

VARIOUS

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PÚSHKIN, THE RUSSIAN POET

No. I

**Sketch of Púshkin's Life and Works, by
Thomas B. Shaw, B.A. of Cambridge,
Adjunct Professor of English Literature
in the Imperial Alexander Lyceum,
Translator of "The Heretic," &c. &c**

Among the many striking analogies which exist between the physical and intellectual creations, and exhibit the uniform method adopted by Supreme Wisdom in the production of what is most immortal and most precious in the world of thought, as

well as of what is most useful and beautiful in the world of matter, there is one which cannot fail to arise before the most actual and commonplace imagination. This is, the great apparent care exhibited by nature in the preparation of the *nidus*—or matrix, if we may so style it—in which the genius of the great man is to be perfected and elaborated. Nature creates nothing in sport; and as much foresight—possibly even more—is displayed in the often complicated and intricate machinery of concurrent causes which prepare the development of great literary genius, as in the elaborate in-foldings which protect from injury the germ of the future oak, or the deep-laid and mysterious bed, and the unimaginable ages of growth and hardening, necessary to the water of the diamond, or to the purity of the gold.

Púshkin is undoubtedly one of that small number of names, which have become incorporated and identified with the literature of their country; at once the type and the expression of that country's nationality—one of that small but illustrious bard, whose writings have become part of the very household language of their native land—whose lightest words may be incessantly heard from the lips of all classes; and whose expressions may be said, like those of Shakspeare, of Molière, and of Cervantes, to have become the natural forms embodying the ideas which they have expressed, and in expressing, consecrated. In a word, Púshkin is undeniably and essentially the great national poet of Russia.

In tracing, therefore, this author's double existence, and in

essaying to give some account of his external as well as his interior life—in sketching the poet and the man—we cannot fail to remark a striking exemplification of the principle to which we have alluded; and as we accompany, in respectful admiration, his short but brilliant career, we shall have incessant occasion to remember the laws which regulated its march—laws ever-acting and eternal, and no less apparent to the eye of enlightened criticism, than are the mighty physical influences which guide the planets in their course, to the abstract reason of the astronomer.

Alexander Púshkin was born (as if destiny had intended, in assigning his birth-place—the ancient capital of Russia, and still the dwelling-place of all that is most intense in Russian nationality—to predict all the stuff and groundwork of his character) at Moscow, on the 26th of May 1799. His family, by the paternal side, was one of the most ancient and distinguished in the empire, and was descended from Rátcha, a German—probably a Teutonic knight—who settled in Muscovy in the thirteenth century, and took service under Alexander Névkii, (1252-1262,) and who is the parent root from which spring many of the most illustrious houses in Russia—those of Púshkin, of Buturlín, of Kaménskii, and of Metelóff. Nor was the paternal line of Púshkin's house undistinguished for other triumphs than those recorded in the annals of war; his grandfather, Vassílii Lvóvitch Púshkin, was a poet of considerable reputation, and was honoured, no less than Alexander's father, with the intimacy of the most illustrious literary men of his age—of Dmíttrieff,

Karamzín, and Jukóvskii.

But perhaps the most remarkable circumstance connected with Púshkin's origin—a circumstance of peculiar significance to those who, like ourselves, are believers in the influence, on human character, of *race*, or *blood*, is the fact of his having been the grandson, by the mother's side, of an African. The cold blood of the north, transmitted to his veins from the rude warrior of Germany, was thus mingled with that liquid lightning which circles through the fervid bosom of the children of the desert; and this crossing of the race (to use the language of the course) produced an undeniable modification in our poet's character. His maternal grandfather was a negro, brought to Russia when a child by Peter the Great, and whose subsequent career was one of the most romantic that can be imagined. The wonderful Tsar gave his sable protégé, whose name was Annibal, a good education, and admitted him into the marine service of the empire—a service in which he reached (in the reign of Catharine) the rank of admiral. He took part in the attack upon Navarin under Orloff, and died after a long and distinguished career of service, having founded, in his new country, the family of Annibáloff, of which Púshkin was the most distinguished ornament, and of whose African origin the poet, both in personal appearance and in mental physiognomy, bore the most unequivocal marks. To the memory of this singular progenitor, Púshkin has consecrated more than one of his smaller works, and has frequently alluded to the African blood which he inherited from the admiral.

In 1811, Púshkin obtained (through the interest of Turgénieff, to whom Russia is thus, in some sort, indebted for her great poet) admission into the Imperial Lyceum of Tsárskoë Seló, where he was to receive the education, and to form the friendships, which so strongly coloured, not only the literary productions of his whole career, but undoubtedly modified, to a considerable extent, the personal character of the poet. This institution, then recently established by the Emperor Alexander, and always honoured by the peculiar favour and protection of its illustrious founder, was modelled on the plan of those *lycées* which France owed to the genius of Napoleon; and was intended to confer upon its pupils the advantage of a complete encyclopedic education, and, not only embracing the preparatory or school course, but also the academic *curriculum* of a university, was calculated to dismiss the students, at the end of their course of training, immediately into active life. The Lyceum must be undoubtedly considered as having nursed in its bosom a greater number of distinguished men than any other educational institution in the country; and our readers may judge of the peculiar privileges enjoyed by this establishment, (the primary object of whose foundation was, that of furnishing to the higher civil departments in the government, and to the ministry of foreign affairs in particular, a supply of able and accomplished *employés*,) from the fact of its having been located by the emperor in a wing of the palace of Tsárskoë Seló—the favourite summer residence of the Tsars of Russia since the time of Catharine II. It is

to the last-named sovereign, as is well known to travellers, that this celebrated spot is indebted for its splendid palace and magnificent gardens, forming, perhaps, the most striking object which gratifies the stranger's curiosity in the environs of St Petersburg.

The students of the Lyceum are almost always youths of the most distinguished families among the Russian nobility, and are themselves selected from among the most promising in point of intellect. The system of education pursued within its walls is of the most complete nature, partaking, as may be concluded from what we have said, of both a scientific and literary character; and a single glance at a list of the first course (of which Púshkin was a member) will suffice to show, that it counted, among its numbers, many names destined to high distinction. Among the comrades and intimate friends of Púshkin at the Lyceum, must be mentioned the elegant poet, the Baron Délvig, whose early death was so irreparable a loss to Russian literature, and must be considered as the severest personal bereavement suffered by Púshkin—"his brother," as he affectionately calls him, in the muse as in their fate. Nor must we forget Admiral Matiúshkin, a distinguished seaman now living, and commanding the Russian squadron in the Black Sea. We could specify a number of other names, all of more or less note in their own country, though the reputation of many of them has not succeeded, for various reasons, in passing the frontiers.

From the system of study, no less than from the peculiar social

character, if we may so express it, which has always prevailed in the Lyceum of Tsárskoë Seló, we must deduce the cause of the peculiar intensity and durability of the friendships contracted within its bosom—a circumstance which still continues to distinguish it to a higher degree than can be predicated of any other institution with which we are acquainted; and we allude to this more pointedly from the conviction, that it would be absolutely impossible to form a true idea of Púshkin—not only as man, but even as a poet—were we to leave out of our portrait the immense influence exerted on the whole of his career, both in the world of reality and in the regions of art, by the close and intimate friendships he formed in the Lyceum, particularly that with Délévig. Few portions of poetical biography contain a purer or more touching interest than the chapter describing the school or college friendships of illustrious men; and the innumerable allusions to Lyceum comrades and Lyceum happiness, scattered so profusely over the pages of Púshkin, have an indescribable charm to the imagination, not less delightful than the recital of Byron's almost feminine affection for "little Harness," or the oft-recalled image of the Noble Childe's boyish meditation in the elm-shadowed churchyard of Harrow.

During the six years which Púshkin passed at the Lyceum, (from 1811 to 1817,) the intellect and the affections of the young poet were rapidly and steadily developing themselves. He could not, it is true, be considered as a diligent scholar, by those who looked at the progress made by him in the regular and

ostensible occupations of the institution; but it is undeniable, that the activity of his powerful, accurate, and penetrating mind found solid and unremitting occupation in a wide circle of general reading. His own account of the acquirements he had made at this period, and of the various branches of study which he had cultivated with more or less assiduity, proves that, however desultory may have been the nature of his reading, and however unformed or incoherent were his literary projects, he possessed, in ample measure, even at this period, the great elements of future fame; viz. the habit of vigorous industry, and the power of sustained abstraction and contemplation.

His personal appearance, at this time, was a plain index of his character, intellectual as well as moral. The closely-curved and wiry hair, the mobile and irregular features, the darkness of the complexion, all betrayed his African descent; and served as an appropriate outside to a character which was early formed in all its individuality, and which remained unchanged in its principal features during the whole of the poet's too short existence. Long will the youthful traditions of the Lyceum recall the outlines of Púshkin's character; long will the unbiassed judgment of boyhood do justice to the manliness, the honour, the straightforwardness of the great poet's nature, and hand down, from one young generation to another, numberless traits exemplifying the passionate warmth of his heart, the gaiety of his temper, and the vastness of his memory. In all cases where circumstances come fairly under their observation, the young are

the best judges of internal character, as well as the most unerring physiognomists of the outward lineaments of the face. Púshkin was extremely popular among his comrades—the generosity of his character had peculiar charms for the unsophisticated minds of the young; and the vigour of a body never enfeebled in infancy by luxurious indulgence, enabled him to obtain, by sharing in their sports, no less consideration among them than he derived from the play of his penetrating and sarcastic humour. His poetical existence was now already begun: to the Lyceum period of Púshkin's life we must ascribe not only a considerable number of short pieces of verse—those first flutterings of the bird before it has strength to leave the nest—but even the conception of many poetical projects which time and study were hereafter to mature into masterpieces. The short and fugitive essays in poetry to which we have just alluded, appeared in a literary journal at various periods, and under anonymous signatures—a circumstance to be deplored, as it has deprived us of the means of examining how far these slight attempts, composed in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth years of his age, gave promise of future excellence. In themselves, they were probably so crude and *unlicked* as to justify the poet in the indifference which prevented him from claiming these early compositions, and allowing them to be incorporated in the collections of his writings. During his residence at the Lyceum, however, he undoubtedly meditated the plan of his charming romantic poem, "Ruslán and Liudmíla," and probably even composed the

opening of the work. To this period, too, are to be assigned some stanzas of great merit, entitled "Recollections of Tsárskoë Seló," and an "Epistle to Licinius"—both works exhibiting considerable skill and mastery in versification, but by far too much tinged (as might indeed be expected) with the light reflected from the youthful poet's reading to deserve a place among his original productions. For the amusement of his comrades, also, he wrote a number of ludicrous and humorous pieces, which derived their chief merit from the circumstances which suggested them; and were calculated rather to excite a moment's laughter in the merry circle of schoolfellows, than to be cited as specimens of the author's comic powers, particularly when we reflect, that the broadly humorous was never Púshkin's favourite or even successful manner of writing: in the delicate, subdued, Cervantes tone of humour, however, he was destined to become perhaps the most distinguished writer of his country—but let us not anticipate. One production, connected with the Lyceum, is, however, too important (not perhaps in itself, so much as in the circumstances accompanying it) to be passed over in a biography of our poet. This is a didactic poem entitled "Infidelity," which Púshkin composed and read at the public examination at the Lyceum, at the solemn *Act*, (a ceremony resembling that which bears the same name at Oxford and Cambridge, and which takes place at the conferring of the academical degree.) It was on this occasion that Púshkin was publicly saluted *Poet*, in the presence of the Emperor, by the aged Derjávín—the greatest Russian poet

then living, and whose glory was so soon to be eclipsed by the young student whom he prophetically applauded. It is impossible not to be affected by the sight of the sunset of that genius whose brightest splendour is worthily reflected in the sublime ode, "God"—one of the noblest lyrics in the Russian, or, indeed, in any language—thus heralding, as it were, the dawning of a more brilliant and enduring daybreak; even as in the northern summer the vapoury evening glow melts imperceptibly into the dawn, and leaves no night between.

This event, so calculated to impress the vivid and ardent imagination of the young poet, has been most exquisitely described by himself in the literary journal, "Sovreménnik," (The Contemporary,) vol. viii. p. 241.

On quitting the Lyceum, in October 1817, Púshkin entered the civil service, and was immediately attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Young, noble, cultivated, possessed in the highest degree of those talents which are certain to enchant society, he plunged, as might naturally have been expected, with all the ardour of his African blood, into the pleasures and amusements of the capital. His success in society, and the eagerness with which he was welcomed every where, might easily have been foreseen, particularly when we keep in mind the universal hospitality which distinguishes the higher classes of Russian society, and the comparative rarity in this country of literary celebrity, which tends to render merit of that nature certain of a respectful, if not exaggerated appreciation.

"The three years," to quote the words of one—himself a personal friend of the poet's—who has succeeded in seizing with admirable fidelity the principal features of Púshkin's intellectual physiognomy, "the three years which he passed in St Petersburg, after quitting the Lyceum, were devoted to the amusements of the fashionable world, and to the irresistible enchantments of society. From the splendid drawing-room of the great noble down to the most unceremonious supper-table of a party of young officers, every where Púshkin was received with exultation, and every where did he become the idol of the young, who gratified both his vanity and their own by the glory which accompanied his every step."

The eagerness with which the young poet plunged into the glittering stream of fashionable life, must not be attributed only to the natural thirst for pleasure in a young man just released from the bonds of a school life, and to the first vivid sense of liberty excited in the mind of a youth, who had been passing six years of his life in a spot which, however beautiful, was still but a beautiful seclusion. We must keep in mind the different constitution of society in Russia, and particularly the fact, that the absence (at least for social purposes) of a middle class in that country, renders the upper ranks the only section of the social system in which intellectual pleasure can be sought, or intellectual supremacy appreciated. Púshkin himself always attached no inconsiderable importance to his success in the *beau monde*; and it is incontestably to his friction (if we may so style it)

with that *beau monde* that he owed some of the more attractive, if not the more solid, qualities of his genius, and much of the refinement and good taste which distinguish his style. Like all men of the higher order of intellect—like Scott, like Cervantes, and Michael Angelo—Púshkin was endowed by nature with a vigorous and mighty organization, bodily as well as mental: and though he may appear to have been losing much valuable time in the elegant frivolities of the drawing-room, he was not less industrious at this period of his career in amassing a store of observation derived from a practical study of human character, than successful in filling up—in the short intervals of ball and festival—the poetical outlines which he had roughly sketched at the Lyceum. He worked in the morning at his poem, and passed the greater part of his nights in society; very short intervals of repose sufficing to repair, in so vigorously constituted a being, the loss of energetic vitality caused by the quick succession of intense intellectual labour, and equally intense social enjoyment. It was at this period that the enchanting creations of Wieland and Ariosto were first presented to his young and glowing imagination. These poets are emphatically and essentially the poets of the young: the "*white soul*" of youth, as yet untinged with the colouring reflected from its own peculiar fantasy, or the results of reading, mirrors faithfully the fairy splendour of their magic style, even as the Alpine snow the rosy light of dawn: and Púshkin, with the natural desire of imitating what he so well knew how to admire, conceived the happy thought of

transporting Armida and Oberon to a scenery admirably adapted for their reproduction—to the world of ancient Russia. The popular superstitions of the Slavonic races, though naturally possessing a tone and local colouring of their own, and modified by the nature which they reflect, are neither less graceful nor less fertile in poetry than the delicate mythology so exquisitely embodied by the great German or the yet greater Italian: and the poem of "Ruslán and Liudmíla"—the result of Púshkin's bold and happy experiment—may be said to have been the very first embodiment of Russian fancy, at least the first such embodiment exhibited under a form sufficiently European to enable readers who were not Russians to appreciate and admire. The cantos which compose this charming work were read by Púshkin, as fast as they were completed, at the house of his friend and brother poet, Jukóvskii, where were assembled the most distinguished men of Russian literary society. In 1820 the poem of "Ruslán and Liudmíla" was completed, and its appearance must be considered as giving the finishing blow to the worn-out classicism which characterizes all the poetical language of the eighteenth century. This revolution was begun by Jukóvskii himself, to whom Russian literature owes so much; and he hailed with delight the new and beautiful production of the young poet—the "conquering scholar," as Jukóvskii affectionately calls Púshkin—which established for ever the new order of things originating in the good taste of the "conquered master," as he designates himself.

The ever timid spirit of criticism was, as usual, exemplified in the judgments passed by the literary journals upon this elegant innovation. Some were alarmed at the novelty of the language, others shocked at the irregularity of the versification, and others again at the occasional comic passages introduced into the poem. but all forgot, or all dared not confess, that this was the first Russian poetry which had ever been greedily and universally *read*; and that, until the appearance of "Ruslán and Liudmíla," poetry and tiresomeness had been, in Russia, convertible terms.

Immediately on the publication of "Ruslán and Liudmíla," the poet, becoming in all probability somewhat weary of a life of incessant and labouring pleasure, left the capital and retired to Kishenév; he took service in the chancery (or office) of Lieutenant-General Inzóff, substitute in the province of Bessarabia. From this epoch begins the wandering and unsettled period of the poet's life, which occupies a space of five years, and concludes with his return to his father's village of Mikháilovskoë, in the government of Pskoff. The effect upon the character and genius of Púshkin, of this pilgrim-like existence, must be considered as in the highest degree favourable: he stored up, in these wanderings, we may be sure, effects of scenery and traits of human nature—in fact the rough materials of future poetry. Fortunately for him, the theatre of his travels was vast enough to enable him to lay in an ample stock not only of recollections of the external beauties in the physical world, but also a rich supply of the various characteristics of national manners. He traversed

the whole south of Russia—a district admirably calculated to strike and to impress the warm and vivid imagination of our poet; and "he took genial tribute from the wandering tribes of Bessarabia, and from the merchant inhabitants of Odessa, and from the classic ruins of the Tauride, and from the dark-blue waves of the Euxine, and from the wild peaks of the Caucasus."

It was at this epoch of Púshkin's career that the mighty star of Byron first rose, like some glittering, but irregular comet, above the literary horizon of Europe. The genius of the Russian poet had far too many points of resemblance, in many of its most characteristic peculiarities, with the Muse of the Noble Childe, for us to be surprised at the circumstance that the new and brilliant productions of Byron should have a powerful influence on so congenial a mind as was that of Púshkin. When we allow, therefore, the existence of this influence, nay more, when we endeavour to appreciate and measure the extent of that influence; when we essay to express the degree of *aberration* (to use the language of the astronomer) produced in the orbit of the great poetic planet of the North by the approach in the literary hemisphere of the yet greater luminary of England—we give the strongest possible denial to a fallacious opinion, useless to the glory of one great man and injurious to the just fame of the other, viz. that Púshkin can be called in any sense an *imitator* of Lord Byron. In many respects, it is true, there was a strange and surprising analogy between the personal character, the peculiar tone of thought, nay, even the nature of the subjects

treated by the two poets: and to those who content themselves with a superficial examination of the question—those "who have not attained," as Sir Thomas Browne quaintly phrases it, "to the deuteroscaphie or second sight of things"—these analogies may appear conclusive; but we trust to be able to show, that between these two great men there exists a difference wide and marked enough to satisfy the most critical stickler for originality.

The next production of Púshkin's pen was a brilliant "Epilogue" to the poem of "Ruslán and Liudmíla"—in which he replies to the strictures which had appeared in the various literary journals. This piece was immediately followed (in 1822) by his "Prisoner of the Caucasus," a romantic poem, which breathes the very freshness of the mountain breeze, and must be considered as the perfect embodiment, in verse, of the sublime region from whence it takes its title. So deep was the impression produced by this splendid and passionate poem, that it was reprinted four times before it was incorporated into the edition of the author's collected works;—the impressions having been exhausted in 1822, 24, 28, and 35. The reader, in order to appreciate the avidity with which the poem was read, must bear in mind the small amount of literary activity in Russia, as compared with England, with Germany, or with France. We shall not attempt to give, in this place, any analysis of this, or the other works of Púshkin, as it is our conviction that short and meagre fragments—all that our space would admit of—are very unsatisfactory and insufficient grounds on which to judge a work of fiction, and

particularly a work of poetry in a language absolutely unknown to almost all our readers, many of the chief peculiarities depending too upon the nationality of which that language is the expression and vehicle. It is, however, our intention, should the specimens of lyric poetry presented in the translations accompanying this notice be favourably received in England, to extend the sphere of our humble labours, and to endeavour to Daguerreotype, by faithful versions, portions of the longer poems (and in particular the narrative pieces) of the great writer whose portrait we are attempting to trace. We shall, we trust, by so doing succeed in giving our countrymen a more just idea of the merit and peculiar manner of our poet, than we could hope to do by exhibiting to the reader the bare anatomy—the mere dry bones of his works, to which would be wanting the lively play of versification, the life-blood of fancy, and the ever-varying graces of expression.

Between the first of these two remarkable poems ("Ruslán and Liudmíla") and the second—"The Prisoner of the Caucasus," the mind of Púshkin had undergone a most remarkable transformation; "there is hardly any thing," to use the words of the elegant critic whom we have already quoted, "common to the two poems, except the beauty of the verses." There is not a greater difference between an early and a late picture of Raphael; and what is interesting and curious to remark, is the circumstance, that poet and painter (in their gradual advance towards consummate excellence in their respective arts) seemed to have passed through the same stages of development. In the

earlier work all is studied, elaborated, carefully and scientifically *composed*; worked out from the quarry of memory, chiselled by the imagination, and polished by a studious and somewhat pedantic taste: while the imagery, the passion, and the characters of the later production are modelled immediately from Nature herself. The reader perceives that the young artist has now reached the first phase of his development, and has thrown aside the rule and compass of precedents and books, and feels himself sufficiently strong of hand and steady of eye to look face to face upon the unveiled goddess herself, and with reverent skill to copy her sublime lineaments. We cannot better express our meaning, than by allowing Púshkin himself to give his own opinion of this poem. In the latter part of his life, he writes as follows—"At Lars I found a dirtied and dog's-eared copy of 'The Prisoner of the Caucasus,' and I confess that I read it through with much gratification. All this is weak, boyish, incomplete; but there is much happily guessed at and faithfully expressed."

The indomitable activity which we have mentioned as forming a marked feature in Púshkin's intellect, though exhibited most strikingly throughout his whole career, was never more forcibly displayed than at the present period. Although the first fervour of his passions was now in sole degree moderated by indulgence, and by that satiety which is the inevitable attendant on such indulgence, it is not to be imagined that the poet, in retiring from the capital, intended by this to seclude himself from the gayer pleasures of society. We know, too, how absorbing of time is

the wandering life which he led—and many have learned from experience, how difficult it is for a traveller to find leisure for intellectual pursuits. Some idea, therefore, of Púshkin's activity may be formed from a knowledge of the circumstance, that during this roving period he had not only been storing his memory with images of the beauties of nature, taking tribute of grandeur and loveliness from every scene through which he wandered, but found time to pursue what would appear, even for an otherwise unoccupied student, a very steady and incessant course of labour. During the whole of his life, he made it his practice to read almost every remarkable work which appeared in the various languages he had acquired. That this was no easy task, and that the quantity of intellectual food which he unceasingly consumed, must have required a powerful and rapid digestion to assimilate it, we may conclude from his own statement of his occupations and acquirements. On quitting the Lyceum, he was acquainted with the English, Latin, German, and French languages; to this list he managed to add, during his wanderings, a complete knowledge of the Italian, and a competent proficiency in Spanish.

But let us hear his own account of these studies, extracted from a poem written in Bessarabia—

"In solitude my soul, my wayward inspiration
I've school'd to quiet toil, to fervent meditation.
I'm master of my days; order is reason's friend;
On graver thoughts I've learn'd my spirit's powers to bend;

I seek to compensate, in freedom's calm embraces,
For the warm years of youth, its joys and vanish'd graces;
And to keep equal step with an enlighten'd age."

We cannot refrain from quoting in this place a passage from another poem, written at this period; our readers will be pleased, we think, with so graceful a tribute to the glory of the great exile-bard of Rome, whose fate and character had so much in common with those of Púshkin himself—

"Sweet Ovid! Love's own bard! I dwell by that still shore
Whither thine exiled gods thou broughtest—where of yore
Thou pour'dst thy plaints in life, and left thine ashes dying;
With deathless, fruitless tears these places glorifying.

* * * * *

Here, with a northern lyre the wilderness awaking,
I wander'd in those days, when liberty was breaking—
Roused by the gallant Greek—her sleep, by Danube's tide;
And not one friend would stand, a brother, by my side;
And the far hills alone, and woods in silence dreaming,
And the calm muses then would list with kindly seeming."

The influence exerted upon our poet's mind and productions by the Byronian spirit, to which we alluded a few pages back, may

be traced, in very perceptible degree, in the next poem which he gave to the public, "The Fountain of Bakhtchisarái," a work in which is reflected, as vividly as it is in the storied waters of the fount from which it takes its name, all the wealth, the profuse and abounding loveliness, of the luxurious clime of the Tauric Chersonese. The scene of the poem is one of the most romantic spots in that divine land; and the ruined palace and "gardens of delight" which once made the joy and pride of the mighty khans—the rulers of the Golden Horde—is perhaps not inferior, as a source of wild legend and picturesque fairy lore—certainly not inferior in the eyes of a Russian reader—to the painted halls and fretted colonnades of the Alhambra. The success instantly obtained and permanently enjoyed by this exquisite poem must be attributed to something more than the profusion and beauty of the descriptive passages, so thickly and artfully interwoven with the action of the tale—a species of wealth and profusion, it may be remarked, which suits well with the oriental character of the story, and with the abounding loveliness of the scenery amid which that action is supposed to take place. In this poem, too, we may remark the first decided essay made by the poet towards delineating and contrasting, in an artistic manner, the characters of human personages. The dramatic opposition between the two principal characters of the tale, Maria and Zarema, is well conceived and most skilfully executed. This poem first appeared in 1824, and was reprinted in 1827, 1830, 1835. The powers of dramatic delineation which may be seen, as it were, in embryo

in this work, were to be still further developed in Púshkin's next production, which was begun in the same year, (1824,) and appeared in 1827. Those powers, too, were destined to be exhibited in their full splendour in a historical tragedy—perhaps the finest which the Russian literature can be said to possess. The work to which we have alluded as being the second trial of his wings in the arduous regions of dramatic creation, was the short but exquisite tale entitled "The Gipsies." This tale, which is esteemed by the Russians a masterpiece of grace and simplicity, is a poem in dialogue; the persons being only four in number, and the action a wild yet simple catastrophe of love, jealousy, and revenge. The *dramatis personæ* are gipsies; and it is difficult to select what is most admirable in this exquisite little work—the completeness and distinctness of the descriptions of external nature—the artful introduction of various allusions, (particularly in one most charming passage, indicating Ovid's exile in the beautiful country which is the scene of the drama,) or the intense interest which the poet has known how to infuse into what would appear at first sight a subject simple even to meagreness. Poets of many nations have endeavoured, with various qualifications, and with no less various degrees of success, to represent the picturesque and striking features of the nomad life and wild superstitions of the gipsy race: none however, it may be safely asserted, have ever produced a picture more true or more poetical than is to be found in the production of Púshkin. He had ample opportunities of studying their peculiar manners in the green

oceans of the southern steppes. It is at this period that Púshkin began the composition of his poem entitled "Evgénii Oniégin," a production which has become, it may be said, part of the ordinary language of the poet's countrymen. The first canto appeared in 1825, 1829. This work, in its outline, its plan, in the general tone of thought pervading it, and in certain other *external* circumstances, bears a kind of fallacious resemblance to the inimitable production of Lord Byron; a circumstance which leads superficial readers into the error (unjust in the highest degree to Púshkin's originality) of considering it as an imitation of the Don. It is a species of satire upon society, (and Russian fashionable society in particular,) embodied in an easy wandering verse something like that of Byron; and so far, perhaps, the comparison between the two poems holds good. Púshkin's *plot* has the advantage of being (though sufficiently slight in construction, it must be confessed) considerably more compact and interesting than the irregular narration which serves Byron to string together the bitter beads of his satirical rosary; but, at the same time, the aim and scope of the English satirist is infinitely more vast and comprehensive. The Russian has also none of the terrible and deeply-thrilling pictures of passion and of war which so strangely and powerfully contrast with the bitter sneer and gay irony forming the basis of the Don; but, on the other hand, the interest of the reader (scattered, in Byron's work, upon the various, unconnected, and somewhat monotonous outlines of female characters in Julia, Haidée, Gulbeyas, &c.,)

is in "Evgénii Oniégin" most powerfully concentrated upon the heroine, Tatiana—one of the most exquisite tributes that poetry has ever paid to the nobility of woman. To show the difficulty of judging of this work, we need only mention, that while many compare it to "Don Juan," others consider it as rather resembling "Childe Harold;" while the author himself professed that it was rather to be placed in the category of "Beppo."

On leaving Odessa, (in 1824,) Púshkin, who appears to have loved the sea with all the fervour of Shelley himself, bade farewell to the waves with which he had communed so earnestly, and whose deep voices his verse so nobly echoed, in some grand stanzas "To the Sea," of which a translation will be given in a subsequent part.

It is to this epoch that we must ascribe the first outline of the historical tragedy to which we have alluded; but which did not appear till a much later period. We shall recur to this work when we reach the date of its completion.

As the composition of "Evgénii Oniégin" extended over a considerable space of time, our readers may not be displeas'd at our reverting occasionally to the progress of this work and to the character of its merits. This production must be considered as the fullest and most complete embodiment that exists in Russian literature, of the nationality of the country. It will be found to be the expression of those apparently discordant elements the union of which composes that hard riddle—the Russian character. A passage of Púshkin's dedication will not incorrectly exhibit the

variety of its tone:—

"Accept this heap of motley traits,
Half gay, half sad, half false, half real,
Half every-day, yet half ideal,
The careless fruit of idle days,
Of sleepless nights; slight inspirations
Of unripe years, of wasted art—
The reason's frigid observations,
And sad conclusions of the heart."

During the most tranquil and laborious portion of Púshkin's life, which passed principally at Mikháilovskoë, and which occupies the period from his leaving Odessa at the end of the year 1824 to 1826, he continued to labour upon his tragedy, and to produce the second and third cantos of "Evgénii Oniégin," in addition to which, our indefatigable poet found means to collect and publish a number of smaller poems, some of which will be found among the translations which we are about to offer; and to aid his friend and brother-poet Délvig in an annual volume of prose and verse (illustrated after the manner of our Keepsakes, &c.) entitled "Northern Flowers." This publication was commenced in 1826, and continued to appear, always enriched with something by Púshkin, till its existence closed at the early and lamented death of the projector and editor.

Púshkin's life at this period was characterized by intense industry, and an uniformity of exertion modified and

compensated by variety of occupation. He has left a minute description of the manner in which his time was distributed between labour and repose; and even if we did not possess his letters, it is described with sufficient accuracy in the fourth canto of "Evgénii Oniégin," to enable us to transcribe it here. He was in the habit of rising early, and of devoting the morning and forenoon to those parts of his literary occupation which demanded the exercise of the intellectual or reasoning powers, the memory, &c. &c. Before dinner (whatever was the state of the weather) he took somewhat violent walking exercise; he then dined, (it should be remarked that the dinner-hour is earlier in Russia than is usual in England,) and having passed the evening in society either at home or at some neighbouring country-house, he returned to his poetical labours, which he sometimes continued far into the night.¹ He has frequently repeated that he found himself more perfectly disposed to composition in the season of autumn; and that his poetical vein flowed most generously and abundantly on a dark and stormy night. To those who are acquainted with the climate of Russia (particularly of that part of the Empire where Púshkin now resided) this will not be surprising; and the abundance and splendour of the descriptions of the autumnal season introduced into his various

¹ His fondness for books was absolutely insatiable; he was supplied with all the new publications as fast as they appeared; and he would devote the last money in his purse to this purpose. His extravagance in this article of expense he excused by comparing himself to the glazier, whose trade renders it necessary for him to purchase a diamond, an article which a rich man will frequently abstain from buying.

works, will show that his mind and imagination had something in harmony with that which is, in our opinion, the most poetical portion of the year. Like many persons of a highly nervous organization, the brilliant sunshine of spring-tide produced in Púshkin's temperament an impression of melancholy, which he explained by a natural tendency to consumption.

In autumn 1826, Púshkin re-entered the government service in his original department, viz., that of the foreign affairs; and in 1827 he printed, besides the third canto of "Evgénii Oniégin," the "Gypsies," a new poem of inferior merit entitled the "Robber-Brothers," and a comic tale, also in verse, which, though slight in construction, is a masterpiece of graceful and elegant satire. It is entitled "Count Nulin," and describes the signal discomfiture of certain designs meditated by the count (a most delightful specimen of a young Russian coxcomb) against the virtue of his hostess, a fair *châtelaine*, at whose country-house the said count passes a night in consequence of a disabled travelling-carriage.

To this period, too, must be assigned the composition of "Poltáva," a work, the proper title of which would be "Mazépa," but which received its name in order that the public might not confound it with Byron's tale, the hero of both being the same historical personage. It is almost unnecessary to state that there is no resemblance whatever between these two remarkable works. While the production of Byron is rather an admirable development of certain incidents, either entirely invented by the poet, or only slightly suggested by passages of the old Kazak

Hetman's biography, the *Mazépa* of Púshkin is a most spirited and faithful version of the real history of the romantic life of the hero; the actual events adopted by the Russian poet as the groundwork of his tale, being certainly not inferior in strangeness, novelty, and romantic incident, to the short fiery tale, dawning rosily in mutual love, and finishing with the wild gallop on the desert steed, which thrills us so deeply in the pages of Byron.

In 1829 was given to the world an edition of Púshkin's collected works, arranged in chronological order; and the author had another opportunity of visiting the East—those climes whence he had drawn, and was to draw again, so much of his inspiration. He once more crossed the Caucasus, and leaving in his rear his beloved Georgia, he followed the movements of the Russian army in its campaign, and accompanied it as far as Arzerám, receiving, during this journey, the most flattering attentions from Marshal Paskévitch, the commander-in-chief of the expedition. We may judge of the delight with which he seized this opportunity of indulging his taste for travelling, and of the vast store of recollections and images which he garnered up during this pilgrimage—so peculiarly attractive to a poet, as combining the pleasure of travelling with the splendour and picturesque novelties of a military march—by the letters in which he has described his impressions during this interesting period. These letters are models of simplicity, grace, and interest, and have become classical in the Russian language.

In 1830, Baron Délvig commenced the publication of the *Literary Gazette*, an undertaking in which Púshkin took as active and zealous an interest as he had done in the *Northern Flowers*, edited by his friend and schoolfellow. He not only contributed many beautiful poems to this periodical, but also several striking prose tales and other papers, in which, by the elegance and brilliancy of the style, and the acuteness and originality of the thoughts, the public found no difficulty in identifying Púshkin, though they appeared anonymously. He now visited Moscow, in order to superintend the printing of his *Bóris Godunóff*, the tragedy which he had been so long engaged in polishing and completing, and respecting the success of which he appears to have been more anxious than usual, as he determined to write himself the preface to this work. The subject of this tragedy is the well-known episode of Russian history which placed Boris upon the throne of the Tsar; and writers have taken various views of the character of the hero of this scene, Púshkin representing Boris as the assassin of the son of Ivan IV., while the ancient chroniclers, and the modern historians in general, as Ustriáloff, Pogódin, Kraévskii, &c. &c., concur in asserting that that prince was elected by the clergy and the people. Whatever may be the historical truth of the design, Púshkin has given us in this tragedy a dramatic picture full of spirit, of passion, of character, and of life; and some of the personages, particularly those of the pretender Dimítri, and the heroine Marina, are sketched with a vigorous and flowing pencil. The *form* of this play is ostensibly

Shakspearian; but it appears to us to resemble less the works of Shakspeare himself, than some of the more successful imitations of the great dramatist's manner—as, for instance, some parts of the *Wallenstein*. As to the language and versification, it is in blank verse, and the style is considered by Russians as admirable for ease and flexibility. At this time Púshkin's life was about to undergo a great change; he was engaged to a young lady whom he afterwards married, and retired, in the spring of this year, to the village of Boldino, in the province of Nijegorod, in order to make preparations for his new existence as a married man, and in this spot he remained, in consequence of the cholera breaking out in Moscow, until the winter. In spite of the engrossing nature of these occupations, he seems never to have been more industriously employed than during this autumn. "I must tell you," he writes, "(but between you and me!) that I have been working at Boldino as I have not done for a long time. Listen then! I brought with me hither the two last cantos of 'Oniégin,' ready for the press, a tale in octaves, (the *Little House in the Kolomora*,) number of dramatic scenes—"The Stingy Knight," "Mozart and Salieri," "The Feast in the Time of the Plague," and "Don Juan." Besides this, I have written about thirty small pieces of poetry. I have not done yet; I have written in prose (this is a great secret) five tales," (Ivan Biélkin's *Stories*.) The year 1831 began afflictingly for Púshkin. On the 14th of January Baron Délvig died. All Púshkin's letters in which he makes any allusion to this loss, breathe a sentiment of the most deep and permanent

sorrow. The following is extracted from a letter to a friend, dated the 31st of this month:—"I knew him (Délvig) at the Lyceum. I watched the first unnoted unfolding of his poetic mind—the early development of a talent which we then gave not its just value. We read together Deljávín and Jukóvskii; we talked of all *that swelleth the spirit, that melteth the heart*. His life was rich and full—rich, not in romantic adventures, but in the most noble feelings, the most brilliant and the purest intellect, and the fairest hopes."

But the grief caused by this great and irreparable loss—a grief which threw its dark cold shadow over the whole of Púshkin's subsequent existence—was not unrelieved by feelings of a brighter tone: the void caused by friendship was filled up with love. In February of this year he was married, at Moscow, to the lady to whom (as we have mentioned above) he had been some time engaged. Mlle. Gontcháreff was of an ancient Russian family, and a person of singular beauty. "I am married," (writes the poet to one of his friends, in a letter dated February 24.) "I have now but one desire in the world, and that is, that nothing in my present life be changed. This existence is so new to me, that I feel as if I had been born again. The death of Délvig is the only shadow in my bright existence." Púshkin was desirous of editing a volume of the "Northern Flowers," in the following year, for the benefit of the family of his departed friend, for which he now began assiduously to collect materials. This labour detained him until the month of May in Moscow; and, before his migration

to St Petersburg, the tragedy of Bóris Godunóff was printed. Among all the works of Púshkin there is not one which exhibits so high a degree of artistic skill, or so vigorous and powerful a genius, as this drama, in which every word, every dialogue, seems to unite the certainty of study and meditation with the fire and naturalness of a happy improvisation, and in which there is not a character nor an allusion which destroys the truth and vigour of the composition, viewed as a faithful mirror of Russian nationality, Russian history, and Russian character. The remainder of Púshkin's short, alas! but laborious life, however filled with the silent activity of intellectual occupation, offers but few materials for the biographer: it was passed principally at St Petersburg, varied by occasional journeys to Moscow, and the usual *autumnal* retirements, which we have mentioned as having been so favourable for the execution of the poet's literary tasks. We shall content ourselves with giving a slight account of the principal works in which Púshkin employed his great powers—powers which had now reached their highest point of vigour, retaining all the freshness and vivacity of youth, while they had acquired the maturity and solidity of manhood. The subjects of these works, however, being for the most part historical, are of a nature which renders them less susceptible of analysis in our pages—and indeed their local nature would cause such analysis to be devoid, in a great measure, of interest to the English reader. There is, however, one episode in the poet's life, which must possess peculiar interest to those who delight

to watch that fond fidelity with which genius returns to the scenes where it was first developed, and which brought back Shakspeare, loaded with glory, to pass the calm evening of his life amid the native shades of Stratford. On quitting Moscow for St Petersburg, Púshkin passed a winter at Tsárskoë Seló. "This was a most blessed thought," he says, in a letter of 26th March; "I can thus pass my summer and *autumn* in a most enchanting and inspiring seclusion; close to the capital, in the circle of my dearest recollections. I shall be able to see you every week, and Jukóvskii also. Petersburg is within an hour's drive. Living is cheap here. I shall not want an equipage. What can be better?" And, in fact, it is certain that he never was so perfectly happy in his society and his occupations, and in himself, as in these summer and autumn months which he passed, as he says:—

"In those bright days when yet all ignorant of fame,
And knowing neither care, system, nor art, nor aim,
Thy tutelary shades, O Tsárskoë! were flinging
Gay echoes to *his* voice, the praise of Idlesse singing."

The beautiful retirement of Tsárskoë Seló was at this period dignified by the presence of two great poets, each producing works worthy of the imperial groves under whose shade they were meditated. Púshkin and Jukóvskii were not only residing here together, but they were engaged in a friendly rivalry, and each writing so industriously as though determined never to meet without some new poetic novelty. The deep impression produced

by Jukóvskii's patriotic stanzas, written at this period, entitled "Russian Glory," was worthily responded to by the noble poems written by Púshkin, "To the Slanderers of Russia!" and "The Anniversary of Borodino,"—all these works being spirited and majestic embodiments of national triumph and exultation.

It is curious and delightful to remark, too, that the poets of Tsárskoë Seló were occupied, at this period, with the composition of two similar works of another and no less national character. These were "tales" or legends in the popular taste of the Russian people, that of Jukóvskii was entitled "The Lay of the Tsar Berendéi," and Púshkin's, "The Lay of the Tsar Saltán."

In this year, too, was printed Púshkin's small collection of prose tales, under the assumed name of Ivan Biélkin, which appeared with a biographical preface, describing the life and character of the supposed author. The tales are of extraordinary merit, remarkable for the simplicity and natural grace of the style, and the preface is a specimen of consummate excellence in point of quiet Addisonian humour.

In the year 1831, Púshkin girded up his loins to enter upon the great historical task; which had so long attracted his imagination, and which, difficult and arduous as was the undertaking, he was probably better calculated than any literary man whom Russia has yet seen, to execute in a manner worthy of the sublime nature of its subject. This was the history of Peter the Great. He now began to set seriously about preparing himself for approaching this gigantic subject, and passed the greater part of his time in the

archives, collecting the necessary materials for the work. In his hours of relaxation he produced the third volume of his smaller poems, and superintended the publication of another volume of the "Northern Flowers," which appeared in 1832. But these must be considered as the results rather of his play-moments, than as the serious occupation of his time. His mornings were generally passed among the records preserved in the various departments of the government, from whence, after the labours and researches of the day, he usually returned on foot to his late dinner. He was an active and indefatigable walker, prizing highly, and endeavouring to preserve by constant exercise, the vigorous frame of body with which he was blessed by nature. Even in summer he was accustomed to return on foot from his country residence to his labours in the city, and was in the habit of taking violent corporeal exercise in gymnastics, which he would continue with the patience and enduring vigour of an athlete. These walks (it should be remarked that a taste for walking is much more rare among the Russians than in England, from the severity and extreme changes in the climate of the North, the heat in summer rendering such exercise much more laborious than with us, and the cold in winter necessitating the use of the heavy shubá of fur)—these walks were Púshkin's principal amusement, if we except bathing, an exercise which the poet would frequently continue far into autumn—a season when the weather in Russia is frequently very severe.

In the prosecution of his great historical labour, it was

evidently difficult for the lively imagination of Púshkin to escape the temptation of being drawn aside from his chief aim, by the attractive and romantic character of many episodes in Russian history—to wander for a moment from the somewhat formal and arid high-road of history, into some of the "shady spaces," peopled with romantic adventure and picturesque incident. It was under the influence of some such attraction, that he conceived the idea of working out in a separate production, the detached epoch rendered so remarkable by the rebellion of Pugatchéff. Finding that he had already performed the most serious portion of the drudgery of collecting materials for his principal historical enterprise, he drew, with a wonderfully rapid and lively pencil, the vigorous sketch of the events of that extraordinary conspiracy, and has left us a work which, whatever be its imperfections and slightness, viewed as a work of history, cannot be denied to be a most admirable and striking outline of the picturesque and singular events which form its subject. Convinced of the importance, to an author of history, of a personal knowledge of the scenes in which his events took place, Púshkin, when the history of Pugatchéff's rebellion was already on the verge of completion, determined (before his work was published) to examine with his own eyes that eastern region of European Russia, which had been the theatre of the strange drama of that singular pretender's life, and to enable himself to infuse into a narration founded upon dry records, the life and reality which was to be obtained from questioning the old

inhabitants of that country, many of whom might remember the wild adventures of which, in their youth, they had been witnesses or actors. In 1833, Púshkin was enabled to gratify this natural curiosity; and the result of his visit to the scene of the rebellion enabled him to communicate to his already plain, vigorous, and concise narration, a tone of reality, a warmth of colouring, and a liveliness of language, which renders it impossible to leave the book unfinished when once opened, and which no elaborateness of research, and no minuteness of detail, could otherwise have communicated.

During the first two years of its existence, the periodical entitled "The Reading Library" was honoured by the appearance in its pages of that division of Púshkin's smaller poems, afterwards published separately as the fourth volume of his collected works, in the year 1835. In this journal, too, were printed his two prose tales "The Queen of Spades" and "Kirdjáli," the former of which has, we believe, appeared in English, and of the latter a translation has been attempted, together with several others of his smaller prose works, by the author of the present notice. A journey which he made to Orenburg gave him the materials for fresh prose tales. The most remarkable of these, the beautiful and well-known story, "The Captain's Daughter," first appeared in the periodical entitled "The Contemporary," which is justly considered as the chief miscellaneous journal that appears in Russia, and which partakes of the nature of what we in England call the review and magazine.

In all his writing, prose or verse, Púshkin is most astonishingly unaffected, rational, and straightforward; but in the last-named story he has attained the highest degree of perfection—it is the simplicity of nature herself.

This period must be considered as that in which Púshkin had arrived at the summit of his glory. He was now enjoying the universal respect and admiration of his countrymen, a respect and admiration shared by the sovereign himself, who distinguished the great poet by naming him "gentilhomme de la chambre;" he was in the very flower of health, life, and genius; he had completed the laborious part of his great task, in collecting materials for the history of Peter the Great—all seemed to prophesy a future filled with bright certainties of happiness and glory.

But the end was not far off; the dark and melancholy event which was to put a sudden and a fatal conclusion to this glorious and useful career was near at hand. The storm which was to quench this bright and shining light was already rising dimly above the horizon; and the poet's prophetic eye foresaw—like that of the seer in the Scripture—the "little cloud like a man's hand," that was rising heavily over the calm sky; he seems to have had an obscure presentiment of the near approach of death, little suspecting, perhaps, that that death was to be one of violence, of suffering, and of blood. He had, a few months before, lost his mother, and had himself accompanied her last remains to the monastery of Sviatogórsk, and had fixed upon a spot where he

wished to be buried by her side; leaving for this purpose a sum of money in the treasury of the monastery.

It is, we believe, generally known, even in England, that Púshkin was mortally wounded in a duel, on Wednesday 27th January, and that he died, after lingering in excruciating² torment during two days and nights, at half-past two in the afternoon of the 29th of January 1837.

Respecting the causes which led to this melancholy conclusion of a great man's life, and the details which accompanied that sad and deplorable event, it is not our intention to speak. Under any circumstances, to dwell upon so lamentable an affair would serve no good purpose; and would rather minister to a morbid curiosity in our readers, than in any respect illustrate the life and character of Púshkin; but the propriety of avoiding more than an allusion to this sad story will be evident, when we reflect that the poet's dying wish was, that the whole circumstance should if possible be buried in oblivion. Respect, then, to the last desire of a dying man! Respect to the prayer of great genius, whose lips, when quivering in the last agony, murmured the generous words, "Pardon, and Forget!"

The foregoing brief notice is presented to the English reader

² The last hours of Púshkin have been minutely and eloquently described by the most distinguished of his friends and brother poets, Jukóvskii, in a letter addressed to Púshkin's father. As this letter contains one of the most touching and beautiful pictures of a great man's death-bed, and as it does equal honour to the author and its subject, we append a translation of it. It is undoubtedly one of the most singular documents in the whole range of literature.—T. B. S.

less in the character of a complete biography of Púshkin, (a character to which it has evidently no pretensions,) than as a kind of necessary introduction to the translated specimens of his poetry, which it is intended to accompany. For a perfect biography, indeed, of the poet, the materials, even in Russia, are not yet assembled; nor, perhaps, has a sufficient period of time been suffered to elapse since his death, to render it possible to attempt a life of Púshkin, with any hope of preserving that *distance* and *proportion*, which is necessary for the successful execution of a portrait, whether traced with the pencil or the pen. The artist may be too near to his original in *time* as well as in *space*.

The general accuracy of the preceding pages may be depended on; the materials were obtained from various sources, but principally from two persons who were both acquainted—one intimately so—with Púshkin. We should be indeed ungrateful, were we to let pass the present opportunity afforded us, of expressing our deep obligations to both those gentlemen for the assistance they have given us; and we cannot deny ourselves the gratification of publicly and particularly thanking M. Pletniéff, rector of the Imperial University of St Petersburg, not only for the kind manner in which he facilitated the composition of these pages, by supplying us with a copy of his own elegant and spirited critical sketch of Púshkin's works and character (a short but masterly article, reprinted from the "Sovreménnik," or Contemporary, a literary journal of which M. Pletniéff is the

editor,) but for the many delightful and intellectual hours which we have passed in his society.

Thomas B. Shaw.

St Petersburg, February 5th/17th, 1845.

THE LAST HOURS OF PÚSHKIN

Letter from Jukóvskii to Sergei Púshkin, the Poet's Father

February 15th/27th, 1837.

I have not till now succeeded in mustering up the courage to write to you, my poor friend, Sergei Lvóvitch. What could I say to you, overwhelmed as I am by the national calamity which has just fallen upon us all, like an avalanche, and crushed us beneath its ruin? Our Púshkin is no more! This terrible fact is unhappily true, but nevertheless it still appears almost incredible. The thought, that he is gone, cannot yet enter into the order of common, evident, every-day ideas; one still continues, by mechanical habit as it were, to seek him; it still seems so natural to expect to see him at certain hours; still amid our conversations seems to resound his voice, still seems to ring his lively childlike laugh of gaiety; and there, where he was wont to be seen in daily life, there nothing is changed, there are hardly even any marks of the melancholy loss we have undergone—all is in its common order, every thing is in its place; but he is gone from us, and for ever. It is hardly conceivable! In one moment has perished that strong and mighty life, full of genius, and glowing with hope. I will not

speak of you, his feeble and unhappy father; I will not speak of us, his mourning friends. Russia has lost her beloved, her national poet. She has lost him at the very moment when his powers had reached their maturity, lost him when he had reached that climacteric—that point at which our intellect, bidding farewell to the fervid, and sometimes irregular force of youth agitated by genius, devotes itself to more tranquil, more orderly powers of riper manhood, fresh as the first period, and if less tempestuous, yet certainly more creative. What Russian is there who does not feel as if the death of Púshkin had torn away one of his very heart-strings? The glory of the present reign has lost its poet—a poet who belonged to it, as Derjávín belonged to the glory of Catharine, or Karamzín to that of Alexander.

The first terrible moments of agony and bereavement are over for you; you can now listen to me and weep. I will describe to you every detail of your son's last hours—details which I either saw myself, or which were related to me by other eyewitnesses. On Wednesday the 27th January/8th February, at ten o'clock in the evening, I called at the house of the Prince Viázemskii, where I was told that both he and the princess were at Púshkin's, and Valúeff, to whom I afterwards went, addressed me on my entrance with the words:—"Have you not received the Princess's note? They have sent for you long ago; hurry off to Púshkin's: he is dying." Thunderstruck with this news, I rushed down-stairs. I galloped off to Púshkin's. In his antechamber, before the door of his study, I found Drs Arendt and Spásskii, Prince Viázemskii

and Prince Mestchérskii. To the question, "*How is he?*"—Arendt answered me, "He is very bad; he will infallibly die." The following was the account they gave me of what had happened: At six o'clock, after dinner, Púshkin had been brought home in the same desperate condition by Lieutenant-Colonel Danzás, his schoolfellow at the Lyceum. A footman had taken him out of the carriage, and carried him in his arms up-stairs. "*Does it hurt you to carry me?*" asked Púshkin of the man. They carried him into his study; he himself told them to give him clean linen; he changed his dress, and lay down on a sofa. At the moment when they were helping him to lie down, his wife, who knew nothing of what had happened, was about to come into the room; but he cried out in a loud tone—"N'entrez pas; il y a du monde chez moi." He was afraid of frightening her. His wife, however, had already entered by the time that he was laid down completely dressed. They sent for the doctors. Arendt was not at home, but Scholtz and Zadler came. Púshkin ordered everybody to leave the room, (at this moment Danzás and Pletniéff were with him.) "*I am very bad,*" he said, as he shook hands with Scholtz. They examined his wound, and Zadler went away to fetch the needful instruments. Left alone with Scholtz, Púshkin enquired, "*What do you think of my state—speak plainly?*" "I cannot conceal from you the fact, that you are in danger." "*Say rather, I am dying.*" "I hold it my duty not to conceal from you that such is the case. But we will hear the opinion of Arendt and Salomon, who are sent for." "*Je vous remercie, vous avez agi en honnête homme envers*

moi," said Púshkin. Then, after a moment's silence, he rubbed his forehead with his hand, and added, "*Il faut que j'arrange ma maison.*" "Would you not like to see any of your relations?" asked Scholtz. "*Farewell, my friends!*" cried Púshkin, turning his eyes towards his library. To whom he bade adieu in these words, whether it was to his living or his dead friends, I know not. After waiting a few moments, he asked, "*Then do you think that I shall not live through the hour?*" "Oh no! I merely supposed that it might be agreeable to you to see some of your friends—M. Pletniéff is here." "*Yes, but I should like to see Jukóvskii too. Give me some water, I feel sick.*" Scholtz felt his pulse, and found that the hand was cold, and the pulse weak and quick; he left the room for some drink, and they sent for me. I was not at home at this moment, and I know not how it happened, but none of their messengers ever reached me. In the meanwhile Zadler and Salomon arrived. Scholtz left the patient, who affectionately shook hands with him, but without speaking a single word. Soon after Arendt made his appearance. He was convinced at the first glance that there was not the slightest hope. They began to apply cold fomentations with ice to the patient's stomach, and to give cooling drinks; a treatment which soon produced the desired effect; he grew more tranquil. Before Arendt's departure, he said to him, "*Beg the Emperor to pardon me.*" Arendt now departed, leaving him to the care of Spásskii, the family physician, who, during that whole night, never quitted the bedside. "*I am very bad*," said Púshkin, when Spásskii came into the room. Spásskii

endeavoured to tranquillize him; but Púshkin waved his hand in a negative manner. From this moment he seemed to have ceased to entertain any anxiety about himself; and all his thoughts were now turned towards his wife. "*Do not give my wife any useless hope;*" he said to Spásskii; "*do not conceal from her what is the matter, she is no pretender to sentiment; you know her well. As for me, do as you please with me; I consent to every thing, and I am ready for every thing.*" At this moment were already assembled the Princess Viázemskii, the Prince, Turgénieff, the Count Vielhórskaa, and myself. The princess was with the poor wife, whose condition it is impossible to describe. She from time to time stole, like a ghost, into the room where lay her dying husband; he could not see her, (he was lying on a sofa, with his face turned from the window and the door;) but every time that she entered, or even stopped at the door, he felt her presence. "*My wife is here—is she not?*" he said. "*Take her away.*" He was afraid to admit her, because he did not wish her to perceive the sufferings which he overmastered with astonishing courage. "*What is my wife doing?*" he once enquired of Spásskii. "*Poor thing! she suffers innocently. The world will tear her to pieces.*" In general, from the beginning to the end of his sufferings, (except during two or three hours of the first night, when they exceeded all measure of human endurance,) he was astonishingly firm. "I have been in thirty battles," said Dr Arendt; "I have seen numbers of dying men; but I have very seldom seen any thing like this." And it is peculiarly remarkable that, during these last hours of

his life, he seemed, as it were, to have become another person; the tempest, which a few hours back had agitated his soul with uncontrollable passion, was gone, and left not a trace behind; not a word, not a recollection of what had happened. On the previous day he had received an invitation to the funeral of Gretch's son. He remembered this amid his own sufferings. "*If you see Gretch,*" said he to Spásskii, "*give him my compliments, and say that I feel a heartfelt sympathy in his loss.*" He was asked, whether he did not desire to confess and take the sacrament. He willingly consented, and it was determined that the priest should be sent for in the morning. At midnight Dr Arendt returned. Whatever was the subject of the conversation, it was evident that what the dying man had heard from the physician tranquillized, consoled, and fortified him. Fulfilling a desire (of which he was already, aware) on the part of those who had expressed a touching anxiety respecting his eternal welfare, he confessed and took the holy sacrament. Down to five o'clock in the morning, there had not taken place the slightest change in his condition. But about five o'clock the pain in the abdomen became intolerable, and its force mastered the strength of his soul: he began to groan; they again sent for Arendt. At his arrival it was found necessary to administer a clyster; but it did no good, and only seemed to increase the patient's sufferings, which at length reached the highest pitch, and continued till seven o'clock in the morning. What would have been the feelings of his unhappy wife, if she had been able, during the space of these two eternal hours, to

hear his groans? I am confident that her reason could not have borne this agonizing trial. But this is what happened: she was lying, in a state of complete exhaustion, in the drawing-room, close to the doors which were all that separated her from her husband's bed. At the first dreadful cry he uttered, the Princess Viázemskii, who was in the drawing-room with her, darted to her side, dreading that something might happen. But she still lay immovable, (although she had been speaking a moment before,) a heavy lethargic slumber had overcome her, and this slumber, as if purposely sent down in mercy from above, lasted till the very minute when the last groan rang on the other side of the door. But in this moment of most cruel agony, according to the account of Spásskii and Arendt, the dying man's firmness of soul was shown in all its force: when on the point of screaming out, he with violent effort merely groaned, fearing, as he said himself, that his wife might hear it, and that she might be frightened. At seven o'clock the pain grew milder. It is necessary to remark, that during all this time, and even to the end of his sufferings, his thoughts were perfectly rational, and his memory clear. Even at the beginning of the terrible attack of pain, he had called Spásskii to his bedside, ordered him to hand him a paper written with his own hand, and made him burn it. He then called in Danzás, and dictated to him a statement respecting a few debts which he had incurred. This task, however, only exhausted him, and afterwards he was unable to make any other dispositions. When, at the arrival of morning, his intolerable suffering ceased, he

said to Spásskii, "*My wife! call my wife!*" This farewell moment I dare not attempt to describe to you. He then asked for his children; they were asleep; but they went for them, and brought them half asleep as they were. He bent his eyes in silence upon each of them, laid his hand on their heads, made a sign of the cross over them, and then, with a gesture of the hand, sent them away. "*Who is there?*" he enquired of Spásskii and Danzás. They named me and Viázemskii. "*Call them in!*" said he in a feeble voice. I entered, took the cold hand which he held out to me, kissed it. I could not speak; he waved his hand, I retired; but he called me back. "*Tell the Emperor,*" he said, "*that I am sorry to die; I would have been wholly his. Tell him that I wish him a long, long reign; that I wish him happiness in his son, happiness in his Russia.*" These words he spoke feebly, interruptedly, but distinctly. He then bade farewell to Viázemskii. At this moment arrived the Count Vielhórskii, and went into his room; and he was thus the last person who pressed his hand in life. It was evident that he was hastening to his last earthly account, and listening, as it were, for the footstep of approaching death. Feeling his own pulse, he said to Spásskii, "*Death is coming.*" When Turgéniëff went up to him, he looked at him twice very earnestly, squeezed his hand, seemed as though he desired to say something, but waved his hand, and uttered the word "*Karamzín!*" Mademoiselle Karamzín was not in the house; but they instantly sent for her, and she arrived almost immediately. Their interview only lasted a moment; but when Katerína Andréevna was about to leave the

bedside, he called her and said, "*Sign me with the cross,*" and then kissed her hand. In the mean time, a dose of opium which had been given eased him a little; and they began to apply to his stomach emollient fomentations instead of the cold effusions. This was a relief to the sufferer; and he began, without a word of resistance, to perform the prescriptions of the doctors, which he had previously refused obstinately to do, being terrified by the idea of prolonging his tortures, and ardently desiring death to terminate them. But he now became as obedient as a child; he himself applied the compresses to his stomach, and assisted those who were busied around him. In short, he was now apparently a great deal better. In this state he was found by Dr Dahl, who came to him at two o'clock. "*I am in a bad way, my dear fellow,*" said Púshkin, with a smile, to Dahl. But Dahl, who actually entertained more hopes than the other physicians, answered him, "We all hope; so you must not despair either." "*No,*" he cried; "*I cannot live; I shall die. It seems that it must be so.*" At this moment, his pulse was fuller and steadier. A slight general fever began to show itself. They put on some leeches: the pulse grew more even, slower, and considerably lighter. "I caught," says Dahl, "like a drowning man at a straw. With a firm voice, I pronounced the word *hope*; and was about to deceive both myself and others." Púshkin, observing that Dahl was growing more sanguine, took him by the hand, and said—"There is nobody there?" "No one." "*Dahl, tell me the truth, shall I die soon?*" "We have hopes of you, Púshkin—really, we have hopes." "*Well,*

thank you!" he replied. As far as it appears, he had only once flattered himself with the consolation of hope: neither before nor after this moment did he feel any trust in it. Almost the whole night (that is, of the 29th, during the whole of which Dahl sate by the bedside, and I, Viázemskii, and Vielhórskii, in the next room,) he held Dahl's hand. He often would take a spoonful of water, or little lump of ice, into his mouth, doing every thing himself: taking the tumbler from a shelf within reach, rubbing his temples with ice, applying himself the fomentations to his stomach, changing them himself, &c. He suffered less from pain than from an excessive feeling of depression. "*Ah! what depression!*" he several times exclaimed, throwing his hands backward above his head; "*it makes my heart die within me!*" He then begged them to lift him up, or to turn him on his side, or to arrange his pillow; and, without letting them finish to do so, would stop them generally with the words—"*There! so, so—very well; so it is very well; well enough; now it is quite right;*" or, "*Stop—never mind—only pull my arm a little—so! now it is very well—excellent!*"—(these are all his exact expressions.) "In general," says Dahl, "with respect to my treatment, he was as manageable and obedient as a child, and did every thing I wished." Once he inquired of Dahl, "*Who is with my wife?*" Dahl answered, "Many good people feel a sympathy with you; the drawing-room and the antechamber are full from morning to night." "*Oh, thank you,*" he replied; "*only go and tell my wife that all is going on well, thank God! or else they will talk all sorts of nonsense to her*

there, I suppose." Dahl did not deceive him. From the morning of the 28th, when the news that Púshkin was dying had flown through the whole town, his antechamber had been incessantly crowded with visitors; some enquiring after him by messengers, others—and people of all conditions, whether acquainted with him or not—coming themselves. The feeling of a national, an universal affliction, was never more touchingly expressed than by this proceeding. The number of visitors became at last so immense, that the entrance-door (which was close to the study where the dying man lay) was incessantly opening and shutting; this disturbed the sufferer, and we imagined the expedient of closing that door, by placing against it a chest from the hall, and instead of it opening another little door which led from the stair-case into the pantry, and partitioning off with screens the dining-room from the drawing-room, where his wife was. From this moment, the pantry was unceasingly thronged with people; none but acquaintances were admitted into the dining-room. On the faces of all these visitors was expressed a most heartfelt sympathy; very many of them wept. So strong a testimony of general affliction touched me deeply. In Russians, to whom is so dear their national glory, it was not to be wondered at; but the sympathy of foreigners was to me as gratifying as it was unlooked for. We were losing something of our own; was it wonderful that *we* should grieve? But what was it that could touch *them* so sensibly? It is not difficult to answer this. Genius is the property of all. In bowing down before genius all nations are brethren;

and when it vanishes untimely from the earth, all will follow its departure with one brotherly lamentation. Púshkin, with respect to his genius, belonged not to Russia alone, but to all Europe; and it was therefore that many foreigners approached his door with feelings of *personal* sorrow, and mourned for *our* Púshkin as if he had been *their own*. But let me return to my recital. Though he sent Dahl to console his wife with hope, Púshkin himself did not entertain the slightest. Once he enquired, "*What o'clock is it?*" and on Dahl's informing him, he continued, in an interrupted voice, "*Have I ... long ... to ... be tortured thus?... Pray ... haste!*" This he repeated several times afterwards, "*Will the end be soon?*" and he always added, "*Pray ... make haste!*" In general, however, (after the torments of the first night, which lasted two hours,) he was astonishingly patient. When the pain and anguish overcame him, he made movements with his hands, or uttered at intervals a kind of stifled groan, but so that it was hardly audible "You must bear it, my dear fellow; there is nothing to be done," said Dahl to him; "but don't be ashamed of your pain; groan, it will ease you." "*No,*" he replied, interruptedly; "*no,... it is of no ... use to ... groan;... my wife ... will ... hear; ... 'tis absurd ... that such a trifle ... should ... master me,... I will not.*"—I left him at five o'clock in the morning, and returned in a couple of hours. Having observed, that the night had been tolerably quiet, I went home with an impression almost of hope; but on my return I found I had deceived myself. Arendt assured me confidently that all was over, and that he could not live out the

day. As he predicted, the pulse now grew weaker, and began to sink perceptibly; the hands began to be cold. He was lying with his eyes closed; it was only from time to time he raised his hand to take a piece of ice and rub his forehead with it. It had struck two o'clock in the afternoon, and Púshkin had only three quarters of an hour left to live. He opened his eyes, and asked for some cloud-berry water. When they brought it, he said in a distinct voice,—"*Call my wife; let her feed me.*" She came, sank down on her knees by the head of the bed, and carried to his lips one, and afterwards another spoonful of the cloud-berries, and then pressed her cheek against his; Púshkin stroked her on the head, and said, "*There, there, never mind; thank God, all is well; go.*" The tranquil expression of his face, and the firmness of his voice, deceived the poor wife; she left the room almost radiant with joy. "You see," she said to Dr Spásskii, "he will live; he will not die." But at this moment the last process of vitality had already begun. I stood together with Count Vielhórskii at the head of the bed; by the side stood Turgéniéff. Dahl whispered to me, "He is going." But his thoughts were clear. It was only at intervals that a half-dosing forgetfulness overshadowed them; once he gave his hand to Dahl, and pressing it, said: "*Now, lift me up—come—but higher, higher ... now, come along!*" But awaking, he said, "*I was dreaming, and I fancied that I was climbing with you up along these books and shelves! so high ... and my head began to turn.*" After pausing a little, he again, without unclosing his eyes, began to feel for Dahl's hand, and pulling it, said: "*Now,*

let us go then, if you wish; but together." Dahl, at his request, took him under the arms, and raised him higher; and suddenly, as if awaking, he quickly opened his eyes, his face lighted up, and he said, "*Life is finished!*" Dahl, who had not distinctly heard the words, answered, "Yes, it is finished; we have turned you round." "*Life is finished!*" he repeated, distinctly and positively. "*I can't breathe, I am stifling!*" were his last words. I never once removed my eyes from him, and I remarked at this moment, that the movement of the breast, hitherto calm, became interrupted. It soon ceased altogether. I looked attentively; I waited for the last sigh, but I could not remark it. The stillness which reigned over his whole appearance appeared to me to be tranquillity; but he was now no more. We all kept silence around him. In a couple of minutes I asked, "How is he?" "He is dead!" answered Dahl. So calmly, so tranquilly had his soul departed. We long stood around him in silence, without stirring, not daring to disturb the mysteries of death, which were completed before us in all their touching holiness. When all had left the room, I sate down before him, and long alone I gazed upon his face. Never had I beheld upon that countenance any thing like that which was upon it in this first moment of death. His head was somewhat bent forward; the hands, which a few moments ago had exhibited a kind of convulsive movement, were calmly stretched, as if they had just fallen into an attitude of repose after some heavy labour. But that which was expressed in the face, I am not able to tell in words. It was to me something so new, and at the same time so familiar.

This was not either sleep or repose; it was not the expression of intellect which was before so peculiar to the face; nor was it the poetic expression; no! some mighty, some wondrous thought was unfolded in it: something resembling vision, some full, complete, deeply-satisfying knowledge. Gazing upon it, I felt an irresistible desire to ask him, "What do you see, my friend?" And what would he have answered if he had been able for a moment to arise? There are moments in our life which fully deserve the epithet of great. At this moment, I may say, I beheld the face of death itself, divinely-mysterious; the face of death without a veil between. And what a seal was that she had stamped upon him, and how wondrously did she tell her secret and his own! I most solemnly assure you that I never beheld upon his face an expression of such deep, majestic, such triumphant *thought*. The expression had undoubtedly been latent in the face before; but it was only displayed in all its purity then, when all earthly things had vanished from his sight at the approach of death. Such was the end of our Púshkin. I will describe in a few words what followed. Most fortunately, I remembered, before it was too late, that it was necessary to take a cast of the mask; this was executed without loss of time. His features had not yet entirely changed. It cannot be denied that the first expression which death had given them, was not preserved in them; but we now all possess an attractive portrait, a fac-simile of the features, and which images—not death, but a deep, majestic slumber. I will not relate to you the state in which was the poor wife—many good

friends remained inseparably with her, the Princess Viázemskii, Elizabeth Zaguájskii, the Count and Countess Stróganoff. The Count took upon himself all the arrangements for the funeral. After remaining some time longer in the house, I went away to Vielhórskii's to dinner; there were assembled all the other persons who, like myself, had seen Púshkin's last moments; and he himself had been invited, three days before, to this dinner ... it was to celebrate my birth-day. On the following morning we, his friends, with our own hands, laid Púshkin in the coffin; and on the evening of the succeeding day, we transported him to the Koninshennaia (the Imperial Stables) Church. And during the whole of these two days, the drawing-room where he lay in his coffin was incessantly full of people. It may be safely asserted that more than ten thousand persons visited it, in order to obtain one look at him: many were in tears, others stood long immoveable, and seemed as though they wished to behold his face; there was something inexpressibly striking in his immobility amid all this movement, and something mysteriously touching in the prayer which was heard so gently and so uniformly murmured amid that confused murmur of whispered conversation. The funeral service was performed on the 1st of February. Many of our greatest nobles, and many of the foreign ministers, were in the church. We carried the coffin with our own hands to the vault, where it was to remain until the moment of its being taken out of the city. On the 3d of February, at ten o'clock in the evening, we assembled for the last time around all that remained to us of

Púshkin; the last requiem was sung; the case which contained the coffin was placed upon a sledge; at midnight the sledge set off; by the light of the moon I followed it for some moments with my eyes; it soon turned the corner of a house; and all that once was Púshkin was lost for ever from my sight.

V. *Jukóvskii.*

The body was accompanied by Turgénieff. Púshkin had more than once said to his wife, that he desired to be buried in the monastery of the Assumption at Sviatogórsk, where his mother had recently been interred. This monastery is situated in the government (province) of Pskoff; and in the riding of Opótkhoff, at about four versts from the country-house and hamlet of *Mikháilovskoë*, where Púshkin passed several years of his poetic life. On the 4th, at nine o'clock in the evening, the corpse arrived at Pskoff, from whence, conformably to the excellent arrangements made by the provincial government, it was forwarded on the same night, and the morning of the 5th, through the town of Ostroff to the Sviatogórsk monastery, where it arrived as early as seven o'clock in the evening. The dead man glided to his last abode, past his own deserted cottage, past the three beloved firs which he had planted not long before. The body was placed upon the *holy hill* (*sviatáia gorá*, from which the monastery takes its name,) in the cathedral church of the Assumption, and a requiem was performed in the evening. All night long workmen were employed in digging a grave beside the spot where his mother reposes. On the following day, as soon as

it was light, at the conclusion of divine service, the last requiem was chanted, and the coffin was lowered into the grave, in the presence of Turgénieff and the peasants of Púshkin's estate, who had come from the village of Mikháilovskoë to pay the last honour to their kind landlord. Very strangely to the ears of the bystanders sounded the words of the Bible, accompanying the handful of earth as it was cast upon Púshkin—"*earth thou art!*"

THE NOVEL AND THE DRAMA

(Some Advice To an Author.)

You tell me, my dear Eugenius, that you are hesitating between the novel and the drama: you know not which to attack; and you wish me to give you some suggestions on the subject. You are candid enough to say that it is not point-blank advice that you ask, which you would probably heed just as much as good counsel is generally heeded by those who apply for it; but you would have me lay before you such ideas as may occur to me, in order that you may have the picking and choosing amongst them, with the chance of finding something to your mind—something which may assist you to a decision. Artists in arabesque get an idea by watching the shifting forms of the kaleidoscope; in the same manner you hope—if I will but turn my mind about a little—that some lucky adjustment of its fragments of observation may help you to a serviceable thought or two. At all events, you shall not have to complain of too much method in what follows.

If I could only, my dear Eugenius, persuade you to leave them both alone!—drama and novel both! But this is hopeless. The love one bears to a woman may be conquered—not indeed by good counsel, but by speedy flight; but the passion that draws us

to poetry and romance can only die out, it cannot be expelled; for in this passion, go where we will, we carry our Helen with us. She steals upon us at each unguarded moment, and renews in secret her kisses upon our lip. Well, if I cannot persuade you to leave both alone, my next advice is that you attack both; for if you endeavour to express in either of these forms of composition all that is probably fermenting in your mind, the chance is that you spoil your work.

And by all means lay your hands first upon the drama. True, it is the higher aim of the two, and I will not pretend to augur any very brilliant success. But still it is the more appropriate to the first ebullitions of genius, and the spasmodic efforts of youth. The heart is at this time full of poetry, which, be its value what it may, must be got rid of before the stream of prose will run clear. Besides, the very effort of verse seems necessary to this age, which disdains a facile task, and seeks to expend its utmost vigour on its chosen labour. Moreover, to write a good novel one should have passed through the spring-time and enthusiasm of youth—one should be able to survey life with some degree of tranquillity; neither wrapped in its illusions, nor full of indignation at its discovered hollowness. At two-and-twenty, even if the heart is not burning with fever heat of some kind—some enthusiastic passion or misanthropical disgust—the head at least is preoccupied with some engrossing idea, which so besets the man, that he can see nothing clearly in the world around him. At this age he has a philosophy, a metaphysical

system, which he really believes in, (a species of delusion the first to quit us,) and he persists in seeing his dogma reflected to him from all sides. This is supportable, or may be disguised in poetry; it becomes intolerable in prose. Add to all which, that the writer of a novel should have had some *experience* in the realities of life, a certain empirical knowledge of the manner in which the passions develop themselves in men and women. The high ideal forms of good and evil he may learn from his own heart; but there is in actual life, so to speak, a vulgar monstrosity which must be seen to be credited. I can figure to myself the writer of a drama musing out his subject in solitude, whether the solitude of the seashore or of a garret in London; but the successful novelist must have mingled with the world, and should know whatever the club, the drawing-room, and, above all, the boudoir can reveal to him.

Of course it is understood between us, that in speaking of the drama we make no reference to the stage. Indeed, you can hardly contemplate writing for the stage, as there is no stage to write for. We speak of the drama solely as a form of composition, presented, like any other, to the reader. I have heard the opinion expressed that the drama, viewed as a composition designed only to be read, is destined to be entirely superseded by the novel, which admits of so great a variety of material being worked into its structure, and affords an unrivalled scope for the development both of story and of character. To me it seems that the drama, especially in its more classic form, apart from its application to

the stage, has a vitality of its own, and will stand its ground in literature, let the novel advance as it may.

All the passions of man represent themselves in his speech, the great prerogative of the human being; almost every thing he does is transacted through the medium of speech, or accompanied by it; even in solitude his thoughts are thrown into words, which are frequently uttered aloud, and the soliloquy is wellnigh as natural as the dialogue. Give, therefore, a fair representation of the speech of men throughout every great transaction, and you give the best and truest representations of their actions and their passions, and this in the briefest form possible. You have all that is essential to the most faithful portrait, without the distraction of detail and circumstance. With a reader of the drama the eye is little exercised; he seems to be brought into immediate contact with the minds of those imaginary persons who are rather thinking and feeling, than acting before him. To this select representation of humanity is added the charm of verse, the strange power of harmonizing diction. If the drama rarely captivates the eye, it takes possession of the ear. May it never lose its appropriate language of verse—that language which so well comports with its high ideal character, being one which, as a French poet has happily expressed it, the world understands, but does not speak—

"Elle a cela pour elle—

Que le monde l'entend, et ne la parle pas!"

The drama is peculiarly appropriate to the ideal; and it seems to me that the very fact, that whatever appertains to the middle region of art, or requires the aid of much circumstance and detail, has found in the novel a far more perfect development, ought to induce us to purify the drama, and retain amongst us its most exalted type. It is in vain that it strives to compete with the novel in the intricacy of its plot, in the number of its *dramatis personæ*, in the representation of the peculiarities, or as they used to be called, the *humours* of men. These have now a better scene for their exhibition than the old five-act play, or tragi-comedy, could afford them; but the high passions of mankind, whatever is most elevated or most tender, whatever naturally leads the mind, be it good or evil, to profound contemplation—this will still find its most complete, and powerful, and graceful development in the poetic form of the drama.

The novel and the drama have thus their several characteristics. Do you wish to hurry on your reader with a untiring curiosity? you will, of course, select the novel. Do you wish to hold him lingering, meditative, to your pages—pages which he shall turn backwards as well as forwards? you were wise to choose the drama. Both should have character, and passion, and incident; but in the first the interest of the *story* should pervade the whole, in the second the interest of the *passion* should predominate. If you write a novel, do not expect your readers very often to stand still and meditate profoundly; if you

write a drama, forego entirely the charm of curiosity. Do not hope, by any contrivance of your plot, to entrap or allure the attention of your readers, who must come to you—there is no help for it—with something of the spirit, and something of the unwillingness, of the student. What some man of genius may one day perform, or not perform, it were presumptuous to assert; for it is the privilege of genius to prove to the critic what is possible; but, speaking according to our *present lights*, we should say that the sustaining of the main characteristic interest of the novel, is incompatible with the more intense efforts of reflection or of poetry. One cannot be dragged on and chained to the spot at the same time. Some one *may* arise who shall combine the genius of Lord Byron and of Sir Walter Scott; but till the prodigy makes his appearance, I shall continue to think that no intellectual chymistry could present to us, in one compound, the charms of *Ivanhoe* and of *Sardanapalus*.

I should be very ungrateful—I who have been an idle man—if I underrated the novel. It is hardly possible to imagine a form of composition more fit to display the varied powers of an author; for wit and pathos, the tragic and the comic, descriptions, reflections, dialogue, narrative, each takes its turn; but I cannot consent that it carry off all our regard from its elder sister, the drama. In the novel every thing passes by in dizzy rapidity; we are whirled along over hill and valley, through the grandeur and the filth of cities, and a thousand noble and a thousand grotesque objects flit over our field of vision. In the drama, it is true, we

often toil on, slow as a tired pedestrian; but then how often do we sit down, as at the foot of some mountain, and fill our eyes and our hearts with the prospect before us? How gay is the first!—even when terrible, she has still her own vivacity; but then she exhausts at once all the artillery of her charms. How severe is the second!—even when gayest, she is still thoughtful, still maintains her intricate movement, and her habit of involved allusions; but then at each visit some fresh beauty discloses itself. It was once my good fortune—I who am now old, may prattle of these things—to be something a favourite with a fair lady who, with the world at large, had little reputation for beauty. Her sparkling sister, with her sunny locks and still more sunny countenance, carried away all hearts; she, pale and silent, sat often unregarded. But, oh, Eugenius! when she turned upon you her eyes lit with the light of love and genius, that pale and dark-browed girl grew suddenly more beautiful than I have any words to express. You must make the application yourself; for having once conjured up her image to my mind, I cannot consent to compare her even to the most eloquent poetry that was ever penned.

Undoubtedly the first dramatic writer amongst our contemporaries is Henry Taylor, and the most admirable dramatic poem which these times have witnessed is *Philip van Artevelde*. How well he uses the language of the *old masters*! how completely has he made it his own! and how replete is the poem with that sagacious observation which penetrates the very core of human life, and which is so appropriate to the drama! Yet the

author of *Philip van Artevelde*, I shall be told, has evidently taken a very different view of the powers and functions of the drama at this day than what I have been expressing. In his poem we have the whole lifetime of a man described, and a considerable portion of the history of a people sketched out; we have a canvass so ample, and so well filled, that all the materials for a long novel might be found there. But the example of *Philip van Artevelde* rather confirms than shakes my opinion. I am persuaded that that drama, good as it is, would have been fifty times better, had it been framed on a more restricted plan. You, of course, have read and admired this poem. Now recall to mind those parts which you probably marked with your pencil as you proceeded, and which you afterwards read a second and a third and a fourth time; bring them together, and you will at once perceive how little the poem would have lost, how much it would have gained, if it had been curtailed, or rather constructed on a simpler plan. What care we for his Sir Simon Bette and his Guisebert Grutt? And of what avail is it to attempt, within the limits of a drama, and under the trammels of verse, what can be much better done in the freedom and amplitude of prose? Under what disadvantages does the historical play appear after the historical novels of the Author of *Waverley*!

The author of *Philip van Artevelde*, and *Edwin the Fair*, seems to shrink from idealizing character, lest he should depart from historic truth. But historic truth is not the sort of truth most essential to the drama. We are pleased when we meet with it;

but its presence will never justify the author for neglecting the higher resources of his art. Do not think, however, that in making this observation I intend to impeach the character of Philip van Artevelde himself. Artevelde I admire without stint, and without exception. Compare this character with the Wallenstein of Schiller, and you will see at once its excellence. They are both leaders of armies, and both men of reflection. But in Wallenstein the habit of self-examination has led to an irresolution which we feel at once, in such a man, to be a degrading weakness, and altogether inconsistent with the part he is playing in life. It is an indecision which, in spite of the philosophical tone it assumes, pronounces him to be unfit for the command of men, or to sway the destinies of a people. Artevelde, too, reflects, examines himself, pauses, considers, and his will is the servant of his thought; but reflection with him comes in aid of resolution, matures it, establishes it. He can discuss with himself, whether he shall pursue a life of peaceful retirement, or plunge into one of stormy action; but having once made his election, he proceeds along his devoted path with perfect self-confidence, and without a look that speaks of retreat. A world of thought is still around him; he carries with him, at each step, his old habit of reflection—for this, no man who has once possessed, can ever relinquish—but nothing of all this disturbs or impedes him.

Do not you, Eugenius, be led by the cant of criticism to sacrifice the real interest of your *dramatis personæ*. Some dry censor will tell you that your Greeks are by no means Greek,

nor your Romans Roman. See you first that they are real men, and be not afraid to throw your own heart into them. Little will it console either you or your readers, if, after you have repelled us by some frigid formal figure, a complimentary critic of this school should propose to place it as a frontispiece to a new edition of Potter or of Adam—applauding you the while for having faithfully preserved the classic costume. I tell you that the classic costume must ruffle and stir with passions kindred to our own, or it had better be left hanging against the wall. And what a deception it is that the scholastic imagination is perpetually imposing on itself in this matter! Accustomed to dwell on the points of difference between the men of one age and of another, it revolts from admitting the many mere points of resemblance which must have existed between them; it hardly takes into account the great fund of humanity common to them both. The politics of Cicero, it is true, would be unintelligible to one unversed in the constitution and history of Rome; but the ambition of Cicero, the embarrassment of the politician, the meditated treachery, the boasted independence, the doubt, the fear, the hesitation,—all this will be better studied in a living House of Commons, than in all the manuscripts of the Vatican. Sacrifice nothing of what you know to be the substantial interest of your piece, to what these critics call the *colour* of the age, which, after all, is nothing better than one guess amongst many at historic truth. Schiller fell a victim, in one or two instances, to this sort of criticism, and, in obedience to it, contradicted the

natural bias of his genius. In his *Wilhelm Tell*, instead of the hero of liberty and of Switzerland, he has given us little more than a sturdy peasant, who, in destroying Gessler, follows only a personal revenge, and feels the remorse of a common assassin. If this were historic truth, it was not the part of the poet to be the first to discover and proclaim it. Was he to degrade the character below the rank which ordinary historians assigned to it? We do not want a drama to frame the portrait of a Lincolnshire farmer; it is the place, if place there is, for the representation of the higher forms of humanity.

After taking note of the distinctive qualities of the drama and the novel, it were well—O author that will be!—to take note of thyself, and observe what manner of talent is strongest within thee. There are two descriptions of men of genius. The one are men of genius in virtue of their own quick feelings and intense reflection; they have imagination, but it is chiefly kindled by their own personal emotions: they write from the inspiration of their own hearts; they see the world in the height of their own joys and afflictions. These amiable egotists fill all nature with the voice of their own plaints, and they have ever a tangled skein of their own peculiar thoughts to unravel and to ravel again. The second order of men of genius, albeit they are not deficient in keen susceptibility or profound reflection, see the world outstretched before them, as it lies beneath the impartial light of heaven; they understand, they master it; they turn the great globe round under the sun; they make their own mimic variations after its

strange and varied pattern. Now you must take rank, high or low, amongst this second order of men of genius, if you are to prosper in the land of fiction and romance. Pray, do you—as I half suspect—do you, when sitting down to sketch out some budding romance, find that you have filled your paper with the analysis of a character or a sentiment, and that you have risen from your desk without relating a single incident, or advancing your story beyond the first attitude, the first *pose* of your hero? If so, I doubt of your aptitude for the novel. I know that you have some noble ideas of elevating the standard of the romance, and, by retarding and subduing the interest of the narrative, to make this combine with more elaborate beauties, and more subtle thought, that has been hitherto considered as legitimately appertaining to the novel. I like the idea—I should rejoice to see it executed; but pardon me, if the very circumstance of you being possessed with this idea, leads me to augur ill of you as a writer of fiction. You have not love enough for your story, nor sufficient confidence in it. You are afraid of every sentence which has in it no peculiar beauty of diction or of sentiment. A novelist must be liberal of letter-press, must feel no remorse at leading us down, page after page, destitute of all other merit than that of conducting us to his *dénouement*: he writes not by sentences; takes no account of paragraphs; he strides from chapter to chapter, from volume to volume.

"Verily," I think I hear you say, "you are the most consolatory of counsellors; you advise me to commence with the drama—"

but with no prospect of success—in order to prepare myself for a failure in the novel!"

My dear Eugenius, you shall not fail. You shall write a very powerful, exciting, affecting romance. Pray, do not be too severe upon our sensibilities, do not put us on the rack more than is absolutely necessary. It has always seemed to me—and I am glad to have this opportunity of unburdening my heart upon the point—it has always seemed to me, that there was something *barbarous* in that torture of the sympathies in which the novelist delights, and which his reader, it must be supposed, finds peculiarly grateful. It really reminds me of that pleasure which certain savages are said to take in cutting themselves with knives, and inflicting other wounds upon themselves when in a state of great excitement. I have myself often flung away the work of fiction, when it seemed bent upon raising my sympathies only to torture them. Pray, spare us when you, in your time, shall have become a potent magician. Follow the example of the poets, who, when they bear the sword, yet hide it in such a clustre of laurels that its sharpness is not seen.

To take very common instance—All the world knows that the catastrophe of a romance must be inevitably postponed, that suspense must be prolonged, and that the two lovers whose fate we have become interested in, cannot possibly be made happy in the first or even in the second volume. But the expedients employed to delay this term of felicity, are sometimes such as the laws of a civilized society ought really to proscribe. I will mention

the first example that occurs to me, though your better memory will directly suggest many more striking and more flagrant. It is taken from the work of no mean artist; indeed, none but a writer of more or less talent could inflict this gratuitous anguish upon us. In the novel of *Rienzi*, a young nobleman, Adrian, goes to Florence, at that time visited by the plague, to seek his betrothed Irene, sister of the Tribune. Fatigue, the extreme heat, and his own dreadful anxiety, have thrown him into a fever, and he sinks down in the public thoroughfare. It is Irene herself who rushes to his assistance. Every one else avoids him, thinking him struck by the plague. She and a benevolent friar convey him, still in a state of unconsciousness, into an empty and deserted palace which stood by, and of which there were many at that time in Florence. She tends him, nurses him day and night, aided only by the same pious and charitable friar. In his delirium he raves of that Irene who is standing by his head, and who thus learns that it is to seek her he has exposed himself to the horrors of the plague. At the end of this time the friar, who had administered to the patient some healing draught, tells her, on leaving, that Adrian will shortly fall into a sound slumber—that this will be the crisis of his fever—that he will either wake from this sleep restored to consciousness and health, or will sink under his malady. Adrian falls accordingly into a sound sleep, Irene watching by his side. Now we know that the patient is doing well, and our hearts have been sedulously prepared for the happy interview that is promised us, when, on awaking, he will see beside him the loved

Irene whom he has been seeking, and recognise in her the saviour of his life. But this sleep lasts longer than Irene had anticipated; she becomes alarmed, and goes away to seek the friar. The moment she has left the room, Adrian wakes!—finds himself well and alone—there is no one to tell him who it is that has preserved his life; nor has Irene, it seems, left any trace of her presence. He sallies forth again into the city of the plague to seek her, and she is destined to return to the empty chamber! Taken to a hideous sort of charnel-house, Adrian is shown the body of a female clad in a mantle that had once been Irene's, and concludes that it is the corpse of her who, for the last three days and nights, has been tending on him. I recollect that, when I came to this part of the novel, I threw the book down, and stalked for five minutes indignantly about the room, exclaiming that it was cruel—barbarous—savage, to be sporting thus with human sympathies. To be sure, I ought to add, in justice to the author, that, after exhaling my rage in this manner, I again took up the novel, and read on to the end.

I do beseech you, Eugenius, do not give us a *philosophical* novel. Every work of art of a high order will, in one sense of the word, be philosophical; there will be philosophy there for those who can penetrate it, and sometimes the reader will gather a profounder and juster meaning, than the author himself detected in his fiction. I mean, of course, those works where some theory or some dogma is expressly taught, where a vein of scholastic, or political, or ethical matter alternates with a vein of narrative

and fictitious matter. I dislike the whole genus. Either one is interested in your story, and then your philosophy is a bore; or one is not interested in it, and then your philosophy can gain no currency by being tacked to it. Suppose the narrative and didactic portions of such a book equally good, it is still essentially two books in one, and should be read once for the story, and once without. We are repeatedly told that people are induced to peruse, in the shape of a novel, what they would have avoided as dry and uninteresting in the shape of an essay. Pray, can you get people to take knowledge, as you get children to take physic, without knowing what it is they swallow? So that the powder was in the jelly, and the jelly goes down the throat, the business, in the one case, is done. But I rather think, in gaining knowledge, one must *taste the powder*; there is no help for it. Really, the manner in which these good nurses of the public talk of passing off their wisdom upon us, reminds us of the old and approved fashion in which Paddy passes his bad shilling, by slipping it between two sound penny pieces. To be sure it is but twopence after all, and he gets neither more nor less than his twopenny-worth of intoxication, but he has succeeded in putting his shilling into circulation. Just such a circulation of wisdom may we expect from novels which are to teach philosophy, and politics, and political economy, and I know not what else. But such works have succeeded, you will tell me. What shall I say to *Tremaine*?—what to *Coningsby*? In *Tremaine*, so far as I remember, the didactic portion had sunk like a sort of sediment, and being collected into

a dense mass in the third volume, could easily be avoided. As to *Coningsby*, I deny that it any where calls upon the reader for much exercise of his reflective powers. The novel has some sparkling scenes written in the vivacious manner of our neighbours, the French, and these we read. Some Eton boys talk politics, and as they talk just as boys should talk, their prattle is easily tolerated. Besides, I am not responsible for the caprice of fashion, nor for those adventitious circumstances which give currency to books, and which may sometimes compel us all to read what none of us heartily admires.

Certainly, if I were admitted to the counsels of a novelist, I should never have finished with my list of grievances, my entreaties, and deprecations. I will not inflict it upon you. But there is one little request I cannot help making even to a novelist in embryo. I have been annoyed beyond measure at the habit our writers of fiction have fallen into, of throwing their heroes perpetually into a sort of swoon or delirium, or state of half consciousness. That a heroine should occasionally faint, and so permit the author to carry her quietly off the stage—this is an old expedient, natural and allowable. What I complain of is, that whenever the passions of the hero himself rise to a certain pitch; or whenever the necessities of the plot require him to do one thing, whilst both his reason and his feelings would plainly lead him to do another—he is immediately thrown into a state of half frenzy, has a "vague consciousness" of something or other, makes a complete nightmare of the business; is cast, in short, into

a state of *coma*, in which the author can carry him hither and thither, and communicate to him whatever impulse he pleases. In this sort of dream he raves and resolves, he fights or he flies, and then wakes to confused memory of just what the author thinks fit to call to his recollection. It is very interesting and edifying, truly, to watch the movements of an irrational puppet! I do beg of you, when you take up the functions of the novelist, not to distribute this species of intoxication amongst your *dramatis personæ*, more largely than is absolutely necessary. Keep them in a rational state as long as you can. Depend upon it they will not grow more interesting in proportion as they approximate to madmen or idiots.

And so, dear Eugenius, you are resolved, at all events, in some form or other, to be the author! This is decided. What was that desperate phrase I once heard you utter—you would strike one blow, though you put your whole life into the stroke, and died upon the broken sword!

Ah! but one does not die upon the broken sword; one has to live on. Would that I could dissuade you from this inky pestilence! This poetizing spirit, which gives all life so much significance *to the imagination*, strikes it with sterility in every thing which should beget or prosper a personal career. It opens the heart—true, but keeps it open; it closes in on nothing—shuts in nothing for itself. It is an open heart, and the sunshine enters there, and the bird alights there; but nothing retains them, and the light and the song depart as freely as they came. You lose

the spring of action, and forfeit the easy intercourse with the world; for, believe me, however you struggle against it, so long as you live a poet, will you feel yourself a stranger or a child amongst men. And all for what? I have that confidence in your talent, that I am sure you will make no ridiculous failures. What you write for fame, will be far superior to what others write for popularity. But these will attain their end, and you, with far more merit, will be only known as having failed. And know you not that men revenge on mediocrity the praise extorted from them by indisputable celebrity? It is a crime to be above the vulgar, and yet not overawe the vulgar. There are a few great names they cannot refuse to extol; men of genuine merit, of a larger merit than they can measure, who yet cannot confessedly approach to these select few, they treat with derision and contempt.

But suppose the most complete success that you can rationally expect—what have you done? You have added one work of art the more to a literature already so rich, that the life of a man can hardly exhaust it; so rich, that it is compelled to drop by the way, as booty it cannot preserve, what in another literature, or at an earlier period of its own career, would have been considered invaluable treasure.

But the question of success or failure is not, after all, the first or most important to your happiness. Could the hope of literary fame, could the passion for it, could the esteem even of its possession, keep a steady place in your mind, there were but little danger in admitting this species of ambition as the ruling

spirit of your house. But, alas! whilst it is the most tenacious, it is also the most fluctuating of passions. It rises all radiant with the morning, and before the sun is in the zenith, it forsakes you, and the bright world at your feet is as a glittering desert. But if you should make good resolutions to reform and eject your tyrant, it will not fail to return before the night descends to dash and confound them.

I remember meeting somewhere with the complaint of a young poet who had made trial of his muse and failed; the style was perhaps somewhat quaint, but it spoke the language of truth, and I copied it out. I will transcribe it for your edification, and so conclude this wandering epistle. You must not ask me for the title of the book, for I am not sure that I could give it you correctly. Besides, it would be of no use, as the work I know is out of print.

"I could do better," says the poet in reply to his friend, who had been suggesting the usual consolations and lenitives applicable to the case, "but I could not so far excel what I have written, as to make all the difference between obscurity and fame. It is not a brief and tolerated existence in the world of letters that can be a sanction and motive to my endeavours; and since a noble immortality is denied me, I am willing to sink at once into oblivion. The sentence has been passed. I have not that obstinacy of hope which can make an appeal to the decision of posterity. My labours have been futile—my whole being has been an error—my life is without aim or meaning."

"I sought it not," continued the disappointed bard, "I

sought not this gift of poesy—I despised not the ruder toils of existence—I strove to pursue them, but I strove in vain. I could not walk along this earth with the busy forward tread of other men. The fair wonder detained and withheld me. Flowers on their slender stalks could prove an hindrance in my path; the light acacia would fling the barrier of its beauty across my way; the slow-thoughted stream would bend me to its winding current. Was it fault of mine that all nature was replete with feeling that compassed and enthralled me? On the surface of the lake at eventide, there lay how sweet a sadness! Hope visited me from the blue hills. There was perpetual revelry of thought amidst the clouds, and in the wide cope of heaven. This passion of the poet came to me, not knowing what it was. It came the gift of tranquil skies, and was breathed by playful zephyrs, and fell on me, with many a serene influence from the bright and silent stars.

"I saw others pursuing and enjoying the varied prosperity of life—I felt no envy at their success, and no participation in their desires. I could not call in and limit my mind to the concerns of a personal welfare. I had leaned my ear unto the earth, and heard the beating of her mighty heart, and the murmur of her mysteries, and my spirit lost its fitness for any selfish aim or narrow purpose. I stood forth to be the interpreter of his own word to man. Alas! I myself am but one—the poorest—of the restless and craving multitude.

"Gone! gone for ever! is the pleasant hope that danced before me on my path, with feet that never wearied, and timbrel that never paused! Oh, gay illusion! whither hast thou led me? and to what desolation has the music of

thy course conducted? I am laden, as it were, with the fruitage of cultivated affections, but I myself am forlorn and disregarded. I kindle with innumerable sympathies, but am shut out for ever from social endearments—from the sweet relationships that make happy the homes of other men. I am faint with love of the beautiful, and my heart pants with an unclaimed devotion—but who may love the poet in his poverty?"

The disappointed bard, who, I should mention, was an Italian, resolves to quit Rome, and books, and meditations; he goes to a seaport town, becomes a mariner, and is soon advanced to the rank of captain of a small trading vessel. The same friend to whom he had poured out the lamentation I have already transcribed, encounters him in this new character, and he then gives the following account of himself:—

"I worked hard with the men, and studied diligently with the captain. One voyage to the Levant was speedily followed by a second; I gained experience; I have earned promotion—go to—I have earned money! Here I am, master of this vessel, which shall carry you to the mouth of the Tiber, or the port of Genoa."

"Then you have quite merged the poet in the sailor?" said his companion.

"Quite! quite! These hands are hard," replied the poet, gaily exhibiting his swarthy palms; "they have tugged at other than the cordage of a lyre. I, who used to burden the passing clouds with many a pensive sentiment, now ask of them what weather they predict. I, who was wont

to give a thousand utterances to the winds of heaven, enquire from what point of the compass they are blowing. I, who could never behold the ocean without lapsing into dreamy emotions or endless speculations, now study its tides, and sound its shallows, and know it as the high-road I travel on. Yes," he continued, pacing the deck with animation, "I am no longer that commiserated mortal, whose musing gait marks him out for the mingled ridicule and, compassion of all observers; who burns with a passion for fame which renders him at once the most solitary and the most dependent of men. Me—I belong to the multitude—I am one of themselves. They cannot point the finger at me. I am released from that needless necessity to distinguish myself from others—from that pledge, given unsought to a heedless world, to leave behind an enduring memento of my existence. I can be filled with daily life, as with daily bread. Life is indeed a freedom—I can give *all* to death."

"I think," said his friend with a smile, "I trace something of the leaven of poetry even in this description of your unpoetized condition. Fear you not that the old fever will return?"

"No; I resist—I fly from all temptation. If leaning, perchance, over the side of the vessel, and looking down on the troubled water, my mind grows troubled also with agitated thoughts, I start from the insidious posture. I find something to tug—to haul. A rope is thrown to me, and I am saved! Or I seize the rudder—I grasp its handle, grown smooth by its frequent intercourse with the human palm—and, believe me, there is a magic in its touch that brings

me back instantly to the actual world of man's wants and of man's energies. I feel my feet press firm upon the boarded deck; I look out and around me; and my eye surveys, and my ear listens to the plain and serviceable realities of this our habitable globe."

This seems like a case of cure. But the symptoms were deceptive. The next time we meet the poet-sailor he has embarked all he possessed in an expedition of discovery in the new world which had recently been laid open by Columbus; and this, not from love of gain, nor love of science, nor even the ardour of enterprise, but purely from the restlessness of a spirit which, ejected from its home in the world of thought, could never find another amongst those "serviceable realities" of life, which he knew so well how to applaud. He set sail from the port of Genoa, and was never heard of afterwards. The moral of which is, that you take timely warning, Eugenius, lest your poetic culture end in a voyage of discovery to New South Wales!

MARSTON; OR, THE MEMOIRS OF A STATESMAN

Part XVII

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

Shakspeare.

The speech of the Opposition leader decided the question. No man on his side would venture beyond the line which he had drawn; and the resolutions of Government were triumphantly carried, after a brief appeal from me to the loyalty and manliness of the House. I placed before them the undeniable intention of the cabinet to promote the public prosperity, the immeasurable value of unanimity in the parliament to produce confidence in the people, and the magnitude of the stake for which England and Ireland were contending with the enemy of Europe. Those sentiments were received with loud approval—my language was

continually echoed during the debate, I was congratulated on all sides; and this night of expectancy and alarm closed in a success which relieved me from all future anxiety for the fate of the Government.

The House broke up earlier than usual; and, to cool the fever which the events of the night had produced in my veins, I rambled into one of the spacious squares which add so much to the ornament of that fine city. The night was serene, the air blew fresh and flower-breathing from the walks, the stars shone in their lustre, and I felt all the power of nature to soothe the troubled spirit. Some of the fashionable inhabitants of the surrounding houses had been induced by the fineness of the night to prolong their promenade; and the light laugh, and the sound of pleasant voices, added to the touching and simple charm of the scene. A group had stopped round a player on the guitar, with which we made a tolerable accompaniment to some foreign songs. My ear was caught by a chorus which I had often heard among the French peasantry, and I joined in the applause. The minstrel was ragged and pale, and had evidently met with no small share of the buffets of fortune; but, cheered by our approval, he volunteered to sing the masterpiece of his collection—"The Rising of the Vendée"—the rallying-song of the insurrection, a performance chanted by the Vendéan army in the field, by the Vendéan peasant in his cottage, and which he now gave us with all the enthusiasm of one who had fought and suffered in the cause.

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