden Horde[7]—
Round the South's sultry isles twelve times
His ships resistless pour'd;
Mahmood – his tomb in Ghazna
For many an age shall show
The mighty mace with which he laid
Du's hideous idol low.
True soldier of the Prophet!
From Somnauth's gorgeous shrine
He tore the gates of sandal-wood,
The carven gates divine;
He hung them vow'd, in Ghazna,
To Allah's blest renown —
Trophies of endless sway they tower,
For unto earth's remotest hour
What boastful man may hope the power
Again to take them down?

IV

All praise to the First Sultan,
Mahmood the Ghaznavide!

[7] The tribes of savage warriors inhabiting the Kipchak, or table-land of Tartary, have been distinguished by the name of the Golden Hordes. There is a magnificent lyric on their Battle-charge, by Dr Croly, in the *Friendship's Offering* for 1834.

His wars are o'er, but not the more
His sovereign cares subside:
From morn to noontide daily
In his superb Divan
He sits dispensing justice
Alike to man and man.
What though earth heaves beneath him
With ingot, gem, and urn,
Though in his halls a thousand thrones
Of vanquish'd monarchs burn;
Though at his footstool ever
Four hundred princes stay;
Though in his jasper vestibules
Four hundred bloodhounds bay —
Each prince's sabre hafted
With the carbuncle's gem,
Each bloodhound's collar fashion'd
From a rajah's diadem? —
Though none may live beholding
The anger of his brow,
Yet his justice ever shineth
To the lofty and the low;
O'er his many-nation'd empire
Shines his justice far and wide —
All praise to the First Sultan,
Mahmood the Ghaznavide!

V

The morn to noon is melting
On Ghazna's golden domes;
From the Divan the suppliant crowd,
The poor, the potent, and the proud,
Who sought its grace with faces bow'd,
Have parted for their homes.
Already Sultan Mahmood
Has risen from his throne,
When at the Hall's far portal
Stands a Stranger all alone, —
A man in humble vesture,
But with a haughty eye;
And he calls aloud, with the steadfast voice
Of one prepared to die —
"Sultan! the Wrong'd and Trampled
Lacks time to worship thee,
Stand forth, and answer to my charge,
Son of Sebactagi!
Stand forth!" —
The brief amazement
Which shook that hall has fled —
Next moment fifty falchions
Flash round the madman's head,
And fifty slaves are waiting

Their sovereign's glance to slay;
But dread Mahmood, with hand upraised,
Has waved their swords away.
Once more stands free the Stranger,
Once more resounds his call —
"Ho! forth, Mahmood! and hear me,
Then slay me in thy hall.
From Oxus to the Ocean
Thy standards are unfurl'd
Thy treasury-bolts are bursting
With the plunder of the world —
The maids of soft Hindostan,
The vines by Yemen's Sea,
But bloom to nurse the passions
Of thy savage soldiery.
Yet not for them sufficeth
The Captive or the Vine,
If in thy peaceful subjects' homes
They cannot play the swine.
Since on my native Ghazna
Thy smile of favour fell,
How its blood, and toil, and treasure
Have been thine, thou knowest well!
Its Fiercest swell thine armies,
Its Fairest serve thy throne,
But in return hast thou not sworn
Our *hearths* should be our own?
That each man's private dwelling,
And each man's spouse and child,

Should from thy mightiest Satrap
Be safe and undefiled?
Just Allah! – hear how Mahmood
His kingly oath maintains! —
Amid the suburbs far away
I deemed secure my dwelling lay,
Yet now two nights my lone Serai
A villain's step profanes.
My bride is cursed with beauty,
He comes at midnight hour,
A giant form for rapine made,
In harness of thy guards array'd,
And, with main dint of blow and blade,
He drives me from her bow'r,
And bars and holds my dwelling
Until the dawning gray —
Then, ere the light his face can smite,
The felon slinks away.
Such is the household safety
We owe to thine and thee: —
Thou'st heard me first, do now thy worst,
Son of Sebactagi!"

VI

What tongue may tell the terror

That thrill'd that chamber wide,
While thus the Dust beneath his feet
Reviled the Ghaznavide!
The listeners' breath suspended,
They wait but for a word,
To sweep away the worm that frets
The pathway of their Lord.
But Mahmood makes no signal;
Surprise at first subdued,
Then shame and anger seem'd by turns
To root him where he stood.
But as the tale proceeded,
Some deadlier passion's hue,
Now flushing dark, now fading wan,
Across his forehead flew.
And when those daring accents
Had died upon his ear,
He sat him down in reverie
Upon the musnud near,
And in his robe he shrouded
For a space his dreadful brow;
Then strongly, sternly, rose and spoke
To the Stranger far below —
"At once, depart! – in silence: —
And at the moment when
The Spoiler seeks thy dwelling next,
Be with Us here again."

VII

Three days the domes of Ghazna
Have gilded Autumn's sky —
Three moonless nights of Autumn
Have slowly glided by.
And now the fourth deep midnight
Is black upon the town,
When from the palace-portals, led
By that grim Stranger at their head,
A troop, all silent as the dead,
With spears, and torches flashing red,
Wind towards the suburbs down.
On foot they march, and midmost
Mahmood the Ghaznavide
Is marching there, his kingly air
Alone not laid aside.
In his fez no ruby blazeth,
No diamonds clasp his vest;
But a light as red is in his eye,
As restless in his breast.
And none who last beheld him
In his superb Divan
Would deem three days could cause his cheek
To look so sunk and wan.
The gates are pass'd in silence,

They march with noiseless stride,
'Till before a lampless dwelling
Stopp'd their grim and sullen guide.
In a little grove of cypress,
From the city-walls remote,
It darkling stood: – He faced Mahmood,
And pointed to the spot.
The Sultan paused one moment
To ease his kaftan's band,
That on his breast too tightly prest,
Then motion'd with his hand: —

"My mace! – put out the torches —
Watch well that none may flee:
Now, force the door, and shut me in,
And leave the rest to me."
He spoke, 'twas done; the wicket
Swung wide – then closed again:
Within stand Mahmood, night, and Lust —
Without, his watching men.
Their watch was short – a struggle —
A sullen sound – a groan —
A breathless interval – and forth
The Sultan comes alone.
None through the pitchy darkness
Might look upon his face,
But they *felt* the storm that shook him
As he lean'd upon that mace.
Back from his brow the turboosh

He push'd – then calmly said,
"Re-light the torches, enter there,
And bring me forth the dead."
They light the torches, enter,
And bring him forth the dead —
A man of stalwart breadth and bone,
A war-cloak round him spread.
Full on the face the torches
Flash out – a sudden cry
(And those who heard it ne'er will lose
Its echo till they die,)
A sudden cry escapeth
Mahmood's unguarded lips,
A cry as of a suffering soul
Redeemed from Hell's eclipse.
"Oh, Allah! gracious Allah!
Thy servant badly won
This blessing to a father's heart,
'Tis not – 'tis NOT my son!
Fly! – tell my joy in Ghazna; —
Before the night is done
Let lighted shrine and blazing street
Proclaim 'tis not my son!
'Tis not Massoud, the wayward,
Who thus the Law defied,
Yet I deem'd that none but my only son
Dared set my oath aside:
Though my frame grew faint from fasting,
Though my soul with grief grew wild,

Upon this spot I would have wrought stern justice on my child.
I wrought the deed in darkness,
For fear a single ray
Should light his face, and from this heart
Plead the Poor Man's cause away.
Great Allah sees uprightly
I strive my course to run,
And thus rewards his servant —
This dead is not my son!"

VIII

Thus, through his reign of glory,
Shone his JUSTICE far and wide;
All praise to the First Sultan,
Mahmood the Ghaznavide

MARSTON; OR, THE MEMOIRS OF A STATESMAN

Part XIX

"Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea, puft up with wind,
Rage like an angry boar chafed with sweat?
Have I not heard great ordnance in the field,
And Heaven's artillery thunder in the skies?
Have I not in the pitched battle heard
Loud 'larums, neighing steeds, and trumpets clang?"

Shakspeare.

Change is the master-spirit of Europe, as permanency is of Asia. The contrast is in the nature of things. However the caprice, the genius, or the necessities, of the sitter on the throne may attempt to impress permanency on the habits of the West, or mutability on those of the East, his success must be but partial. In Europe we have a perpetual movement of minds, a moral ocean, to which tides and currents are an operation of nature. But the Caspian or the Euxine is not more defined by its limits of rock and mountain, or more inexorably separated from the general

influx of the waters which roll round the world, than the Asiatic mind is from following the free course, and sharing the bold and stormy innovations, of Europe.

But the most rapid and total change within human memory, was the one which was now before my eye. I felt as some of the old alchymists might feel in their laboratories, with all their crucibles heating, all their alembics boiling, all their strange materials in full effervescence; and their eyes fixed in doubt, and perhaps in awe, on the powerful and hazardous products about to result from combinations untried before, and amalgams which might shatter the roof above their heads, or extinguish their existence by a blast of poison.

I had left Paris Democracy. I found it a Despotism. I had left it a melancholy prey to the multitude; a startling scene of alternate fury and dejection; of cries for revenge, and supplications for bread; of the tyranny of the mob, and the misery of the nation. I now found it the most striking contrast to that scene of despair; – Paris the headquarters of a military government; the Tuileries the palace of a conqueror; every sound martial; the eye dazzled every where by the spoils of the German and Italian sovereignties; the nation flushed with victory. Still, the public aspect exhibited peculiarities which interested me the more, that they could never have appeared in older times, and probably will never return. In the midst of military splendour there was a wild, haggard, and unhappy character stamped on all things. The streets of the capital had not yet felt the influence of that

imperial taste which was to render it an imperial city. I saw the same shattered suburbs, the same deep, narrow, and winding streets, the same dismal lanes; in which I had witnessed so often the gatherings of the armed multitude, and which seemed made for popular commotion. Mingled with those wild wrecks and gloomy places of refuge, rather than dwellings, I saw, with their ancient ornaments, and even with their armorial bearings and gilded shields and spears not yet entirely defaced, the palaces of the noblesse and blood-royal of France, the remnants of those ten centuries of monarchy which had been powerful enough to reduce the bold tribes of the Franks to a civilized slavery, and glittering enough to make them in love with their chains. If I could have imagined, in the nineteenth century, a camp of banditti on its most showy scale – a government of Condottieri with its most famous captain at its head – every where a compilation of arms and spoils, the rude habits of the robber combined with the pomp of military triumph – I should have said that the realization was before me.

The Palais Royal was still the chief scene of all Parisian vitality. But the mob orators were to be found there no more. The walks and cafés were now crowed with bold figures, epauleted and embroidered, laughing and talking with the easy air of men who felt themselves masters, and who evidently regarded every thing round them as the furnishing of a camp. The land had now undergone its third stage of that great spell by which nations are urged and roused at the will of a few. The crosier

was the first wand of the magician, then came the sceptre – we were now under the spell of the sword. I was delighted at this transformation of France, from the horrid form of popular domination to the showy supremacy of soldiership. It still had its evils. But the guillotine had disappeared. Savage hearts and sanguinary hands no longer made the laws, and executed them. Instead of the groans and execrations, the cries of rage and clamours of despair, which once echoed through all the streets, I now heard only popular songs and dances, and saw all the genuine evidences of that rejoicing with which the multitude had thrown off the most deadly of all tyrannies – its own.

The foreigner shapes every thing into the picturesque, and all his picturesque now was military. Every regiment which passed through Paris on its way from the frontier was reviewed, in front of the palace, by the First Consul; and those reviews formed the finest of all military spectacles, for each had a character and a history of its own. – The regiment which had stormed the bridge of Lodi; the regiment which had headed the assault on the *tête-du-pont* at Mantua; the regiment which had led the march at the passage of the St Bernard; the regiment which had formed the advance of Dessaix at Marengo – all had their separate distinctions, and were received with glowing speeches and appropriate honours by the chief of the state. The popular vanity was flattered by a perpetual pageant, and that pageant wholly different from the tinsel displays of the monarchy: no representation of legends, trivial in their origin, and ridiculous

in their memory; but the revival of transactions in which every man of France felt almost a personal interest, which were the true sources of the new system of nations, and whose living actors were seen passing, hour after hour, before the national eye. All was vivid reality, where all had been false glitter in the days of the Bourbons, and all sullenness and fear in the days of the Democracy. The reality might still be rough and stern, but it was substantial, and not without its share of the superb; it had the sharpness and weight, and it had also the shining, of the sabre. But this was not all; nothing could be more subtly consecutive than the whole progress of the head of the government. In a more superstitious age, it might have been almost believed that some wizard had stood by his cradle, and sung his destiny; or that, like the greatest creation of the greatest of dramatists, he had been met in some mountain pass, or on some lonely heath, and had heard the weird sisters predicting his charmed supremacy. At this period he was palpably training the republic to the sight of a dictatorship. The return of the troops through Paris had already accustomed the populace to the sight of military power.

The movement of vast masses of men by a word, the simplicity of the great military machine, its direct obedience to the master-hand, and its tremendous strength – all were a continued lesson to the popular mind. I looked on the progress of this lesson with infinite interest; for I thought that I as about to see a new principle of government disclosed on the broadest scale – Republicanism in its most majestic aspect, giving a new development of the art

of ruling men, and exhibiting a shape of domination loftier and more energetic than the world had ever yet seen. Still, I was aware of the national weaknesses. I was not without a strong suspicion of the hazard of human advance when entrusted to the caprice of any being in the form of man, and, above all, to a man who had won his way to power by arms. Yet, I thought that society had here reached a point of division; a ridge, from which the streams of power naturally took different directions; that the struggles of the democracy were but like the bursting of those monsoons which mark the distinction of seasons in the East; or the ruggedness of those regions of rock and precipice, of roaring torrent and sunless valley, through which the Alpine traveller must toil, before he can bask in the luxuriance of the Italian plain. Attached as I am in the highest degree to the principle of monarchy, and regarding it as the safest anchorage of the state, still, how was I to know that moral nature might not have her reserves of power, as well as physical; that the science of government itself might not have its undetected secrets, as well as the caverns of the earth; that the quiverings and convulsions of society at this moment, obviously alike beyond calculation and control, might not be only evidences of the same vast agencies at work, whose counterparts, in depths below the human eye, shake and rend the soil? Those were the days of speculation, and I indulged in them like the rest of the world. Every man stood, as the islander of the South Sea may stand on his shore, contemplating the conflict of fire and water, while the furnaces

of the centre are forcing up the island in clouds of vapour and gusts of whirlwind. All was strange, undefined, and startling. One thing alone seemed certain; that the past *régime* was gone, never to return; that a great barrier had suddenly been dropped between the two sovereignties; that the living generation stood on the dividing pinnacle between the languid vices of the past system and the daring, perhaps guilty, energies of the system to come. Behind man lay the long level of wasted national faculties, emasculating superstitions, the graceful feebleness of a sensual nobility, and the superb follies of a haughty and yet helpless throne. Before him rose a realm of boundless extent, but requiring frames of vigour, and feelings undismayed by difficulty, to traverse and subdue; – a horizon of hills and clouds, where the gale blew fresh and the tempest rolled; where novel difficulties must be met at every step, but still where, if we trod at all, we must ascend at every step, where every clearing of the horizon must give us a new and more comprehensive prospect, and where every struggle with the rudeness of the soil, or the roughness of the elements, must enhance the vigour of the nerve that encountered them.

Those were dreams; yet I had not then made due allowance for the nature of the foreign mind. I was yet to learn its absence of all sober thought; its ready temptation by every trivially of the hour; its demand of extravagant excitement to rouse it into action, and its utter apathy where its passions were not bribed. I had imagined a national sovereignty, righteous, calm, and resolute,

trained by the precepts of a Milton and a Locke; I found only an Italian despotism, trained by the romance of Rousseau and the scepticism of Voltaire.

Every day in the capital now had its celebration, and all exhibited the taste and talent of the First Consul; but one characteristic fête at length woke me to the true design of this extraordinary man – the inauguration of the Legion of Honour. It was the first step to the throne, and a step of incompatible daring and dexterity; it was the virtual restoration of an aristocracy, in the presence of a people who had raved with the rage of frenzy against all titles, who had torn down the coats-of-arms from the gates of the noblesse, and shattered and dug up even the marbles of their sepulchres. A new military caste – a noblesse of the sword – was now to be established. Republicanism had been already "pushed from its stool," but this was the chain which was to keep it fixed to the ground.

The ceremonial was held in the Hotel des Invalides; and all the civil pomp of the consulate was combined with all the military display. The giving of the crosses of honour called forth in succession the names of all those gallant soldiers whose exploits had rung through Europe, in the campaigns of the Alps and the Rhine. Nothing could be more in the spirit of a fine historic picture, or in the semblance of a fine drama. The first men of the French councils and armies stood, surrounded by the monuments of their ancestors in the national glory – the statues of the Condés and Turennes, whose memory formed so large a

portion of the popular pride, and whose achievements so solid a record in the history of French triumph. To those high sources of sentiment, all that could be added by stately decoration and religious solemnity was given; and in the chorus of sweet voices, the sounds of martial harmony, the acclamations of the countless multitudes within and without, and the thunder of cannon, was completed the most magnificent, and yet the most ominous, of all ceremonials. It was not difficult to see, that this day was the consecration of France to absolute power, and of all her faculties to conquest. Like the Roman herald, she had put on, in the temple, the robe of defiance to all nations. She was to be from this day of devotement the nation of war. It was less visible, but not less true, that upon the field of Marengo perished the Democracy, but in that temple was sacrificed the Republic. The throne was still only in vision; but its outline was clear, and that outline was colossal.

In my intercourse with the men of the new *régime* I had associated chiefly with the military. Their ideas were less narrowed by the circle of Paris, their language was frank and free, and their knowledge was more direct and extensive on the topic which I most desired to comprehend, the state of their foreign conquests. I soon had reason to congratulate myself on my choice. One of these, a colonel of dragoons, who had served with Moreau, and whose partialities at least did not lean to the rival hero, came hurriedly to me at an early hour one morning, to "take his leave." But why, and where? "He was ordered to join his

regiment immediately, and march for the coast of the Channel." "To invade us?" I asked laughingly. "Not exactly yet, perhaps; but it may come to that in good time. I grieve to tell you," added my gallant friend, with more of gravity than I thought he could possibly have thrown into his good-humoured features, "that we are to have war. The matter is perfectly determined in the Tuileries; and at the levee to-day there will probably be a scene. In the mean time, take my information as certain, and be prepared for your return to England without twenty-four hours' delay." He took his departure.

I attended the levee on that memorable day, and saw the *scene*. The Place du Carrousel was unusually crowded with troops, which the First Consul was passing in review. The whole population seemed to have conjectured the event of the day; for I had never seen them in such numbers, or with such an evident look of general anxiety. The Tuileries were filled with officers of state, with leading military men, and members of the Senate and Tribunat; the whole body of the foreign ambassadors were present; and yet the entire assemblage was kept waiting until the First Consul had inspected even the firelocks of his guard, and the shoes in their knapsacks. The diplomatists, as they saw from the high casements of the palace this tardy operation going on, exchanged glaces with each other at its contemptuous trifling. Some of the *militaires* exhibited the impatience of men accustomed to prompt measures; the civilians smiled and shrugged their shoulders; but all felt that there was a purpose in

the delay.

At length, the drums beat for the close of the review; the First Consul galloped up to the porch of the palace, flung himself from his charger, sprang up the staircase, and without stopping for etiquette, rushed into the *salle*, followed by cloud of aides-de-camp and chamberlains. The Circle of Presentations was formed, and he walked hastily round it, saying few rapid words to each. I observed for the first time an aide-de-camp moving on the outside of the circle, step for step, and with his eye steadily marking the gesture of each individual to whom the First Consul spoke in his circuit. This was a new precaution, and indicative of the time. Till then he had run all risks, and might have been the victim of any daring hand. The very countenance of the First Consul was historic; it was as characteristic as his career. It exhibited the most unusual contrast of severity and softness; nothing sterner than the gathering of his brow, nothing more flattering than his smile. On this occasion we had them both in perfection. To the general diplomatic circle his lip wore the smile. But when he reached the spot where the British ambassador stood, we had the storm at once. With his darkest frown, and with every feature in agitation, he suddenly burst out into a tirade against England – reproaching her with contempt of treaties; with an absolute desire for war; with a perpetual passion for embroiling Europe; with forming armaments in the midst of peace; and with challenging France to an encounter which must provoke universal hostilities. The English ambassador listened

in silence, but with the air of a high-spirited man, who would concede nothing to menace; and with the countenance of an intelligent one, who could have easily answered declamation by argument. But for this answer there was no time. The First Consul, having delivered his diatribe, suddenly sprang round, darted through the crowd, rushed through a portal, and was lost to the view. That scene was decisive. I saw that war was inevitable. I took my friend's advice, ordered post-horses, and within the twenty-four hours I saw with infinite delight the cliffs of Dover shining in the dawn.

I am not writing a history. I am merely throwing together events separated by great chasms, in the course of a life. My life was all incident; sometimes connected with public transactions of the first magnitude, sometimes wholly personal; and thus I hasten on to the close of a public career which has ended, and of an existence diversified by cloud and sunshine, but on the whole happy.

The war began; it was unavoidable. The objects of our great adversary have been since stripped of their disguise. His system, at the time, was to lull England by peace, until he had amassed a force which would crush her at the outbreak of a war. A few years would have concentrated his strength, and brought the battle to our own shores. But there are higher impulses acting on the world than human ambition; the great machine is not altogether guided by man. England had the cause of nations in her charge; her principles were truth, honour, and justice. She

had retained the reverence of her forefathers for the Sanctuary; and the same guidance which had in the beginning taught her wisdom, ultimately crowned her with victory. I lived through a period of the most overwhelming vicissitudes of nations, and of the great disturber himself, who had caused those vicissitudes. I saw Napoleon at the head of 500,000 men on the Niemen; I saw him reduced to 50,000 on the plains of Champagne; I saw him reduced to a brigade at Fontainebleau; I saw him a burlesque of empire at Elba; and I saw him an exile on board a British ship, departing from Europe to obscurity and his grave. These things may well reconcile inferior talents to the changes of fortune. But they should also teach nations, that the love of conquest is national ruin; and that there is a power which avenges the innocent blood. No country on earth requires that high moral more than France; and no country on earth has more bitterly suffered for its perversion. Napoleon was embodied France; the concentrated spirit of her wild ambition, of her furious love of conquest, of her reckless scorn of the sufferings and rights of mankind. Nobler principles have followed, under a wiser rule. But if France draws the sword again in the ambition of Napoleon, she will exhibit to the world only the fate of Napoleon. It will be her last war.

On my arrival in England, I found the public mind clouded with almost universal dejection. Pitt was visibly dying. He still held the nominal reins of government for some period; but the blow had been struck, and his sole honour now was to be,

that, like the Spartan of old, he died on the field, and with his buckler on his arm. There are secrets in the distribution of human destinies, which have always perplexed mankind; and one of those is, why so many of the most powerful minds have been cut off in the midst of their career, extinguished at the moment when their fine faculties were hourly more essential to the welfare of science, of government, and of the general progress of society.

I may well comprehend that feeling, for it was my own. I saw Pitt laid in the grave; I looked down into the narrow bed where slept all that was mortal of the man who virtually wielded the whole supremacy of Europe. Yet how little can man estimate the future! Napoleon was in his glory, when Pitt was in his shroud. Yet how infinitely more honoured, and thus more happy, was the fate of him by whose sepulchre all that was noble and memorable in the living generation stood in reverence and sorrow, than the last hour of the prisoner of St Helena! Both were emblems of their nations. The Englishman, manly, pure, and bold, of unshaken firmness, of proud reliance on the resources of his own nature, and of lofty perseverence through good and through evil fortune. The foreigner, dazzling and daring, of singular intellectual vividness, and of a thirst of power which disdained to be slaked but at sources above the ambition of all the past warriors and statesmen of Europe. He was the first who dreamed of fabricating anew the old Roman sceptre, and establishing an empire of the world. His game was for a prodigious stake, and for a while he played it with prodigious fortune. He found the

moral atmosphere filled with the floating elements of revolution; he collected the republican electricity, and discharged it on the cusps and pinnacles of the European thrones with terrible effect. But, from the moment when he had dissipated that charm, he lost the secret of his irresistible strength. As the head of the great republic, making opinion his precursor, calling on the old wrongs of nations to level his way, and marshaling the new-born hopes, the ancient injuries, and the ardent imaginations of the continental kingdoms to fight his battles; the world lay before him, with all its barriers ready to fall at the first tread of his horse's hoof. As an Emperor, he forged his own chain.

Napoleon, the chieftain of republicanism, might have revolutionized Europe; Napoleon, the monarch, narrowed his supremacy to the sweep of his sword. Like a necromancer weary of his art, he scattered the whole treasury of his magnificent illusions into "thin air;" flung away his creative wand for a sceptre; and buried the book of his magic "ten thousand fathom deep," to replace it only by the obsolete statutes of courts, and the weak etiquette of governments in decay. Fortunate for mankind that he committed this irrecoverable error, and was content to be the lord of France, instead of being the sovereign of opinion; for his nature was despotic, and his power must have finally shaped and massed itself into a stupendous tyranny. Still, he might have long influenced the fates, and long excited the awe and wonder, of Europe. We, too, might have worshipped his Star, and have forgotten the danger of the flaming phenomenon, in the rapidity

and eccentricity of its course, as we saw it eclipsing the old luminaries in succession; until it touched our orbit, and visited us in conflagration.

It was said that Pitt died of a broken heart, in despair of the prospects of England. The defeat of Austerlitz was pronounced his death-blow. What thoughts may cluster round the sleepless pillow, who shall tell? But no man knew England better; none had a bolder faith in her perseverance and principle; none had more broadly laid the foundations of victory in national honour. I shall never be driven into the belief that William Pitt despaired of his country.

He died in the vigour of his genius, in the proudest struggle of the empire, in the midst of the deepest trial which for a thousand years had demanded all the faculties of England. Yet, what man within human recollection had lived so long, if we are to reckon life not by the calendar but by triumphs? What minister of England, what minister of Europe, but himself, was the head of his government for three-and-twenty years? What man had attained so high an European rank? What mind had influenced so large an extent of European interests? What name was so instinctively pronounced by every nation, as the first among mankind? To have earned distinctions like these, was to have obtained all that time could give. Not half a century in years, Pitt's true age was patriarchal.

I was now but a spectator. My connexion with public life was broken off. Every name with which I had been associated was

swept away; and I stood like a man flung from ship-wreck upon a shore, where every face which he met was that of a stranger. I was still in Parliament, but I felt a loathing for public exertions. From habit, I had almost identified office with the memorable men whom I had seen governing so long; and the new faces, the new declamation, and the new principles, which the ministerial change brought before me nightly, startled my feelings even less as new than as incongruous. I admitted the ability, the occasional intelligence, and perhaps even the patriotism of the cabinet; but in those reveries, (the natural refuge from a long debate,) memory so often peopled the Treasury Bench with the forms of Pitt and his distinguished coadjutors, and so completely filled my ear with his sonorous periods and high-toned principles, that when I was roused to the reality, I felt as those who have seen some great performer in one of Shakspeare's characters, until no excellence of his successor can embody the conception once more.

I retired from the tumult of London, and returned to tastes which I had never wholly forgotten; taking a small residence within a few miles of this centre of the living world, and devoting my leisure to the enjoyments of that life, which, in the purest days of man, was given to him as the happiest, "to dress the garden, and keep it." Clotilde in all her tastes joined with mine, or rather led them, with the instinctive elegance of a female mind, accomplished in every grace of education. We read, wrote, walked, talked, and pruned our rose-trees and gathered our

carnations and violets, together. She had already given me those pledges, which, while they increase the anxiety, also increase the affection, of wedded life. The education of our children was a new source of interest. They were handsome and healthy. Their little sports, the growth of their young perceptions, and the freshness of their ideas, renewed to us both all the delights of society without their exhaustion; and when, after returning from a day spent in the noise and bustle of London, I reached my rustic gate, heard the cheerful voices of the little population which rushed down the flowery avenue to cling upon my neck; and stood at the door of my cottage, with my arm round the waist of my beautiful and fond wife, breathing the evening fragrance of a thousand blooms, and enjoying the cool air, and the purple glories of the sky – I often wondered why men should seek for happiness in any other scene; and felt gratitude, not the less sincere for its being calm and solemn, to the Giver of a lot so nearly approaching to human fulness of joy.

But the world rolls on, let who will slumber among its roses. The political world was awoke by a thunder-clap. Fox died. He was just six months a minister! Such is ambition, such is the world. He died, like Pitt, in the zenith of his powers, with his judgment improved and his passions mitigated, with the noblest prospects of public utility before his eyes, and the majestic responsibilities of a British minister assuming their natural rank in his capacious mind. The times, too, were darkening; and another "lodestar" was thus stricken from the

national hemisphere, at the moment when the nation most wanted guidance. The lights which remained were many; but they were vague, feeble, and scattered. The "leader of the starry host" was gone.

I cannot trust myself to speak of this distinguished man; for I was no Foxite. I regarded his policy in opposition as the pleadings of a powerful advocate, with a vast retaining fee, a most comprehensive cause, and a most generous and confiding client. Popularity, popular claims, and the people, were all three made for him beyond all other men; and no advocate ever pleaded with more indefatigable zeal, or more resolute determination. But, raised to a higher position, higher qualities were demanded. Whether they might not have existed in his nature, waiting for the development of time, is the question. But time was not given. His task had hitherto been easy. It was simply to stand as a spectator on the shore, criticising the manœuvres of a stately vessel struggling with the gale. The helm was at last put into his hand; and it was then that he felt the difference between *terra firma* and the wild and restless element which he was now to control. But he had scarcely set his foot on the deck, when he, too, was swept away. On such brevity of trial, it is impossible to judge. Time might have matured his vigour, while it expanded his views: matchless as the leader of a party, he might then have been elevated into the acknowledged leader of a people. The singular daring, ardent sensitiveness, and popular ambition, which made him dangerous in a private station, might then have

found their nobler employment, and been purified in the broad and lofty region of ministerial duty. He might have enlarged the partizan into the patriot, and, instead of being the great leader of a populace, have been ennobled into the great guide of an empire.

But the world never stands still. On the day when I returned from moralising on the vanity of life over the grave of Fox, I received a letter, a trumpet-call to the *mêlée*, from Mordecai. It was enthusiastic, but its enthusiasm had now taken a bolder direction. "In abandoning England," he told me, "he had abandoned all minor and personal speculations, and was now dealing with the affairs of kingdoms." This letter gave only fragments of his views; but it was easy to see that he contemplated larger results than he ventured to trust to paper.

"You must come and see me here," said he, "for it is only here that you *can* see me as I ever desired to be seen; or in fact, as nature made me. In your busy metropolis, I was only one of the millions who were content to make a sort of a reptile existence, creeping on the ground, and living on the chances of the day. Here I have thrown off my caterpillar life and am on the wing – a human dragon-fly, if you will, darting at a thousand different objects, enjoying the broad sunshine, and speeding through the wide air. My invincible attachment to my nation here finds its natural object; for the sons of Abraham are here a *people*. I am a patriarch, with my flocks and herds, my shepherds and clansmen, the sons of my tribe coming to do me honour, and my heart swelling and glowing with the prospects of national

regeneration. I have around me a province to which one of your English counties would be but a sheepfold; a multitude of bold spirits, to whom your populace would be triflers; a new nation, elated by their approaching deliverance, solemnly indignant at their past oppression, and determined to shake the land to its centre, or to recover their freedom.

"You will speak of this as the vision of an old man – come to us, and you will see it a splendid reality. But observe, that *I* expect no miracle. I leave visions to fanatics; and while I acknowledge the Power of Powers, which rides in clouds, and moves the world by means unknown to human weakness, I look also to the human means which have their place in pushing on the wheels of the great system. The army which has broken down the strength of the Continent – the force which, like a whirlwind, has torn such tremendous chasms through the old domains of European power, and has torn up so many of the forest monarchs by the root – the French legions, the greatest instrument of human change since the Gothic invasions, are now marching direct on Poland.

"I have seen the man who is at the head of that army – the most extraordinary being whom Europe has seen for a thousand years – the crowned basilisk of France. I own, that we must beware of his fangs, of the blast of his nostrils, and the flash of his eye. He is a terrible production of nature: but he is on our side, and, even if he should be finally trampled, he will have first done our work. I have had an interview with Napoleon! it was long and animated. He spoke to me as to the chief man of my nation, and I

answered him in the spirit of the chief man. He pronounced, that the general change, essential to the true government of Europe, was incapable of being effected without the aid of our people. He spoke contemptuously of the impolicy by which we had been deprived of our privileges, and declared his determination to place us on a height from which we might move the world. But it was obvious to me, that under those lofty declarations there was a burning ambition; that if we were to move the world, it was for him; and that, even then, we were not to move it for the monarch of France, but for the individual. I saw, that *he* was then the dreamer. Yet his dream was the extravagance of genius. In those hopeless graspings and wild aspirations, I saw ultimate defeat; but I saw also the nerve and muscle of a gigantic mind. In his pantings after immeasurable power and imperishable dominion, he utterly forgot the barrier which time throws before the proudest step of human genius; and that within a few years his head must grow grey, his blood cold, the sword be returned to its sheath, and even the sceptre fall from his withering hand. Still, in our conference, we both spoke the same language of scorn for human obstacles, of contempt for the narrowness of human views, and of our resolution to effect objects which, in many an after age, should fix the eye of the world. But *he* spoke of immortal things; relying on mortal conjecture and mortal power. I spoke of them on surer grounds. I felt them to be the consummation of promises which nothing can abolish; to be the offspring of power which nothing can resist. The foundation of his structures was policy,

the foundation of mine was prophecy. And when his shall be scattered as the chaff of the threshing-floor, and be light as the dust of the balance; mine shall be deep as the centre, high as the heavens, and dazzling as the sun in his glory."

In another portion of his letter, he adverted to the means by which this great operation was to be effected.

"I have been for three days on the Vistula, gazing at the march of the 'Grand Army.' It well deserves the name. It is the mightiest mass of power ever combined under one head; half a million of men. The armies of Persia were gatherings of clowns compared to this incomparable display of soldiership; the armies of Alaric and Attila were hordes of savages in comparison; the armies of ancient Rome alone approached it in point of discipline, but the most powerful Roman army never reached a fifth of its number. I see at this moment before me the conquerors of the Continent, the brigades which have swept Italy, the bayonets and cannon which have broken down Austria, and extinguished Prussia. – The eagles are now on the wing for a mightier prey."

This prediction was like the prayers of the Homeric heroes —

"One half the gods dispersed in empty air."

Poland was not to be liberated; the crisis was superb, but the weapon was not equal to the blow. It was the first instance in which the French Emperor was found inferior to his fortune. With incomparable force of intellect, Napoleon wanted grandeur of mind. It has become the custom of later years to deny him even superiority of intellect; but the man who, in a contest open to

all, goes before all – who converts a republic, with all its ardour, haughtiness, and passion, into a monarchy at once as rigid and as magnificent as an Oriental despotism – who, in a country of warriors, makes himself the leading warrior – who, among the circle within circle of the subtlest political intrigues, baffles all intrigues, converts them into the material of his own ascendency, and makes the subtlest and the boldest spirits his instruments and slaves – has given sufficient evidence of the superiority of his talents. The conqueror who beat down in succession all the great military names of Europe, must have been a soldier; the negotiator who vanquished all existing diplomacy, and the statesman who remodelled the laws, curbed the fiery temper, and reduced to discipline the fierce insubordination of a people, whose first victory had crushed the state, and heaped the ruins of the throne on the sepulchre of their king – must have been a negotiator and a statesman of the first rank. Or, if those were not the achievements of intellect, by what were they done? If they were done without it, of what value is intellect? Napoleon had then only found the still superior secret of success; and we deny his intellect, simply to give him attributes higher than belong to human nature. – No man before him dreamed of such success, no man in his day rivalled it, no man since his day has attempted its renewal. "But he was fortunate!" What can be more childish than to attempt the solution of the problem by fortune? Fortune is a phantom. Circumstances may arise beyond the conception of man; but where the feebler mind yields to circumstances, the

stronger one shapes, controls, and guides them.

This man was sent for a great purpose of justice, and he was gifted with the faculties for its execution. An act of imperial guilt had been committed, of which Europe was to be purged by penalty alone. The fall of Poland was to be made a moral to the governments of the earth; and Napoleon was to be the fiery brand that was to imprint the sentence upon the foreheads of the great criminals. It is in contemplations like these, that the Spirit of history ministers to the wisdom of mankind. Whatever may be the retribution for individuals beyond the grave, justice on nations must be done in this world; and *here* it will be done.

The partition of Poland was the most comprehensive and audacious crime of the modern world. It was a deliberate insult, at once to the laws of nations and to the majesty of the great Disposer of nations. And never fell vengeance more immediate, more distinct, or more characteristic. The capital of Austria twice entered over the bodies of its gallant soldiery; Russia ravaged and Moscow burnt; the Prussian army extinguished by the massacre of Jena, and Prussia in a day fettered for years – were the summary and solemn retribution of Heaven. But, when the penalty was paid, the fate of the executioner instantly followed. Guilt had punished guilt, and justice was to be alike done upon all. Napoleon and his empire vanished, as the powder vanishes that explodes the mine. The ground was broken up; the structures of royalty on its surface were deeply fractured; the havoc was complete; but the fiery deposit which had effected the

havoc was itself scattered into air.

His re-establishment of Poland would have been an act of grandeur. It would have established a new character for the whole Revolution. It would have shown that the new spirit which had gone forth summoning the world to regeneration, was itself regeneration; that it was not a tempter, but a restorer; that all conquest was not selfish, and all protestation not meant to deceive. If Napoleon had given Poland a diadem, and placed it on the brow of Kosciusko, he would, in that act, have placed on his own brow a diadem which no chance of the field could have plucked away; an imperishable and dazzling answer to all the calumnies of his age, and all the doubts of posterity. He might even have built, in the restoration of the fallen kingdom, a citadel for his own security in all the casualties of empire; but, in all events, he would have fixed in the political heaven a star which, to the last recollection of mankind, would have thrown light on his sepulchre, and borne his name.

The fall of the Foxite ministry opened the way to a new cabinet, and I resumed my office. But we marched in over ruins. In the short period of their power, Europe had been shattered. England had stood aloof and escaped the shock; but to stand aloof then was her crime – her sympathy might have saved the tottering system. Now, all was gone. When we looked over the whole level of the Continent, we saw but two thrones – France and Russia; all the rest were crushed. They stood, but their structure was shattered, stripped of its adornments, and

ready to crumble down at the first blow. England was without an ally. We had begun the war with Europe in our line of battle; we now stood alone. Yet, the spirit of the nation was never bolder than in this hour, when a storm of hostility seemed to be gathering round us from every quarter of the world. Still, there were voices of ill omen among our leading men. It was said, that France and Russia had resolved to divide the world between them – to monopolize the East and the West; to extinguish all the minor sovereignties; to abolish all the constitutions; to turn the world into two vast menageries, in which the lesser monarchies should be shown, as caged lions, for the pomp of the two lords-paramount of the globe. I heard this language from philosophers, from orators, even from statesmen; but I turned to the people, and I found the spirit of their forefathers unshaken in them still – the bold defiance of the foreigner, the lofty national scorn of his gasconading, the desire to grapple more closely with his utmost strength, and the willingness, nay, the passionate desire, to rest the cause of Europe on their championship alone. I never heard among the multitude a sound of that despair which had become the habitual language of Opposition. They had answered the call to arms with national ardour. The land was filled with voluntary levies, and the constant cry of the people was – conflict with the enemy, any where, at any time, or upon any terms. More fully versed in their national history than any other European people, they remembered, that in every war with France, for a thousand years, England had finished with victory; that she had

never suffered any one decisive defeat in the war, that where the forces of the two nations could come fairly into contact, their troops had always been successful; and that from the moment when France ventured to contest the empire of the seas, all the battles of England were triumphs, until the enemy was swept from the ocean.

The new cabinet formed its plans on the national confidence, and executed them with statesmanlike decision. The struggle on the Continent was at an end; but they resolved to gird it with a chain of fire. Every port was shut up by English guns; every shore was watched by English eyes. Outside this chain, the world was our own. The ocean was free; every sea was traversed by our commerce with as much security as in the most profound peace. The contrast with the Continent was of the most striking order. There all was the dungeon – one vast scene of suffering and outcry; of coercion and sorrow; the conscription, the confiscation, the licensed plunder, the bitter and perpetual insult. The hearts of men died within them, and they crept silently to their obscure graves. Wounds, poverty, and ferocious tyranny, the heart-gnawing pangs of shame, and the thousand thorns which national and conscious degradation strews on the pillow of men crushed by the insolence of a soldiery, wore away the human race; provinces were unpeopled, and a generation were laid prematurely in the grave.

The recollections of the living world will long point to this period as the most menacing portion of all history. The ancient

tyrannies were bold, presumptuous, and remorseless monopolies of power; but their pressure scarcely descended to the multitude. It crushed the senator, the patrician, and the man of opulence; as the tempest smites the turrets of the palace, or shatters the pinnacles of the mountain range. But the despotism of France searched the humblest condition of man. It tyrannized over the cottage, as fiercely as it had swept over the thrones. The German or Italian peasant saw his son torn away, to perish in some distant region, of which he knew no more than that it was the grave of the thousands and tens of thousands of his fellow shepherds and vintagers. The despotism of France less resembled the domination of man, from which, with all its vigilance, there is some hope of escape, than the subtlety of a demon, which has an evil and a sting for every heart, and by which nothing can be forgotten, and nothing will be spared. In the whole immense circle of French dominion, no man could lay his head down to rest, with a security that he might not be roused at midnight, to be flung into a captivity from which he was never to return. No man could look upon his property, the earnings of his manhood, the resource for his age, or the provision for his children, without the knowledge that it was at the mercy of the plunderer; no man could look upon the birth of his child, without the bitter consciousness that another victim was preparing for the general sacrifice; nor could see the ripening form or intellect of those who were given to him by Providence for the comfort and companionship of his advancing years, without a conviction that they would be swept

away from him. He felt that he would be left unsheltered and alone; and that those in whom his life was wrapt, and whom he would have gladly given his life to save, were destined to perish by some German or Russian bayonet, and make their last bed among the swamps of the Danube or the snows of Poland.

I am not now speaking from the natural abhorrence of the Briton for tyranny alone. The proofs are before the eye of mankind. Within little more than half the first year of the Polish campaign, three conscriptions, of eighty thousand youths each, were demanded from France alone. Two hundred and forty thousand living beings were torn from their parents, and sent to perish in the field, the hospital, and on the march through deserts where winter reigns in boundless supremacy!

Let the man of England rejoice that those terrible inflictions cannot be laid on him, and be grateful to the freedom which protects the most favoured nation of mankind. Arbitrary arrest and the conscription are the two heads of the serpent – either would embitter the existence of the most prosperous state of society; they both at this hour gnaw the vitals of the continental states; they alienate the allegiance, and chill the affections; even where they are mitigated by the character of the sovereigns, they still remain the especial evils which the noblest patriotism should apply all its efforts to extinguish, and the removal of which it would be the most illustrious boon of princes to confer upon their people.

But the ramparts of that empire of slavery and suffering were

to be shaken at last. The breach was to be made and stormed by England; Europe was to be summoned to achieve its own deliverance; and England was to move at the head of the proudest armament that ever marched to conquest for the liberties of mankind.

She began by a thunder-clap. The peace with Russia had laid the Czar at the mercy of France. Napoleon had intrigued to make him a confederate in the league against mankind. But the generous nature of the Russian monarch shrank from the conspiracy, and the secret articles of the treaty of Tilsit were divulged to the British cabinet. I shall not now say from what authority they came; but the confidence was spontaneous, and the effect decisive. Those Articles contained the outline of a plan for combining all the fleets of subject Europe, and pouring the final vengeance of war on our shores. The right wing of that tremendous armament was to be formed of the Danish and Russian fleets. This confederacy must be broken up, or we must see a hundred and eighty ships of the line, freighted with a French and Russian army, at the mouth of the Thames. There was not a moment to be lost, if we were to act at all; for a French force was already within a march of the Great Belt, to garrison Denmark. The question was debated in council, in all its bearings. All were fully aware of the hypocritical clamour which would be raised by the men who were lending themselves to every atrocity of France. We were not less prepared for the furious declamation of that professor of universal justice and protector of the rights

of neutral nations – the French Emperor. But the necessity was irresistible; the act was one of self-defence; and it was executed accordingly, and with instant and incomparable vigour. A fleet and army were dispatched to the Baltic. An assault of three days gave the Danish fleet into our hands. The confederacy was broken up by the British batteries; and the armament returned, with twenty sail of the enemy's line, as trophies of the best planned and boldest expedition of the war.

Napoleon raged; but it was at finding that England could show a promptitude like his own, sanctioned by a better cause. Denmark complained pathetically of the infringement of peace, before she had "completed her preparations for war;" but every man of political understanding, even in Denmark, rejoiced at her being disburdened of a fleet, whose subsistence impoverished her revenues, and whose employment could only have involved her in fatal hostilities with Britain. Russia was loudest in her indignation, but a smile was mingled with her frown. Her statesmen were secretly rejoiced to be relieved from all share in the fearful enterprise of an encounter with the fleets of England, and her Emperor was not less rejoiced to find, that she had still the sagacity and the courage which could as little be baffled as subdued, and to which the powers of the North themselves might look for refuge in the next struggle of diadems.

This was but the dawning of the day; the sun was soon to rise. Yet, public life has its difficulties in proportion to its height. As Walpole said, that no man knows the human heart

but a minister; so no man knows the real difficulties of office, but the man of office. Lures to his passions, temptations to his integrity, and alarms to his fears, are perpetually acting on his sense of honour. To make a false step is the most natural thing in the world under all those impulses; and one false step ruins him. The rumour reached me that there were dissensions in the cabinet; and, though all was smooth to the eye, I had soon sufficient proof that the intelligence was true. A prominent member of the administration was the object of the intrigue. He was an intelligent, high-spirited, and straightforward man, open in language, if the language was not of the most classic order; and bold in his conceptions, if those conceptions were not formed on the most accomplished knowledge. He had attained his high position, partly by public services, but still more by connexion. It was impossible to refuse respect to his general powers, but it was equally impossible to deny the intellectual superiority of his competitor. The contrast which they presented in the House was decisive of their talents for debate. While the one spoke his mind with the uncultured expressions of the moment; the other never addressed the House but with the polished and pointed diction of the orator. He was the most accomplished of debaters. – Always prepared, always pungent, often powerful. Distinguished in early life by scholarship, he had brought all the finer spirit of his studies into the business of public life. He was the delight of the House; and the boundless applause which followed his eloquence, and paid an involuntary tribute to his mastery of

public affairs, not unnaturally stimulated his ambition to possess that leading official rank to which he seemed called by the right of nature. The rivalry at length became open and declared; it had been felt too deeply to die away among the casual impressions of public life; it had been suppressed too long to be forgiven on either side; and the crisis was evidently approaching in which it was necessary to take a part with either of those gifted men.

I seldom spent more anxious hours in the course of an anxious life, than during the period of this deliberation. I felt all the fascinations of the man of genius. On the other hand, I respected all the solid and manly qualities of his opponent. In a personal view, the issue of the contest was likely to produce evil to my own views. I was still a dependent upon fortune. I had new ties and interests, which made official income more important to me day by day. In the fall of the administration I must follow the general fate. – In making my decision with the unsuccessful candidate for power, I must go down along with him; and the claims of the competitors were so equally balanced, and both were so distinguished, that it was beyond all conjecture to calculate the result. I, too, was not without many a temptation to perplex my judgment. The rivalry had at length become public, and the friends of each were active in securing opinions among the holders of office. The whole was a lottery, but with my political existence dependent on my escaping a blank. In this dilemma I consulted my oracle, Clotilde. Her quick intelligence decided for me at once. "You must resign," said she. "You value both; you

cannot side with either without offending their feelings, or, what I more regard, distressing your own. Both are men of intelligence and honour, and they will understand your motives and respect them. To retain office is impossible."

"But, Clotilde, how can I bear the thought of reducing you and my infants to the discomforts of a narrow income, and the obscurity of a life of retirement?"

"A thousand times better, than you could endure the thought of retaining office against your judgment, or taking a part against a friend. Follow the impressions of your own generous nature, and you will be dearer than ever to Clotilde – even though it condemned us all to the deepest obscurity." Tears gushed into her eyes as she spoke the words; and in her heart she was evidently less of the heroine than in her language: the children had come playing round her feet at the moment; and the family picture of the reverse in our fortunes, filled with this cluster of young faces, unconscious of the chance which lay before them, was too severe a trial for a mother's feelings. Her tears flowed abundantly, and the beating of her heart showed the anguish of her sacrifice. But she still persisted in her determination. As I took leave of her to go down to the House, her last words, as she pressed my hand, were – "Resign, and leave the rest to fortune."

A motion on the subject of the rival claims had been appointed for the evening; and the premier was to open the debate. The House was crowded at an early hour; and as my services were required in the discussion, I postponed the communication of

my resolve, until the division should announce that my labours were at an end. But the hour passed away in routine business. Still, the premier did not appear. The anxiety grew excessive. At length whispers ran round the benches, of a rencounter between the two distinguished individuals; and, like all rumours of this nature, the results were pronounced to be of the most alarming kind. The consternation was gradually mitigated by the announcement that one of the combatants remained unhurt, but that the other had received a mortal wound. The House was speedily deserted; and all rushed out to ascertain the truth of this melancholy intelligence. Yet, nothing was to be gathered among the numberless reports of the night, and I returned home harassed almost into fever. The morning quieted the general alarm. The wound was dangerous, but not mortal; and both combatants had sent in their resignation. It was accepted by royalty, and before another night fell; I was sent for by the premier, and offered one of the vacant offices.

Such are the chances of public life. The lottery had been drawn, and mine was a prize. With what feelings I returned on that night to my fireside; with what welcome I was received by my gentle, yet heroic, wife; or with what eyes I glanced upon my infants, as they came to ask the paternal kiss and blessing before they parted for their pillows, I leave to those who know the rejoicing of the heart, to conceive.

Those events had shaken the ministry, as dissensions always have done; and it still cost us many a severe struggle to resist the

force of Opposition combined with the clamours of the country. England and France now presented a spectacle unexampled in the annals of hostilities, engaged in a war which seemed interminable – both determined to conquer or perish; both impelled by the most daring courage; yet neither able to inflict the slightest blow upon the other, with but fifteen miles between. France was nearer to Russia, nay, was nearer to the remotest extremity of Asia, than to England. In the midst of the fiercest war, both preserved the attitude of the most profound peace. The lion and the tiger, couching on the opposite sides of some impassable ravine, each watching the fiery eyes and naked fangs of the other, would have been the natural emblems of this hopeless thirst of encounter between the two most powerful and exasperated nations of the earth.

It is no superstition to trace those events to a higher source than man. The conclusion of this vast conflict was already written, in a record above the short-sighted vision and infirm memory of our nature. In all the earlier guilt of Europe, France has been the allotted punisher of the Continent; and England the allotted punisher of France. I make no presumptuous attempt to explain the reason; but the process is incontestable. When private profligacy combines with some atrocious act of public vice to make the crimes of the Continent intolerable, France is sent forth to carry fire and sword to its boundaries, to crush its armies in the field, to sack its cities, and to decimate its population. Then comes the penalty of the punisher. The crimes of France

demand purgation. The strength of England is summoned to this stern duty, and France is scourged; her military pride is broken; her power is paralysed, peace follows, and Europe rests for a generation. The process has been so often renewed, and has been completed with such irresistible regularity, that the principle is a law. The period for this consummation was now come once more.

I was sitting in my library one evening, when a stranger was introduced, who had brought a letter from the officer commanding our squadron on the Spanish coast. He was a man of noble presence, of stately stature, and with a countenance exhibiting all the vivid expression of the South. He was a Spanish nobleman from the Asturias, and deputed by the authorities to demand succours in the national rising against the common enemy, Napoleon. I was instinctively struck by the measureless value of resistance in a country which opened to us the whole flank of France; but the intelligence was so wholly unexpected, so entirely beyond calculation, and at the same time so pregnant with the highest results to England, that I was long incredulous. I was prepared to doubt the involuntary exaggeration of men who had every thing at stake; the feverish tone of minds embarked in the most formidable of all struggles; and even the passion of the southern in every event and object, of force sufficient to arouse him into action. But the Asturian was firm in his assurances, clear and consistent in his views, and there was even a candour in his confession of the unprepared state of his country, which

added largely to my confidence. Our dialogue was, I believe, unprecedented for the plainness of its enquiries and replies. It was perfectly Lacedæmonian.

"What regular force can Spain bring into the field?"

"None."

"What force has Napoleon in Spain at this moment?"

"At least two hundred and fifty thousand men, and those in the highest state of equipment and discipline."

"And yet you venture to resist?"

"We have resisted, we shall resist, and we shall beat them."

"In what state are your fortresses?"

"One half of them in the hands of the French, and the other half, without garrisons, provisions, or even guns; still, we shall beat them."

"Are not the French troops in possession of all the provinces?"

"Yes."

"Are they not in fact masters of the country?"

"No."

"How am I to reconcile those statements?"

"The French are masters by day; the Spaniards are masters by night."

"But you have none of the elements of national government. You have lost your king."

"So much the better."

"Your princes, nobles, and court."

"So much the better."

"Even your prime minister and whole administration are in the hands of the enemy."

"Best of all!" said the respondent, with a frown like a thunder-cloud.

"What resource, then, have you?"

"The people!" exclaimed the Spaniard, in a tone of superb defiance.

"Still – powerful as a united people are – before you can call upon a British government to embark in such a contest, it must be shown that the people are capable of acting together; that they are not separated by the jealousies which proverbially divide your country."

"Señor Inglese," said the Don, with a Cervantic curl of the lip, "I see, that Spain has not been neglected among the studies of your high station. But Spain is *not* to be studied in books. She is not to be sketched, like a fragment of a Moorish castle, and carried off in a portfolio. Europe knows nothing of her. You must pass the Pyrenees to conceive her existence. She lives on principles totally distinct from those of all other nations; and France will shortly find, that she never made a greater mistake than when she thought, that even the southern slope of the Pyrenees was like the northern."

"But," said I, "the disunion of your provinces, the extinction of your army, and the capture of your executive government, must leave the country naked to invasion. The contest may be gallant, but the hazard must be formidable. To sustain a war against the

disciplined troops of France, and the daring determination of its ruler, would require a new age of miracle." The Spaniard bit his lip, and was silent. "At all events, your proposals do honour to the spirit of your country, and I shall not be the man to throw obstacles in your way. Draw up a memoir; state your means, your objects and your intentions, distinctly; and I shall lay it before the government without delay."

"Señor Inglese, it shall be done. In that memoir, I shall simply say that Spain has six ranges of mountains, all impregnable, and that the Spanish people are resolved to defend them; that the country is one vast natural fortress; that the Spanish soldier can sleep on the sand, can live on the simplest food, and the smallest quantity of that food; that he can march fifty miles a-day; that he is of the same blood as the conquerors of the Moors, and with the soldiers of Charles V.; and that he requires only discipline and leaders to equal the glory of his forefathers." His fine features glanced with manly exultation.

"Still, before I can bring your case before the country, we must be enabled to have an answer for the objections of the legislature. Your provinces are scarcely less hostile to each other than they are to the enemy. What plan can unite them in one system of defence? and, without that union, how can resistance be effectual?"

"Spain stands alone," was the reply. "Her manners, her feelings, and her people, have no examples in Europe. Her war will have as little similarity to the wars of its governments. It will

be a war, not of armies, but of the shepherd, of the artificer, the muleteer, the contrabandist – a war of all classes the peasant, the priest, the noble, nay, the beggar on the highway. But this was the war of her ancestors, the war of the Asturias, which cleared the country of the Moors, and will clear it of the French. All Spain a mass of hostility, a living tide of unquenchable hatred and consuming fire – the French battalions, pouring over the Pyrenees, will be like battalions poured into the ocean. They will be engulfed; they will never return. Our provinces are divided, but they have one invincible bond – abhorrence of the French. Even their division is not infirmity, but strength. They know so little of each other that even the conquest of one half of Spain would be scarcely felt by the rest. This will be a supreme advantage in the species of war which we contemplate – a war of desultory but perpetual assaults, of hostilities that cease neither night nor day, of campaigns that know no distinction between summer and winter – a war in which no pitched battles will be fought, but in which every wall will be a rampart, every hollow of the hills a camp, every mountain a citadel, every roadside, and swamp, and rivulet, the place of an ambuscade. We shall have no battalions and brigades, we require no tactics; our sole science will be, to kill the enemy wherever he can be reached by bullet or knife, until we make Spain the tomb of invasion, and her very name an omen, and a ruin to the tyrant on the French throne."

The councils of England in the crisis were worthy of her ancient name. It was resolved to forget the long injuries of which

Spain had been the instrument, during her passive submission to the arrogance of her ally and master. The Bourbons were now gone; the nation was disencumbered of that government of chamberlains, maids of honour, and duennas. It was to be no longer stifled in the perfumed atmosphere of court boudoirs, or to be chilled in the damps of the cloister. Its natural and noble proportions were to be left unfettered and undisguised by the formal fashions of past centuries of grave frivolity and decorous degradation. The giant was to rise refreshed. The Samson was to resume his primal purpose; he was no longer to sleep in the lap of his Delilah; the national fame was before him, and, breaking his manacles at one bold effort, he was thenceforth to stand, as nature had moulded him, powerful and prominent among mankind.

These were dreams, but they were high-toned and healthy dreams – the anticipations of a great country accustomed to the possession of freedom, and expecting to plant national regeneration wherever it set foot upon the soil. The cause of Spain was universally adopted by the people and was welcomed by Parliament with acclamation; the appointment of a minister to represent the cabinet in Spain was decided on, and this distinguished commission was pressed upon my personal sense of duty by the sovereign. My official rank placed me above ambassadorships, but a service of this order had a superior purpose. It was a mission of the country, not of the minister. I was to be the instrument of an imperial declaration of good-will, interest, and alliance to a whole people.

In another week, the frigate which conveyed me was flying before the breeze, along the iron-bound shore of Galicia; the brightest and most burning of skies was over my head, the most billowy of seas was dashing and foaming round me, and my eye was in continual admiration of the noble mountain barriers which, in a thousand shapes, guard the western coast of Spain from the ocean. At length the bay of Corunna opened before us; our anchor dropped, and I made my first step on the most picturesque shore, and among the most original people, of Europe. My destination was Madrid; but it was essential that I should ascertain all the facts in my power from the various provincial governments as I passed along; and I thus obtained a more ample knowledge of the people than could have fallen to the lot of the ordinary traveller. I consulted with their juntas, I was present at their festivals, I rode with their hidalgos, and I marched with their troops. One of the peculiarities which, as an Englishman, has always interested me in foreign travel is, that it brings us back to a period different from the existing age at home. All descending from a common stock, every nation of Europe has made a certain advance; but the advance has been of different degrees. Five hundred years ago, they were all nearly alike. In the Netherlands, I continually felt myself carried back to the days of the Protectorate; I saw nearly the same costume, the same formality of address, and the same habits of domestic life. In Germany, I went back a century further, and saw the English primitive style of existence, the same stiff architecture, the same

mingling of stateliness and simplicity, not forgetting the same homage to the "divine right of kings." In Spain, I found myself in the thirteenth century, and but for the language, the heat, and the brown visages around me, could have imagined myself in England, in the days when "barons bold" still exercised the rights of feudalism, when gallant archers killed the king's deer without the king's permission, and when the priest was the lawgiver of the land.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.