ТОМАС ДЕ КВИНСИ

THE UNCOLLECTED WRITINGS OF THOMAS DE QUINCEY, VOL. 1

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The Uncollected Writings of Thomas de Quincey—Vol. 1 / With a Preface and Annotations by James Hogg:

Содержание

Thomas De Quincey
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PREFACE

'*The last fruit off an old tree!*' This, in the words of Walter Savage Landor, is what I have now the honour to set before the public in these hitherto 'Uncollected Writings of Thomas De Quincey.'

It was my privilege to be associated intimately with the Author some thirty to forty years ago—from the beginning of 1850 until his death in 1859.[1] Throughout the whole period during which he was engaged in preparing for the Press his *Selections Grave and Gay*, I assisted in the task.

Of the singularly pleasant literary intercourse of that memorable time I have given some reminiscences in *Harper's Magazine* for this month. I may yet combine in a Volume with

[1] De Quincey, Leigh Hunt, and Macaulay all died in that year.

these some amusing, scholarly letters in my possession, and a Selection of Papers from the original sources, which I feel warranted, by the Author's own estimate, in calling *De Quincey's Choice Works*. Meantime, in dealing with the various Essays and Stories here gathered together, I limit myself to such notes as are necessary to point out the special circumstances under which some of the papers were written; in others the nature of the evidence I have found as to the indisputable authorship.

My special opportunities, derived from constant companionship and the continuous discussion with De Quincey of matters concerning his writings, gave me the key to some of the admirable papers here reprinted. It also entitles me to say, that he would have included a number of them in his Collected Works alongside the *Suspiria de Profundis* (Sighs from the Depths), had he lived to continue his labours.

When we find that most part of the *Suspiria*—perhaps the highest reach of his intellect in impassioned power—did not appear in the *Selections* at all, the reader will at once understand that, in the Author's own opinion, the Essays and Stories now first collected, were neither less dignified in purpose nor less finished in style than those which had passed under his hand in the fourteen volumes he nearly completed. Rather like the *Suspiria*, some of these papers were reserved as material upon the revision of which his energy might be fitly bestowed when health would permit.

The interesting papers which appeared in *Tait's Magazine* are all duly vouched for in that periodical. I have not touched any of the autobiographical matter which appeared in *Tait*,—the Author having recast that as well as the *Sketches from Childhood*, published in *The Instructor* in the 'Autobiographic Sketches' with which he opened the *Selections*. *The Casuistry of Duelling*, indeed, appeared in *Tait* as part of the Autobiographic Series, but, practically, it stood as an independent paper. The touching personal passage in this article reveals the misery caused by the unbridled scurrility of certain notorious publications of the last generation.

The paper on *The German Language* appeared in *Tait* in June 1836, and the *Brief Appraisal of Greek Literature* in December 1838 and June 1839.

Two long and valuable papers on *Education; Plans for the Instruction of Boys in Large Numbers*, which appeared in *The London Magazine* for April and May, 1824, were duly authenticated by the following characteristic letter from De Quincey to Christopher North. It appears in *Professor Wilson's Life*, written by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon:—

'*London, Thursday, February 24th, 1825.*

'My dear Wilson,

'I write to you on the following occasion:—Some time ago, perhaps nearly two years ago, Mr. Hill, a lawyer, published a book on Education, detailing a plan on which his brothers had

established a school at Hazlewood, in Warwickshire. This book I reviewed in the *London Magazine*, and in consequence received a letter of thanks from the Author, who, on my coming to London about midsummer last year, called on me. I have since become intimate with him, and, excepting that he is a sad Jacobin (as I am obliged to tell him once or twice a month), I have no one fault to find with him, for he is a very clever, amiable, good creature as ever existed; and in particular directions his abilities strike me as really very great indeed. Well, his book has just been reviewed in the last *Edinburgh Review* (of which some copies have been in town about a week). This service has been done him, I suppose, *through* some of his political friends—(for he is connected with Brougham, Lord Lansdowne, old Bentham, etc.),—but I understand *by* Mr. Jeffrey. Mr. Hill, in common with multitudes in this Babylon—who will not put their trust in Blackwood as in God (which, you know, he ought to do)—yet privately adores him as the Devil; and indeed publicly too, is a great *prôneur* of Blackwood. For, in spite of his Jacobinism, he is liberal and inevitably just to real wit. His fear is—that Blackwood may come as Nemesis, and compel him to regorge any puffing and cramming which Tiff has put into his pocket, and is earnest to have a letter addressed in an influential quarter to prevent this. I alleged to him that I am not quite sure but it is an affront to a Professor to presume that he has any connection as contributor, or anything else, to any work which he does not publicly avow as his organ for communicating with the world of letters. He

answers that it would be so in him,—but that an old friend may write *sub rosa*. I rejoin that I know not but you may have cut Blackwood—even as a subscriber—a whole lustrum ago. He rebuts, by urging a just compliment paid to you, as a supposed contributor, in the *News of Literature and Fashion*, but a moon or two ago. Seriously, I have told him that I know not what was the extent of your connection with Blackwood at *any* time; and that I conceive the labours of your Chair in the University must now leave you little leisure for any but occasional contributions, and therefore for no regular cognizance of the work as director, etc. However, as all that he wishes—is simply an interference to save him from any very severe article, and not an article in his favour, I have ventured to ask of you if you hear of any such thing, to use such influence as must naturally belong to you in your general character (whether maintaining any connection with Blackwood or not) to get it softened. On the whole, I suppose no such article is likely to appear. But to oblige Hill I make the application. He has no *direct* interest in the prosperity of Hazlewood; he is himself a barrister in considerable practice, and of some standing, I believe; but he takes a strong paternal interest in it, all his brothers (who are accomplished young men, I believe) being engaged in it. They have already had one shock to stand: a certain Mr. Place, a Jacobin friend of the School till just now, having taken the pet with it—and removed his sons. Now this Mr. Place, who was formerly a tailor—leather-breeches maker and habit-maker,—having made a fortune and finished

his studies,—is become an immense authority as a political and reforming head with Bentham, etc., as also with the *Westminster Review*, in which quarter he is supposed to have the weight of nine times nine men; whence, by the way, in the "circles" of the booksellers, the Review has got the name of the *Breeches Review*.' … [The writer then passes on to details of his own plans and prospects, and thus concludes.]

'I beg my kind regards to Mrs. Wilson and my young friends, whom I remember with so much interest as I last saw them at Elleray.—I am, my dear Wilson,

'Very affectionately yours,

'Thomas De Quincey.'

In approaching the consideration of other papers said, in various quarters (with some show of authority) to have been written by De Quincey, it was necessary to act with extreme care. One was a painstaking list on the whole, but very inaccurate as regards certain contributions attributed to De Quincey in *Blackwood*. I have had the kind aid of Messrs. Blackwood in examining the archives of *Maga* to settle the points in question.

I was puzzled by some papers in *The London Magazine* set down as De Quincey's contributions in a memorandum said to have been furnished by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, its Publishers. The *Blackwood* blunders made me very sceptical. There was one story in particular—the long droll one of *Mr. Schnackenberger; or, Two Masters to one Dog*, about which I

remained in doubt.

I had a faint recollection that one day De Quincey dwelt on the merits of 'Juno,' and owned the story when he was discussing 'bull-dogs.'

By the way, he was rather fond of 'bull-dogs,' and had some good anecdotes about them. It was a kind of pet-admiration-horror which he shared with Southey, on account of the difficulty in making a well-bred bull-dog relax his grip. Some member of the canine 'fancy' down at the Lakes had given them a so-called infallible 'tip' for making a bull-dog let go. I am sorry to say I have quite forgotten this admirable receipt. To be sure, one ought never to forget such valuable pieces of information. So I thought one day lately before the muzzling order came into force, when a bloodthirsty monster,—a big, white bull-dog, sprang suddenly at me in Cleveland Gardens. Instantly there flashed the thought —what was it that De Quincey recommended? A lucky lunge which drove the ferule of my umbrella down the brute's throat fortunately created a diversion, and allowed a little more time for the study of the problem. Perhaps I will be pardoned this digression, as it affords an opportunity of recording the fact that De Quincey and Southey both looked up to the bull-dog as an animal of very decided 'character.'

I was loth to abandon *Mr. Schnackenberger*, but unwilling to lean too much on my somewhat hazy remembrance. It seemed almost hopeless to obtain the necessary evidence. Messrs. Taylor and Hessey were long dead, and after groping about like a

detective, no one could tell me what had become of the records of *The London Magazine*. Suddenly there came light in October last. I ascertained that a son of one of the Publishers is the Archdeacon of Middlesex, the Venerable J. A. Hessey, D.C.L.

I stated the case, and the worthy Archdeacon came most kindly and promptly to my assistance. As a boy he remembered De Quincey at his father's house, and recollected very well reading *Mr. Schnackenberger*. He informed me, 'I was greatly interested in the [London] Magazine generally, so much so, that, at my father's request, I copied from his private list, and attached to the head of each paper the name of the Author.... This interesting set came to me at my father's death.'

Dr. Hessey had subsequently presented the series to his old pupil, Mr. William Carew Hazlitt (by whose courtesy I have been able to examine it)—'the grandson of William Hazlitt, who was a frequent writer in the Magazine, and an old friend of my father. I thought he would like to possess it, and that it would thus be in fitting hands. I should not have parted with it in favour of any but a man like Mr. Hazlitt, who was sure to value it.'

As these valuable annotations of the Archdeacon ramify in various directions—touching as they do the contributions of many brilliant men of that period—it may not be amiss (as a possible help to others in the future) to add a few more decisive words by Dr. Hessey:—

'If any papers are not marked (he refers only to those volumes actually published by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey) it was because

they were anonymous, or because, from some inadvertency, they were not assigned in my father's list. *So far as the record goes, it may be depended upon.*'

By its help I was able to fix the authorship by De Quincey of (1) *The Dog Story*—translated from the German, (2) *Moral Effects of Revolutions*, (3) *Prefigurations of Remote Events*, (4) *Abstract of Swedenborgianism by Immanuel Kant*.

Another perplexing element was the letter written by De Quincey to his uncle, Colonel Penson, in 1819 (Page's *Life*, vol. i. p. 207), wherein reference is made to certain contributions to *Blackwood's Magazine* and *The Quarterly Review*.

The archives of *Maga* I find go back only as far as 1825. As to *The Quarterly Review*, I have Mr. Murray's authority for stating that De Quincey never wrote a line in it. Whether any contributions were ever commissioned, paid for, and afterwards suppressed, I have been unable to ascertain. As a matter of fact, the *Schiller* Series referred to in the letter to Colonel Penson was never reviewed in *The Quarterly* at all.

De Quincey as a Newspaper Editor forms the subject of a Chapter in Page's *Life*. Some extracts are there given from cuttings out of *The Westmorland Gazette* found amongst the Author's Papers. This editorship (1818-19) was of short duration, and pursued under hostile circumstances, such as distance from the Press, &c., which soon led to De Quincey's resignation. I had hoped to add some further specimens of the

newspaper work, but have not, as yet, obtained access to a file of the period. In any future edition I may be able to add this in an Appendix.

The Love-Charm.—In spite of the marvellous tenacity of De Quincey's memory, even as to the very words of a passage in an Author which he had, perhaps, only *once* read, there were *blanks* which confounded himself. One of these bore on his contributions to Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*. Mr. Fields had been so generally careful in obtaining sufficient authority for what he published, in the original American edition, that De Quincey good-humouredly gave the verdict against himself, and 'supposed he *must* be wrong' in thinking that some of these special papers were not from his pen. Still,—he demurred, and before including them in *The Selections Grave and Gay*, it was resolved to institute an inquiry. Accordingly, about 1852, I was deputed to interview Mr. Charles Knight, and request his aid. My mission was to obtain, if possible, a correct list of the various contributions to the *Quarterly Magazine*, including this *Love-Charm*.

Mr. Knight, Mr. Ramsay (his first lieutenant, as he called him), and myself all met at Fleet Street, where we had the archives of the old *Quarterly Magazine* turned up, and a list checked. I lately found this particular story also referred to circumstantially in the annexed paragraph contained in Charles Knight's *Passages of a Working Life* (Thorne's re-issue, vol. I.

chap. x. p. 339).

'De Quincey had written to me in December 1824, in the belief that, as he expressed it, "many of your friends will rally about you, and urge you to some new undertaking of the same kind. If that should happen, I beg to say, that you may count upon me, as one of your men, for any extent of labour, to the best of my power, which you may choose to command." He wrote a translation of *The Love-Charm* of Tieck, with a notice of the Author. This is not reprinted in his Collected Works, though perhaps it is the most interesting of his translations from the German. In this spring and summer De Quincey and I were in intimate companionship. It was a pleasant time of intellectual intercourse for me.'

There is no doubt *The Love-Charm* would have been reprinted had the Author lived to carry the *Selections* farther.

The curious little Essay *On Novels*,—written in a Lady's Album, had passed out of Mr. Davey's hands before I became aware of its existence. The *facsimile*, however, taken for *The Archivist*, by an expert like Mr. Netherclift, shows that it is, unquestionably, in the handwriting of De Quincey. I have been unable to trace the 'Fair Incognita' to whom it was addressed.

The compositions which were written for me when I edited *Titan*, and which I now place before the public in volume form, after the lapse of a whole generation (thirty-three years, to speak

'by the card'), demand some special comment, particularly in their relation to the *Selections Grave and Gay*.

Titan was a half-crown monthly Magazine, a continuation in an enlarged form of *The Instructor*. I had become the acting Editor of its predecessor, *the New Series* of *The Instructor*, working in concert with my Father, the proprietor. In this *New Series* there appeared from De Quincey's pen *The Sphinx's Riddle*, *Judas Iscariot*, the Series of *Sketches from Childhood*, and other notable papers.

At that time I was but a young editor—young and, perhaps, a little 'curly,' as Lord Beaconsfield put it. De Quincey, with a truly paternal solicitude, gave me much good advice and valuable help, both in the selection of subjects for the Magazine and in the mode of handling them. The notes on *The Lake Dialect*, *Shakspere's Text and Suetonius Unravelled*, were written to me in the form of Letters, and published in *Titan*.

Storms in English History was a consideration of part of Mr. Froude's well-known book, which on its publication made a great stir in the literary world, and profoundly impressed De Quincey.

How to write English was the first of a series projected for *The Instructor*. It never got beyond this 'Introduction,' but the fragment contains some matter well worthy of preservation.

The circumstances attending the composition of the four papers on *The English in India* and *The English in China*, I have explained at some length in the introductory notices attached to them.

And now for a confession! The 'gentle reader' may, perhaps, feel a momentary inclination to blame me when I reveal, that I rather stood in the way of some brilliant articles which were very seriously considered at this period.

De Quincey was eager to write them, and I should have been glad indeed to have had them for *Titan*, but for a fear of allowing the Author to wander too far from the ever-present and irksome *Works*. Any possible escape—even through other downright hard work, from this perplexing labour was joyfully hailed by him as a hopeful chance of obtaining a prosperous holiday.

For a little I wavered under the temptation (Reader,—was it not great?)—the idea of having a little relaxation which would permit some, at least, of these well-planned papers to be written. But I was keenly alive to the danger which overtook us at last. We are daily reminded that 'art is long and life is short.' I had already saved the *Works* from being strangled at their birth in a legal tussle with Mr. John Taylor.[2] My Father was at my elbow anxiously inquiring about the progress of the 'copy' for each succeeding volume. There were eager friends also, on both sides of the Atlantic, pressing resolutely for it. So—prudence prevailed, and we held as straightly on our way as the Author's uncertain health would permit.

Thus it came to pass, dear Public, that you lost some charming

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[2] This incident was a complicated contention, concerning the copyright of *The Confessions*, in which De Quincey had long allowed his rights to lie dormant. It was at last happily settled in an amicable manner.

essays, while you gained the fourteen volumes of the *Selections* which the Author all but completed.

Wherefore, seeing that you may possibly expect it of me to make some use of my rare opportunities by doing whatever I can in these matters, 'before the night cometh,'—I have prepared this book—*ohne hast, ohne rast*.

I cannot close these few pages better than by quoting some strong, just, sympathetic words which appeared in two great reviews—one American, the other British.

The North American Review said:—

'In De Quincey we are struck at once by the exquisite refinement of mind, the subtleness of association, and the extreme tenuity of the threads of thought, the gossamer filaments yet finally weaving themselves together, and thickening imperceptibly into a strong and expanded web. Mingled with this, and perhaps springing from a similar mental habit, is an occasional dreaminess both in speculation and in narrative, when the mind seems to move vaguely round in vast returning circles. The thoughts catch hold of nothing, but are heaved and tossed like masses of cloud by the wind. An incident of trivial import is turned and turned to catch the light of every possible consequence, and so magnified as to become portentous and terrible.'

'A barren and trivial fact, under the power of that life-giving hand, shoots out on all sides into waving branches and green

leaves, and odoriferous flowers. It is not the fact that interests us, but the mind working upon it, investing it with mock-heroic dignity, or rendering it illustrative of really serious principles; or, with the true insight of genius, discovering, in that which a vulgar eye would despise, the germs of grandeur and beauty; the passions of war in the contests of the rival factions of schoolboys, the tragedy in every peasant's death-bed.'

'De Quincey constantly amazes us by the amount and diversity of his learning. Two or three of the minor papers in the collected volumes are absolutely loaded with the life spoils of their author's scholarship, yet carry their burden as lightly as our bodies sustain the weight of the circumambient atmosphere. So perfect is his tact in finding, or rather making a place for everything, that, while inviting, he eludes the charge of pedantry.'

'It is scarcely to be expected that one who tries his hand at so many kinds of pencraft should always excel; yet such is the force of De Quincey's intellect, the brilliancy of his imagination, and the charm of his style, that he throws a new and peculiar interest over every subject which he discusses, while his fictitious narratives in general rivet the attention of the reader with a power not easily resisted.'

The Quarterly Review said:—

'De Quincey's style is superb, his powers of reasoning unsurpassed, his imagination is warm and brilliant, and his

humour both masculine and delicate.'

The writer continues:—

'A great master of English composition, a critic of uncommon delicacy, an honest and unflinching investigator of received opinions, a philosophic inquirer—De Quincey has departed from us full of years, and left no successor to his rank. The exquisite finish of his style, with the scholastic vigour of his logic, form a combination which centuries may never reproduce, but which every generation should study as one of the marvels of English Literature.'

James Hogg.

London, February, 1890.

A BRIEF APPRAISAL OF THE GREEK LITERATURE IN ITS FOREMOST PRETENSIONS:

By way of Counsel to Adults who are hesitating as to the Propriety of Studying the Greek Language with a view to the Literature; and by way of consolation to those whom circumstances have obliged to lay aside that plan.

No. I

No question has been coming up at intervals for reconsideration more frequently than that which respects the comparative pretensions of Pagan (viz. Greek and Roman) Literature on the one side, and Modern (that is, the Literature of Christendom) on the other. Being brought uniformly before unjust tribunals—that is, tribunals corrupted and bribed by their own vanity—it is not wonderful that this great question should have been stifled and overlaid with peremptory decrees, dogmatically cutting the knot rather than skilfully untying it, as often as it has been moved afresh, and put upon the roll for a re-hearing. It is no mystery to those who are in the secret, and who can lay A and B together, why it should have happened that the most interesting of all literary questions, and the most comprehensive (for it includes most others, and some special to itself), has, in the first place, never been pleaded in a style of dignity, of philosophic precision, of feeling, or of research, proportioned to its own merits, and to the numerous 'issues' (forensically speaking) depending upon it; nor, in the second place, has ever received such an adjudication as was satisfactory *even at the moment*. For, be it remembered, after all, that any provisional adjudication—one growing out of the fashion or taste of a single era—could not, at any rate, be binding for a different era. A judgment which met the approbation of

Spenser could hardly have satisfied Dryden; nor another which satisfied Pope, have been recognised as authentic by us of the year 1838. It is the normal or exemplary condition of the human mind, its ideal condition, not its abnormal condition, as seen in the transitory modes and fashions of its taste or its opinions, which only

> 'Can lay great bases for eternity,'

or give even a colourable permanence to any decision in a matter so large, so perplexed, so profound, as this great pending suit between antiquity and ourselves—between the junior men of this earth and ourselves, the seniors, as Lord Bacon reasonably calls us. Appeals will be brought *ad infinitum*—we ourselves shall bring appeals, to set aside any judgment that may be given, until something more is consulted than individual taste; better evidence brought forward than the result of individual reading; something higher laid down as the *grounds* of judgment, as the very principles of the jurisprudence which controls the court, than those vague *responsa prudentum*, countersigned by the great name, perhaps, of Aristotle, but still too often mere products of local convenience, of inexperience, of experience too limited and exclusively Grecian, or of absolute caprice—rules, in short, which are themselves not less truly *sub judice* and liable to appeal than that very appeal cause to which they are applied as decisive.

We have remarked, that it is no mystery why the decision

should have gone pretty uniformly in favour of the ancients; for here is the dilemma:—A man, attempting this problem, *is* or *is not* a classical scholar. If he *is*, then he has already received a bias in his judgment; he is a bribed man, bribed by his vanity; and is liable to be challenged as one of the judges. If he is *not*, then he is but imperfectly qualified—imperfectly as respects his knowledge and powers; whilst, even as respects his will and affections, it may be alleged that he also is under a bias and a corrupt influence; his interest being no less obvious to undervalue a literature, which, as to *him*, is tabooed and under lock and key, than his opponent's is to put a preposterous value upon that knowledge which very probably is the one sole advantageous distinction between him and his neighbours.

We might cite an illustration from the French literary history on this very point. Every nation in turn has had its rows in this great quarrel, which is, in fact, co-extensive with the controversies upon human nature itself. The French, of course, have had *theirs*—solemn tournaments, single duels, casual 'turn-ups,' and regular 'stand-up' fights. The most celebrated of these was in the beginning of the last century, when, amongst others who acted as bottle-holders, umpires, &c., two champions in particular 'peeled' and fought a considerable number of rounds, mutually administering severe punishment, and both coming out of the ring disfigured: these were M. la Motte and Madame Dacier. But Motte was the favourite at first, and once he got Dacier 'into chancery,' and 'fibbed' her twice round the ropes,

so that she became a truly pitiable and delightful spectacle to the connoisseurs in fibbing and bloodshed. But here lay the difference: Motte was a hard hitter; he was a clever man, and (which all clever men are not) a man of sense; but, like Shakspeare, he had no Greek. On the other hand, Dacier had nothing *but* Greek. A certain abbé, at that time, amused all Paris with his caricatures of this Madame Dacier, 'who,' said he, 'ought to be cooking her husband's dinner, and darning his stockings, instead of skirmishing and tilting with Grecian spears; for, be it known that, after all her *not cooking* and her *not darning*, she is as poor a scholar as her injured husband is a good one.' And *there* the abbé was right; witness the husband's *Horace*, in 9 vols., against the wife's *Homer*. However, this was not generally understood. The lady, it was believed, waded petticoat-deep in Greek clover; and in any Grecian field of dispute, naturally she must be in the right, as against one who barely knew his own language and a little Latin. Motte was, therefore, thought by most people to have come off second best. For, as soon as ever he opened thus—'Madame, it seems to me that, agreeably to all common sense or common decorum, the Greek poet should here'–instantly, without listening to his argument, the intrepid Amazon replied (ὑποδρα ιδουσα), 'You foolish man! you remarkably silly man!—*that* is because you know no better; and the reason you know no better, is because you do not understand *ton d'apameibomenos* as I do.' *Ton d'apameibomenos* fell like a hand-grenade amongst Motte's papers, and blew

him up effectually in the opinion of the multitude. No matter what he might say in reply—no matter how reasonable, how unanswerable—that one spell of 'No Greek! no Greek!' availed as a talisman to the lady both for offence and defence; and refuted all syllogisms and all eloquence as effectually as the cry of *À la lanterne!* in the same country some fourscore years after.

So it will always be. Those who (like Madame Dacier) possess no accomplishment *but* Greek, will, of necessity, set a superhuman value upon that literature in all its parts, to which their own narrow skill becomes an available key. Besides that, over and above this coarse and conscious motive for overrating that which reacts with an equal and answerable overrating upon their own little philological attainments, there is another agency at work, and quite unconsciously to the subjects of that agency, in disturbing the sanity of any estimate they may make of a foreign literature. It is the habit (well known to psychologists) of transferring to anything created by our own skill, or which reflects our own skill, as if it lay causatively and objectively[3] in the reflecting thing itself, that pleasurable power which in very truth belongs subjectively to the mind of him who surveys it, from conscious success in the exercise of his own energies. Hence it is that we see daily without surprise, young ladies hanging enamoured over the pages of an Italian author, and

[3] *Objectively* and *subjectively* are terms somewhat too metaphysical; but they are so indispensable to accurate thinking that we are inclined to show them some indulgence; and, the more so, in cases where the mere position and connection of the words are half sufficient to explain their application.

calling attention to trivial commonplaces, such as, clothed in plain mother English, would have been more repulsive to them than the distinctions of a theologian, or the counsels of a great-grandmother. They mistake for a pleasure yielded by the author, what is in fact the pleasure attending their own success in mastering what was lately an insuperable difficulty.

It is indeed a pitiable spectacle to any man of sense and feeling, who happens to be really familiar with the golden treasures of his own ancestral literature, and a spectacle which moves alternately scorn and sorrow, to see young people squandering their time and painful study upon writers not fit to unloose the shoes' latchets of many amongst their own compatriots; making painful and remote voyages after the drossy refuse, when the pure gold lies neglected at their feet. Too often he is reminded of a case, which is still sometimes to be witnessed in London. Now and then it will happen that a lover of art, modern or antique alike, according to its excellence, will find himself honoured by an invitation from some millionnaire, or some towering grandee, to 'assist,' as the phrase is, at the opening of a case newly landed from the Tiber or the Arno, and fraught (as he is assured) with the very gems of Italian art, intermingled besides with many genuine antiques. He goes: the cases are solemnly disgorged; adulatory hangers on, calling themselves artists, and, at all events, so much so as to appreciate the solemn farce enacted, stand by uttering hollow applauses of my Lord's taste, and endeavouring to play upon the tinkling cymbals

of spurious enthusiasm: whilst every man of real discernment perceives at a glance the mere refuse and sweeping of a third-rate *studio*, such as many a native artist would disdain to turn out of his hands; and antiques such as could be produced, with a month's notice, by cart-loads, in many an obscure corner of London. Yet for this rubbish has the great man taken a painful tour; compassed land and sea; paid away in exchange a king's ransom; and claims now on their behalf, the very humblest homage of artists who are taxed with the basest envy if they refuse it, and who, meantime, cannot in sincerity look upon the trumpery with other feelings than such as the potter's wheel, if (like Ezekiel's wheels) it were instinct with spirit, would entertain for the vilest of its own creations;—culinary or 'post-culinary' mugs and jugs. We, the writers of this paper, are not artists, are not connected with artists. And yet, upon the general principle of sympathy with native merit, and of disgust towards all affectation, we cannot but recall such anecdotes with scorn; and often we recollect the stories recorded by poor Benvenuto Cellini, that dissolute but brilliant vagabond, who (like our own British artists) was sometimes upbraided with the degeneracy of modern art, and, upon his humbly requesting some evidence, received, by way of practical answer, a sculptured gem or vase, perhaps with a scornful demand of—when would he be able to produce anything like that—'eh, Master Ben? Fancy we must wait a few centuries or so, before you'll be ready with the fellow of this.' And, lo! on looking into some hidden angle of the

beautiful production, poor Cellini discovered his own private mark, the supposed antique having been a pure forgery of his own. Such cases remind one too forcibly of the pretty Horatian tale, where, in a contest between two men who undertake to mimic a pig's grunting, he who happens to be the favourite of the audience is applauded to the echo for his felicitous execution, and repeatedly encored, whilst the other man is hissed off the stage, and well kicked by a band of amateurs and cognoscenti, as a poor miserable copyist and impostor; but, unfortunately for the credit of his exploders, he has just time, before they have quite kicked him off, for exposing to view the real pig concealed under his cloak, which pig it was, and not himself, that had been the artist—forced by pinches into 'mimicry' of his own porcine music. Of all baffled connoisseurs, surely, these Roman pig-fanciers must have looked the most confounded. Yet there is no knowing: and we ourselves have a clever friend, but rather too given to subtilising, who contends, upon some argument not perfectly intelligible to us, that Horace was not so conclusive in his logic as he fancied; that the real pig might not have an 'ideal' or normal squeak, but a peculiar and non-representative squeak; and that, after all, the man might deserve the 'threshing' he got. Well, it may be so; but, however, the Roman audience, wrong or not, for once fancied themselves in the wrong; and we cannot but regret that our own ungenerous disparagers of native merit, and *exclusive* eulogisers of the dead or the alien—of those only '*quos Libitina sacravit*,' or whom oceans divide from us—are not

now and then open to the same *palpable* refutation, as they are certainly guilty of the same mean error, in prejudging the whole question, and refusing to listen even to the plain evidence of their own feelings, or, in some cases, to the voice of their own senses.

From this preface it is already abundantly clear what side *we* take in this dispute about modern literature and the antique.[4] And we now propose to justify our leaning by a general review of the Pagan authors, in their elder section—that is, the Grecians. These will be enough in all conscience, for one essay; and even for them we meditate a very cursory inquest; not such as would suffice in a grand ceremonial day of battle—a *justum prœlium*, as a Roman would call it—but in a mere perfunctory skirmish, or (if the reader objects to that word as pedantic, though, really, it is a highly-favoured word amongst ancient divines, and with many a

[4] In general usage, '*The antique*' is a phrase limited to the expression of art; but improperly so. It is quite as legitimately used to denote the *literature* of ancient times, in contradistinction to the modern. As to the term *classical*, though generally employed as equivalent to Greek and Roman, the reader must not forget this is quite a false limitation, contradicting the very reason for applying the word in *any* sense to literature. For the application arose thus: The social body of Rome being divided into six classes, of which the lowest was the sixth, it followed that the highest was the first. Thence, by a natural process common to most languages, those who belonged to this highest had no number at all assigned to them. The very absence of a number, the calling them *classici*, implied that they belonged to *the* class emphatically, or *par excellence*. *The classics* meant, therefore, the grandees in social consideration; and thence by analogy in literature. But if this analogy be transferred from Rome to Greece, where it had no corresponding root in civic arrangement—then, by parity of reason, to all nations.

'philosopher,
Who has read Alexander Ross over,')

why, in that case, let us indulge his fastidious taste by calling it an autoschediastic combat, to which, surely, there can be no such objection. And as the manner of the combat is autoschediastic or extemporaneous, and to meet a hurried occasion, so is the reader to understand that the object of our disputation is not the learned, but the unlearned student; and our purpose, not so much to discontent the one with his painful acquisitions, as to console the other under what, upon the old principle of *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, he is too apt to imagine his irreparable disadvantages. We set before us, as our especial auditor, the reasonable man of plain sense but strong feeling, who wishes to know how much he has lost, and what injury the gods did him, when, though making him, perhaps, poetical, they cut short his allowance of Latin, and, as to Greek, gave him not a jot more than a cow has in her side pocket.

Let us begin at the beginning—and that, as everybody knows, is Homer. He is, indeed, so much at the beginning that, for that very reason (if even there were no other), he is, and will be ever more, supremely interesting. Is the unlearned reader aware of his age? Upon that point there are more hypotheses than one or even two. Some there are among the chronologers who make him eleven hundred years anterior to Christ. But those who allow

him least, place him more than nine—that is, about two centuries before the establishment of the Grecian Olympiads, and (which is pretty nearly the same thing as regards time) before Romulus and Remus. Such an antiquity as this, even on its own account, is a reasonable object of interest. A poet to whom the great-grandfather of old Ancus Martius (his grandfather, did we say—that is, avus?—nay, his *abavus*, his *atavus*, his *tritavus*) looked back as to one in a line with his remote ancestor—a poet who, if he travelled about as extensively as some have supposed him to do, or even as his own countryman Herodotus most certainly did five or six hundred years afterwards, might have conversed with the very workmen who laid the foundations of the first temple at Jerusalem—might have bent the knee before Solomon in all his glory:—Such a poet, were he no better than the worst of our own old metrical romancers, would—merely for his antiquity, merely for the sublime fact of having been coeval with the eldest of those whom the eldest of histories presents to our knowledge; coeval with the earliest kings of Judah, older than the greatest of the Judean prophets, older than the separation of the two Jewish crowns and the revolt of Israel, and, even with regard to Moses and to Joshua, not in any larger sense junior than as we ourselves are junior to Chaucer—purely and exclusively with regard to these pretensions, backed and supported by an antique form of an antique language—the most comprehensive and the most melodious in the world, would—could—should—ought to merit a filial attention; and, perhaps with those who had waggon-

loads of time to spare, might plead the benefit, beyond most of those in whose favour it was enacted, of that Horatian rule—

> 'vos exemplaria Græca,
> Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurna.'

In fact, when we recollect that, in round numbers, we ourselves may be considered as two thousand years in advance of Christ, and that (by assuming less even than a mean between the different dates assigned to Homer) he stands a thousand years before Christ, we find between Homer and ourselves a gulf of three thousand years, or about one clear half of the total extent which we grant to the present duration of our planet. This in itself is so sublime a circumstance in the relations of Homer to our era, and the sense of power is so delightfully titillated to that man's feeling, who, by means of Greek, and a very moderate skill in this fine language, is able to grasp the awful span, the vast arch of which one foot rest upon 1838, and the other almost upon the war of Troy—the mighty rainbow which, like the archangel in the Revelation, plants its western limb amongst the carnage and the magnificence of Waterloo, and the other amidst the vanishing gleams and the dusty clouds of Agamemnon's rearguard—that we may pardon a little exultation to the man who can actually mutter to himself, as he rides home of a summer evening, the very words and vocal music of the old blind man at whose command

'–the Iliad and the Odyssey
Rose to the murmurs of the voiceful sea.'

But pleasures in this world fortunately are without end. And every man, after all, has many pleasures peculiar to himself—pleasures which no man shares with him, even as he is shut out from many of other men. To renounce one in particular, is no subject for sorrow, so long as many remain in that very class equal or superior. Elwood the Quaker had a luxury which none of us will ever have, in hearing the very voice and utterance of a poet quite as blind as Homer, and by many a thousand times more sublime. And yet Elwood was not perhaps much happier for *that*. For now, to proceed, reader—abstract from his *sublime* antiquity, and his being the very earliest of authors, allowance made for one or two Hebrew writers (who, being inspired, are scarcely to be viewed as human competitors), how much is there in Homer, *intrinsically* in Homer, stripped of his fine draperies of time and circumstance, in the naked Homer, disapparelled of the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious antiquity, to remunerate a man for his labour in acquiring Greek? Men think very differently about what *will* remunerate any given labour. A fool (professional *fool*) in Shakspeare ascertains, by a natural process of logic, that a 'remuneration' means a *testern*, which is just sixpence; and two remunerations, therefore, a testoon, or one shilling. But many men will consider the same service ill paid by a thousand pounds. So, of the reimbursement for learning a

language. Lord Camden is said to have learned Spanish, merely to enjoy Don Quixote more racily. Cato, the elder Cato, after abusing Greek throughout his life, sat down in extreme old age to study it: and wherefore? Mr. Coleridge mentions an author, in whom, upon opening his pages with other expectations, he stumbled upon the following fragrant passage—'But from this frivolous digression upon philosophy and the fine arts, let us return to a subject too little understood or appreciated in these sceptical days—the subject of *dung*.' Now, *that* was precisely the course of thought with this old censorious Cato: So long as Greek offered, or seemed to offer, nothing but philosophy or poetry, he was clamorous against Greek; but he began to thaw and melt a little upon the charms of Greek—he 'owned the soft impeachment,' when he heard of some Grecian treatises upon *beans* and *turnips*; and, finally, he sank under its voluptuous seductions, when he heard of others upon DUNG. There are, therefore, as different notions about a 'remuneration' in this case, as the poor fool had met with it in *his* case. We, however, unappalled by the bad names of 'Goth,' 'Vandal,' and so forth, shall honestly lay before the reader *our* notions.

When Dryden wrote his famous, indeed matchless, epigram upon the three great masters (or reputed masters) of the Epopee, he found himself at no loss to characterize the last of the triad—no matter what qualities he imputed to the first and the second, he knew himself safe in imputing them all to the third. The mighty modern had everything that his predecessors

were ever *thought* to have, as well as something beside.[5] So he expressed the surpassing grandeur of Milton, by saying that in him nature had embodied, by concentration as in one focus, whatever excellencies she had scattered separately amongst her earlier favourites. But, in strict regard to the facts, this is far from being a faithful statement of the relations between Milton and his elder brothers of the *Epos*: in sublimity, if that is what Dryden meant by 'loftiness of thought,' it is not so fair to class Milton with the greatest of poets, as to class him apart, retired from all others, sequestered, 'sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.' In other poets, in Dante for example, there may be rays, gleams, sudden coruscations, casual scintillations, of the sublime; but for any continuous and sustained blaze of the sublime, it is in vain to look for it, *except* in Milton, making allowances (as before) for the inspired sublimities of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and of the great Evangelist's Revelations. As to Homer, no critic who writes from personal and *direct* knowledge on the one hand, or who understands the value of words on the other, ever contended in any critical sense for sublimity, as a quality to which he had the slightest pretensions. What! not Longinus? If he did, it would have been of little consequence; for he had no field of

[5] The beauty of this famous epigram lies in the *form* of the conception. The first had A; the second had B; and when nature, to furnish out a third, should have given him C, she found that A and B had already exhausted her cycle; and that she could distinguish her third great favourite only by giving him both A and B in combination. But the filling up of this outline is imperfect: for the A (*loftiness*) and the B (*majesty*) are one and the same quality, under different names.

comparison, as we, knowing no literature but one—whereas we have a range of seven or eight. But he did not: Τὸ ὑψηλον,[6] or the elevated, in the Longinian sense, expressed all, no matter of what origin, of what tendency, which gives a character of life and animation to composition—whatever raises it above the dead level of flat prosaic style. Emphasis, or what in an artist's sense gives *relief* to a passage, causing it to stand forward, and in advance of what surrounds it—that is the predominating idea in the 'sublime' of Longinus. And this explains what otherwise has perplexed his modern interpreters—viz. that amongst the elements of his sublime, he ranks even the pathetic, *i. e.* (say they) what by connecting itself with the depressing passion of grief is the very counter-agent to the elevating affection of the sublime. True, most sapient sirs, my very worthy and approved good masters: but that very consideration should have taught you

[6] Because the Latin word *sublimis* is applied to objects soaring upwards, or floating aloft, or at an aerial altitude, and because the word does *sometimes* correspond to our idea of the sublime (in which the notion of height is united with the notion of moral grandeur), and because, in the excessive vagueness and lawless latitudinarianism of our common Greek Lexicons, the word ὑψος is translated, *inter alia*, by το *sublime*, *sublimitas*, &c. Hence it has happened that the title of the little essay ascribed to Longinus, Περι ὑψους, is usually rendered into English, *Concerning the sublime*. But the idea of the Sublime, as defined, circumscribed, and circumstantiated, in English literature—an idea altogether of English growth—the *sublime byway of polar antithesis to the Beautiful*, had no existence amongst ancient critics; consequently it could have no expression. It is a great thought, a true thought, a demonstrable thought, that the Sublime, as thus ascertained, and in contraposition to the Beautiful, grew up on the basis of *sexual* distinctions, the Sublime corresponding to the male, the Beautiful, its anti-pole, corresponding to the female. Behold! we show you a mystery.

to look back, and reconsider your translation of the capital word ὕψος. It was rather too late in the day, when you had waded half-seas over in your translation, to find out either that you yourselves were ignoramuses, or that your principal was an ass. 'Returning were as tedious as go o'er.' And any man might guess how you would settle such a dilemma. It is, according to you, a little oversight of your principal: '*humanum aliquid passus est.*' We, on the other hand, affirm that, if an error at all on the part of Longinus, it is too monstrous for any man to have 'overlooked.' As long as he could see a pike-staff, he must have seen that. And, therefore, we revert to *our* view of the case—viz. that it is yourselves who have committed the blunder, in translating by the Latin word *sublimis*[7] at all, but still more after it had received

[7] No word has ever given so much trouble to modern critics as this very word (now under discussion) of the *sublime*. To those who have little Greek and *no* Latin, it is necessary in the first place that we should state what are the most obvious elements of the word. According to the noble army of etymologists, they are these two Latin words—*sub*, under, and *limus*, mud. Oh! gemini! who would have thought of groping for the sublime in such a situation as that?—unless, indeed, it were that writer cited by Mr. Coleridge, and just now referred to by ourselves, who complains of frivolous modern readers, as not being able to raise and sequester their thoughts to the abstract consideration of dung. Hence it has followed, that most people have quarrelled with the etymology. "Whereupon the late Dr. Parr, of pedantic memory, wrote a huge letter to Mr. Dugald Stewart, but the marrow of which lies in a nutshell, especially being rather hollow within. The learned doctor, in the first folio, grapples with the word *sub*, which, says he, comes from the Greek—so much is clear—but from what Greek, Bezonian? The thoughtless world, says he, trace it to ὑπο (hypo), sub, *i. e.* under; but I, Ego, Samuel Parr, the Birmingham doctor, trace it to ὑπερ (hyper), super, *i. e.* above; between which the difference is not less than between a chestnut horse and a horse-chestnut. To this learned Parrian dissertation on mud, there cannot be much

new determinations under modern usage.

Now, therefore, after this explanation, recurring to the Longinian critiques upon Homer, it will avail any idolator of Homer but little, it will affect us not much, to mention that Longinus makes frequent reference to the *Iliad*, as the great source of the sublime—

> 'A quo, ceu fonte perenni,
> Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis';

for, as respected Grecian poets, and as respected *his* sense of the word, it cannot be denied that Homer was such. He was the great well-head of inspiration to the Pagan poets of after times, who, however (*as a body*), moved in the narrowest circle that has ever yet confined the natural freedom of the poetic mind. But, in conceding this, let it not be forgotten how much we concede—we concede as much as Longinus demanded; that is, that Homer furnished an ideal or model of fluent narration, picturesque

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reasonably to object, except its length in the first place; and, secondly, that we ourselves exceedingly doubt the common interpretation of *limus*. Most unquestionably, if the sublime is to be brought into any relation at all to mud, we shall all be of one mind—that it must be found *above*. But to us it appears—that when the true modern idea of mud was in view, *limus* was not the word used. Cicero, for instance, when he wishes to call Piso 'filth, mud,' &c. calls him *Cænum*: and, in general, *limus* seems to have involved the notion of something adhesive, and rather to express *plaister*, or artificially prepared cement, &c., than that of filth or impure depositions. Accordingly, our own definition differs from the Parrian, or Birmingham definition; and may, nevertheless, be a Birmingham definition also. Not having room to defend it, for the present we forbear to state it.

description, and the first outlines of what could be called characteristic delineations of persons. Accordingly, uninventive Greece—for we maintain loudly that Greece, in her poets, *was* uninventive and sterile beyond the example of other nations—received, as a traditional inheritance, the characters of the Paladins of the Troad.[8] Achilles is always the all-accomplished and supreme amongst these Paladins, the Orlando of ancient romance; Agamemnon, for ever the Charlemagne; Ajax, for ever the sullen, imperturbable, columnar champion, the Mandricardo, the *Bergen-op-Zoom* of his faction, and corresponding to our modern 'Chicken' in the pugilistic ring, who was so called (as the books of the Fancy say) because he was a 'glutton'; and a 'glutton' in this sense—that he would take any amount of cramming (*i. e.* any possible quantum of 'milling,' or 'punishment'). Ulysses, again, is uniformly, no matter whether in the solemnities of the tragic scene, or the festivities of the Ovidian romance, the same shy cock, but also sly cock, with the least thought of a white feather in his plumage; Diomed is the same unmeaning double of every other hero, just as Rinaldo is with respect to his greater cousin, Orlando; and so of Teucer, Meriones, Idomeneus, and

[8] There is a difficulty in assigning any term as comprehensive enough to describe the Grecian heroes and their antagonists, who fought at Troy. The seven chieftains against Thebes are described sufficiently as Theban captains; but, to say *Trojan* chieftains, would express only the heroes of one side; *Grecian*, again, would be liable to that fault equally, and to another far greater, of being under no limitation as to time. This difficulty must explain and (if it can) justify our collective phrase of the Paladins of the Troad.

the other less-marked characters. The Greek drama took up these traditional characters, and sometimes deepened, saddened, exalted the features—as Sophocles, for instance, does with his 'Ajax Flagellifer'—Ajax the knouter of sheep—where, by the way, the remorse and penitential grief of Ajax for his own self-degradation, and the depth of his affliction for the triumph which he had afforded to his enemies—taken in connection with the tender fears of his wife, Tecmessa, for the fate to which his gloomy despair was too manifestly driving him; her own conscious desolation, and the orphan weakness of her son, in the event which she too fearfully anticipates—the final suicide of Ajax; the brotherly affection of Teucer to the widow and the young son of the hero, together with the unlooked-for sympathy of Ulysses, who, instead of exulting in the ruin of his antagonist, mourns over it with generous tears—compose a situation, and a succession of situations, not equalled in the Greek tragedy; and, in that instance, we see an effort, rare in Grecian poetry, of conquest achieved by idealisation over a mean incident—viz. the hallucination of brain in Ajax, by which he mistakes the sheep for his Grecian enemies, ties them up for flagellation, and scourges them as periodically as if he were a critical reviewer. But really, in one extremity of this madness, where he fixes upon an old ram for Agamemnon, as the leader of the flock, the αναξ ανδρων Αγαμεμνων, there is an extravagance of the ludicrous against which, though not exhibited scenically, but simply narrated, no solemnity of pathos could avail; even in narration, the violation

of tragical dignity is insufferable, and is as much worse than the hyper-tragic horrors of *Titus Andronicus* (a play which is usually printed, without reason, amongst those of Shakspeare) as absolute farce or contradiction of all pathos must inevitably be a worse indecorum than physical horrors which simply outrage it by excess. Let us not, therefore, hear of the judgment displayed upon the Grecian stage, when even Sophocles, the chief master of dramatic economy and scenical propriety, could thus err by an aberration so far transcending the most memorable violation of stage decorum which has ever been charged upon the English drama.

From Homer, therefore, were left, as a bequest to all future poets, the romantic adventures which grow, as so many collateral dependencies,

> 'From the tale of Troy divine';

and from Homer was derived also the discrimination of the leading characters, which, after all, were but coarsely and rudely discriminated; at least, for the majority. In one instance only we acknowledge an exception. We have heard a great modern poet dwelling with real and not counterfeit enthusiasm upon the character (or rather upon the general picture, as made up both of character and position), which the course of the *Iliad* assigns gradually to Achilles. The view which he took of this impersonation of human grandeur, combining all gifts of

intellect and of body, matchless speed, strength, inevitable eye, courage, and the immortal beauty of a god, being also, by his birth-right, half-divine, and consecrated to the imagination by his fatal interweaving with the destinies of Troy, and to the heart by the early death which to *his own knowledge*[9] impended over his magnificent career, and so abruptly shut up its vista—the view, we say, which our friend took of the presiding character throughout the *Iliad*, who is introduced to us in the very first line, and who is only eclipsed for seventeen books, to emerge upon us with more awful lustre;—the view which he took was—that Achilles, and Achilles only, in the Grecian poetry, was a great idea—an idealised creation; and we remember that in this respect he compared the Homeric Achilles with the Angelica of Ariosto. Her only he regarded as an idealisation in the *Orlando Furioso*. And certainly in the luxury and excess of her all-conquering beauty, which drew after her from 'ultimate Cathay' to the camps of the baptised in France, and back again, from the palace of Charlemagne, drew half the Paladins, and 'half Spain militant,' to the portals of the rising sun; that sovereign beauty which (to say nothing of kings and princes withered by her frowns) ruined for a time the most princely of all the Paladins, the supreme Orlando, crazed him with scorn,

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[9] 'To his own knowledge'—see, for proof of this, the gloomy serenity of his answer to his dying victim, when, predicting his approaching end:—'Enough; I know my fate: to die—to see no moreMy much-lov'd parents, and my native shore,' &c. &c.

'And robbed him of his noble wits outright'—

in all this, we must acknowledge a glorification of power not unlike that of Achilles:—

'Irresistible Pelides, whom, unarm'd,
No strength of man or wild beast could withstand;
Who tore the lion as the lion tears the kid;
Ran on embattl'd armies clad in iron;
And, weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail,
Adamantéan proof;
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanced
Spurned them to death by troops. The bold Priamides
Fled from his lion ramp; old warriors turn'd
Their plated backs under his heel,
Or, groveling, soil'd their crested helmets in the dust.'

These are the words of Milton in describing that 'heroic Nazarete,' 'God's champion'—

'Promis'd by heavenly message twice descending';

heralded, like Pelides,

'By an angel of his birth,
Who from his father's field
Rode up in flames after his message told';

these are the celestial words which describe the celestial prowess of the Hebrew monomachist, the irresistible Sampson; and are hardly less applicable to the 'champion paramount' of Greece confederate.

This, therefore, this unique conception, with what power they might, later Greek poets adopted; and the other Homeric characters they transplanted somewhat monotonously, but at times, we are willing to admit, and have already admitted, improving and solemnizing the original epic portraits when brought upon the stage. But all this extent of obligation amongst later poets of Greece to Homer serves less to argue his opulence than their penury. And if, quitting the one great blazing jewel, the Urim and Thummim of the *Iliad*, you descend to individual passages of poetic effect; and if amongst these a fancy should seize you of asking for a specimen of the *Sublime* in particular, what is it that you are offered by the critics? Nothing that we remember beyond one single passage, in which the god Neptune is described in a steeple chase, and 'making play' at a terrific pace. And certainly enough is exhibited of the old boy's hoofs, and their spanking qualities, to warrant our backing him against a railroad for a rump and dozen; but, after all, there is nothing to grow frisky about, as Longinus does, who gets up the steam

of a blue-stocking enthusiasm, and boils us a regular gallop of ranting, in which, like the conceited snipe[10] upon the Liverpool railroad, he thinks himself to run a match with Sampson; and, whilst affecting to admire Homer, is manifestly squinting at the reader to see how far he admires his own flourish of admiration; and, in the very agony of his frosty raptures, is quite at leisure to look out for a little private traffic of rapture on his own account. But it won't do; this old critical posture-master (whom, if Aurelian hanged, surely he knew what he was about) may as well put up his rapture pipes, and (as Lear says) 'not squiny' at us; for let us ask Master Longinus, in what earthly respect do these great strides of Neptune exceed Jack with his seven-league boots? Let him answer that, if he can. We hold that Jack has the advantage. Or, again look at the Koran: does any man but a foolish Oriental think that passage sublime where Mahomet describes the divine pen? It is, says he, made of mother-of-pearl; so much for the 'raw material,' as the economists say. But now for the size: it can hardly be called a 'portable' pen at all events, for we are told that it is so tall of its age, that an Arabian 'thoroughbred horse would require 500 years for galloping down the slit to the nib. Now this Arabic sublime is *in this instance* quite a kin brother to the Homeric.

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[10] On the memorable inaugural day of the Liverpool railroad, when Mr. Huskisson met with so sad a fate, a snipe or a plover tried a race with Sampson, one of the engines. The race continued neck and neck for about six miles, after which, the snipe finding itself likely to come off second best, found it convenient to wheel off, at a turn of the road, into the solitudes of Chat Moss.

However, it is likely that we shall here be reminded of our own challenge to the Longinian word ὑψηλον as not at all corresponding, or even alluding to the modern word sublime. But in this instance, the distinction will not much avail that critic—for no matter by what particular *word* he may convey his sense of its quality, clear it is, by his way of illustrating its peculiar merit, that, in his opinion, these huge strides of Neptune's have something supernaturally grand about them. But, waiving this solitary instance in Homer of the sublime, according to his idolatrous critics—of the pseudo sublime according to ourselves—in all other cases where Longinus, or any other Greek writer has cited Homer as the great exemplary model of ὑψος in composition, we are to understand him according to the Grecian sense of that word. He must then be supposed to praise Homer, not so much for any ideal grandeur either of thought, image, or situation, as in a general sense for his animated style of narration, for the variety and spirited effect with which he relieves the direct formal narration in his own person by dialogue between the subjects of his narration, thus ventriloquising and throwing his own voice as often as he can into the surrounding objects—or again for the similes and allusive pictures by which he points emphasis to a situation or interest to a person.

Now then we have it: when you describe Homer, or when you hear him described as a lively picturesque old boy [by the way, why does everybody speak of Homer as old?], full of life, and animation, and movement, then you say (or you hear say) what

is true, and not much more than what is true. Only about that word picturesque we demur a little: as a chirurgeon, he certainly *is* picturesque; for Howship upon gunshot wounds is a joke to him when he lectures upon *traumacy*, if we may presume to coin that word, or upon traumatic philosophy (as Mr. M'Culloch says so grandly, Economic Science). But, apart from this, we cannot allow that simply to say Ζακυνθος νεμοεσσα, woody Zacynthus, is any better argument of picturesqueness than Stony Stratford, or Harrow on the Hill. Be assured, reader, that the Homeric age was not ripe for the picturesque. *Price on the Picturesque*, or, *Gilpin on Forest Scenery*, would both have been sent post-haste to Bedlam in those days; or perhaps Homer himself would have tied a millstone about their necks, and have sunk them as public nuisances by woody Zante. Besides, it puts almost an extinguisher on any little twinkling of the picturesque that might have flared up at times from this or that suggestion, when each individual had his own regular epithet stereotyped to his name like a brass plate upon a door: Hector, the tamer of horses; Achilles, the swift of foot; the ox-eyed, respectable Juno. Some of the 'big uns,' it is true, had a dress and an undress suit of epithets: as for instance, Hector was also κορυθαιολος, Hector with the tossing or the variegated plumes. Achilles again was διος or divine. But still the range was small, and the monotony was dire.

And now, if you come in good earnest to picturesqueness, let us mention a poet in sober truth worth five hundred of Homer,

and that is Chaucer. Show us a piece of Homer's handywork that comes within a hundred leagues of that divine prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, or of 'The Knight's Tale,' of the 'Man of Law's Tale,' or of the 'Tale of the Patient Griseldis,' or, for intense life of narration and festive wit, to the 'Wife of Bath's Tale.' Or, passing out of the *Canterbury Tales* for the picturesque in human manner and gesture, and play of countenance, never equalled as yet by Pagan or Christian, go to the *Troilus and Cresseid*, and, for instance, to the conversation between Troilus and Pandarus, or, again, between Pandarus and Cresseid. Rightly did a critic of the 17th century pronounce Chaucer a miracle of natural genius, as having 'taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales*, the various manners and humours of the whole English nation in his age; not a single character has escaped him.' And this critic then proceeds thus—'The matter and manner of these tales, and of their telling, are so suited to their different educations, humours, and calling, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different. But there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty.' And soon after he goes on to assert (though Heaven knows in terms far below the whole truth), the superiority of Chaucer to Boccaccio. And, in the meantime, who was this eulogist of Chaucer? Why,

the man who himself was never equalled upon this earth, unless by Chaucer, in the art of fine narration: it is John Dryden whom we have been quoting.

Between Chaucer and Homer—as to the main art of narration, as to the picturesque life of the manners, and as to the exquisite delineation of character—the interval is as wide as between Shakespeare, in dramatic power, and Nic. Rowe.

And we might wind up this main chapter, of the comparison between Grecian and English literature—viz. the chapter on Homer, by this tight dilemma. You do or you do not use the Longinian word ὕψος in the modern sense of the sublime. If you do not, then of course you translate it in the Grecian sense, as explained above; and in that sense, we engage to produce many scores of passages from Chaucer, not exceeding 50 to 80 lines, which contain more of picturesque simplicity, more tenderness, more fidelity to nature, more felicity of sentiment, more animation of narrative, and more truth of character, than can be matched in all the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. On the other hand, if by ὕψος you choose absurdly to mean sublimity in the modern sense, then it will suffice for us that we challenge *you* to the production of one instance which truly and incontestably embodies that quality.[11] The burthen of proof rests upon you

[11] The description of Apollo in wrath as νυκτι εοικω, like night, is a doubtful case. With respect to the shield of Achilles, it cannot be denied that the general conception has, in common with all abstractions (as *e. g.* the abstractions of dreams, of prophetic visions, such as that in the 6th Æneid, that to Macbeth, that shown by the angel Michael to Adam), something fine and, in its own nature, let the execution be what it may,

who affirm, not upon us who deny. Meantime, as a kind of choke-pear, we leave with the Homeric adorer this one brace of portraits, or hints for such a brace, which we commend to his comparison, as Hamlet did the portraits of the two brothers to his besotted mother. We are talking of the sublime: that is our thesis. Now observe: there is a catalogue in the *Iliad*—there is a catalogue in the *Paradise Lost*. And, like a river of Macedon and of Monmouth, the two catalogues agree in that one fact—viz. that they *are* such. But as to the rest, we are willing to abide by the issue of that one comparison, left to the very dullest sensibility, for the decision of the total question at issue. And what is that? Not, Heaven preserve us! as to the comparative claims of Milton and Homer in this point of sublimity—for surely it would be absurd to compare him who has most with him whom we affirm to have none at all—but whether Homer has the very smallest pretensions in that point. The result, as we state it, is this:—The catalogue of the ruined angels in Milton, is, in itself taken separately, a perfect poem, with the beauty, and the felicity, and the glory of a dream. The Homeric catalogue of ships is exactly on a level with the muster-roll of a regiment, the register of a tax-gatherer, the catalogue of an auctioneer. Nay, some catalogues are far more interesting, and more alive with meaning. 'But him followed fifty black ships!'—'But him follow seventy black ships!' Faugh! We could make a more readable poem out

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sublime. But this part of the *Iliad*, we firmly believe to be an interpolation of times long posterior to that of Homer.

of an Insolvent's Balance Sheet.

One other little suggestion we could wish to offer. Those who would contend against the vast superiority of Chaucer (and him we mention chiefly because he really has in excess those very qualities of life, motion, and picturesque simplicity, to which the Homeric characteristics chiefly tend), ought to bear in mind one startling fact evidently at war with the *degree* of what is claimed for Homer. It is this: Chaucer is carried naturally by the very course of his tales into the heart of domestic life, and of the scenery most favourable to the movements of human sensibility. Homer, on the other hand, is kept out of that sphere, and is imprisoned in the monotonies of a camp or a battle-field, equally by the necessities of his story, and by the proprieties of Grecian life (which in fact are pretty nearly those of Turkish life at this day). Men and women meet only under rare, hurried, and exclusive circumstances. Hence it is, that throughout the entire *Iliad*, we have but one scene in which the finest affections of the human heart can find an opening for display; of course, everybody knows at once that we are speaking of the scene between Hector, Andromache, and the young Astyanax. No need for question here; it is Hobson's choice in Greek literature, when you are seeking for the poetry of human sensibilities. One such scene there is, and no more; which, of itself, is some reason for suspecting its authenticity. And, by the way, at this point, it is worth while remarking, that a late excellent critic always pronounced the words applied to Andromache

δακρυοεν γελασασα (*tearfully smiling*, or, *smiling through her tears*), a mere Alexandrian interpolation. And why? Now mark the reason. Was it because the circumstance is in itself vicious, or out of nature? Not at all: nothing more probable or more interesting under the general situation of peril combined with the little incident of the infant's alarm at the plumed helmet. But any just taste feels it to be out of the Homeric key; the barbarism of the age, not mitigated (as in Chaucer's far less barbarous age) by the tenderness of Christian sentiment, turned a deaf ear and a repulsive aspect to such beautiful traits of domestic feeling; to Homer himself the whole circumstance would have been one of pure effeminacy. Now, we recommend it to the reader's reflection—and let him weigh well the condition under which that poetry moves that cannot indulge a tender sentiment without being justly suspected of adulterous commerce with some after age. This remark, however, is by the by; having grown out of the δακρυοεν γελασασα, itself a digression. But, returning from that to our previous theme, we desire every candid reader to ask himself what must be the character, what the circumscription, of that poetry which is limited, by its very subject,[12] to a scene of such intense uniformity as a battle or a camp; and by the prevailing spirit of manners to the exclusive society of men. To make bricks without straw, was the excess even of Egyptian

[12] But the *Odyssey*, at least, it will be said, is not thus limited: no, not by its subject; because it carries us amongst cities and princes in a state of peace; but it is equally limited by the spirit of manners; we are never admitted amongst women, except by accident (Nausicaa)—by necessity (Penelope)—or by romance (Circe).

bondage; Homer could not fight up against the necessities of his age, and the defects of its manners. And the very apologies which will be urged for him, drawn as they must be from the spirit of manners prevalent in his era, are reciprocally but so many reasons for not seeking in him the kind of poetry which has been ascribed to him by ignorance, or by defective sensibility, or by the mere self-interest of pedantry.

From Homer, the route stretches thus:—The Grecian drama lies about six hundred years nearer to the Christian era, and Pindar lies in the interval. These—*i. e.* the Dramatic and Lyric—are the important chapters of the Greek poetry; for as to Pastoral poetry, having only Theocritus surviving, and a very little of Bion and Moschus, and of these one only being of the least separate importance—we cannot hold that department entitled to any notice in so cursory a review of the literature, else we have much to say on this also. Besides that, Theocritus was not a natural poet, indigenous to Sicily, but an artificial blue-stocking; as was Callimachus in a different class.

The drama we may place loosely in the generation next before that of Alexander the Great. And his era may be best remembered by noting it as 333 years B. C. Add thirty years to this era—that will be the era of the Drama. Add a little more than a century, and that will be the era of Pindar. Him, therefore, we will notice first.

Now, the chief thing to say as to Pindar is—to show cause, good and reasonable, why no man of sense should trouble his

head about him. There was in the seventeenth century a notion prevalent about Pindar, the very contradiction to the truth. It was imagined that he 'had a demon'; that he was under a burthen of prophetic inspiration; that he was possessed, like a Hebrew prophet or a Delphic priestess, with divine fury. Why was this thought?—simply because no mortal read him. Laughable it is to mention, that Pope, when a very young man, and writing his *Temple of Fame* (partly on the model of Chaucer's), when he came to the great columns and their bas-reliefs in that temple, each of which is sacred to one honoured name, having but room in all for six, chose Pindar for one[13] of the six. And the first bas-relief on Pindar's column is so pretty, that we shall quote it; especially as it suggested Gray's car for Dryden's 'less presumptuous flight!'

> 'Four swans sustain a car of silver bright,
> With heads advanc'd, and pinions stretch'd for flight:
> Here, *like some furious prophet*, Pindar rode,
> And seem'd to *labour with th' inspiring god*.'

Then follow eight lines describing other bas-reliefs, containing 'the figured games of Greece' (Olympic, Nemean, &c.). But what we spoke of as laughable in the whole affair is, that Master Pope neither had then read one line of Pindar, nor ever read one line of Pindar: and reason good; for at that time he could

[13] The other five were Homer, Virgil, Horace, Aristotle, Cicero.

not read the simple Homeric Greek; while the Greek of Pindar exceeds all other Greek in difficulty, excepting, perhaps, a few amongst the tragic choruses, which are difficult for the very same reason—lyric abruptness, lyric involution, and lyric obscurity of transition. Not having read Homer, no wonder that Pope should place, amongst the bas-reliefs illustrating the *Iliad*, an incident which does not exist in the *Iliad*.[14] Not having read Pindar, no wonder that Pope should ascribe to Pindar qualities which are not only imaginary, but in absolute contradiction to his true ones. A more sober old gentleman does not exist: his demoniac possession is a mere fable. But there are two sufficient arguments for not reading him, so long as innumerable books of greater interest remain unread. First, he writes upon subjects that, to us, are mean and extinct—race-horses that have been defunct for twenty-five centuries, chariots that were crazy in his own day, and contests with which it is impossible for us to sympathise. Then his digressions about old genealogies are no whit better than his main theme, nor more amusing than a Welshman's pedigree. The best translator of any age, Mr. Carey, who translated Dante, has done what human skill could effect to make the old Theban readable; but, after all, the man is yet to come who *has* read Pindar, *will* read Pindar, or *can* read Pindar, except, indeed, a

[14] Viz. the supposed dragging of Hector three times round Troy by Achilles—a mere post-Homeric fable. But it is ludicrous to add, that, in after years—nay, when nearly at the end of his translation of the *Iliad*, in 1718—Pope took part in a discussion upon Homer's reasons for ascribing such conduct to his hero, seriously arguing the *pro* and *con* upon a pure fiction.

translator in the way of duty. And the son of Philip himself, though he bade 'spare the house of Pindarus,' we vehemently suspect, never read the works of Pindarus; that labour he left to some future Hercules. So much for his subjects: but a second objection is—his metre: The hexameter, or heroic metre of the ancient Greeks, is delightful to our modern ears; so is the Iambic metre fortunately of the stage: but the Lyric metres generally, and those of Pindar without one exception, are as utterly without meaning to us, as merely chaotic labyrinths of sound, as Chinese music or Dutch concertos. Need we say more?

Next comes the drama. But this is too weighty a theme to be discussed slightly; and the more so because here only we willingly concede a strong motive for learning Greek; here, only, we hold the want of a ready introduction to be a serious misfortune. Our general argument, therefore, which had for its drift to depreciate Greek, dispenses, in this case, with our saying anything; since every word we *could* say would be hostile to our own purpose. However, we shall, even upon this field of the Greek literature, deliver one oracular sentence, tending neither to praise nor dispraise it, but simply to state its relations to the modern, or, at least, the English drama. In the ancient drama, to represent it justly, the unlearned reader must imagine grand situations, impressive groups; in the modern tumultuous movement, a grand stream of action. In the Greek drama, he must conceive the presiding power to be *Death*; in the English, *Life*. What Death? —What Life? That sort of death or of life locked up and frozen

into everlasting slumber, which we see in sculpture; that sort of life, of tumult, of agitation, of tendency to something beyond, which we see in painting. The picturesque, in short, domineers over English tragedy; the sculpturesque, or the statuesque, over the Grecian.

The moralists, such as Theogins, the miscellaneous or didactic poets, such as Hesiod, are all alike below any notice in a sketch like this. The Epigrammatists, or writers of monumental inscriptions, &c., remain; and they, next after the dramatic poets, present the most interesting field by far in the Greek literature; but these are too various to be treated otherwise than *viritim* and in detail.

There remains the prose literature; and, with the exception of those critical writers who have written on rhetoric (such as Hermogenes, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Demetrius Phalerius, &c. &c., some of whom are the best writers extant, on the mere art of constructing sentences, but could not interest the general reader), the prose writers may be thus distributed: 1st, the orators; 2nd, the historians; 3rd, the philosophers; 4th, the literateurs (such as Plutarch, Lucian, &c.).

As to the philosophers, of course there are only two who can present any general interest—Plato and Aristotle; for Xenophon is no more a philosophic writer than our own Addison. Now, in this department, it is evident that the matter altogether transcends the manner. No man will wish to study a profound philosopher, but for some previous interest in his doctrines; and, if by any

means a man has obtained this, he may pursue this study sufficiently through translations. It is true that neither Sydenham nor Taylor has done justice to Plato, for example, as respects the colloquial graces of his style; but, when the object is purely to pursue a certain course of principles and inferences, the student cannot complain much that he has lost the dramatic beauties of the dialogue, or the luxuriance of the style. These he was not then seeking, by the supposition—what he *did* seek, is still left; whereas in poetry, if the golden apparel is lost, if the music has melted away from the thoughts, all, in fact, is lost. Old Hobbes, or Ogilbie, is no more Homer than the score of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

If, however, Grecian philosophy presents no absolute temptations to the attainment of Greek, far less does Grecian history. If you except later historians—such as Diodorus, Plutarch, and those (like Appian, Dionysius, Dion Cassius) who wrote of Roman things and Roman persons in Greek, and Polybius, who comes under the same class, at a much earlier period—and none of whom have any interest of style, excepting only Plutarch: these dismissed, there are but three who can rank as classical Greek historians; *three who can lose by translation*. Of these the eldest, Herodotus, is perhaps of real value. Some call him the father of history; some call him the father of lies. Time and Major Rennel have done him ample justice. Yet here, again, see how little need of Greek for the amplest use of a Greek author. Twenty-two centuries and more have passed since the

fine old man read his history at the Grecian games of Olympia. One man only has done him right, and put his enemies under his footstool; *and yet this man had no Greek*. Major Rennel read Herodotus only in the translation of Beloe. He has told us so himself. Here, then, is a little fact, my Grecian boys, that you won't easily get over. The father of history, the eldest of prose writers, has been first explained, illustrated, justified, liberated from scandal and disgrace, first had his geography set to rights, first translated from the region of fabulous romance, and installed in his cathedral chair, as Dean (or eldest) of historians, by a military man, who had no more Greek than Shakspeare, or than we (perhaps you, reader) of the Kalmuck.

Next comes Thucydides. He is the second in order of time amongst the Grecian historians who survive, and the first of those (a class which Mr. Southey, the laureate, always speaks of as the corruptors of genuine history) who affect to treat it philosophically. If the philosophic historians are not always so faithless as Mr. Southey alleges, they are, however, always guilty of dulness. Commend us to one picturesque, garrulous old fellow, like Froissart, or Philip de Comines, or Bishop Burnet, before all the philosophic prosers that ever prosed. These picturesque men will lie a little now and then, for the sake of effect—but so will the philosophers. Even Bishop Burnet, who, by the way, was hardly so much a picturesque as an anecdotal historian, was famous for his gift of lying; so diligently had he cultivated it. And the Duchess of Portsmouth told a noble lord, when inquiring into the

truth of a particular fact stated by the very reverend historian, that he was notorious in Charles the Second's court, and that no man believed a word he said. But now Thucydides, though writing about his own time, and doubtless embellishing by fictions not less than his more amusing brethren, is as dull as if he prided himself on veracity. Nay, he tells us no secret anecdotes of the times—surely there must have been many; and this proves to us, that he was a low fellow without political connections, and that he never had been behind the curtain. Now, what business had such a man to set himself up for a writer of history and a speculator on politics? Besides, his history is imperfect; and, suppose it were not, what is its subject? Why simply one single war; a war which lasted twenty-seven years; but which, after all, through its whole course was enlivened by only two events worthy to enter into general history—viz. the plague of Athens, and the miserable licking which the Athenian invaders received in Sicily. This dire overthrow dished Athens out and out; for one generation to come, there was an end of Athenian domination; and that arrogant state, under the yoke of their still baser enemies of Sparta, learned experimentally what were the evils of a foreign conquest. There was therefore, in the domination of the Thirty Tyrants, something to 'point a moral' in the Peloponnesian war: it was the judicial reaction of martial tyranny and foreign oppression, such as we of this generation have beheld in the double conquest of Paris by insulted and outraged Christendom. But nothing of all this will be found in Thucydides—he is as cool as a cucumber

upon every act of atrocity; whether it be the bloody abuse of power, or the bloody retribution from the worm that, being trampled on too long, turns at last to sting and to exterminate—all alike he enters in his daybook and his ledger, posts them up to the account of brutal Spartan or polished Athenian, with no more expression of his feelings (if he had any) than a merchant making out an invoice of puncheons that are to steal away men's wits, or of frankincense and myrrh that are to ascend in devotion to the saints. Herodotus is a fine, old, genial boy, that, like Froissart or some of the crusading historians, kept himself in health and jovial spirits by travelling about; nor did he confine himself to Greece or the Grecian islands; but he went to Egypt, got bousy in the Pyramid of Cheops, ate a beef-steak in the hanging-gardens of Babylon, and listened to no sailors' yarns at the Piræus, which doubtless, before his time, had been the sole authority for Grecian legends concerning foreign lands. But, as to Thucydides, our own belief is, that he lived like a monk shut up in his *museum* or study; and that, at the very utmost, he may have gone in the steamboat[15] to Corfu (*i. e.* Corcyra), because *that* was the island which occasioned the row of the Peloponnesian war.

Xenophon now is quite another sort of man; he could use his pen; but also he could use his sword; and (when need was) his heels, in running away. His Grecian history of course

[15] 'In the steamboat!' Yes, reader, the steamboat. It is clear that there *was* one in Homer's time. See the art. *Phæacian* in the *Odyssey*: if it paid then, *à fortiori* six hundred years after. The only point unknown about it, is the captain's name and the state-cabin fares.

is a mere fraction of the general history; and, moreover, our own belief, founded upon the differences of the style, is, that the work now received for his must be spurious. But in this place the question is not worth discussing. Two works remain, professedly historical, which, beyond a doubt, *are* his; and one of them the most interesting prose work by much which Athens has bequeathed us; though, by the way, Xenophon was living in a sort of elegant exile at a chateau in Thessaly, and not under Athenian protection, when he wrote it. Both of his great works relate to a Persian Cyrus, but to a Cyrus of different centuries. The *Cyropædia* is a romance, pretty much on the plan of Fenelon's *Telemaque*, only (Heaven be praised!) not so furiously apoplectic. It pursues the great Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire, the Cyrus of the Jewish prophets, from his infancy to his death-bed; and describes evidently not any real prince, according to any authentic record of his life, but, upon some basis of hints and vague traditions, improves the actual Cyrus into an ideal fiction of a sovereign and a military conqueror, as he *ought* to be. One thing only we shall say of this work, though no admirers ourselves of the twaddle which Xenophon elsewhere gives us as philosophic memorabilia, that the episode of Abradates and Panthea (especially the behaviour of Panthea after the death of her beloved hero, and the incident of the dead man's hand coming away on Cyrus grasping it) exceeds for pathos everything in Grecian literature, always excepting the Greek drama, and comes nearest of anything, throughout Pagan

literature, to the impassioned simplicity of Scripture, in its tale of Joseph and his brethren. The other historical work of Xenophon is the *Anabasis*. The meaning of the title is *the going-up* or *ascent*—viz. of Cyrus the younger. This prince was the younger brother of the reigning king Artaxerxes, nearly two centuries from Cyrus the Great; and, from opportunity rather than a better title, and because his mother and his vast provincial government furnished him with royal treasures able to hire an army, most of all, because he was richly endowed by nature with personal gifts —took it into his head that he would dethrone his brother; and the more so, because he was only his half-brother. His chance was a good one: he had a Grecian army, and one from the very *élite* of Greece; whilst the Persian king had but a small corps of Grecian auxiliaries, long enfeebled by Persian effeminacy and Persian intermarriages. Xenophon was personally present in this expedition. And the catastrophe was most singular, such as does not occur once in a thousand years. The cavalry of the great King retreated before the Greeks continually, no doubt from policy and secret orders; so that, when a pitched battle became inevitable, the foreign invaders found themselves in the very heart of the land, and close upon the Euphrates. The battle was fought: the foreigners were victorious: they were actually singing *Te Deum* or *Io Pæan* for their victory, when it was discovered that their leader, the native prince in whose behalf they had conquered, was missing; and soon after, that he was dead. What was to be done? The man who should have improved

their victory, and placed them at his own right hand when on the throne of Persia, was no more; key they had none to unlock the great fortresses of the empire, none to unloose the enthusiasm of the native population. Yet such was the desperation of their circumstances, that a *coup-de-main* on the capital seemed their best chance. The whole army was and felt itself a forlorn hope. To go forward was desperate, but to go back much more so; for they had a thousand rivers without bridges in their rear; and, if they set their faces in that direction, they would have 300,000 light cavalry upon their flanks, besides nations innumerable—

'Dusk faces with white silken turbans wreath'd';

fierce fellows who understood no Greek, and, what was worse, no joking, but well understood the use of the scymitar. Bad as things were, they soon became worse; for the chiefs of the Grecian army, being foolish enough to accept a dinner invitation from the Persian commander-in-chief, were assassinated; and the words of Milton became intelligible—that in the lowest deep a lower deep had opened to destroy them. In this dilemma, Xenophon, the historian of the expedition, was raised to a principal command; and by admirable skill he led back the army by a different route to the Black Sea, on the coast of which he knew that there were Grecian colonies: and from one of these he obtained shipping, in which he coasted along (when he did not march by land) to the mouth of the Bosphorus and the

Dardanelles. This was the famous retreat of the ten thousand; and it shows how much defect of literary skill there was in those days amongst Grecian authors, that the title of the book, *The Going Up*, does not apply to the latter and more interesting seven-eighths of the account. The Going Up is but the preparation or preface to the Going Down, the *Anabasis* to the *Katabasis*, in which latter part it is that Xenophon plays any conspicuous part. A great political interest, however, over and above the personal interest, attaches to this expedition: for there can be no doubt, that to this proof of weakness in the Persian empire, and perhaps to this, *as recorded by Xenophon*, was due the expedition of Alexander in the next generation, which changed the face of the world.

The literateurs, as we have styled Plutarch and Lucian, though far removed from the true classical era, being both posterior to Christianity, are truly interesting. And, for Lucian in particular, though he is known by reputation only as a humorous and sneering writer, we can say, upon our personal knowledge, that there are passages of more terrific effect, more German, and approaching to the sublime, than anywhere else in Greek literature, out of the tragic poets. Of Plutarch we need hardly speak; one part of his voluminous works—viz. his biographies of Greek and Roman leaders in arts[16] and arms—being so familiar

[16] 'In arts,' we say, because great orators are amongst his heroes; but, after all, it is very questionable whether, simply as orators, Plutarch would have noticed them. They were also statesmen; and Mitford always treats Demosthenes as first lord of the treasury and premier. Plutarch records no poet, no artist, however brilliant.

to all nations; and having been selected by Rousseau as the book for him who should be limited (or, like Collins the poet, should limit himself) to one book only—a foolish choice undoubtedly, but still arguing great range of resources in Plutarch, that he should be thought of after so many myriads of modern books had widened the range of selection. Meantime, the reader is not to forget that, whatever may be his powers of amusement, a more inaccurate or faithless author as to dates, and, indeed, in all matters of research, does not exist than Plutarch. We make it a rule, whenever we see *Plut.* at the bottom of a dictionary article, as the authority on which it rests, to put the better half down as a bouncer. And, in fact, Joe Miller is quite as good authority for English history as Plutarch for Roman.

Now remain the orators; and of these we have a right to speak, for we have read them; and, believe us, reader, not above one or two men in a generation have. If the Editor would allow us room, we would gladly contrast them with modern orators; and we could easily show how prodigious are the advantages of modern orators in every point which can enter into a comparison. But to what purpose? Even modern orators, with all the benefit of modern interest, and of allusions everywhere intelligible, are not read in any generation after their own, pulpit orators only being excepted. So that, if the gods *had* made our reader a Grecian, surely he would never so far misspend his precious time, and squander his precious intellect upon old dusty quarrels, never of more value to a philosopher than a tempest in a wash-hand bason,

but now stuffed with obscurities which no man can explain, and with lies to which no man can bring the counter-statement. But this would furnish matter for a separate paper.

No. II.—THE GREEK ORATORS

Now, let us come to the orators. Isocrates, the eldest of those who have survived, is a mere scholastic rhetorician: for he was a timid man, and did not dare to confront the terrors of a stormy political audience; and hence, though he lived about an entire century, he never once addressed the Athenian citizens. It is true, that, although no *bonâ fide* orator—for he never *spoke* in any usual acceptation of that word, and, as a consequence, never had an opportunity of replying, which only can bring forward a man's talents as a *debater*—still he employed his pen upon real and upon existing questions of public policy; and did not, as so many generations of chamber rhetoricians continued to do in Greece, confine his powers to imaginary cases of political difficulty, or (what were tantamount to imaginary) cases fetched up from the long-past era of King Priam, or the still earlier era of the Seven Chiefs warring against the Seven-gated Thebes of Bœotia, or the half-fabulous era of the Argonauts. Isocrates was a man of sense—a patriot in a temperate way—and with something of a feeling for Greece generally, not merely a champion of Athens. His heart was given to politics: and, in an age when heavy clouds were gathering over the independence and the civil grandeur of his country, he had a disinterested anxiety for drawing off the lightning of the approaching storms by pacific counsels. Compared, therefore, with the common

mercenary orators of the Athenian forum—who made a regular trade of promoting mischief, by inflaming the pride, jealousy, vengeance, or the martial instincts of a 'fierce democracy,' and, generally speaking, with no views, high or low, sound or unsound, that looked beyond the momentary profit to themselves from thus pandering to the thoughtless nationality of a most sensitive people—Isocrates is entitled to our respect. His writings have also a separate value, as memorials of political transactions from which the historian has gathered many useful hints; and, perhaps, to a diligent search, they might yield more. But, considered as an orator—if that title can be, with any propriety, allowed to one who declaimed only in his closet—one who, in relation to public affairs, was what, in England, when speaking of practical jurisprudence, we call a Chamber Counsel—Isocrates is languid, and with little of anything characteristic in his manner to justify a separate consideration. It is remarkable that he, beyond all other rhetoricians of that era, cultivated the *rhythmus* of his periods. And to this object he sacrificed not only an enormity of time, but, I have no doubt, in many cases, the freedom and natural movement of the thoughts. My reason, however, for noticing this peculiarity in Isocrates, is by way of fixing the attention upon the superiority, even artificial ornaments, of downright practical business and the realities of political strife, over the torpid atmosphere of a study or a school. Cicero, long after, had the same passion for *numerositas*, and the full, pompous rotundity of cadence. But in Cicero, all habits and all faculties were nursed

by the daily practice of life and its impassioned realities, in the forum or in the senate. What is the consequence? Why this—that, whereas in the most laboured performance of Isocrates (which cost him, I think, one whole *decennium*, or period of ten years), few modern ears are sensible of any striking art, or any great result of harmony; in Cicero, on the other hand, the fine, sonorous modulations of his periodic style, are delightful to the dullest ear of any European. Such are the advantages from real campaigns, from the unsimulated strife of actual stormy life, over the torpid dreams of what the Romans called an *umbratic*[17] experience.

Isocrates I have noticed as the oldest of the surviving Greek orators: *Demosthenes*, of course, claims a notice more emphatically, as, by universal consent of Athens, and afterwards of Rhodes, of Rome, and other impartial judges, the greatest, or, at least, the most comprehensively great. For, by the way, it must not be forgotten—though modern critics *do* forget this rather important fact in weighing the reputation of Demosthenes—he was not esteemed, in his own day, as the greatest in that particular quality of energy and demoniac power (δεινοτης) which is

[17] 'Umbratic.' I have perhaps elsewhere drawn the attention of readers to the peculiar effects of climate, in shaping the modes of our thinking and imaging. A life of *inertia*, which retreats from the dust and toil of actual experience, we (who represent the idea of effeminacy more naturally by the image of shrinking from cold) call a chimney-corner of a fireside experience; but the Romans, to whom the same effeminacy more easily fell under the idea of shrinking from the heat of the sun, called it an experience won in the shade; and a mere scholastic student, they called an *umbraticus doctor*.

generally assumed to have been his leading characteristic and his *forte*; not only by comparison with his own compatriots, but even with Cicero and the greatest men of the Roman bar. It was not of Demosthenes that the Athenians were accustomed to say, 'he thunders and lightens,' but of Pericles, an elder orator; and even amongst the written oratory of Greece, which still survives (for as to the speeches ascribed to Pericles by Thucydides, I take it for granted that, as usual, these were mere forgeries of the historian), there is a portion which perhaps exceeds Demosthenes in the naked quality of vehemence. But this, I admit, will not impeach his supremacy; for it is probable, that wherever an orator is characterised exclusively by turbulent power, or at least remembered chiefly for that quality, all the other numerous graces of eloquence were wanting to that man, or existed only in a degree which made no equipoise to his insulated gift of Jovian terror. The Gracchi, amongst the Roman orators, were probably more properly 'sons of thunder' than Crassus or Cicero, or even than Cæsar himself, whose oratory, by the way, was, in this respect, like his own character and infinite accomplishments; so that even by Cicero it is rarely cited without the epithet of splendid, magnificent, &c. We must suppose, therefore, that neither Cicero nor Demosthenes was held to be at the head of their respective fields in Rome and Athens, in right of any absolute pre-eminence in the one leading power of an orator—viz. native and fervent vigour—but in right of a large comprehensive harmony of gifts, leaving possibly to

some other orators, elder or rival to themselves, a superiority in each of an orator's talents taken apart, but claiming the supremacy, nevertheless, upon the whole, by the systematic union of many qualities tending to one result: pleasing the taste by the harmonious *coup d'œil* from the total assemblage, and also adapting itself to a far larger variety of situations; for, after all, the *mere* son of thunder is disarmed, and apt to become ridiculous, if you strip him of a passionate cause, of a theme saturated with human strife, and of an excitable or tempestuous audience.

Such an audience, however, it will be said that Demosthenes had, and sometimes (but not very often in those orations which survive) such a theme. As to his audience, certainly it was all that could be wished in point of violence and combustible passion; but also it was something more. A mighty advantage it is, doubtless, to an orator, when he sees and hears his own kindling passions instantaneously reflected in the blazing eyes and fiery shouts (the *fremitus*) of his audience—when he sees a whole people, personally or by deputation, swayed backwards and forwards, like a field of corn in a breeze, by the movements of his own appeals. But, unfortunately, in the Athenian audience, the ignorance, the headstrong violence of prejudice, the arrogance, and, above all, the levity of the national mind—presented, to an orator the most favourite, a scene like that of an ocean always rocking with storms; like a wasp always angry; like a lunatic, always coming out of a passion or preparing to go into one.

Well might Demosthenes prepare himself by sea-shore practice; in which I conceive that his purpose must have been, not so much (according to the common notion) to overcrow the noise of the forum, as to *stand fire* (if I may so express it) against the uproarious demonstrations of mob fury.

This quality of an Athenian audience must very seriously have interfered with the intellectual display of an orator. Not a word could he venture to say in the way of censure towards the public will—not even hypothetically to insinuate a fault; not a syllable could he utter even in the way of dissent from the favourite speculations of the moment. If he did, instantly a roar of menaces recalled him to a sense even of personal danger. And, again, the mere vivacity of his audience, requiring perpetual amusement and variety, compelled a man, as great even as Demosthenes, to curtail his arguments, and rarely, indeed, to pursue a theme with the requisite fulness of development or illustration; a point in which the superior dignity and the far less fluctuating mobility of the Roman mind gave an immense advantage to Cicero.

Demosthenes, in spite of all the weaknesses which have been arrayed against his memory by the hatred of his contemporaries, or by the anti-republican feelings of such men as Mitford, was a great man and an honest man. He rose above his countrymen. He despised, in some measure, his audience; and, at length, in the palmy days of his influence, he would insist on being heard; he would insist on telling the truth, however unacceptable; he would not, like the great rout of venal haranguers, lay any flattering

unction to the capital distempers of the public mind; he would point out their errors, and warn them of their perils. But this upright character of the man, victorious over his constitutional timidity, does but the more brightly illustrate the local law and the tyranny of the public feeling. How often do we find him, when on the brink of uttering 'odious truth,' obliged to pause, and to propitiate his audience with deprecatory phrases, entreating them to give him time for utterance, not to yell him down before they had heard his sentence to the end. Μη θορυζειτε —'Gentlemen of Athens! for the love of God, do not make an uproar at what I am going to say! Gentlemen of Athens! humbly I beseech you to let me finish my sentence!' Such are his continual appeals to the better feelings of his audience. Now, it is very evident that, in such circumstances, no man could do justice to any subject. At least, when speaking not before a tribunal of justice, but before the people in council assembled—that is, in effect, on his greatest stage of all—Demosthenes (however bold at times, and restive in a matter which he held to be paramount) was required to bend, and did bend, to the local genius of democracy, reinforced by a most mercurial temperament. The very air of Attica, combined with great political power, kept its natives in a state of habitual intoxication; and even wise men would have had some difficulty in mastering, as it affected themselves, the permanent bias towards caprice and insolence.

Is this state of things at all taken into account in our modern critiques upon Demosthenes? The upshot of what I can

find in most modern lecturers upon rhetoric and style, French or English, when speaking of Demosthenes, is this notable simile, by way of representing the final effect of his eloquence —'that, like a mountain torrent, swollen by melting snow, or by rain, it carries all things before it.' Prodigiously original! and exceedingly discriminative! As if such an illustration would not equally represent the effect of a lyrical poem, of Mozart's music, of a stormy chorus, or any other form whatever of impassioned vehemence. Meantime, I suspect grievously that not one of these critics has ever read a paragraph of Demosthenes. Nothing do you ever find quoted but a few notorious passages about Philip of Macedon, and the too-famous oath, by the manes of those that died at Marathon. I call it too famous, because (like Addison's comparison of Marlborough, at Blenheim, to the angel in the storm—of which a schoolmaster then living said, that nine out of every ten boys would have hit upon it in a school exercise) it has no peculiar boldness, and must have occurred to every Athenian, of any sensibility, every day of his life. Hear, on the other hand, a modern oath, and (what is most remarkable) an oath sworn in the pulpit. A dissenting clergyman (I believe, a Baptist), preaching at Cambridge, and having occasion to affirm or to deny something or other, upon his general confidence in the grandeur of man's nature, the magnificence of his conceptions, the immensity of his aspirations, &c., delivered himself thus: —'By the greatness of human ideals—by the greatness of human aspirations—by the immortality of human creations—*by the*

Iliad—by the Odyssey'—Now, that *was* bold, startling, sublime. But, in the other case, neither was the oath invested with any great pomp of imagery or expression; nor, if it had—which is more to the purpose—was such an oath at all representative of the peculiar manner belonging to Demosthenes. It is always a rude and inartificial style of criticism to cite from an author that which, whether fine or not in itself, is no fair specimen of his ordinary style.

What then *is* the characteristic style of Demosthenes?—It is one which grew naturally, as did his defects (by which I mean faults of *omission*, in contradiction to such as are positive), from the composition of his audience. His audience, comprehending so much ignorance, and, above all, so much high-spirited impatience, being, in fact, always on the fret, kept the orator always on the fret. Hence arose short sentences; hence, the impossibility of the long, voluminous sweeps of beautiful rhythmus which we find in Cicero; hence, the animated form of apostrophe and crowded interrogations addressed to the audience. This gives, undoubtedly, a spirited and animated character to the style of Demosthenes; but it robs him of a large variety of structure applied to the logic, or the embellishment, or the music of his composition. His style is full of life, but not (like Cicero's) full of pomp and continuous grandeur. On the contrary, as the necessity of rousing attention, or of sustaining it, obliged the Attic orator to rely too much on the *personality* of direct question to the audience, and to use brief sentences, so also the

same impatient and fretful irritability forbade him to linger much upon an idea—to theorise, to speculate, or, generally, to quit the direct business path of the question then under consideration—no matter for what purpose of beauty, dignity, instruction, or even of *ultimate* effect. In all things, the *immediate*—the instant—the *præsens præsentissimum*, was kept steadily before the eye of the Athenian orator, by the mere coercion of self-interest.

And hence, by the way, arises one most important feature of distinction between Grecian oratory (political oratory at least) on the one hand, and Roman (to which, in this point, we may add British) on the other. A Roman lawyer, senator, or demagogue, even, under proper restrictions—a British member of parliament—or even a candidate from the hustings—but, most assuredly, and by the evidence of many a splendid example, an advocate addressing a jury—may embellish his oration with a wide circuit of historical, or of antiquarian, nay, even speculative discussion. Every Latin scholar will remember the leisurely and most facetious, the good-natured and respectful, yet keenly satiric, picture which the great Roman barrister draws of the Stoic philosophy, by way of *rowing* old Cato, who professed that philosophy with too little indulgence for venial human errors. The *judices*—that is, in effect, the jury—were tickled to the soul by seeing the grave Marcus Cato badgered with this fine razor-like raillery; and there can be no doubt that, by flattering the self-respect of the jury, in presuming them susceptible of so much wit from a liberal kind of knowledge, and by really delighting

them with such a display of adroit teasing applied to a man of scenical gravity, this whole scene, though quite extrajudicial and travelling out of the record, was highly useful in conciliating the good-will of Cicero's audience. The same style of liberal *excursus* from the more thorny path of the absolute business before the court, has been often and memorably practised by great English barristers—as, in the trial of Sacheverel, by many of the managers for the Commons; by 'the fluent Murray,' on various occasions; in the great cause of impeachment against our English Verres (or, at least, our Verres as to the situation, though not the guilt), Mr. Hastings; in many of Mr. Erskine's addresses to juries, where political rights were at stake; in Sir James Mackintosh's defence of Peltier for a libel upon Napoleon, when he went into a history of the press as applied to politics —(a liberal inquiry, but which, except in the remotest manner, could not possibly bear upon the mere question of fact before the jury); and in many other splendid instances, which have really made *our* trials and the annals of *our* criminal jurisprudence one great fund of information and authority to the historian. In the senate, I need not say how much farther, and more frequently, this habit of large generalisation, and of liberal excursion from perhaps a lifeless theme, has been carried by great masters; in particular, by Edmund Burke, who carried it, in fact, to such excess, and to a point which threatened so much to disturb the movement of public business, that, from that cause more perhaps than from rude insensibility to the value of his speculations, he

put his audience sometimes in motion for dinner, and acquired (as is well-known) the surname of the Dinner Bell.[18]

Now, in the Athenian audience, all this was impossible: neither in political nor in forensic harangues was there any license by rule, or any indulgence by usage, or any special privilege by personal favour, to the least effort at improving an individual case of law or politics into general views of jurisprudence, of statesmanship, of diplomacy; no collateral discussions were tolerated—no illustrative details—no historical parallelisms—still less any philosophical moralisations. The slightest show of any tendency in these directions was summarily nipped in the bud: the Athenian gentlemen began to θορυζειν in good earnest if a man showed symptoms of entering upon any discussion whatever that was not intensely needful and pertinent in the first place—or which, in the second place, was not of a nature to be wound up in two sentences when a summons should arise either to dinner, or to the theatre, or to the succession of some variety anticipated from another orator.

Hence, therefore, finally arises one great peculiarity of Greek eloquence; and a most unfortunate one for its chance of ever influencing a remote posterity, or, in any substantial sense, of its ever surviving in the real unaffected admiration of us moderns—that it embodies no alien, no collateral information as

[18] Yet this story has been exaggerated; and, I believe, in strict truth, the whole case arose out of some fretful expressions of ill-temper on the part of Burke, and that the name was a retort from a man of wit, who had been personally stung by a sarcasm of the offended orator.

to manners, usages, modes of feeling—no extrinsic ornament, no side glimpses into Grecian life, no casual historical details. The cause, and nothing but the cause—the political question, and nothing but the question– pealed for ever in the ears of the terrified orator, always on sufferance, always on his good behaviour, always afraid, for the sake of his party or of his client, lest his auditors should become angry, or become impatient, or become weary. And from that intense fear, trammeling the freedom of his steps at every turn, and overruling every motion to the right or to the left, in pure servile anxiety for the mood and disposition of his tyrannical master, arose the very opposite result for us of this day—that we, by the very means adopted to prevent weariness in the immediate auditors, find nothing surviving in Grecian orations but what *does* weary us insupportably through its want of all general interest; and, even amongst private or instant details of politics or law, presenting us with none that throw light upon the spirit of manners, or the Grecian peculiarities of feeling. Probably an Athenian mob would not have cared much at the prospect of such a result to posterity; and, at any rate, would not have sacrificed one atom of their ease or pleasure to obviate such a result: but, to an Athenian orator, this result would have been a sad one to contemplate. The final consequence is, that whilst all men find, or may find, infinite amusement, and instruction of the most liberal kind, in that most accomplished of statesmen and orators, the Roman Cicero—nay, would doubtless, from the causes assigned,

have found, in their proportion, the same attractions in the speeches of the elder Antony, of Hortensius, of Crassus, and other contemporaries or immediate predecessors of Cicero—no person ever reads Demosthenes, still less any other Athenian orator, with the slightest interest beyond that which inevitably attaches to the words of one who wrote his own divine language with probably very superior skill.

But, from all this, results a further inference—viz. the dire affectation of those who pretend an enthusiasm in the oratory of Demosthenes; and also a plenary consolation to all who are obliged, from ignorance of Greek, to dispense with that novelty. If it be a luxury at all, it is and can be one for those only who cultivate verbal researches and the pleasures of philology.

Even in the oratory of our own times, which oftentimes discusses questions to the whole growth and motion of which we have been ourselves parties present, or even accessary—questions which we have followed in their first emersion and separation from the clouds of general politics; their advance, slow or rapid, towards a domineering interest in the public passions; their meridian altitude; and perhaps their precipitous descent downwards, whether from the consummation of their objects (as in the questions of the Slave Trade, of Catholic Emancipation, of East India Monopoly), or from a partial victory and compromise with the abuse (as in the purification of that Augean stable, prisons, and, still more, private houses for the insane), or from the accomplishment of one stage or so in a progress which, by

its nature, is infinite (as in the various steps taken towards the improvement, and towards the extension of education): even in cases like these, when the primary and ostensible object of the speaker already, on its own account, possesses a commanding attraction, yet will it often happen that the secondary questions, growing out of the leading one, the great elementary themes suggested to the speaker by the concrete case before him—as, for instance, the general question of Test Laws, or the still higher and transcendent question of Religious Toleration, and the relations between the State and religious opinions, or the general history of Slavery and the commerce in the human species, the general principles of economy as applied to monopolies, the past usages of mankind in their treatment of prisoners or of lunatics—these comprehensive and transcendent themes are continually allowed to absorb and throw into the shade, for a time, the minor but more urgent question of the moment through which they have gained their interest. The capital and primary interest gives way for a time to the derivative interest; and it does so by a silent understanding between the orator and his audience. The orator is well assured that he will not be taxed with wandering; the audience are satisfied that, eventually, they will not have lost their time: and the final result is, to elevate and liberalise the province of oratory, by exalting mere business (growing originally, perhaps, out of contingencies of finance, or trade, or local police) into a field for the higher understanding; and giving to the mere necessities of our position as a nation the

dignity of great problems for civilising wisdom or philosophic philanthropy. Look back to the superb orations of Edmund Burke on questions limited enough in themselves, sometimes merely personal; for instance, that on American Taxation, on the Reforms in our Household or Official Expenditure, or at that from the Bristol hustings (by its *primâ facie* subject, therefore, a mere electioneering harangue to a mob). With what marvellous skill does he enrich what is meagre, elevate what is humble, intellectualise what is purely technical, delocalise what is local, generalise what is personal! And with what result? Doubtless to the absolute contemporaries of those speeches, steeped to the very lips in the passions besetting their topics, even to those whose attention was sufficiently secured by the domineering interest, friendly or hostile, to the views of the speaker—even to these I say, that, in so far as they were at all capable of an intellectual pleasure, those parts would be most attractive which were least occupied with the present business and the momentary details. This order of precedency in the interests of the speech held even for them; but to us, removing at every annual step we take in the century, to a greater distance from the mere business and partisan interests of the several cases, this secondary attraction is not merely the greater of the two—to us it has become pretty nearly the sole one, pretty nearly the exclusive attraction.

As to religious oratory, *that* stands upon a different footing—the questions afloat in that province of human speculation being

eternal, or at least essentially the same under new forms, receives a strong illustration from the annals of the English senate, to which also it gives a strong and useful illustration. Up to the era of James I., the eloquence of either House could not, for political reasons, be very striking, on the very principle which we have been enforcing. Parliament met only for dispatch of business; and that business was purely fiscal, or (as at times it happened) judicial. The constitutional functions of Parliament were narrow; and they were narrowed still more severely by the jealousy of the executive government. With the expansion, or rather first growth and development of a gentry, or third estate, expanded, *pari passu*, the political field of their jurisdiction and their deliberative functions. This widening field, as a birth out of new existences, unknown to former laws or usages, was, of course, not contemplated by those laws or usages. Constitutional law could not provide for the exercise of rights by a body of citizens, when, as yet, that body had itself no existence. A gentry, as the depository of a vast overbalance of property, real as well as personal, had not matured itself till the latter years of James I. Consequently the new functions, which the instinct of their new situation prompted them to assume, were looked upon by the Crown, most sincerely, as unlawful usurpations. This led, as we know, to a most fervent and impassioned struggle, the most so of any struggle which has ever armed the hands of men with the sword. For the passions take a far profounder sweep when they are supported by deep thought and high principles.

This element of fervid strife was already, for itself, an atmosphere most favourable to political eloquence. Accordingly, the speeches of that day, though generally too short to attain that large compass and sweep of movement without which it is difficult to kindle or to sustain any conscious enthusiasm in an audience, were of a high quality as to thought and energy of expression, as high as their circumstantial disadvantages allowed. Lord Strafford's great effort is deservedly admired to this day, and the latter part of it has been often pronounced a *chef-d'œuvre*. A few years before that era, all the orators of note were, and must have been, judicial orators; and, amongst these, Lord Bacon, to whom every reader's thoughts will point as the most memorable, attained the chief object of all oratory, if what Ben Jonson reports of him be true, that he had his audience passive to the motions of his will. But Jonson was, perhaps, too scholastic a judge to be a fair representative judge; and, whatever he might choose to say or to think, Lord Bacon was certainly too weighty—too massy with the bullion of original thought—ever to have realized the idea of a great popular orator—one who

> 'Wielded at will a fierce democracy,'

and ploughed up the great deeps of sentiment, or party strife, or national animosities, like a Levanter or a monsoon. In the schools of Plato, in the *palæstra Stoicorum*, such an orator might be potent; not *in fæce Romuli*. If he had laboured with no other

defect, had he the gift of tautology? Could he say the same thing three times over in direct sequence? For, without this talent of iteration—of repeating the same thought in diversified forms—a man may utter good heads of an oration, but not an oration. Just as the same illustrious man's essays are good hints—useful topics—for essays; but no approximation to what we, in modern days, understand by *essays*: they are, as an eminent author once happily expressed it to myself, '*seeds, not plants or shrubs; acorns, that is, oaks in embryo, but not oaks.*'

Reverting, however, to the oratory of the Senate, from the era of its proper birth, which we may date from the opening of that our memorable Long Parliament, brought together in November of 1642,[19] our Parliamentary eloquence has now, within four years, travelled through a period of two centuries. A most admirable subject for an essay, or a Magazine article, as it strikes me, would be a bird's-eye view—or rather a bird's-wing flight—pursuing rapidly the revolutions of that memorable oracle (for such it really was to the rest of civilised Europe), which, through so long a course of years, like the Delphic oracle to the nations of old, delivered counsels of civil prudence and of national

[19] There was another Parliament of this same year 1642, which met in the spring (April, I think), but was summarily dissolved. A small quarto volume, of not unfrequent occurrence, I believe, contains some good specimens of the eloquence then prevalent—it was rich in thought, never wordy—in fact, too parsimonious in words and illustrations; and it breathed a high tone of religious principle as well as of pure-minded patriotism; but, for the reason stated above—its narrow circuit and very limited duration—the general character of the Parliamentary eloquence was ineffective.

grandeur, that kept alive for Christendom the recollections of freedom, and refreshed to the enslaved Continent the old ideas of Roman patriotism, which, but for our Parliament, would have uttered themselves by no voices on earth. That this account of the position occupied by our British Parliament, in relation to the rest of Europe, at least after the publication of the Debates had been commenced by Cave, with the aid of Dr. Johnson, is, in no respect, romantic or overcharged, may be learned from the German novels of the last century, in which we find the British debates as uniformly the morning accompaniment of breakfast, at the houses of the rural gentry, &c., as in any English or Scottish county. Such a sketch would, of course, collect the characteristics of each age, show in what connection these characteristics stood with the political aspects of the time, or with the modes of managing public business (a fatal rock to our public eloquence in England!), and illustrate the whole by interesting specimens from the leading orators in each generation: from Hampden to Pulteney, amongst oppositionists or patriots; from Pulteney to O'Connell; or, again, amongst Ministers, from Hyde to Somers, from Lord Sunderland to Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke; and from the plain, downright Sir Robert Walpole, to the plain, downright Sir Robert Peel.

Throughout the whole of this review, the same 'moral,' if one might so call it, would be apparent—viz. that in proportion as the oratory was high and intellectual, did it travel out into the collateral questions of less instant necessity, but more durable

interest; and that, in proportion as the Grecian necessity *was* or was *not* enforced by the temper of the House, or by the pressure of public business—the necessity which cripples the orator, by confining him within the severe limits of the case before him—in that proportion had or had not the oratory of past generations a surviving interest for modern posterity. Nothing, in fact, so utterly effete—not even old law, or old pharmacy, or old erroneous chemistry—nothing so insufferably dull as political orations, unless when powerfully animated by that spirit of generalisation which only gives the breath of life and the salt which preserves from decay, through every age alike. The very strongest proof, as well as exemplification of all which has been said on Grecian oratory, may thus be found in the records of the British senate.

And this, by the way, brings us round to an aspect of Grecian oratory which has been rendered memorable, and forced upon our notice, in the shape of a problem, by the most popular of our native historians—the aspect, I mean, of Greek oratory in comparison with English. Hume has an essay upon the subject; and the true answer to that essay will open a wide field of truth to us. In this little paper, Hume assumes the superiority of Grecian eloquence, as a thing admitted on all hands, and requiring no proof. Not the proof of this point did he propose to himself as his object; not even the illustration of it. No. All that, Hume held to be superfluous. His object was, to investigate the causes of this Grecian superiority; or, if *investigate* is too pompous a word for

so slight a discussion, more properly, he inquired for the cause as something that must naturally lie upon the surface.

What is the answer? First of all, before looking for causes, a man should be sure of his facts. Now, as to the main fact at issue, I utterly deny the superiority of Grecian eloquence. And, first of all, I change the whole field of inquiry by shifting the comparison. The Greek oratory is all political or judicial: we have those also; but the best of our eloquence, by immeasurable degrees, the noblest and richest, is our religious eloquence. Here, of course, all comparison ceases; for classical Grecian religious eloquence, in Grecian attire, there is none until three centuries after the Christian era, when we have three great orators, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil—of which two I have a very fixed opinion, having read large portions of both—and a third of whom I know nothing. To our Jeremy Taylor, to our Sir Thomas Browne, there is no approach made in the Greek eloquence. The inaugural chapter of the *Holy Dying*, to say nothing of many another golden passage; or the famous passage in the *Urn Buriall*, beginning—'Now, since these bones have rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests'—have no parallel in literature. The winding up of the former is more, in its effect, like a great tempestuous chorus from the *Judas Maccabeus*, or from Spohr's *St. Paul*, than like human eloquence.

But, grant that this transfer of the comparison is unfair—still, it is no less unfair to confine the comparison on our part to the weakest part of our oratory; but no matter—let issue be joined

even here. Then we may say, at once, that, for the intellectual qualities of eloquence, in fineness of understanding, in depth and in large compass of thought, Burke far surpasses any orator, ancient or modern. But, if the comparison were pushed more widely, very certain I am, that, apart from classical prejudice, no qualities of just thinking, or fine expression, or even of artificial ornament, could have been assigned by Hume, in which the great body of our deliberative and forensic orators fall short of Grecian models; though I will admit, that, by comparison with the Roman model of Cicero, there is seldom the same artful prefiguration of the oration throughout its future course, or the same sustained rhythmus and oratorial tone. The qualities of art are nowhere so prominently expressed, nowhere aid the effect so much, as in the great Roman master.

But, as to Greece, let us now, in one word, unveil the sole advantage which the eloquence of the Athenian *assembly* has over that of the English senate. It is this—*the public business of Athens was as yet simple and unencumbered by details*; the dignity of the occasion was scenically sustained. But, in England, the vast intricacy and complex interweaving of property, of commerce, of commercial interests, of details infinite in number, and infinite in littleness, break down and fritter away into fractions and petty minutiæ, the whole huge labyrinth of our public affairs. It is scarcely necessary to explain my meaning. In Athens, the question before the public assembly was, peace or war—before our House of Commons, perhaps the Exchequer

Bills' Bill; at Athens, a league or no league—in England, the Tithe of Agistment Commutation-Bills' Renewal Bill; in Athens—shall we forgive a ruined enemy? in England—shall we cancel the tax on farthing rushlights? In short, with us, the infinity of details overlays the simplicity and grandeur of our public deliberations.

Such was the advantage—a mighty advantage—for Greece. Now, finally, for the use made of this advantage. To that point I have already spoken. By the clamorous and undeliberative qualities of the Athenian political audience, by its fitful impatience, and vehement arrogance, and fervid partisanship, all wide and general discussion was barred *in limine*. And thus occurred this singular inversion of positions—the greatest of Greek orators was obliged to treat these Catholic questions as mere Athenian questions of business. On the other hand, the least eloquent of British senators, whether from the immense advance in knowledge, or from the custom and usage of Parliament, seldom fails, more or less, to elevate his intense details of pure technical business into something dignified, either by the necessities of pursuing the *historical* relations of the matter in discussion, or of arguing its merits as a case of general finance, or as connected with general political economy, or, perhaps, in its bearings on peace or war. The Grecian was forced, by the composition of his headstrong auditory, to degrade and personalise his grand themes; the Englishman is forced, by the difference of his audience, by old prescription, and by the

opposition of a well-informed, hostile party, into elevating his merely technical and petty themes into great national questions, involving honour and benefit to tens of millions.

THE GERMAN LANGUAGE, AND PHILOSOPHY OF KANT

Using a New Testament, of which (in the narrative parts at least) any one word being given will suggest most of what is immediately consecutive, you evade the most irksome of the penalties annexed to the first breaking ground in a new language: you evade the necessity of hunting up and down a dictionary. Your own memory, and the inevitable suggestions of the context, furnish a dictionary *pro hac vice*. And afterwards, upon advancing to other books, where you are obliged to forego such aids, and to swim without corks, you find yourself already in possession of the particles for expressing addition, succession, exception, inference—in short, of all the forms by which transition or connection is effected (*if*, *but*, *and*, *therefore*, *however*, *notwithstanding*), together with all those adverbs for modifying or restraining the extent of a subject or a predicate, which in all languages alike compose the essential frame-work or *extra-linear* machinery of human thought. The filling-up—the *matter* (in a scholastic sense)—may differ infinitely; but the *form*, the periphery, the determining moulds into which this matter is fused—all this is the same for ever: and so wonderfully limited in its extent is this frame-work, so narrow and rapidly revolving is the clock-work of connections among

human thoughts, that a dozen pages of almost any book suffice to exhaust all the επεα πτεροεντα[20] which express them. To have mastered these επεα πτεροεντα is in effect to have mastered seven-tenths, at the least, of any language; and the benefit of using a New Testament, or the familiar parts of an Old Testament, in this preliminary drill, is, that your own memory is thus made to operate as a perpetual dictionary or nomenclator. I have heard Mr. Southey say that, by carrying in his pocket a Dutch, Swedish, or other Testament, on occasion of a long journey performed in '*muggy*' weather, and in the inside of some venerable 'old heavy'—such as used to bestow their tediousness upon our respectable fathers some thirty or forty years ago—he had more than once turned to so valuable an account the doziness or the dulness of his fellow-travellers, that whereas he had 'booked' himself at the coach-office utterly αναλφαβητος, unacquainted with the first rudiments of the given language,

[20] Επεα πτεροεντα, literally *winged words*. To explain the use and origin of this phrase to non-classical readers, it must be understood that, originally, it was used by Homer to express the few, rapid, and significant words which conveyed some hasty order, counsel, or notice, suited to any sudden occasion or emergency: *e. g.* 'To him flying from the field the hero addressed these winged words—"Stop, coward, or I will transfix thee with my spear."' But by Horne Tooke, the phrase was adopted on the title-page of his *Diversions of Purley*, as a pleasant symbolic expression for all the non-significant particles, the *articuli* or joints of language, which in his well-known theory are resolved into abbreviations or compendious forms (and therefore rapid, flying, *winged* forms), substituted for significant forms of greater length. Thus, *if* is a non-significant particle, but it is an abbreviated form of an imperative in the second person—substituted for gif, or give, or grant the case—put the case that. All other particles are shown by Horne Tooke to be equally shorthand (or *winged*) substitutions.

he had made his parting bows to his coach brethren (secretly returning thanks to them for their stupidity), in a condition for grappling with any common book in that dialect. One of the polyglot Old or New Testaments published by Bagster, would be a perfect Encyclopædia, or *Panorganon*, for such a scheme of coach discipline, upon dull roads and in dull company. As respects the German language in particular, I shall give one caution from my own experience, to the self-instructor: it is a caution which applies to the German language exclusively, or to that more than to any other, because the embarrassment which it is meant to meet, grows out of a defect of taste characteristic of the German mind. It is this: elsewhere, you would naturally, as a beginner, resort to *prose* authors, since the license and audacity of poetic thinking, and the large freedom of a poetic treatment, cannot fail to superadd difficulties of individual creation to the general difficulties of a strange dialect. But this rule, good for every other case, is *not* good for the literature of Germany. Difficulties there certainly are, and perhaps in more than the usual proportion, from the German peculiarities of poetic treatment; but even these are overbalanced in the result, by the single advantage of being limited in the extent by the metre, or (as it may happen) by the particular stanza. To German poetry there is a known, fixed, calculable limit. Infinity, absolute infinity, is impracticable in any German metre. Not so with German prose. Style, in any sense, is an inconceivable idea to a German intellect. Take the word in the limited sense of what

the Greeks called Συνθεσις ονοματων—*i. e.* the construction of sentences—I affirm that a German (unless it were here and there a Lessing) cannot admit such an idea. Books there are in German, and, in other respects, very good books too, which consist of one or two enormous sentences. A German sentence describes an arch between the rising and the setting sun. Take Kant for illustration: he has actually been complimented by the cloud-spinner, Frederic Schlegel, who is now in Hades, as a most original artist in the matter of style. 'Original' Heaven knows he was! His idea of a sentence was as follows:—We have all seen, or read of, an old family coach, and the process of packing it for a journey to London some seventy or eighty years ago. Night and day, for a week at least, sate the housekeeper, the lady's maid, the butler, the gentleman's gentleman, &c., packing the huge ark in all its recesses, its 'imperials,' its 'wills,' its 'Salisbury boots,' its 'sword-cases,' its front pockets, side pockets, rear pockets, its 'hammer-cloth cellars' (which a lady explains to me as a corruption from *hamper-cloth*, as originally a cloth for hiding a hamper, stored with *viaticum*), until all the uses and needs of man, and of human life, savage or civilised, were met with separate provision by the infinite chaos. Pretty nearly upon the model of such an old family coach packing, did Kant institute and pursue the packing and stuffing of one of his regular sentences. Everything that could ever be needed in the way of explanation, illustration, restraint, inference, by-clause, or indirect comment, was to be crammed, according to this German philosopher's

taste, into the front pockets, side pockets, or rear pockets, of the one original sentence. Hence it is that a sentence will last in reading whilst a man

> 'Might reap an acre of his neighbour's corn.'

Nor is this any peculiarity of Kant's. It is common to the whole family of prose writers of Germany, unless when they happen to have studied French models, who cultivate the opposite extreme. As a caution, therefore, practically applied to this particular anomaly in German prose-writing, I advise all beginners to choose between two classes of composition—ballad poetry, or comedy—as their earliest school of exercise; ballad poetry, because the form of the stanza (usually a quatrain) prescribes a very narrow range to the sentences; comedy, because the form of dialogue, and the imitation of daily life in its ordinary tone of conversation, and the spirit of comedy naturally suggesting a brisk interchange of speech, all tend to short sentences. These rules I soon drew from my own experience and observation. And the one sole purpose towards which I either sought or wished for aid, respected the pronunciation; not so much for attaining a just one (which I was satisfied could not be realised out of Germany, or, at least, out of a daily intercourse with Germans) as for preventing the formation, unawares, of a radically false one. The guttural and palatine sounds of the *ch*, and some other German peculiarities, cannot be acquired without constant

practice. But the false Westphalian or Jewish pronunciation of the vowels, diphthongs, &c., may easily be forestalled, though the true delicacy of Meissen should happen to be missed. Thus much guidance I purchased, with a very few guineas, from my young Dresden tutor, who was most anxious for permission to extend his assistance; but this I would not hear of: and, in the spirit of fierce (perhaps foolish) independence, which governed most of my actions at that time of life, I did all the rest for myself.

> 'It was a banner broad unfurl'd,
> The picture of that western world.'

These, or words like these, in which Wordsworth conveys the sudden apocalypse, as by an apparition, to an ardent and sympathising spirit, of the stupendous world of America, rising, at once, like an exhalation, with all its shadowy forests, its endless savannas, and its pomp of solitary waters—well and truly might I have applied to my first launching upon that vast billowy ocean of the German literature. As a past literature, as a literature of inheritance and tradition, the German was nothing. Ancestral titles it had none; or none comparable to those of England, Spain, or even Italy; and there, also, it resembled America, as contrasted with the ancient world of Asia, Europe, and North Africa.[21] But, if its inheritance were nothing, its prospects, and

[21] It has been rather too much forgotten, that Africa, from the northern margin of Bilidulgerid and the Great Desert, southwards—everywhere, in short, beyond Egypt, Cyrene, and the modern Barbary States—belongs, as much as America, to the New

the scale of its present development, were in the amplest style of American grandeur. *Ten thousand* new books, we are assured by Menzel, an author of high reputation—a *literal myriad*—is considerably below the number annually poured from all quarters of Germany, into the vast reservoir of Leipsic; spawn infinite, no doubt, of crazy dotage, of dreaming imbecility, of wickedness, of frenzy, through every phasis of Babylonian confusion; yet, also, teeming and heaving with life and the instincts of truth —of truth hunting and chasing in the broad daylight, or of truth groping in the chambers of darkness; sometimes seen as it displays its cornucopia of tropical fruitage; sometimes heard dimly, and in promise, working its way through diamond mines. Not the tropics, not the ocean, not life itself, is such a type of variety, of infinite forms, or of creative power, as the German literature, in its recent motions (say for the last twenty years), gathering, like the Danube, a fresh volume of power at every stage of its advance. A banner it was, indeed, to me of miraculous promise, and suddenly unfurled. It seemed, in those days, an El Dorado as true and undeceiving as it was evidently inexhaustible. And the central object in this interminable wilderness of what then seemed imperishable bloom and verdure—the very tree of knowledge in the midst of this Eden—was the new or transcendental philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

I have described the gorgeousness of my expectations in those early days of my prelusive acquaintance with German literature.

World—the world unknown to the ancients.

I have a little lingered in painting that glad aurora of my first pilgrimage to the fountains of the Rhine and of the Danube, in order adequately to shadow out the gloom and blight which soon afterwards settled upon the hopes of that golden dawn. In Kant, I had been taught to believe, were the keys of a new and a creative philosophy. Either '*ejus ductu*,' or '*ejus auspiciis*'—that is, either directly under his guidance, or indirectly under any influence remotely derived from his principles—I looked confidingly to see the great vistas and avenues of truth laid open to the philosophic inquirer. Alas! all was a dream. Six weeks' study was sufficient to close my hopes in that quarter for ever. The philosophy of Kant—so famous, so commanding in Germany, from about the period of the French Revolution—already, in 1805, I had found to be a philosophy of destruction, and scarcely, in any one chapter, so much as *tending* to a philosophy of reconstruction. It destroys by wholesale, and it substitutes nothing. Perhaps, in the whole history of man, it is an unexampled case, that such a scheme of speculation—which offers nothing seducing to human aspirations, nothing splendid to the human imagination, nothing even positive and affirmative to the human understanding—should have been able to found an interest so broad and deep among thirty-five millions of cultivated men. The English reader who supposes this interest to have been confined to academic bowers, or the halls of philosophic societies, is most inadequately alive to the case. Sects, heresies, schisms, by hundreds, have arisen out of this

philosophy—many thousands of books have been written by way of teaching it, discussing it, extending it, opposing it. And yet it is a fact, that all its doctrines are negative—teaching, in no case, what we *are*, but simply what we are *not* to believe —and that all its truths are barren. Such being its unpopular character, I cannot but imagine that the German people have received it with so much ardour, from profound incomprehension of its meaning, and utter blindness to its drift—a solution which may seem extravagant, but is not so; for, even amongst those who have expressly commented on this philosophy, not one of the many hundreds whom I have myself read, but has retracted from every attempt to explain its dark places. In these dark places lies, indeed, the secret of its attraction. Were light poured into them, it would be seen that they are *culs-de-sac*, passages that lead to nothing; but, so long as they continue dark, it is not known whither they lead, how far, in what direction, and whether, in fact, they may not issue into paths connected directly with the positive and the infinite. Were it known that upon every path a barrier faces you insurmountable to human steps—like the barriers which fence in the Abyssinian valley of Rasselas—the popularity of this philosophy would expire at once; for no popular interest can long be sustained by speculations which, in every aspect, are known to be essentially negative and essentially finite. Man's nature has something of infinity within itself, which requires a corresponding infinity in its objects. We are told, indeed, by Mr. Bulwer, that the Kantian system has ceased to be

of any authority in Germany—that it is defunct, in fact—and that we have first begun to import it into England, after its root had withered, or begun to wither, in its native soil. But Mr. Bulwer is mistaken. The philosophy has never withered in Germany. It cannot even be said that its fortunes have retrograded: they have oscillated: accidents of taste and ability in particular professors, or caprices of fashion, have given a momentary fluctuation to this or that new form of Kantianism,—an ascendency, for a period, to various, and, in some respects, conflicting, modifications of the transcendental system; but all alike have derived their power mediately from Kant. No weapons, even if employed as hostile weapons, are now forged in any armoury but that of Kant; and, to repeat a Roman figure which I used above, all the modern polemic tactics of what is called metaphysics, are trained and made to move either *ejus ductu*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.