VARIOUS

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Содержание

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WORKS OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN. [1]

If our readers have perchance stumbled upon a novel called "The Improvisatore" by one Hans Christian Andersen, a Dane by birth, they have probably regarded it in the light merely of a foreign importation to assist in supplying the enormous annual consumption of our circulating libraries, which devour books as fast as our mills do raw cotton;—with some difference, perhaps, in the result, for the material can rarely be said to be worked up into any thing like substantial raiment for body or mind, but seems to disappear altogether in the process. As the demand, here, exceeds all ordinary means of supply, they may have been glad to see that our trade with the North is likely to be beneficial to us, in this our intellectual need. Its books may not be so durable as its timber, nor so substantial as its oxen, but then they are articles of faster growth, and of easier transportation. To free-trade in these productions of the literary soil, not the most jealous protectionist will object; and they have, perhaps, been amused to observe how the mere circumstance of a foreign origin has given a cheap repute, and the essential charm of novelty, to materials which in themselves were neither good nor rare. The popular prejudice deals very differently with foreign oxen and foreign books; for, whereas an Englishman has great difficulty in believing that good beef can possibly be produced from any pastures but his own, and the outlandish beast is always looked upon with more or less suspicion, he has, on the contrary, a highly liberal prejudice in favour of the book from foreign parts; and nonsense of many kinds, and the most tasteless extravagancies, are allowed to pass unchallenged and unreproved, by the aid of a German, or French, or Danish title-page.

Nay, the eye is sometimes tasked to discover extraordinary beauty, where there is nothing but extraordinary blemish. Where the shrewd translator had veiled some absurdity or rashness of his author, the more profound reader has been known to detect a meaning and a charm, which "the English language had failed adequately to convey;" and he has, perhaps, shown a sovereign contempt for "the bungling translator," at the very time when that discreet workman had most displayed his skill and judgment. The idea has sometimes occurred to us—Suppose one of these foreign books were suddenly proved to be of genuine home production—suppose the German, or the Dane, or the Frenchman, were discovered to be a fictitious personage, and all the genius, or all the rant, to have really emanated from the English gentleman, or lady, who had merely professed to translate—presto! how the book would instantly change colours! What a reverse of judgment would there be! What secret *misgivings* would now be detected and proclaimed! What sudden outpourings of epithets by no means complimentary! How the boldness of many a metaphor would be transformed into sheer impudence! How the profundities would clear up, leaving only darkness behind! They were so mysterious—and now, throw all the light of heaven upon them, and there is nothing there but a blunder or a blot.

If our readers, we say, have fallen upon this, and other novels of Andersen, they have probably passed them by as things belonging to the literary *season*: they have been struck with some passages of vivid description, with touches of genuine feeling, with traits of character which, though imperfectly

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[1] *The Improvisatore; or, Life in Italy*, from the Danish of Hans Christian Andersen. Translated by Mary Howitt. *Only a Fiddler!* and *O.T. or, Life in Denmark*, by the Author of *The Improvisatore*. Translated by Mary Howitt. *A True Story of my Life*, by Hans Christian Andersen. Translated by Mary Howitt. *Tales from Denmark*. Translated by Charles Bonar. *A Picture-Book without Pictures*. Translated by Meta Taylor. *The Shoes of Fortune, and other Tales. A Poet's Bazaar*. Translated by Charles Beckwith, Esq.

delineated, bore the impress of truth; but they have pronounced them, on the whole, to be unfashioned things, but half made up, constructed with no skill, informed by no clear spirit of thought, and betraying a most undisciplined taste. Such, at least, was the impression their first perusal left upon our mind. Notwithstanding the glimpses of natural feeling and of truthful portraiture which caught our eye, they were so evidently deficient in some of the higher qualities which ought to distinguish a writer, and so defaced by abortive attempts at fine writing, that they hardly appeared deserving of a very critical examination, or a very careful study. But now there has lately come into our hands the autobiography of Hans Christian Andersen, "The True Story of my Life," and this has revealed to us so curious an instance of intellectual cultivation, or rather of genius exerting itself without any cultivation at all, and has reflected back so strong a light, so vivid and so explanatory, on all his works, that what we formerly read with a very mitigated admiration, with more of censure than of praise, has been invested with quite a novel and peculiar interest. Moreover, certain tales for children have also fallen into our hands, some of which are admirable. We prophesy them an immortality in the nursery —which is not the worst immortality a man can Win—and doubt not but that they have already been read by children, or told to children, in every language of Europe. Altogether Andersen, his character and his works, have thus appeared to us a subject worthy of some attention.

We insist upon coupling them together. We must be allowed to abate somewhat of the austerity of criticism by a reference to the life of the author. We cannot implicitly follow the unconditioned admiration of Mrs Howitt for "the beautiful thoughts of Andersen," which she tells us in her preface to the Autobiography, "it is the most delightful of her literary labours to translate." We must be excused if we think that the mixture of praise and of puff, which the lady lavishes so indiscriminately upon the author whose works she translates, is more likely to display her own skill and dexterity in author-craft, than permanently to enhance the fame of Andersen. In the works which Mrs Howitt has translated, (with the exception of the Autobiography,) there is a great proportion of most unquestionable trash, which, we should imagine, it must be a great affliction to render into English.

It is curious, and perhaps necessary, to watch this new relationship which has sprung up in the world of letters, between the original author and his translator. A reciprocity of services is always amiable, and one is glad to see society enriched by another bond of mutual amity. The translator finds a profitable commodity in the genius of his author; the author, a stanch champion in his foreign ally, who, notwithstanding his community of interest, can still praise without blushing. Many good results doubtless arise from this alliance, but an increased chance of impartial criticism is not likely to be one of them.

When Andersen writes *for* childhood or *of* childhood, he is singularly felicitous—fanciful, tender, and true to nature. This alone were sufficient to separate him from the crowd of common writers. For the rest of his works, if you will look at them kindly, and with a friendly scrutiny, you will find many a natural sentiment vividly reflected. But traces of the higher operations of the intellect, of deep or subtle thought, of analytic power, of ratiocination of any kind, there is absolutely none. If, therefore, his injudicious admirers should insist, without any reference to his origin or culture, on extolling his writings as works submitted, without apology or excuse, to the mature judgment and formed taste—they can only peril the reputation they seek to magnify. They will expose to ridicule and contempt one who, if you allow him a place apart by himself, becomes a subject of kindly and curious regard. If they insist upon his introduction, unprotected by the peculiar circumstances which environ him—we do not say amongst the literary magnates of his time, but even in the broad host of highly cultivated minds, we lose sight of him, or we follow him with something very much like a smile of derision.

We remember being told of a dexterous stratagem, by which a lady cured her son of what she deemed an unworthy passion for a rustic beauty. We tell the story—for it may not only afford us an illustration, but a hint also to other perplexed mammas, who may find themselves in the like predicament. She had argued, and of course in vain, against his high-flown admiration of the village

belle. She was a goddess! She would become a throne! Apparently acquiescing in his matrimonial project, she now professed her willingness to receive his bride-elect. Accordingly, she sent her own milliner—mantua-maker—what you will,—to array her in the complete toilette of a lady of fashion. The blushing damsel appeared in the most elegant attire, and took her place in the maternal drawing-room, amongst the sisters of the enraptured lover. Alas! enraptured no more! The rustic beauty, where could it have flown? The belle of the village was transformed into a very awkward young lady. Goddess!—She was a simpleton. Become a throne!—She could not sit upon a chair. The charm was broken. The application we need hardly make. There may be certain uncultivated men of genius on whom it is possible to practise a like malicious kindness.

We would rather preface our notice of the life and works of Andersen, by a motto taken from our own countryman Blake, artist and poet, and a man of somewhat kindred nature:—[2]

"Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me—

'Pipe a song about a lamb;'
So I piped with merry cheer.
'Piper, pipe that song again!—'
So I piped—he wept to hear.

'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe,
Sing thy songs of happy cheer—'
So I sang the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

'Piper, sit thee down and *write*,
In a book that all may read.'
Then he vanished from my sight;
And I plucked a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs,
Every child may joy to hear."

Such was the form under which the muse may be said to have visited and inspired Andersen. He ought to have been exclusively the poet of children and of childhood. He ought never to have seen, or dreamed, of an Apollo six feet high, looking sublime, and sending forth dreadful arrows from the far-resounding bow; he should have looked only to that "child upon the cloud," or rather, he should have seen his little muse as she walks upon the earth—we have her in Gainsborough's picture—with her tattered petticoat, and her bare feet, and her broken pitcher, but looking withal with such

[2] See Allan Cunningham's *Lives of the Painters and Sculptors*, vol. ii. p. 150.

a sweet sad contentedness upon the world, that surely, one thinks, she must have filled that pitcher and drawn the water which she carries—without, however, knowing any thing of the matter—from the very well where Truth lies hidden.

We should like to quote at once, before proceeding further, one of Andersen's tales for children. We *will* venture upon an extract. It will at all events be new to our readers, and will be more likely to interest them in the history of its author than any quotation we could make from his more ambitious works. Besides, the story we select will somewhat foreshadow the real history which follows.

A highly respectable matronly duck introduces into the poultry-yard a brood which she has just hatched. She has had a deal of trouble with one egg, much larger than the rest, and which after all produced a very "ugly duck," who gives the name, and is the hero of the story.

> "'So, we are to have this tribe, too!' said the other ducks, 'as if there were not enough of us already! And only look how ugly one is! we won't suffer that one here.' And immediately a duck flew at it, and bit it in the neck.
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> "'Let it alone,' said the mother; 'it does no one any harm.'
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> "'Yes, but it is so large and strange looking, and therefore it must be teased.'
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> "'These are fine children that the mother has!' said an old duck, who belonged to the noblesse, and wore a red rag round its leg. 'All handsome, except one; it has not turned out well. I wish she could change it.'
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> "'That can't be done, your grace,' said the mother; 'besides, if it is not exactly pretty, it is a sweet child, and swims as well as the others, even a little better. I think in growing it will improve. It was long in the egg, and that's the reason it is a little awkward.'
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> "'The others are nice little things,' said the old duck: 'now make yourself quite at home here.'
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> "And so they did. But the poor young duck that had come last out of the shell, and looked so ugly, was bitten, and pecked, and teased by ducks and fowls. 'It's so large!' said they all; and the turkey-cock, that had spurs on when he came into the world, and therefore fancied himself an emperor, strutted about like a ship under full sail, went straight up to it, gobbled, and got quite red. The poor little duck hardly knew where to go, or where to stand, it was so sorrowful because it was so ugly, and the ridicule of the whole poultry-yard.
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> "Thus passed the first day, and afterwards it grew worse and worse. The poor duck was hunted about by every one; its brothers and sisters were cross to it, and always said, 'I wish the cat would get you, you frightful creature!' and even its mother said, 'Would you were far from here!' And the ducks bit it, and the hens pecked at it, and the girl that fed the poultry kicked it with her foot. So it ran and flew over the hedge.
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> "On it ran. At last it came to a great moor where wild-ducks lived; here it lay the whole night, and was so tired and melancholy. In the morning up flew the wild-ducks, and saw their new comrade; 'Who are you?' asked they; and our little duck turned on every side, and bowed as well as it could. 'But you are tremendously ugly!' said the wild-ducks. 'However, that is of no consequence to us, if you don't marry into our family.' The poor thing! It certainly never thought of marrying; it only wanted permission to lie among the reeds, and to drink the water of the marsh.
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> "'Bang! bang!' was heard at this moment, and several wild-ducks lay dead amongst the reeds, and the water was as red as blood. There was a great shooting excursion. The sportsmen lay all round the moor; and the blue smoke floated like a cloud through the dark trees, and sank down to the very water; and the dogs spattered

about in the marsh—splash! splash! reeds and rushes were waving on all sides; it was a terrible fright for the poor duck.

"At last all was quiet; but the poor little thing did not yet dare to lift up its head; it waited many hours before it looked round, and then hastened away from the moor as quickly as possible. It ran over the fields and meadows, and there was such a wind that it could hardly get along.

"Towards evening, the duck reached a little hut. Here dwelt an old woman with her tom-cat and her hen; and the cat could put up its back and purr, and the hen could lay eggs, and the old woman loved them both as her very children. For certain reasons of her own, she let the duck in to live with them.

"Now the tom-cat was master in the house, and the hen was mistress; and they always said, 'We and the world.' That the duck should have any opinion of its own, they never would allow.

"'Can you lay eggs?' asked the hen.

"'No!'

"'Well, then, hold your tongue.'

"Can you put up your back and purr?' said the tom-cat.

"'No.'

"'Well, then, you ought to have no opinion of your own, where sensible people are speaking.'

"And the duck sat in the corner, and was very sad; when suddenly it took it into its head to think of the fresh air and the sunshine; and it had such an inordinate longing to swim on the water, that it could not help telling the hen of it.

"'What next, I wonder!' said the hen, 'you have nothing to do, and so you sit brooding over such fancies. Lay eggs, or purr, and you'll forget them.'

"'But it is so delightful to swim on the water!' said the duck—'so delightful when it dashes over one's head, and one dives down to the very bottom.'

"'Well, that must be a fine pleasure!' said the hen. 'You are crazy, I think. Ask the cat, who is the cleverest man I know, if he would like to swim on the water, or perhaps to dive, to say nothing of myself. Ask our mistress, the old lady, and there is no one in the world cleverer than she is; do you think that she would much like to swim on the water, and for the water to dash over her head?'

"'You don't understand me,' said the duck.

"'Understand, indeed! If we don't understand you, who should? I suppose you won't pretend to be cleverer than the tom-cat, or our mistress, to say nothing of myself? Don't behave in that way, child; but be thankful for all the kindness that has been shown you. Have you not got into a warm room, and have you not the society of persons from whom something is to be learnt? But you are a blockhead, and it is tiresome to have to do with you. You may believe what I say; I am well disposed towards you; I tell you what is disagreeable, and it is by that one recognises one's true friends.'

"'I think I shall go into the wide world,' said the duckling.

"'Well then, go!' answered the hen.

"And so the duck went. It swam on the water, it dived down; but was disregarded by every animal on account of its ugliness.

"One evening—the sun was setting most magnificently—there came a whole flock of large beautiful birds out of the bushes; never had the duck seen any thing so beautiful. They were of a brilliant white, with long slender necks: they were swans. They uttered a strange note, spread their superb long wings, and flew away from

the cold countries (for the winter was setting in) to warmer lands and unfrozen lakes. They mounted so high, so very high! The little ugly duck felt indescribably—it turned round in the water like a mill-wheel, stretched out its neck towards them, and uttered a cry so loud and strange that it was afraid even of itself. Oh, the beautiful birds! the happy birds! it could not forget them; and when it could see them no longer, it dived down to the very bottom of the water; and when it came up again it was quite beside itself.

"And now it became so cold! But it would be too sad to relate all the suffering and misery which the duckling had to endure through the hard winter. It lay on the moor in the rushes. But when the sun began to shine again more warmly, when the larks sang, and the lovely spring was come, then, all at once it spread out its wings, and rose in the air. They made a rushing noise louder than formerly, and bore it onwards more vigorously; and before it was well aware of it, it found itself in a garden, where the apple-trees were in blossom, and where the syringas sent forth their fragrance, and their long green branches hung down in the clear stream. Just then three beautiful white swans came out of the thicket. They rustled their feathers, and swam on the water so lightly—oh! so very lightly! The duckling knew the superb creatures, and was seized with a strange feeling of sadness.

"'To them will I fly!' said it, 'to the royal birds. Though they kill me, I must fly to them!' And it flew into the water, and swam to the magnificent birds, that looked at, and with rustling plumes, sailed towards it.

"'Kill me!' said the poor creature, and bowed down its head to the water, and awaited death. But what did it see in the water? It saw beneath it its own likeness; but no longer that of an awkward grayish bird, ugly and displeasing—it was the figure of a swan.

"It is of no consequence being born in a farm-yard, if only it is in a swan's egg.

"The large swans swam beside it, and stroked it with their bills. There were little children running about in the garden; they threw bread into the water, and the youngest cried out, 'There is a new one!' And the other children shouted too; 'Yes, a new one is come!'—and they clapped their hands and danced, and ran to tell their father and mother. And they threw bread and cake into the water; and every one said, 'The new one is the best! so young, and so beautiful!'

"Then the young one felt quite ashamed, and hid its head under its wing; it knew not what to do: it was too happy, but yet not proud—for a good heart is never proud. It remembered how it had been persecuted and derided, and now it heard all say it was the most beautiful of birds. And the syringas bent down their branches to it in the water, and the sun shone so lovely and so warm. Then it shook its plumes, the slender neck was lifted up, and, from its very heart, it cried rejoicingly—'Never dreamed I of such happiness when I was the little ugly duck!'"

It is not only in writing for children that our author succeeds; but whenever childhood crosses his path, it calls up a true pathos, and the playful tenderness of his nature. The commencement of his serious novels, where he treats of the infancy and boyhood of his heroes, is always interesting. Amongst the translated works of Andersen is one entitled "A Picture-Book without Pictures." The author describes himself as inhabiting a solitary garret in a large town, where no one knew him, and no friendly face greeted him. One evening, however, he stands at the open casement, and suddenly beholds "the face of an old friend—a round, kind face, looking down on him. It was the moon—the dear old moon! with the same unaltered gleam, just as she appeared when, through the branches of the willows, she used to shine upon him as he sat on the mossy bank beside the river." The moon becomes very sociable, and breaks that long silence which poets have so often celebrated—breaks it,

we must confess, to very little purpose. "Sketch what I relate to you," says the moon, "and you will have a pretty picture-book." And accordingly, every visit, she tells him "of one thing or another that she has seen during the past night." One would think that such a sketch-book, or album, as we have here, might easily have been put together without calling in the aid of so sublime a personage. But amongst the pictures that are presented to us, two or three, where the moon has had her eye upon children in their sports or their distresses, took hold of our fancy. Here Andersen is immediately at home. We give one short extract.

> "It was but yesternight (said the moon) that I peeped into a small court-yard, enclosed by houses: there was a hen with eleven chickens. A pretty little girl was skipping about. The hen chicked, and, affrighted, spread out her wings over her little ones. Then came the maiden's father, and chid the child; and I passed on, without thinking more of it at the moment.
>
> "This evening—but a few minutes ago—I again peeped into the same yard. All was silent; but soon the little maiden came. She crept cautiously to the hen-house, lifted the latch, and stole gently up to the hen and the chickens. The hen chicked aloud, and they all ran fluttering about: the little girl ran after them. I saw it plainly, for I peeped in through a chink in the wall. I was vexed with the naughty child, and was glad that the father came and scolded her still more than yesterday, and seized her by the arm. She bent her head back; big tears stood in her blue eyes. She wept. 'I wanted to go in and kiss the hen, and beg her to forgive me for yesterday. But I could not tell it you.' And the father kissed the brow of the innocent child; and I kissed her eyes and her lips."

Our poet—we call him such, though we know nothing of his verses, for whatever there is of merit in his writings is of the nature of poetry—our poet of childhood and of poverty, was born at Odense, a town of Funen, one of the green, beech-covered islands of Denmark. It bears the name of the Scandinavian hero, or demigod, Odin; Tradition says he lived there. The parents of Andersen were so poor that when they married they had not wherewithal to purchase a bedstead, or at least thought it advisable to make shift by constructing one out of the wooden tressels which, a little time before, had supported the coffin of some neighbouring count as he lay in state. It still retained a part of the black cloth, and some of the funeral ornaments attached to it, when in the year 1805 there lay upon it, not in any peculiar state, the solitary fruit of their marriage—the little Hans Christian Andersen. He was a crying infant, and when carried to the baptismal font, sorely vexed the parson with his outcries. "Your young one screams like a cat!" said the reverend official. The mother was hurt at this reflection upon her offspring; but a prophetic god-papa, who stood by, consoled her by saying, "that the louder he cried when a child, all the more beautifully would he sing when he grew older."

Those who are disposed to trace a hereditary descent in mental qualifications, will find an instance to their purpose in the case of Andersen. His mother, we are told, was utterly ignorant of books and of the world, "but possessed a heart full of love!" From her he may be said to have derived a singular frankness and amiability of disposition—a fond, open, affectionate temper. For the more intellectual qualities, by which this temper, through the medium of authorship, was to become patent to the world, he must have been indebted to his father. This poor and hapless shoemaker (such was his trade) seems to have been a singular person. To use a favourite phrase of Napoleon, "he had missed his destiny." His parents had been country people of some substance, but misfortune falling upon misfortune had reduced them to poverty. Finally, the father had become insane; the mother had been glad to obtain a menial situation in the very asylum where her husband was confined; and there was nothing better to be done for the son than to apprentice him to a shoemaker. Some talk there was amongst the neighbours of raising a subscription to send him to the grammar-school, and thus give him a start in life; but it never went beyond talk. A shoemaker he became. But to the leather

and the last he never took kindly. He would read what books he could get—Holberg's plays and the Bible—and ponder over them. At first he would make his wife a sharer in his reflections, but as she, good woman, never understood a word of what he said, he learned to meditate in silence. On Sundays he would go out into the woods accompanied only by his child; then he would sit down, sunk in abstraction and solitary thought, while young Hans gathered flowers or wild strawberries. "I recollect," says the son, in his Autobiography, "that once, as a child, I saw tears in his eyes; and it was when a youth from the grammar-school came to our house to be measured for a new pair of boots, and showed us his books, and told us what he learned, 'That was the path on which I ought to have gone!' said my father; he kissed me passionately, and was silent the whole evening."

There surely went out of the world something still undeveloped in that poor shoemaker. At a subsequent period of the history we find him fairly abandoning his unchosen trade. The name of Napoleon resounded even in Odense—even in Odense could find a heart that is disquieted. He would follow the banner of him who had "opened a career to all the talents." But the regiment in which he enlisted got no further than Holstein. Peace was concluded; he had to return to his native place, and fall back as well as he could into the old routine. His march to Holstein had, however, shaken his health, and he died shortly after his return.

"I was," says our author, "the only child, and was extremely spoilt; but I continually heard my mother say how very much happier I was than she had been, and that I was brought up like a nobleman's child." No nobleman's child could, at all events, be brought up with less restraint, or more completely left to his own fancies. Poor as were his parents, he never felt want; he had no care; he was fed and clothed without any thought on his part; he lived his own dreamy life, nourished by scraps of plays, songs, and all manner of traditionary stories. There was a theatre at Odense, and young Andersen was now and then taken to it by his parents. He himself constructed a puppet-show, and the dressing and drilling of his dolls was for a long time the chief occupation of his life. As he could rarely go to the theatre, he made friends with the man who sold the play-bills, who was charitable enough to give him one. With this upon his knee, he would sit apart and construct a play for himself; putting the *dramatis personæ* into movement as well as he could, and at all events despatching them all at the close; for he had no idea, he tells us, of a tragedy "that had not plenty of dying."

Of what is commonly called education he had little enough. He was sent to a charity-school, where, by a somewhat startling error of the press, Mrs Howitt is made to say "he learned only *religion*, writing, and arithmetic." Of the *reading*, writing, and arithmetic there taught, he seemed to have gained little; certainly the writing, and the arithmetic went on very slowly. To make amends, he used to present his master on his birth-day with a poem and a garland. Both the wreath and the verses seemed to have been but churlishly received, and the last time they were offered, he got scolded for his pains.

It would be difficult, however, to conceive of a life more suitable to the fostering of the imagination than that which little Hans was leading. Besides the play-house, and the scraps of dramas read to him by his father, himself a strange and dreamy man, we catch sight of an old grandmother, she who resided in the lunatic asylum where her husband was confined. Young Hans was occasionally permitted to visit her; and here he was a great favourite with certain old crones, who told him many a marvellous and terrible story. These stories, and the insane figures which he caught sight of around him, operated, he tells us, so powerfully upon his imagination that when it grew dark he scarcely dared to go out of the house. His own mother was extremely superstitious. When her husband was dying, she sent her son, not to the doctor, but to a wise-woman, who, after measuring the boy's arm with a woollen thread, and performing some other ceremonies, bade him go home by the river side, "and if he did not see the ghost of his father, he was to be sure that he would not die this time." He did *not* see the ghost of his father—which, considering all things, was rather surprising; but his father died nevertheless.

After the death of her husband, the mother of Andersen found another object for her affections, for that "heart so full of love." She married again. But the stepfather was "a grave young man, who would have nothing to do with Hans Christian's education;" refused, we presume, all responsibility on so delicate a business. He was still left to himself. He had now grown a tall lad, with long yellow hair, which the sun probably had assisted to dye, as he was accustomed to go bare-headed. He continued to amuse himself with dressing his theatrical puppets. His mother reconciled herself to the occupation, as it formed, she thought, no bad introduction to the trade of a tailor, to which she now destined him. On the other hand, Hans partly reconciled himself to the idea of being a tailor, because he should then have plenty of cloth, of all colours, for his puppets. Meanwhile it was to a very different trade or destiny that these puppets were conducting him.

About this time, not for the money, said the warm-hearted mother, but that the lad, like the rest of the world, might be doing something, Hans was sent, for a short interval, to a cloth factory. But it was fated that he should never work. He had a beautiful voice, and could sing. The people at the factory asked him to sing. "He began, and all the looms stood still." He had to sing again and again, whilst the other boys had his work given them to do. He was not long, however, at the factory. The coarse jests and behaviour of its inmates drove out the shy and solitary boy.

And now came the crisis. He would go forth into the world. He would be famous. All his early aspirations for distinction and celebrity had become, as might be expected, associated with the theatre. But as yet he had not the least idea in what department he was to excel—whether as actor or poet, dancer or singer—or rather he seems to have thought himself capable of success in them all. The passion for fame, or rather for distinction, had been awakened before the passion for any particular art. All he knew was, that he was to be a celebrated man; by what sort of labour, what kind of performance, he had no conception. Indeed, the remarkable performance, the work to be done, was not the most essential thing in his calculation. "People suffer a deal of adversity, and then they become famous." It was thus he explained the matter to himself. He was on the right road, at all events, for the adversity.

We must relate his going forth in his own words. Never, surely, on the part of all the actors in it, was there a scene of such singular simplicity.

> "My mother said that I must be confirmed, in order that I might be apprenticed to the tailor trade, and thus do something rational. She loved me with her whole heart, but she did not understand my impulses and my endeavours, nor, indeed, at that time did I myself. The people about her always spoke against my odd ways, and turned me into ridicule. (They only saw the ugly duckling in the young swan.)
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> "We belonged to the parish of St Knud, and the candidates for confirmation could either enter their names with the provost or with the chaplain. The children of the so-called superior families, and the scholars of the grammar-school, went to the first, and the children of the poor to the second. I, however, announced myself as a candidate to the provost, who was obliged to receive me, although he discovered vanity in my placing myself among his catechists, where, although taking the lowest place, I was still above those who were under the care of the chaplain. I would, however, hope that it was not alone vanity that impelled me. I had a sort of fear of the poor boys, who had laughed at me, and I always felt as it were an inward drawing towards the scholars of the grammar-school, whom I regarded as far better than other boys. When I saw them Playing in the churchyard, I would stand outside the railings, and wish that I were but among the fortunate ones—not for the sake of the play, but for the many books they had, and for what they might be able to become in the world.
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> "An old female tailor altered my deceased father's greatcoat into a confirmation suit for me; never before had I worn so good a coat. I had also, for

the first time in my life, a pair of boots. My delight was extremely great; my only fear was that every body would not see them, and therefore I drew them up over my trousers, and thus marched through the church. The boots creaked, and that inwardly pleased me, for thus the congregation would hear that they were new. My whole devotion was disturbed. I was aware of it, and it caused me a horrible pang of conscience that my thoughts should be as much with my new boots as with God. I prayed him earnestly from my heart to forgive me, and then again I thought upon my new boots.

"During the last year I had saved together a little sum of money. When I counted it over, I found it to be thirteen rix-dollars banco (about thirty shillings.) I was quite overjoyed at the possession of so much wealth; and as my mother now most resolutely required that I should be apprenticed to a tailor, I prayed and besought her that I might make a journey to Copenhagen, that I might see the greatest city in the world.

"'What wilt thou do there?' asked my mother.

"'I will become famous,' returned I; and I then told her all that I had read about extraordinary men. 'People have,' said I, 'at first an immense deal of adversity to go through, and then they will be famous.'

"It was a wholly unintelligible impulse that guided me. I wept and prayed, and at last my mother consented, after having first sent for a so-called wise-woman out of the hospital, that she might read my future fortune by the coffee-grounds and cards.

"'Your son will become a great man!' said the old woman; 'and in honour of him all Odense will one day be illuminated.'

"My mother wept when she heard that, and I obtained permission to travel."—(p. 27.)

So, at the age of fourteen, with thirty shillings in his pocket, and his idea of becoming famous by going through a deal of adversity, he comes to Copenhagen—the Paris, the more than the Paris of Denmark, for, in respect to all that a great town collects or fosters, Copenhagen is literally Denmark. There never was a stranger history than this of young Andersen's. It is more like a dream than a life; it is like one of his own tales for children, where the rigid laws of probability are dispensed with in favour of a quite free and rapid invention. The theatre is his point of attraction: but he was by no means determined in what department, or under what form, his universal genius shall make its appearance. He will first try dancing. He had heard of a celebrated *danseuse*, a Madame Schall. To her he goes with a letter of introduction, which he had coaxed out of an old printer in Odense, who, though he protested he did not know the lady, was still prevailed upon to write the letter. Dressed in his confirmation suit, a broad hat upon his head, his boots, we may be sure, not forgotten, which were worn, however, this time under the trousers, he finds out the residence of Madame Schall, rings at the bell, and is admitted. "She looked at me with great amazement," writes our author, "and then heard what I had to say. She had not the slightest knowledge of him from whom the letter came, and my whole appearance and behaviour seemed very strange to her. I confessed to her my heartfelt inclination for the theatre; and upon her asking me what character I thought I could represent, I replied Cinderella. This piece had been performed in Odense by the royal company, and the principal character had so taken my fancy, that I could play the part perfectly from memory. In the mean time I asked her permission to take off my boots, otherwise I was not light enough for this character; and then, taking up my broad hat for a tambourine, I began to dance and sing—

'Here below nor rank nor riches
Are exempt from pain and wo.'

My strange gestures and my great activity caused the lady to think me out of my mind, and she lost no time in getting rid of me."

We should think so. Only imagine some wild colt of a boy, one of those young Savoyards, for instance, who are in the habit of dancing round the organ they are grinding, apparently to convince the world how sprightly the tune is—imagine a genius of this natural description introducing himself into the drawing-room of a Taglioni or an Elssler, and commencing forthwith, "with great activity," to give a specimen of his talent! Just such as this must have been the part which young Andersen performed in the saloon of Madame Schall.

As the dancing does not succeed, he next offers himself as an actor—proceeding, quite as a matter of course, to the manager of a theatre to ask for an engagement. The manager was facetious—said he was "too thin for the theatre." Hans would be facetious too. "Oh," he replied, "if you will but engage me at one hundred rix-dollars banco salary, I shall soon get fat." Then the manager looked grave, and bade him go his way, adding, that he engaged only people of education.

But he had many strings to his bow—he could sing. It was at the opera evidently that he was destined to become famous. Here he met with what, for a moment, looked like success. A voice he certainly possessed, though uncultivated, and Seboni, the director of the Academy of Music, promised to procure instruction for him. But a short time afterwards he lost his voice, through insufficient clothing, as he thinks, and bad shoe leather. (Those boots could not be new always—doubtless got sadly worn tramping through the streets of Copenhagen.) Seboni dropped his *protégé*, counselled him to go back to Odense, and learn a trade.

As well learn a trade in Copenhagen, if it was to come to that. He still stayed in the capital, and still lingered round the theatre, sometimes getting a lesson in recitation, sometimes one in dancing, and overjoyed if only as one of a crowd of masked people he could stand before the scenes. There never surely was so irrepressible a vanity combined with so sensitive a temperament; never so strong an impulse for distinction accompanied with such vague notions of the means to attain it. At this period of his life his utter childishness, his affectionate simplicity, his superstition, his unconquerable vanity, present a picture quite unexampled in all biographies we have ever read. He has to make a bargain with an old woman (no better than she should be) for his board and lodging. She had left the room for a short time; there was in it a portrait of her deceased husband. "I was so much a child," he says, "that, as the tears rolled down my own cheeks, I wetted the eyes of the portrait with my tears, in order that the dead man might feel how troubled I was, and influence the heart of his wife."

Great as his susceptibility to ridicule, his vanity is always greater, can surmount it, and find a gratification where a sterner nature would have felt only mortification. In a scene of an opera where a crowd is to be represented, he edges himself upon the stage. He is very conscious of the ill condition of his attire: the confirmation coat did but just hold together; and he did not dare to hold himself upright lest he should exhibit the more plainly the shortness of the waistcoat which he had outgrown. He had the feeling very plainly that people would be making themselves merry with him; yet at this moment, he says, "he felt nothing but the happiness of stepping for the first time before the footlamps."

Of his superstition he records the following amusing instance. "I had the notion that as it went with me on New Year's Day, so would it go with me through the whole year; and my highest wishes were to obtain a part in a play. It was now New Year's Day. The theatre was closed, and only a half-blind porter sat at the entrance to the stage, on which there was not a soul. I stole past him with a beating heart, got between the moveable scenes and the curtain, and advanced to the open part of the stage. Here I fell down upon my knees, but not a single verse for declamation could I recall to my memory. I then said aloud the Lord's Prayer. I went out with the persuasion that, because I had spoken from the stage on New Year's Day, I should, in the course of the year, succeed in speaking still more, as well as in having a part assigned to me."—(p. 50.)

We must quote the paragraph that immediately follows this extract, because it shows that, after all, there was something better stirring at his heart than this vague theatrical ambition, this empty

vanity. There was the love of nature there. "During the two years of my residence in Copenhagen, I had never been out into the open country. Once only had I been in the park, and there I had been deeply engrossed by studying the diversions of the people and their gay tumult. In the spring of the third year, I went out for the first time amid the verdure of a spring morning. I stood still suddenly under the first large budding beech-tree. The sun made the leaves transparent—there was a fragrance, a freshness—the birds sang. I was overcome by it—I shouted aloud for joy, threw my arms around the tree, and kissed it. 'Is he mad?' said a man close behind me."

His good fortune provided him at length with a sincere and serviceable friend in the person of Collins—conference-councillor, as his title runs, and one of the most influential men at that time in Denmark. Through his means a grant was obtained from the royal purse, and access procured to something like regular education in the grammar-school at Slagelse. His place in the school was in the lowest class amongst little boys. He knew indeed nothing at all—nothing of what is taught by the pedagogue. At the age of eighteen, after having written a tragedy, which had been submitted to the theatre at Copenhagen, and we know not what poems besides,—after having versified a dance, and recited a song, he begins at the very beginning, and seats himself down in the lowest form of a grammar-school.

It is not our intention to pursue the biography of Andersen beyond what is necessary for understanding the singular circumstances in which his mind grew up; we shall not, therefore, detain our readers much longer on this part of our subject. His scholastic progress appears to have been at first slow and painful; the rector of the grammar-school behaved neither kindly nor generously towards him; and on him he afterwards took his revenge in the character of Habbas Dahdah, in "The Improvisatore." But he was docile, he was persevering, and passed through the school, and afterwards the college, not discreditably. In 1829, he was launched again into the world, a member of the educated class of society.

After supporting himself some time by his pen, he received from his government a stipend for travelling, which, it appears, in Denmark is bestowed on young poets as well as artists. And now he started on his travels—evidently the best school of education for a mind like his. For whatever use books may have been of to Andersen, in teaching him to *write*, they have had nothing to do with teaching him to *think*. No one portion of his writings of any value can be traced to his acquaintance with books. What knowledge he got from this source he could never rightly use. What his eye saw, what his heart felt—that alone he could work with. The slowly won reflection, the linked thought—any thing like a train of reasoning, seems to have been an utter stranger to his mind. Throughout his life, he is an observant child. From books he can gather nothing: severe analytic thinking he knows nothing of; he must see the world, must hear people talk, must remember how his own heart beat, and thus only can he find something for utterance.

What a change now in his destiny! The poor shoemaker's child, that wandered wild in the woods of Odense, and afterwards wandered almost as wild and as solitary in the streets of Copenhagen—who was next imprisoned in a school with dictionary and grammar—is now free again—may wander with wider range of vision—is a traveller—and in Italy! But the sensitive temper of Andersen, we are afraid, hardly permitted him to enjoy, as he might have done, his full cup of happiness. Vanity is an unquiet companion; he should have left it behind him at home; then the little piece of malice which he records of one of his friends would not have disturbed him as it appears to have done.

"During my journey to Paris, and the whole month that I spent there, I heard not a single word from home. Could it be that my friends had nothing agreeable to tell me? At length, however, a letter arrived; a large letter, which cost a large sum in postage. My heart beat with joy, and yearning impatience; it was indeed my first letter. I opened it, but I discovered not a single written word—nothing but a Copenhagen newspaper, *containing a lampoon upon me*, and that was sent to me all that distance with postage unpaid, probably by the anonymous writer himself. This abominable malice

wounded me deeply. I have never discovered who the author was; perhaps he was one of those who afterwards called me friend, and pressed my hand. Some men have base thoughts; I also have mine."

Poor Andersen has all his life long been sorely plagued by his critics. Those who peruse his Autobiography to the close, and every part of it is worth reading, will find him in violent ill humour with the theatrical public, whom he describes as taking a malicious and diabolical pleasure in damning plays. To hiss down a piece, he declares, is one of the chief amusements that fill the house. "Five minutes is the usual time, and the whistles resound, and the lovely women smile and felicitate themselves like the Spanish ladies at their bloody bull-fights." His second journey into Italy seems to have been in part occasioned by some quarrel with the theatre. "If I would represent this portion of my life more clearly and reflectively, it would require me to penetrate into the mysteries of the theatre, to analyse our æsthetic cliques, and to drag into conspicuous notice many individuals who do not belong to publicity; many persons in my place would, like me, have fallen ill, or would have resented it vehemently. Perhaps the latter would have been the most sensible."

Oh, no! Hans Christian—by no means the most sensible. Better even to have fallen ill. An author by his quarrel with the public, whether the reading or theatrical public, can gain nothing for himself but added torment. The more vehemently he contests and resents, the louder is the laugh against him. Whether the right is upon his side, time alone can show; time alone can redress his wrongs. When the poet has written his best, he has done all his part. If he cannot feel perfectly tranquil as to the result, let him at least affect tranquillity—let him be silent, and silence will soon bring that peace it typifies.

Henceforward, however, upon the whole, the career of Andersen is prosperous, and his life genial. We find him in friendly intercourse with the best spirits of the age. The lad who walked about Odense with long yellow locks, bare-headed, and bare-footed, and who was half reconciled to being a tailor's apprentice, because he should get plenty of remnants to dress his puppets with—is seen spending the evening with the royal family of Denmark, or dining with the King of Prussia, who decorates him with his order of the Red Eagle! He has exemplified his text—"people have a deal of adversity to go through, and then they become famous."

Those who have read "The Improvisatore," the most ambitious of the works of Andersen, and by far the most meritorious of his novels, will now directly recognise the materials of which it has been constructed. His own early career, and his travels into Italy, have been woven together in the story of Antonio. So far from censuring him—as some of his Copenhagen critics appear to have done—for describing himself and the scenes he beheld, we are only surprised when we read "The True Story of his Life," that he has not been able to employ in a still more striking manner, the experience of his singular career. But, as we have already observed, he betrays no habit or power of mental analysis; he has not that introspection which, in the phrase of our poet Daniel, "raises a man above himself;" so that Andersen could contemplate Andersen, and combine the impartial scrutiny of a spectator with the thorough knowledge which self can only have of self. So far from censuring him for the frequent use he makes of the materials which his own life and travels afforded him, we could wish that he had never attempted to employ any other. Throughout his novels, whenever he departs from these, he is either commonplace or extravagant,—or both together, which, in our days, is very possible. If he imitates other writers, it is always their worst manner that he contrives to seize; if he adopts the worn-out resources of preceding novelists, it is always (and in this he may be doing good service) to render them still more palpably absurd and ridiculous than they were before. He has dreams in plenty—his heroes are always dreaming; he has fevered descriptions of the over-excited imagination—a very favourite resource of modern novelists; he has his moral enigmas; and of course he has a witch (Fulvia) who tells fortunes and reads futurity, and reads it correctly, let philosophy or common sense say what it will. His Fulvia affords his readers one gratification; they find her fairly hanged at the end of the book.

We are far enough from attempting to give an outline of the story of this or any other novel—such skeletons are not attractive; but the extracts, and the observations we have to make, will best be understood by entering a few steps into the narrative.

Antonio, the Improvisatore, is born in Rome of poor parents. He is introduced to us as a child, living with his fond mother, his only surviving parent, in a room, or rather a loft, in the roof of a house. She is accidentally run over and killed by a nobleman's carriage. A certain uncle Peppo, a cripple and a beggar, claims guardianship of the orphan. Of this Peppo we have a most unamiable portrait. His withered legs are fastened to a board, and he shuffles himself along with his hands, which were armed with a pair of wooden hand clogs. He used to sit upon the steps of the Piazza de Spagna. "Once I was witness," says the Improvisatore, who tells his own story, "of a scene which awoke in me fear of him, and also exhibited his own disposition. Upon one of the lowest flights of stairs sat an old blind beggar, and rattled with his little leaden box that people might drop a *bajocco* therein. Many people passed by my uncle without noticing his crafty smile and the waivings of his hat; the blind man gained more by his silence—they gave to him. Three had gone by, and now came the fourth, and threw him a small coin. Peppo could no longer contain himself: I saw how he crept down like a snake, and struck the blind man in his face, so that he lost both money and stick. 'Thou thief!' cried my uncle, 'wilt thou steal money from me—thou who art not even a regular cripple—cannot see—that is all! And so he will take my bread from my mouth.'"

On great occasions Peppo could quit his board and straddle upon an ass. And now he came upon his ass, set Antonio before him, and carried him off to his home or den. The boy was put into a small recess contiguous to the apartment which his uncle occupied with some of his guests. He overheard this conversation: "Can the boy do any thing?" asked one; "Has he any sort of hurt?"

"No; the Madonna has not been so kind to him," said Peppo; "he is slender and well formed, like a nobleman's child."

"That is a great misfortune," said they all; and some suggestions were added, that he could have some little hurt to help him to get his earthly bread until the Madonna gave him the heavenly. Conversation such as this filled him with alarm; he crept through the aperture which served for window to his dormitory; slid down the wall, and made his escape. He ran as fast as he could, and found himself at length in the Coliseum.

Antonio, at this time, is a poor boy about nine or ten years old; we have seen from what sort of guardian the terrified lad was making his escape. Now, observe the exquisite appropriateness, taste, and judgment of what follows. It is precisely here that the author makes parade of the knowledge he has lately gained in the grammar-school of Slagelse—precisely here that he throws his Antonio into a classical dream or vision!

> "Behind one of the many wooden altars which stand not far apart within the ruins, and indicate the resting-points of the Saviour's progress to the cross,[3] I seated myself upon a fallen capital, which lay in the grass. The stone was as cold as ice, my head burned, there was fever in my blood; I could not sleep, and there occurred to my mind all that people had related to me of this old building; of the captive Jews who had been made to raise these huge blocks of stone for the mighty Roman Cæsar; of the wild beasts which, within this space, had fought with each other, nay, even with men also, while the people sat upon stone benches, which ascended step-like from the ground to the loftiest colonnade.

[3] Not very clearly expressed by the translator. One would think that our Saviour, in his progress to the cross, had passed through the area of the Coliseum, and not that each of the pictures on these altars represented one of the resting-points, &c. Mrs Howitt is sometimes hasty and careless in her writing. And why does she employ such expressions as these:—"many white buttons," "beside of it," "beside of us?" We have read *a many* English books, but never met them in anyone beside of this.

> "There was a rustling in the bushes above me; I looked up, and fancied that I saw something moving. Oh, yes! my imagination showed to me pale dark shapes, which hewed and builded around me; I heard distinctly every stroke that fell, saw the meagre black-bearded Jews tear away grass and shrubs to pile stone upon stone, till the whole monstrous building stood there newly erected; and now all was one throng of human beings, head above head, and the whole seemed one infinitely vast living giant body.
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> "I saw the vestals in their long white garments; the magnificent court of the Cæsar; the naked bleeding gladiators; then I heard how there was a roaring and a howling round about, in the lowest colonnades; from various sides sprang in whole herds of tigers and hyænas; they sped close past the spot where I lay; I felt their burning breath; saw their red fiery glances, and held myself fast upon the stone upon which I was seated, whilst I prayed the Madonna to save me. But wilder still grew the tumult around me; yet I could see in the midst of all the holy cross as it still stands, and which, whenever I had passed it, I had piously kissed. I exerted all my strength, and perceived distinctly that I had thrown my arms around it; but every thing that surrounded me trembled violently together,—walls, men, beasts. Consciousness had left me,—I perceived nothing more. When I again opened my eyes, my fever was over."

Sadder trash than this it were almost impossible to write. It is necessary to make some quotations to justify the terms of censure, as well as of praise, which we have bestowed upon Andersen; but our readers will willingly excuse the infliction of many such quotations; they might be made abundantly enough, we can assure them.

On awaking from this vision, Antonio finds himself in the presence of some worthy monks. They take charge of him, and ultimately give him over to the protection of an old woman, a relative, Dominica, who is living the most solitary life imaginable, in one of the tombs of the Campagna. Here there is a striking picture presented to the imagination—of the old woman and the little boy, shut up in the ruined tomb, in the almost tropical heat, or the heavy rains, that visit the Campagna. He who erewhile had visions of vestals and captive Jews, Cæsar and the gladiators, is more naturally represented as amusing himself by floating sticks and reeds upon the little canal dug to carry the water from their dwelling;—"they were his boats which were to sail to Rome."

One day a young nobleman, pursued by an enraged buffalo, takes refuge in this tomb, and thus becomes acquainted with Antonio. He is a member of the Borghese family, and proves to be the very nobleman whose carriage had accidentally occasioned the death of his mother. Antonio becomes the protégé of the Borghese, returns to Rome, receives an education, and is raised into the high and cultivated ranks of society. He is put under the learned discipline of Habbas Dahdah—an excellent name, we confess, for a fool—in whose person, we presume, he takes a sly revenge upon his late rector of Slagelse. But he has not been fortunate in the invention of parallel absurdities in his Italian pedagogue to those which he may have remembered of some German prototype. He describes him as animated with a sort of insane aversion to the poet Dante, whom he decries on every occasion in order to exalt Petrarch. A Habbas Dahdah would be much more more likely to feign an excessive admiration for the idol and glory of Italy. However, his pupil stealthily procures a Dante; reads him, of course *dreams* of him; in short, there is an intolerable farago about the great poet.

But the time now comes when the great business of all novels—love—is brought upon the scene. And here we have an observation to make which we think may be deserving of attention.

Antonio, the Improvisatore, is made, in the novel, to love in the strangest fashion imaginable. He loves and he does not love; he never knows himself, nor the reader either, whether, or with whom, to pronounce him in love. Annunciata, the first object of this uncertain passion, behaves herself, it must be confessed, in a very extraordinary manner. We suppose the exigencies of the novel must

excuse her; it was necessary that her lover should be plunged in despair, and therefore she could not be permitted to behave as any other woman would have done in the same circumstances. She has a real affection for Antonio; yet at the critical moment—the last moment he will be able to learn the truth, the last time he will see her unless her response be favourable—she behaves in such a manner as to lead him inevitably to the conclusion that his rival is preferred to him. This Annunciata, the most celebrated singer of her day, loses her voice, loses her beauty,—a fever deprives her of both;—and not till her death does Antonio learn that he, and not another, was the person really beloved. Meanwhile, in his travels, Antonio meets with a blind girl, whom he does or does not love, on whom at least he poetises, and whose forehead, *because she was blind*, he had kissed. He is afterwards introduced, at Venice, to a young lady, (Maria) who bears a striking resemblance to this blind girl. She is, in fact, the same person, restored to sight, though he is not aware of it. Maria loves the Improvisatore; he says, he believes that his affection is *not* love. He quits Venice—he returns—he is ill. Then follows one of those miserable scenes which novelists will inflict upon us—of dream, or delirium—what you will, —and, in this state, he fancies Maria is dead; he finds then that he really loved; and, in his sleep or trance, he expresses aloud his affection. His declaration is overheard by Maria and her sister, who are watching over his couch. He wakes, and Maria is there, alive before him. In his sleep he has become aware of the true condition of his own heart; nay, he has leapt the Rubicon,—he has declared it. He becomes a married man.

Now, in the confused and contradictory account of Antonio's passion, we see a truth which the author drew from his own nature and experience,—a truth which, if he had fully appreciated, or had manfully adhered to, would have enabled him to draw a striking, consistent, and original portrait. In such natures as Andersen's, there is often found a modesty more than a woman's, combined with a vivid feeling of beauty, and a yearning for affection. Modesty is no exclusive property of the female sex, and there may be so much of it in a youth as to be the impediment, perhaps the unconscious impediment, to all the natural outpouring of his heart. The coyness of the virgin, the suitor, by his prayers and wooing, does all he can to overcome; but here the coyness is in the suitor himself. He has to overcome it by himself, and he cannot. He hardly knows the sort of enemy he has to conquer. Every woman seems to him enclosed in a bell-glass, fine as gossamer, but he cannot break it. He feels himself drawn, but he cannot approach. His heart is yearning; yet he says to himself, no, I do not love. A looker-on calls him inconstant, uncertain, capricious. He is not so; he is bound by viewless fetters, nor does he know where to strike the chain that is coiled around him.

Such was the truth, we apprehend, such the character, that Andersen had indistinctly in view. He drew from himself, but he had not previously analysed that self. It is, therefore, not so much a false as a confused and imperfect representation that he has given, which the reader, if he thinks it worth his while, must explain and complete for himself. Perhaps, too, a fear of the ridicule which an exhibition of modesty in man might draw down from certain slender witlings, from the young gentlemen, or even the young ladies, of Copenhagen, may have, in part, deterred him from a faithful portraiture. To people of reflection, who have learned to estimate at its true value the laugh of coxcombs, and the wisdom of the so-called man of the world—the shallowest bird of passage that we know of—such a portrait would have been attractive for the genuine truth it contains. It would require, indeed, a master's hand to deal both well and honestly with it.

The descriptions of Italy which "The Improvisatore" contains are sufficiently striking and faithful to recall the scenes to those who have visited them; which is all, we believe, the best descriptions can effect. What is absolutely new to a reader cannot be described to him. If all the poets and romancers of England were to unite together in a committee of taste, they could not frame a description which would give the effect of mountainous scenery to one who had never seen a mountain. The utmost the describer call do, in all such cases, is to liken the scene to something already familiar to the reader's imagination. Though generally faithful, we cannot say that our author never sacrifices accuracy of detail to the demands of the novelist, never sacrifices the actual to the

ideal. For instance, his account of the *Miserere* in the Sistine Chapel, is rather what one is willing to anticipate it might be, than what a traveller really finds it. To be sure, he has a right to place his hero of the novel where he pleases in the chapel, relieve him from the crowd, and give him all the advantages of position: still his perfect enjoyment of all that both the arts of painting and music can afford, and that overpowering *sentiment* which he finds in the great picture of the Last Judgment by Michel Angelo, (a picture which addresses itself far more to the artist than the poet,) strikes us as a description more from imagination than experience.

A little satire upon the travelling English seems, by the way, to be as agreeable at Copenhagen as at Paris. Our Danish friends are quite welcome to it; we only wish for their sakes that, in the present instance, it had been a little more lively and pungent. Our Hans Andersen is too weak in the wrist, has not arm strong enough "to crack the satyric thong." Mere exaggeration maybe mere nonsense, and very dull nonsense. The scene is at the hotel at Terracina, so well known by all travellers.

> "The cracking of whips re-echoed from the wall of rocks; a carriage with four horses rolled up to the hotel. Armed servants sat on the seat at the back of the carriage; a pale thin gentleman, wrapped in a large bright-coloured dressing-gown, stretched himself within it. The postilion dismounted and cracked his long whip several times, whilst fresh horses were put to. The stranger wished to proceed, but as he desired to have an escort over the mountains where Fra Diavolo and Cesari had bold descendants, he was obliged to wait a quarter of an hour, and now scolded, half in English and half in Italian, at the people's laziness, and at the torments and sufferings which travellers had to endure; and at length knotted up his pocket-handkerchief into a night-cap, which he drew on his head, and then, throwing himself into a corner of the carriage, closed his eyes, and seemed to resign himself to his fate.
>
> "I perceived that it was all Englishman, who already, in ten days, had travelled through the north and the middle of Italy, and in that time had made himself acquainted with this country; had seen Rome in one day, and was now going to Naples to ascend Vesuvius, and then by the steam-vessel to Marseilles, to gain a knowledge also of the south of France, which he hoped to do in a still shorter time. At length eight well-armed horsemen arrived, the postilion cracked his whip, and the carriage and the out-riders vanished through the gate between the tall yellow rocks."—(Vol. ii. p. 6.)

"*Only a Fiddler*" proceeds, in part, on the same plan as "The Improvisatore." Here, too, the author has drawn from his own early experience; here, too, we have a poor lad of genius, who will "go through an immense deal of adversity and then become famous;" here too we have the little ugly duck, who, however, was born in a swan's egg. The commencement of the novel is pretty, where it treats of the childhood of the hero; but Christian (such is his name) does not win upon our sympathy, and still less upon our respect. We are led to suspect that Christian Andersen himself, is naturally deficient in certain elements of character, or he would have better upheld the dignity of his namesake, whom he has certainly no desire to lower in our esteem. With an egregious passion for distinction, a great vanity, in short, we are afraid that he himself (judging from some passages in his Autobiography) hardly possesses a proper degree of pride, or the due feeling of self-respect. The Christian in the novel is the butt and laughing-stock of a proud, wilful young beauty of the name of Naomi; yet does he forsake the love of a sweet girl Lucie, to be the beaten spaniel of this Naomi. He has so little spirit as to take her money and her contempt at the same time.

This self-willed and beautiful Naomi is a well-imagined character, but imperfectly developed. Indeed the whole novel may be described as a jumble of ill-connected scenes, and of half-drawn characters. We have some sad imitations of the worst models of our current literature. Here is a

Norwegian godfather, the blurred likeness of some Parisian murderer. Here are dreams and visions, and plenty of delirium. He has caught the trick, perhaps, from some of our English novelists, of infusing into the persons of his drama all sorts of distorted imaginations, by way of describing the situation he has placed them in. We will quote a passage of this nature: it is just possible that some of our countrymen, when they see their own style reflected back to them from a foreign page, may be able to appreciate its exquisite truth to nature. Christian, still a boy, is at play with his companions; he hides from them in the belfry of a church. It was the custom to ring the bells at sunset. He had ensconced himself between the wall and the great bell, and "when this rose, and showed to him the whole opening of its mouth," he found he was within a hair's breadth of contact with it. Retreat was impossible, and the least movement exposed his head to be shattered. The conception is terrible enough, but by no means a novel one, as all readers conversant with the pages of this Magazine will readily allow, by reference to the story of "The Man in the Bell," in our tenth volume,[4] one of the late Dr Maginn's most powerful and graphic sketches. But the natural horror of the situation by no means satisfies this novelist; he therefore engrafts the following imaginations thereupon, as being such as were most likely to occur to the lad, frightened out of his senses, stunned by the roar of the bell, winking hard, and pressing himself closer and closer to the wall to escape the threatened blow.

> "Overpowered to his very inmost soul by the most fearful anguish, the bell appeared to him the jaws of some immense serpent; the clapper was the poisonous tongue, which it extended towards him. Confused imaginations pressed upon him; feelings similar to the anguish which he felt when the godfather had dived with him beneath the water, took possession of him; but here it roared far stronger in his ears, and the changing colours before his eyes formed themselves into gray figures. The old pictures in the castle floated before him, but with threatening mien and gestures, and ever-changing forms; now long and angular, again jelly-like, clear and trembling; they clashed cymbals and beat drums, and then suddenly passed away into that fiery glow in which every thing had appeared to him, when, with Naomi, he looked through the red window-panes. It burned, that he felt plainly. He swam through a burning sea, and ever did the serpent exhibit to him its fearful jaws. An irresistible desire seized him to take hold on the clapper with both hands, when suddenly it became calm around him, but it still raged within his brain. He felt that all his clothes clung to him, and that his hands seemed fastened to the wall. Before him hung the serpent's head, dead and bowed; the bell was silent. He closed his eyes and felt that he fell asleep. He had fainted."—(Vol. i. p. 59.)

Are these some of the "beautiful thoughts" which Mrs Howitt finds it the greatest delight of her literary life to translate? One is a little curious to know how far this beauty has been increased or diminished by their admiring translator; but unfortunately we can boast no Scandinavian scholarship. This novel, however, is not without some striking passages, whether of description of natural scenery, or of human life. Of these, the little episode of the fate of Steffen-Margaret recurs most vividly to our recollection. Mrs Howitt, in her translation of "The True Story of my Life," draws our attention, in a note, to this character of Steffen-Margaret, informing us that it is the reproduction of a personage whom Andersen becomes slightly acquainted with in the early part of his career. She thus points out a striking passage in the novel; but the translator of the Autobiography and of "Only a Fiddler," might have found more natural opportunities for illustrating the connexion between the novel and the life of the author. There is no resemblance whatever between the two characters alluded to, except that they both belong to the same unfortunate class of society. Of the young girl mentioned in the life, nothing indeed is said, except that she received once a week a visit from her papa, who came to drink

[4] Vol. x, Nov. 1821, p. 373.

tea with her, dressed always in a shabby blue coat; and the point of the story is, that in after times, when Andersen rose into a far different rank of society, he encountered in some fashionable saloon the papa of the shabby blue coat in a bland old gentleman glittering with orders.

Christian, the hero of the novel, a lad utterly ignorant of life, has come for the first time to Copenhagen. Whilst the ship in which he has arrived is at anchor in the port, it is visited by some *ladies*, one of whom particularly fascinates him. She must be a princess, or something of that kind, if not a species of angel. The next day he finds out her residence, sees her, tells her all his history, all his inspirations, all his hopes; he is sure that he has found a kind and powerful patroness. The lady smiles at him, and dismisses him with some cakes and sweetmeats, and kindly taps upon the head. This is just what Andersen at the same age would have done himself, and just in this manner would he have been dismissed and comforted. There is a scene in the Autobiography very similar. He explains to some kind old dames, whom he encounters at the theatre, his thwarted aspirations after art; they give him cakes;—he tells them again of his impulses, and that he is dying to be famous; they give him more cakes;—he eats and is pacified.

The ship, however, had not been long in the harbour before his princess visited it again. It was evening—Christian was alone in the cabin.

> "He was most strangely affected as he heard at this moment a voice on the cabin steps, which was just like hers. She, perhaps, would already present herself as a powerful fairy to conduct him to happiness. He would have rushed towards her, but she came not alone; a sailor accompanied her, and inquired aloud, on entering, if there were any one there. But a strange feeling of distress fettered Christian's tongue, and he remained silent.
>
> "'What have you got to say to me?' asked the sailor.
>
> "'Save me!' was the first word, which Christian heard from her lips in the cabin; she whom he had regarded as a rich and noble lady. 'I am sunk in shame!' said she. 'No one esteems me; I no longer esteem myself. Oh, save me, Sören! I have honestly divided my money with you; I yet am possessed of forty dollars. Marry me, and take me away out of this wo, and out of this misery! Take me to a place where nobody will know me, where you may not be ashamed of me. I will work for you like a slave, till the blood comes out at my finger-ends. Oh, take me away with you! In a year's time it may be too late.'
>
> "'Should I take you to my old father and mother?' said the sailor.
>
> "'I will kiss the dust from their feet they may beat me, and I will bear it without a murmur—will patiently bear every blow. I am already old, that I know. I shall soon be eight-and-twenty; but it is an act of mercy, which I beseech of you. If you will not do it, nobody else will; and I think I must drink—drink till my brain reels—and I forget what I have made myself!'
>
> "'Is that the very important thing that you have got to tell me?' remarked the sailor, with a cold indifference.
>
> "Her tears, her sighs, her words of despair, sank deep into Christian's heart. A visionary image had vanished, and with its vanishing he saw the dark side of a naked reality.
>
> "He found himself again alone.
>
> "A few days after this, the ice had to be hewed away from the channel. Christian and the sailor struck their axes deeply into the firm ice, so that it broke into great pieces. Something white hung fast to the ice in the opening; the sailor enlarged the opening, and then a female corpse presented itself, dressed in white

> as for a ball. She had amber leads round her neck, gold earrings, and she held her hands closely folded against her breast as if for prayer. It was Steffen-Margaret."

"O.T." commences in a more lively style than either of the preceding novels, but soon becomes in fact the dullest and most wearisome of the three. During a portion of this novel he seems to have taken for his model of narrative the "Wilhelm Meister" of Goethe; but the calm domestic manner which is tolerable in the clear-sighted man, who we know can rise nobly from it when he pleases, accords ill enough with the bewildered, most displeasing, and half intelligible story which Andersen has here to relate.

We have occupied ourselves quite sufficiently with these novels, and shall pass over "O.T." without further comment. Neither shall we bestow any of our space upon "The Poet's Bazaar," which seems to be nothing else than the Journal which the author may be supposed to have kept during his second visit to Italy, when he also extended his travels into Greece and Constantinople.

We take refuge in the nursery—we will listen to these tales for children—we throw away the rigid pen of criticism—we will have a story.

What precisely are the laws, what the critical rules, on which tales for children should be written, we will by no means undertake to define. Are they to contain nothing, in language or significance, beyond the apprehension of the inmates of the nursery? It is a question which we will not pretend to answer. Aristotle lays down nothing on the subject in his "Poetici;" nor Mr Dunlop in his "History of Fiction." If this be the law, if every thing must be level to the understanding of the frock-and-trousers population, then these, and many other Tales for Children, transgress against the first rule of their construction. How often does the story turn, like the novels for elder people, upon a marriage! Some king's son in disguise marries the beautiful princess. What idea has a child of marriage?—unless the sugared plum-cake distributed on such occasions comes in aid of his imagination. Marriage, to the infantine intelligence, must mean fine dresses, and infinite sweetmeats—a sort of juvenile party that is never to break up. Well, and the notion serves to carry on the tale withal. The imagination throws this temporary bridge over the gap, till time and experience supply other architecture. Amongst this collection, is a story in which vast importance is attached to a kiss. What can a curly-headed urchin, who is kissing, or being kissed, all day long, know of the value that may be given to what some versifier calls,

> "The humid seal of soft affections!"

To our apprehension, it has always appeared that the best books for children were those not written expressly for them, but which, interesting to all readers, happened to fasten peculiarly upon the youthful imagination,—such as "Robinson Crusoe," the "Arabian Nights," "Pilgrim's Progress," &c. It is quite true that in all these there is much the child does not understand, but where there is something vividly apprehended, there is an additional pleasure procured, and an admirable stimulant, in the endeavour to penetrate the rest. There is all the charm of a riddle combined with all the fascination of a story. Besides, do we not throughout our boyhood and our youth, read with intense interest, and to our great improvement, books which we but partly understand? How much was lost to us of our Milton and our Shakspeare at an age when nevertheless we read them with intense interest and excitement, and therefore, we may be sure, with great profit. Throughout the whole season of our intellectual progress, we are necessarily reading works of which a great part is obscure to us; we get half at one time, and half at another.

Not, by any means, that we intend to say a word against writing books for children; if they are good books we shall read them too. A clever man talking to his child, in the presence of his adult friends,—has it never been remarked, how infinitely amusing he may be, and what an advantage he has from this two-fold audience? He lets loose all his fancy, under pretence that he is talking to a child, and he couples this wildness with all his wit, and point, and shrewdness, because he knows his friend is listening. The child is not a whit the less pleased, because there is something above its

comprehension, nor the friend at all the less entertained, because he laughs at what was not intended for his capacity. A writer of children's tales—(If they are any thing better than what every nursery-maid can invent for herself)—is precisely in this position: he will, he *must* have in view the adult listener. While speaking to the child, he will endeavour to interest the parent who is overhearing him; and thus there may result a very amusing and agreeable composition.

We have met with some children's tales which, we thought, were so plainly levelled at the parent, that they seemed little more than lectures to grown-up people in the disguise of stories to their children. Some of the very clever stories of Miss Edgeworth appear to be more evidently designed for the adult listener, than to the little people to whom they are immediately addressed. And they may perhaps render good service in this way. Perhaps some mature matron, far above counsel, may take a hint which she thinks was not *intended*—may accept that piece of good advice which she fancies her own shrewdness has discovered, and which the subtle, Miss Edgeworth had laid, like a trap, in her path.

We are happy, we repeat, that we do not feel it incumbent upon us to settle the rules, the critical canon, of this nursery literature. We have no objection, however, to peep into it now and then, and we shall venture to give our readers another of Andersen's little stories, and so take our leave of him. We omit a sentence, here and there, where we can without injury to the tale; yet we have no fear that our gravest readers will think the extract too long. Our quotation is from the volume called "Tales from Denmark." There is another collection called, "The Shoes of Fortune;" these are higher in pretension, and inferior in merit.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

"One day a couple of swindlers, who called themselves first-rate weavers, made their appearance in the imperial town of——. They pretended that they were able to weave the richest stuffs, in which not only the colours and the pattern were extremely beautiful, but that the clothes made of such stuffs possessed the wonderful property of remaining invisible to him who was unfit for the office he held, or was extremely silly.

"'What capital clothes they must be!' thought the Emperor. 'If I had but such a suit, I could directly find out what people in my empire were not equal to their office; and besides, I should be able to distinguish the clever from the stupid. By Jove, I must have some of this stuff made directly for me!' And so he ordered large sums of money to be given to the two swindlers, that they might set to work immediately.

"The men erected two looms, and did as if they worked very diligently; but in reality they had got nothing on the loom. They boldly demanded the finest silk, and gold thread, put it all in their own pockets, and worked away at the empty loom till quite late at night.

"'I should like to know how the two weavers are getting on with my stuff,' said the Emperor one day to himself; 'but he was rather embarrassed when he remembered that a silly fellow, or one unfitted for his office, would not be able to see the stuff. 'Tis true, he thought, as far as regarded himself, there was no risk whatever; but yet he preferred sending some one else, to bring him intelligence of the two weavers, and how they were getting on, before he went himself; for every body in the whole town had heard of the wonderful property that this stuff was said to possess.

"'I will send my worthy old minister,' said the Emperor at last, after much consideration; 'he will be able to say how the stuff looks better than anybody.'

"So the worthy old minister went to the room where the two swindlers were' working away with all their might and main. 'Lord help me!' thought the old man, opening his eyes as wide as possible—'Why, I can't see the least thing whatever on the loom.' But he took care not to say so.

"The swindlers, pointing to the empty frame, asked him most politely if the colours were not of great beauty. And the poor old minister looked and looked, and could see nothing whatever. 'Bless me!' thought he to himself, 'Am I, then, really a simpleton? Well, I never thought so. Nobody knows it. I not fit for office! No, nothing on earth shall make me say that I have not seen the stuff!'

"'Well, sir,' said one of the swindlers, still working busily at the empty loom, 'you don't say if the stuff pleases you or not.'

"'Oh beautiful! beautiful! the work is admirable!' said the old minister looking hard through his spectacles. 'This pattern, and these colours! Well, well, I shall not fail to tell the Emperor that they are most beautiful!'

"The swindlers then asked for more money, and silk, and gold thread; but they put as before all that was given them into their own pocket, and still continued to work with apparent diligence at the empty loom.

"Some time after, the Emperor sent another officer to see how the work was getting on. But he fared like the other; he stared at the loom from every side; but as there was nothing there, of course he could see nothing. 'Does the stuff not please

you as much as it did the minister?' asked the men, making the same gestures as before, and talking of splendid colours and patterns, which did not exist.

"'Stupid I certainly am not!' thought the new commissioner; 'then it must be that I am not fitted for my lucrative office—that were a good joke! However, no one dare even suspect such a thing.' And so he began praising the stuff that he could not see, and told the two swindlers how pleased he was to behold such beautiful colours, and such charming patterns. 'Indeed, your majesty,' said he to the Emperor on his return, 'the stuff which the weavers are making, is extraordinarily fine.'

"It was the talk of the whole town.

"The Emperor could no longer restrain his curiosity to see this costly stuff; so, accompanied by a chosen train of courtiers, among whom were the two trusty men who had so admired the work, off he went to the two cunning cheats. As soon as they heard of the Emperor's approach they began working with all diligence, although there was still not a single thread on the loom.

"'Is it not magnificent?' said the two officers of the crown, who had been there before. 'Will your majesty only look? What a charming pattern! What beautiful colours!' said they, pointing to the empty frames, for they thought the others really could see the stuff.

"'What's the meaning of this?' said the Emperor to himself, 'I see nothing! Am *I* a simpleton! I not fit to be Emperor? Oh,' he cried aloud, 'charming! The stuff is really charming! I approve of it highly;' and he smiled graciously, and examined the empty looms minutely. And the whole suite strained their eyes and cried 'Beautiful!' and counselled his Majesty to have new robes made out of this magnificent stuff for the grand procession that was about to take place. And so it was ordered.

"The day on which the procession was to take place, the two men brought the Emperor's new suit to the palace; they held up their arms as though they had something in their hands, and said, 'Here are your Majesty's knee-breeches; here is the coat, and here the mantle. The whole suit is as light as a cobweb; and when one is dressed, one would almost fancy one had nothing on: but that is just the beauty of this stuff!'

"'Of course!' said all the courtiers, although not a single one of them could see any thing of the clothes.

"'Will your imperial Majesty most graciously be pleased to undress? We will then try on the new things before the glass.'

"The Emperor allowed himself to be undressed, and then the two cheats did exactly as if each one helped him on with an article of dress, while his Majesty turned himself round on all sides before the mirror.

"'The canopy which is to be borne above your Majesty in the procession, is in readiness without,' announced the chief master of the ceremonies.

"'I am quite ready,' replied the Emperor, turning round once more before the looking-glass.

"So the Emperor walked on, under the high canopy, through the streets of the metropolis, and all the people in the streets and at the windows cried out, 'Oh, how beautiful the Emperor's new dress is!' In short there was nobody but wished to cheat himself into the belief that he saw the Emperor's new clothes.

"'But he has nothing on!' said a little child.'

"And then all the people cried out, 'He has nothing on!'

"But the Emperor and the courtiers—they retained their seeming faith, and walked on with great dignity to the close of the procession."

THE VISION OF CAGLIOSTRO

"In the horror of a vision by night, when deep sleep is wont to hold men, fear seized upon me, and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted; and when a spirit passed before me, the hair of my flesh stood up."
—The Book of Job.

The last, and perhaps the most renowned of the Rosicrucians, was, according to a historical insinuation, implicated in that notorious juggle of the Diamond Necklace, which tended so much to increase the popular hatred towards the evil-doomed and beautiful Marie Antoinette. Whether this imputation were correct, or whether the Cardinal Duc de Rohan was the only distinguished person deluded by the artifices of the Countess de la Motte, it is certain that Joseph Balsamo, commonly called Alexandre, Count de Cagliostro, was capable of any knavery, however infamous. Guile was his element; audacity was his breastplate; delusion was his profession; immorality was his creed; debauchery was his consolation; his own genius—the genius of cunning—was the god of his idolatry. Had Cagliostro been sustained by the principles of rectitude, he must have become the idol as well as the wonder of his contemporaries; his accomplishments must have dazzled them into admiration, for he possessed all the attributes of a Crichton. Beautiful in aspect, symmetrical in proportions, graceful in carriage, capacious in intellect, erudite as a Benedictine, agile as an Acrobat, daring as Scævola, persuasive as Alcibiades, skilled in all manly pastimes, familiar with the philosophies of the scholar and the worldling, an orator, a musician, a courtier, a linguist,—such was the celebrated Cagliostro. In his abilities, he was as capricious as Leonardo, and as subtle as Macchiavelli; but he was without the magnanimity of the one, or the crafty prudence of the other. Lucretius so darkened the glories of nature by the glooms of his blasphemous imagination, that he might have described this earth as a golden globe animated by a demon. Fashioned in a mould as marvellous as that golden orb, and animated in like manner by a devilish and wily spirit, was Balsamo the Rosicrucian.

Between the period of his birth in 1743, and that of his dissolution in 1795, when incarcerated in a dungeon of San Leo, at Rome, Cagliostro, rendered himself in a manner illustrious by practising upon the credulity of his fellow-creatures. Holstein had witnessed his pretended successes in alchemy. Strasburg had received him with admiration, as the evangelist of a mystic religion. Paris had resounded with the marvels revealed by his performances in Egyptian free-masonry. Molten gold was said to stream at pleasure over the rim of his crucibles; divination by astrology was as familiar to him as it had been of yore to Zoroaster or Nostradamus; graves yawned at the beck of his potent finger; their ghostly habitants, appeared at his preternatural bidding. The necromantic achievements of Doctor Dee and William Lilly dwindled into insignificance before those attributed to a man who, although apparently in the bloom of manhood, was believed to have survived a thousand winters.

Accident had supplied Cagliostro with an accomplice of suitable depravity. In the course of his eccentric peregrinations among the continental cities, he had formed the acquaintance of a female, remarkable for her consummate loveliness and her boundless sensuality. Married to this Circe, the adventurer began to thrive beyond his most sanguine anticipations. It must be remembered, however, that in his nefarious proceedings, Balsamo was aided by a faculty of invention almost miraculous in its fruitfulness, and occasionally almost sublime in its audacity. By these means, he ultimately became the most astonishing impostor the world had ever beheld, with the solitary exception of Mohammed.

As a forerunner of a disastrous revolution, the appearance of this fantastic personage in the capital of civilisation was at once dismal and prophetic. Unconsciously, he was the prophet of disaster. Unconsciously, he was the prelude—half-solemn, half-grotesque—of a bloody and diabolical saturnalia. History, both profane and inspired, tells us that when the Euphrates forsook its natural channel, and the hostile legions trampled under its gates at nightfall; when the revellers

of Belshazzar, drunk with prolonged orgies and haggard with the shadow of an impending doom, staggered through the marble vestibules and out upon the marble causeways, rending their purple vestures in the moonlight, there was weeping among the lords of Chaldea,—"Wo! wo! wo!" was walled in the streets of Babylon. A similar destiny awaited Paris, but as yet a different spectacle was visible; as yet the carousals of the metropolis were at their zenith; as yet the current flowed in its ancient channel; as yet the woes of the empire were not written on the wall of the palace. Festivities were never conducted with more magnificence than immediately before the downfall of the monarchy and the general desolation of the kingdom. The pomps of the religion, the pageantries of the court, and the munificence of the nobility, were never before characterised by so much grandeur and profusion. The church, the sovereign, and the oligarchy, were crowning themselves for the sacrifice.

Opposite the Rue de Luxembourg, and parallel with the Rue de Caumartin, there stood, in the year 1782, a little villa-cottage or rustic pavilion. It was separated from the Boulevard de la Madeleine by a green paddock, and was concealed in a nest of laurustinus and clematis. Autumn, that generous season, which seems in its bounty to impart a smell of ripeness to the very leaves, had already scattered dyes of gold and vermilion over the verdure of this shrubbery. A night-breeze, impregnated with vegetable perfumes, and wafting before it one of these leaves, stole between the branches—over the fragrant mould—across a grass-plot—through an open window of the cottage. The leaf tinkled. It had fallen upon the pages of a volume from which a man was reading by a lamp. At that moment the clock of the Capuchins tolled out a doleful two; it was answered by the numerous bells of Paris. Solemn, querulous, sepulchral, quavering, silvery, close at hand, or modulated into a dim echo by the distance, the voice of the inexorable hours vibrated over the capital, and then ceased.

Alas, for the heart of Cagliostro!

The solitary watcher shuddered as the metallic sounds floated in from the belfries. Although startled by the dropping of the leaf, he closed the volume, leisurely placing it between the pages as a marker—*it*, so brittle! so yellow! so typical of decay and mortality! The book comprised the writings of Sir Cornelius Agrippa. Having tossed the old alchemist from him with an air of overwhelming dejection, the student abandoned himself to the most sorrowful reflections.

He had but recently returned from a masked ball, and a domino of salmon-coloured satin still hung loosely over his shoulders. As the feeble light of the lamp glimmered upon the jet-bugles and steel-spangles of his costume, there was visible the perpetual contrast of his destiny,—a mingling of the most abstruse researches and the most extravagant frivolities. Jewels sparkled upon his hands and bosom; the varicose veins on his temples throbbed with a feverish precision; the fumes of the wine-cup flushed his cheek and disordered his imagination.

"Death," thought the Rosicrucian, "fills me with abhorrence; and yet life is totally devoid of happiness. Happiness! O delusive phantom of humanity, how art thou attainable? Through Fame? Fame is mine, and I am wretched. Over the realms of civilisation my name is noised abroad; in the populous cities the glory of my art resounds; when my barge glided among the palaces of Venice, the blue Adriatic was purpled with blossoms in my honour.—Fame? Fame brings not happiness to Cagliostro. Wealth? Not so. Ducats, pistoles, louis-d'or, have brought no panacea to the sorrows of Balsamo. Beauty? Nay; for, in the profligate experience of capitals, the sage is saddened with the knowledge that comeliness, at best, is but an exquisite hypocrisy. I have striven also, vainly, for contentment in the luxuries of voluptuous living. The talisman of Epicurus has evaded my grasp—the glittering bauble![5] The ravishing ideal Joy, has been to me not as the statue to Pygmalion: I have grovelled down in adoration at its feet, and have found it the same immobile, relentless, unresponsive image. Youth is yet mine, but it is a youth hoary in desolation. Centuries of anguish have flooded

[5] Béranger has already conveyed this truth through the melody of his delicious verse:—"Le vois-tu bien, là-bas, là-bas,Là-bas, là-bas? dit l'Espérance;Bourgeois, manants, rois et prelatsLui font de loin la révérence.C'est le Bonheur, dit l'Espérance.Courons, courons; doublons le pas,Pour le trouver là-bas, là-bas,Là-bas, là-bas."

through my bosom, even in the heyday of existence. The tangible and the intangible, the visible and the invisible, the material and the immaterial, have been at deadly strife in my conjectures. The present has been to me an evasion, the future an enigma; the earth a delusion, the heavens a doubt. Even the pomp of those inexplicable stars is a new agony of indecision to my recoiling fancy[6]—so impassive in their unchangeableness, so awful in the quiescence of their eternal grandeur. Supreme, too, in my bewilderment, remains the problem of their revolutions—the cause of their impulsion[7] as well as of their creation. Baffled in my scrutiny of the sublime puzzle which is *domed* over the globe at nightfall, dizzy with the contemplation of such abysses of mystery, my thoughts have reverted to this earth, in which pleasure sparkles but to evaporate. No solace in the investigation of those infinitudes, which are only fathomable by a system revolting to my judgment—the system of a theocratic philosophy; no consolation in the dreamings evoked by the lore of the stupendous skies: my heart throbs still for the detection and the possession of happiness. Nature has endowed me with senses—five delicate and susceptible instruments—for the realisation of bodily delight. Sights of unutterable loveliness, tones of surpassing melody, perfumes of delicious fragrance, marvellous sensibilities of touch and palate, afford me so many channels for enjoyment. Still the insufficiency of the palpable and appreciable is paramount; still the everlasting dolor interposes: the appetite is satiated, the aroma palls upon the nostrils, the nerves are affected by irritability, the harmony merges into dissonance; even the beautiful becomes so far an abomination that man is 'mad for the sight of his eyes that he did see.' Such is the sterile and repulsive penalty of the searcher after happiness. Happiness! O delusive phantom of humanity, how art thou attainable?"

A thrill pervaded the frame of the visionary as he paused in his meditations. Subtle as the birth of an emotion—solemn as the presage of a disaster—terrible as the throes of dissolution, was the pang that agonised the Rosicrucian. His flesh crept upon his bones at the consciousness of a preternatural but invisible presence—the presence of an unseen visitant in the dead of the midnight! His heart quaked as it drank in, like Eliphaz, "*the veins of* ITS *whisper*."[8] There was no sound or reverberation, and yet the language streamed upon the knowledge of the listener with a distinctness beyond that of human articulation. The stillness of his solitude was only broken by the rustling of the night-breeze among the laurustines, and yet in the ears of Cagliostro there was the utterance as of unsubstantial lips—the sense as of a divine symphony—"the thunder, and the music, and the pomp" of an unearthly Voice.[9]

"Balsamo!" it cried, "thy thoughts are blasphemy; thy lamentations are foolishness; thy mind is darkened by the glooms of a most barren dejection. Away! vain Sceptic, with the syllogisms of infidelity. The glory of the immortal will evades thy comprehension in the depths of infinitude. When in its natural brightness, the spiritual being of man reflects that glory as in a mirror. *Thine* is blurred by sensuality. Tranquillity is denied thee, because of the concupiscence of thy ambition. A profligate and venal career has troubled thy soul with misgivings. Thou hast scorned even the five senses—those golden portals of humanity! Know, O dreamer, that in them alone consists the enjoyment of a finite

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[6] "I did not dare to breathe aloud the unhallowed anguish of my mind to the majesty of the unsympathising stars."—See *Falkland*.

[7] "Motus autem siderum," such is the reverent and sententious remark of Grotius, "qui eccentrici, quique epicyclici dicuntur, manifeste ostendunt *non vim materiæ, sed liberi agentis ordinationem*."—See *De Veritate Rel. Christ. Lib.* i. § 7.

[8] "Now, there was a word spoken to me in private, and my ears, by stealth as it were, received the veins of its whisper."—*Job*, chap. iv. verse 12.

[9] "There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines When Winter lifts his voice; there is a noise Among immortals when a god gives sign With hushing finger, how he means to load His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought, With thunder, and with music, and with pomp." Such are the majestic syllables which preface the speech of Saturn in *Hyperion*. Keats was ridding himself of the puerilities of Cockaigne when he wrote that fragment of an epic—a fragment which is unsurpassed by any modern attempt at heroic composition. In reading it, the very earth seems shaking with the footsteps of fallen divinities. Even Byron, who, like ourselves, had no great predilection for the school in which the poetic genius of John Keats was germinated, has emphatically said of *Hyperion* that "it seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus."—See *Byron's Works*, vol. xv., p. 92.

existence: know that *through the virtuous use of those five senses, earthly happiness is attainable*! Dost thou still tremble in thy unbelief? Arise, Balsamo, and behold the teachings of eternity!"

As the last sentence resounded in the heart of Cagliostro, up into the air floated the Rosicrucian and the Voice.

TIBERIUS

Time and distance seemed to be conquered in that mysterious ascension, and an impenetrable darkness enveloped the impostor as he felt himself carried swiftly through the atmosphere. When he had somewhat recovered, however, from his astonishment, the motion ceased, and the light of an Italian evening beamed upon him from the heavens. A scene then revealed itself around Cagliostro, the like of which his eyes had never before beheld, or his imagination, in its wildest mood, conceived.

He was standing in a secluded grove in the island of Capreæ. Fountains sparkled under the branches; blossoms of the gaudiest colours flaunted on the brambles, or enamelled the turf; laughter and music filled the air with a confusion of sweet sounds; and among the intricacies of the trees, bands of revellers flitted to and fro, clad in the antique costumes of Rome. Under the shadow of a gigantic orange-bush, upon a couch of luxurious softness and embroidered in gorgeous arabesques, there reclined the figure of an old man. His countenance was hideous with age and debauchery. Sin glimmered in the evil light of his eyes—those enormous and bloodshot eyes with which (*prægrandibus oculis*) the historian tells us he could see even in the night-time.[10] Habitual intemperance had inflamed his complexion, and disfigured his skin with disgusting eruptions; while his body, naturally robust in its proportions, had become bloated with the indolence of confirmed gluttony. A garment (the *toga virilis*) of virgin whiteness covered his limbs; along the edge of the garment was the broad hem of Tyrian purple indicative of the imperial dignity; and around the hoary brow of the epicurean, was woven a chaplet of roses and aloe-leaves.

Cagliostro recoiled in abhorrence before a spectacle at once so austere and lascivious. His spirit quailed at the sight of a visage in which appeared to be concentrated the infamy of many centuries. His soul revolted at the sinister and ferocious expression pervading every lineament, and lurking in every wrinkle. As he gazed, however, a blithe sound startled him from the umbrage of the boughs. Quick, lively, jocund, to the clashing of her cymbals, there bounded forth an Italian maiden in the garb of a Bacchante. Her feet agile as the roe's, her eyes lustrous and defiant, her hair dishevelled, her bosom heaving, her arms symmetrical as sculpture, but glowing with the roseate warmth of youth, the virgin still rejoiced, as it were, in the tumult of the dance. Grapes of a golden-green relieved by the ruddy-brown of their foliage, clustered in a garland about her temples, and leaped in unison with her movements. Around! with her raven tresses streaming abroad in ringlets—around! with her sandals clinking on the gravel to the capricious beat of her cymbals—around! with her light robes flowing back from a jewelled brooch above the knee—singing, sparkling, undulating, circling, rustling, the Bacchante entranced the heart of the Rosicrucian. She gleamed before him like the embodiment of enthusiasm. She was the genius of motion, the divinity of the dance; she was Terpsichore in the grace of her movements, Euterpe in the ravishing sweetness of her voice. A thrill of admiration suffused with a deeper tint even the abhorred cheek of the voluptuary.

By an almost imperceptible degree, the damsel abated the ardour of her gyrations, her cymbals clashed less frequently, the song faded from her lip, the flutter of her garments ceased, the vine-fruit drooped upon her forehead. She stood before the couch palpitating with emotion, and radiant with a divine beauty. In another instant, she had prostrated herself upon the earth, for in the decrepit monster of Capreæ, she recognised the lord of the whole world—Tiberius.

"Arise, maiden of Apulia," he said, with an immediate sense that he beheld another of those innocent damsels, who were stolen from their pastoral homes on the Peninsula to become the victims of his depravity. "Arise, and slake my thirst from yonder goblet. The tongue of Tiberius is dry with the avidity of his passion."

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[10] Thus writes Suetonius—"prægrandibus oculis, qui, quod mirum esset, noctu etiam et in tenebris, viderent, sed ad breve, et quum primum a somno patuissent; deinde rursum hebescebant."—*Tib.* cap. lxviii.

An indescribable loathing entered into the imagination of the Bacchante even as she lay upon the grass; yet she rose with precipitation and filled a chalice to the brim with Falernian. Tiberius grasped it with an eager hand, and his mouth pressed the lip of the cup as if to drain its ruby vintage to the bottom. Suddenly, however, the eyes of the old man blazed with a raging light; the scowl of lust was forgotten; the vindictiveness of a fiend shone in his dilated eyeballs, and, with a yell of fury, he cast the goblet into the air, crying out that the wine *boiled like the bowl of Pluto*. He was writhing in one of those paroxysms of rage, which justified posterity in regarding him as a madman. The howling of Tiberius resounded among the verdure, as the rattle of a snake might do when it raises its deadly crest from its lair among the flowers. Quick as thought at the first sound of those inexorable accents, the grove was thronged with the revellers. They jostled each other in their solicitude to minister to the cruelty of the despot; and that cruelty was as ruthless, and as hell-born, as it was ingenious and appalling.

Obedient to a gesture of Tiberius, the Bacchante was placed upon a pedestal. For a moment, she stood before them an exquisite statue Of despair—exquisite even in the excess of her bewilderment. For a moment, she stood there stunned by the suddenness of the commotion, and frantic with the consciousness of her peril. For a moment she gazed about her for aid, wildly but, alas! vainly. No pity beamed upon her in that more horrible Gomorrah. The marble trembled under her feet—a sulphurous stench shot through its crevices—the virgin shrieked and fell forwards, scorched and blackened to a cinder. She was blasted, as if by a thunderbolt.[11] Cagliostro looked with horror upon the ashes of the Bacchante. He had seen youth stricken down by age; he had seen virtue annihilated, so to speak, at the mandate of vice; he had seen—and even *his* callous heart exulted at the thought—he had seen innocence snatched from pollution, when upon the very threshold of an earthly hell. While rejoicing in this reflection, he was aroused by the stertorous breathing of the emperor. The crowned demon of the island was being borne away to his palace upon the shoulders of his attendants. Although maddened by an insatiable thirst, and by a gloom that was becoming habitual, the monster lay upon his cushions as impotent as a child, in the midst of his diseases and iniquities.[12]

At the feet of the Rosicrucian were huddled the bones of the virgin of Apulia; and the babbling of the fountains was alone audible in the solitude.

"Such," said the mournful Voice, as Cagliostro again felt himself carried through the darkness —"such, Balsamo, are the miseries of a debauched appetite."

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[11] Those who are familiar with the classic historians, will see in this description no exaggeration whatever. Instruments for the destruction of life yet more awful and mysterious, were employed by many of the predecessors, and many of the successors of Tiberius, as well as by Tiberius himself: and modern science has shown that these devices, instead of being, as was originally conjectured, the result of black-magic, were, in reality, the effect of hydraulic, pneumatic, and mechanical contrivances. Even the most marvellous feats of the Egyptian sorcerers have been latterly explained by the revelations of natural philosophy, and a multitude of these explanations may be found by the reader in the learned work "Des Sciences Occultes," &c. written by M. Eusebe Salverte, and published in Paris as recently as 1843. In that remarkable volume, M. Salverte proves that natural phenomena are more startling than necromantic tricks, and that, in the words of Roger Bacon, "*non igitur oportet nos magicis illusionibus uti, cum potestas philosophica doceat operari quod sufficit.*" That Tiberius was capable of atrocities yet more terrific, and that murders of the most inhuman kind were the consequence of almost every one of his diabolical whims, those acquainted with the picturesque narrative of Suetonius already know. They will remember not only how he caused his nephew Germanicus to be poisoned by the governor of Syria, but how he ordered a fisherman to be torn in pieces by the claws of a crab, simply because he met him, in one of his suspicious moods, when strolling in a sequestered garden of Capreæ.—*Sue. Tib.* c. lx.

[12] Suetonius assures us (cap. lxviii.), that the muscular strength of Tiberius Claudius Nero was, in the prime of his manhood, almost as supernatural as his crimes; that he could with his outstretched finger bore a hole through a sound apple (*integrum malum digito terebraret*), and wound the head of a child or even a youth with a fillip, (*caput pueri, vel etiam adolescentis, talitro vulneraret.*) His excesses must, however, have enervated his frame long before his death by suffocation.

AGRIPPA

In another instant, the impostor was standing upon the floor of a gigantic amphitheatre in Palestine. The whole air was refulgent with the light of a summer morning, and through the loopholes of the structure, the eye caught the blue shimmer of the Mediterranean. Banners, emblazoned with the ciphers of Rome, fluttered from the walls of the amphitheatre. Its internal circumference was thronged with a vast concourse of citizens; and, immediately about the Rosicrucian, groups of foreign traders, habited as if for some unusual ceremony, were scattered over the arena. Expectation was evinced in every movement of the assemblage, in every murmur that floated round the benches. The worshippers were there, it seemed, and were awaiting the high-priest. That high-priest was approaching, and more than a high-priest; for Herod Agrippa, the tetrarch of Judea had descended from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, for the celebration of warlike games in honour of the Emperor Claudius, and, on the completion of those festivities, the deputed sovereign had consented, at the intercession of Blastus, to receive a deputation of certain Phenician ambassadors who were solicitous for an assurance of his clemency. Those envoys—the merchant princes of Tyre and Sidon—were tarrying in the public theatre of the city for the promised interview in the presence of the people of Samaria.

Cagliostro marvelled, as he scanned the scene before him, whether it were all a reality or a delusion of his fancy; but the lapping of the surge upon the adjacent beach, and the perfume of Oriental spices which impregnated the breezes from the Levant, and even the motes that swarmed about him like phosphoric atoms, proved that it was no juggle of a distempered imagination.

Suddenly the air was rent with acclamations; the crowd rose as if by a single impulse; trumpets sounded in the seven porches of the amphitheatre; again the plaudits shook the air like the concussion of enthusiasm, and the deputation in the arena prostrated themselves in the dust. Balsamo saw, at once, the reason of this rejoicing; he saw the tetrarch of Judea seated upon a throne of ivory. The crown of Agrippa glittered upon his forehead with an unnatural brightness—it was of the purest gold, radiating from the brow in spikes, and flecked with pearls of an uncommon size. Silent—erect—inflated with pride at his own grandeur, and the adulation of the rabble, sate the King of Palestine. Silent—awe-stricken—uncovered before the majesty of the representative of Claudius, stood the people of Samaria and Phenicia. Extreme beauty of an elevated and heroic character shone upon the features of Herod, although his beard was grizzled with the passage of fifty-four winters. In the midst of the silence of the populace, the morning sun rose, almost abruptly, above the topmost arches of the edifice, and darted his beams full upon the glorious garments of Agrippa. It played in sparkles of intense lustre upon the jewels of his diadem; and upon the outer robe, which was of silver tissue woven with consummate skill and powdered with diamonds, the refraction of the sunlight produced an intolerable splendour.[13] The Samaritans shielded their eyes from its magnificence; they were dazzled; they were blinded; they thrilled with admiration and astonishment.

Agrippa spoke.

At the first sound of his accents, there was a whisper of awe among the multitude—it increased—it grew louder—it arose to the heavens in one prolonged and jubilant shout of adoration.

"It is a God!" they cried—"it is a God that speaketh, not a man!"

As the language of that impious homage saluted the ears of Herod, his mouth curled with a smile of satisfaction, his soul expanded with an inexpressible tumult of emotions, he drank in the blasphemous flatteries of the rabble, and assumed to himself the power and the dignity of the Most High God. Yet in the very ecstasy of those sensations, his countenance became ghastly, his lips writhed, his eyes beheld with unutterable dismay the omen of his dissolution—the visible phantom

[13] His garb, writes Josephus, "was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon Him."—*Lib.* xix. c. 8.

of an avenging Nemesis.[14] He staggered from his throne, crying aloud in the extremity of his anguish; a sudden corruption had seized upon his body—he was being devoured by worms.

The heart of Cagliostro quailed within him at the lamentations of the people of Samaria, as they beheld their idol smitten down by death in the midst of his surpassing pomp. Even the Jewish hagiographer tells us, with pathetic simplicity, that King Agrippa himself wept at the wailings of the adoring mob.

Again the Alchemist found himself enveloped in darkness, again the unearthly Voice stole into his brain.

"Lo!" it said, "how the frame rots in the ermine: how the body and soul are polluted by vicious passions! Such, Balsamo, are the penalties of the lusts of the flesh."

[14] "An owl," says Josephus (xix. 8); "an angel of the Lord," αγγελος Κυριου, say the scriptures, (Acts. xii. 23,)—in either case a spectral illusion.

MILTON

Another scene then revealed itself to the Rosicrucian, but one altogether different from those he had already witnessed. Instead of being in an Oriental amphitheatre, he was standing in a rural lane; instead of tumult he found tranquillity; instead of regal pageantries an almost primitive simplicity. He inhaled the sweet smells of clover and newly-turned mould with a zest hitherto unexperienced. The gurgling of a brook by the wayside saluted his ears, as it struggled through the rushes and tinkled over the pebbles, with a sound more agreeable than he ever remembered to have heard from the instruments of court musicians. For the first time nature seemed to disclose her real loveliness to his comprehension. Every where she appeared to abound with beauties: in the bee that lit upon the nettle and sucked the honey out of its blossom; in the nettle that nodded under the weight of the bee; in the dew that dropped like a diamond from the alder-bough when the thrush alighted on its stem; in the thrush that warbled till the speckled feathers on its throat throbbed as if its heart were in its song; in the slug that trailed a silver track upon the dust; in the very dust itself that twirled in threads and circles on the ground as the wind swerved round the corner of the hedgerow. Cagliostro was entranced with the most novel and pleasurable emotions, as he strolled on towards the building he had already observed. From the elevation of the ground which he was traversing, his glance roved with admiration over a wide and diversified extent of country; over a prospect richly wooded and teeming with vegetation; over orchards laden with fruit and knee-deep in grass; over fields of barley bristling with golden ripeness; over distant mills, churning the water into foam, and driving gusts of meal out through the open doorway; over meadows where the sheep cropped the cool herbage, and the cattle lay in the sunshine sleeping; over village steeples, over homesteads brown with age, or hid amongst the verdure. The worldling scanned the profusion of the panorama with an amazement that was exquisite from its newness. He marvelled at the charms that strewed the earth in such abundance, at the almost unnumbered forms and colours of her vitality, at the wonderful harmony that subsisted amidst all those various hues and shapes. Never had the joys derivable from the sense of vision appeared of so much value as now that he gazed into the deep and delicious magnificence of nature. His sight, with a sort of luxurious abandonment, strayed over the contrasts, and penetrated into the distances of the landscape; his bosom swelled with the consciousness of a sympathy with that creation of which he felt himself to be but a kindred unit, or, at best, a sentient atom.

It was while absorbed in these sensations, that Cagliostro paused before the rustic dwelling-house towards which his steps had been involuntarily directed. The building was situated at a few paces from the pathway. There was nothing about it to arrest the attention of a passer-by, except, perhaps, all appearance of extreme but picturesque humility. The walls were riveted together with iron-bands in crossbars and zig-zags; the brickwork was decayed and crumbling away in blotches; the roof was low and thatched. Yet, in spite of these evidences of poverty, the scholar regarded the structure with a reverential aspect, with such an aspect as he might have presented had he contemplated the hut of Baucis and Philemon.

The threshold of this obscure edifice formed of itself a bower of greenery, thickly covered with the blooms of the honey-suckle. Under the porch was seated a man of a most venerable countenance. He was muffled in a gray coat of the coarsest texture, and his legs being crossed, a worsted stocking and a slipper of untanned leather betrayed the meanness of his under garments. His hair, brilliant with a whiteness like that of milk, was parted in the centre of the forehead, and fell over his shoulders in those negligent curls called *oreilles de chien*, which became fashionable long afterwards, during the days of the French Directory. Had the Alchemist remained profoundly ignorant as to the identity of the old man, he must still have observed with interest, features which were equally characterised by the pensiveness of the student and the paleness of the valetudinarian. He knew, however, instinctively, as he had done upon the two preceding occasions, that he beheld a personage of illustrious memory.

And he knew rightly, for it was Milton. While the great plague was desolating the metropolis, he had escaped from his residence in the Artillery Walk, and sought security from the contagion by a temporary sojourn in Buckinghamshire.

Opposite the immortal sage stood a person of about the same years, but of a very different deportment—it was the dearest of his few friends, and the most ardent of his many worshippers, Richardson. The latter was leaning against the trunk of a great maple-tree that grew close to the parlour-lattice, stretching forth its enormous branches in all directions, and mingling its foliage with the smoke that issued from the chimney. Richardson had been reading aloud but a moment before, from a volume of Boccaccio; he had placed the book, however, upon the window-sill, in obedience to a movement from his companion, and continued, with his arms folded and his eyelids closed, a silent and almost inanimate portion of the domestic group. The quietude which ensued was so contagious that Cagliostro remarked with a feeling of listlessness, the details and accessories of the spectacle —the silk curtains of rusty green festooned before the open window, the tobacco-pipe lying among the manuscripts upon the table, even the slouched-hat hanging from the back of an arm-chair. The rambling meditations of Balsamo were soon concentrated upon a loftier theme, by the voice of Milton singing in a subdued tone the antistrophe of a favourite ode of Pindar. As the noble words of the Greek lyrist rolled with an indescribable gusto from the lips of Milton, it seemed to the Rosicrucian that he had never before comprehended the true euphony of the language. And the visage of the old bard responded to the strain of Pindar; it was illumined with a certain majesty of expression that imparted additional dignity to a countenance at all times beaming with wisdom. In appreciating the Pagan poet, the poet of Christianity appeared to glow with enthusiasm like that which entranced his whole soul in the moments of his own superb inspiration.[15] Nor was the grandeur of the head diminished in any manner by the unpoetical proportions of the body, for, to the acknowledgment of his most partial biographer, Richardson, the stature of Milton was so much below the ordinary height, and so much beyond the ordinary bulk, that he might almost be described as "short and thick." Yet, notwithstanding these peculiarities of the frame, an august radiance seemed to envelope the brow—a brow, hoary alike from years and from misfortunes—and to invest with a sublime air the figure of that old man huddled in that old gray coat. Cagliostro gazed with profound interest upon Milton as the rolling melody of Pindar streamed into his ears, when suddenly the song ceased, and the face of the singer was raised to the resplendent light of the heavens. Alas! those eyes turned vacantly in their sockets—those eyes which had once looked so sorrowfully on the sightless Galileo—those eyes which had mourned over the ashes of *Lycidas*, and rained upon them tears transmuted by poetry into a shower of precious stones! The misery of his blindness recurred to Milton himself at that same instant. A cloud of grief descended upon his countenance. He experienced one of those poignant feelings of regret which, in our own day, occasionally oppress the heart of Augustin Thierry—for with the sensibility of a poet he *knew* that the hour was beautiful. Never had Cagliostro seen human face express such exquisite but patient suffering; it seemed to be *listening* to the loveliness of the earth; it seemed to be *inhaling* the glories of nature, as it were, through those channels which were not obliterated. The stirring of the leaves, the scent of the woodbine, the pattering of the winged seeds of the maple upon the pages of Boccaccio, the fitful twittering of the birds—all ascended as offerings of recompense to the blind man, but they only tended to enhance the sense of his affliction. He caught but the skirts of the goddess of that creation whose glories he had chanted in his celestial epic; and yet no murmur escaped from the dejected lip of Milton!

Again darkness surrounded the Rosicrucian—again the awful voice resounded in his imagination.

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[15] It is impossible for anyone devoted to the study of "Paradise Lost," of "Comus," even of "Sampson Agonistes," and especially of "Il Pensoroso" and "L'Allegro," to doubt that their writer was carried away at times by the *œstrum*, or *divine afflatus*, although Dr Johnson discredits "these bursts of light, and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention."—See *Lives of the Poets*, vol. i. p. 188.

"Behold!" it said, "the sorrows of the great and virtuous when the light is quenched: behold the divine prerogative of those who see! And know, Balsamo, that such are the boons thou hast contemned—such are the faculties thou hast polluted."

MIRABEAU

After a scarcely perceptible pause, the Voice resumed: "The miseries of those who have abused or lost the powers of seeing, of tasting, or of feeling, have been revealed to thee, O sceptic! Thine eyes have penetrated into the dim retrospections of the past. Look onwards, Balsamo, and thou shalt discern the things that are germinating in the womb of the future."

Cagliostro had scarcely heard this assurance when the curtain hitherto impenetrable to mortal, was raised—the dread shadows of the future were dispelled. He found himself in the upper apartment of one of the most distinguished mansions in Paris. The chamber, which was lofty and spacious, was enriched with the most costly furniture, and the most gorgeous decorations. Pilasters, incrusted with marble, and enamelled with lapis-lazuli, broke the monotony of the walls and supported the ceiling with their capitals. Between these pilasters were pedestals surmounted with statuary and busts; and these, again, were reflected in the mirrors hung about the room in profusion. An almost oriental luxury characterised the Turkish carpets, as soft as the greensward, and the draperies of velvet which concealed the windows, and fell in graceful folds about a bed at the opposite end of the apartment. An antique candelabrum stood upon the mantelpiece and shed a rosy and voluptuous light over this domestic pomp, while some odorous gums crackled in a chafing-dish upon the hearth and loaded the air with their fragrance.

Familiar as the Rosicrucian was with splendour, his glance roved over these appurtenances with delight, for he had never before seen the evidences of wealth so enhanced by the evidences of refinement. He thought that the possession of such a dwelling would be something towards the realisation of happiness. In the very conception of that ignoble thought, however, he received a solemn and effectual admonition. Before him, in the silent chamber, on either side of it groups of attendants and men robed in the costumes of the court and the barracks, was a deathbed. It was the deathbed of an extraordinary being, the owner of all this grandeur. It was the deathbed of Honoré-Gabriel de Mirabeau.

The patrician demagogue reposed upon the pillows in the final stage of dissolution, and his broad forehead was already damp with the sweat of his last agony. Cagliostro surveyed the dying tribune with emotion, for in the very hideousness of his countenance there was a subtle and indefinable fascination. The gigantic stature which had so often awed the tumults of the National Assembly was prostrate. The voice, whose brazen tones had sounded like a trumpet over the land, was hushed—that voice which had exclaimed with such sublime significance to the Marseillais,—"When the last of the Gracchi expired, he flung dust towards heaven, and from this dust sprang Marius!"—that voice which had conquered the aversion of Mademoiselle de Marignan with its seductive melody—that voice which had been at once the oracle of the king and the law of the rabble. Mirabeau lay before the Rosicrucian, with his natural ugliness rendered yet more repulsive by the tokens of a terrible malady. The touch of death imparted additional horror to the massive deformity of his skull, to the coarseness of his pockmarked features, to his sunken eyeballs, to his cheeks scared by disease, to his hair bristling and dishevelled like that of a gorgon. Still, through all these unsightly and almost loathsome peculiarities, there was perceptible a sort of masculine susceptibility. It was that susceptibility which gave zest to his debaucheries, and occasionally subdued into pathos the storms of his dazzling and sonorous eloquence.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.