

Ballou Maturin Murray

Genius in Sunshine and Shadow



Maturin Ballou

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PREFACE

The volume in hand might perhaps better have been entitled "Library Notes," as the pages are literally the gathered notes of the author's library-hours. The reader will kindly peruse these pages remembering that they assume only to be the gossip, as it were, of the author with himself, – notes which have grown to these proportions by casual accumulation in the course of other studies, and without consecutive purpose. That these notes thus made have been put into printed form, is owing to the publisher's chance knowledge and hearty approval of them. These few lines are by way, not of apology, – no sensible person ever made an apology, according to Mr. Emerson, – but of introduction; so that the reader may not fancy he is to encounter a labored essay upon the theme suggested by the title of the volume.

These pages may not be without a certain wholesome influence, if, fortunately, they shall incite others to analyze the character of genius as exhibited by the masters of art and literature. The facts alluded to, though familiar to many, are not so to all; wherefore the volume may indirectly promote the knowledge of both history and biography, at the same time leading the thoughtful reader to seek further and more ample information concerning those individuals who are here so briefly introduced.

M. M. B.

CHAPTER I

The ever-flowing tide of time rapidly obliterates the footprints of those whom the world has delighted to honor. While it has caused heroic names, like their possessors, to lapse into oblivion, it has also shrouded many a historical page with the softened veil of distance, like ivy-grown towers, rendering what was once terrible now only picturesque. In glancing back through thousands of years, and permitting the mind to rest on the earliest recorded epochs, one is apt to forget how much human life then, in all its fundamental characteristics, was like our own daily experience. There never was a golden age; that is yet to come. The most assiduous antiquarian has only corroborated the fact that human nature is unchanged. Conventionalities, manners and customs, the fashions, may change, but human nature does not. As an example of the mutability of fame, we have only to ask ourselves what is actually known to-day of Homer,¹ Aristophanes, and their renowned contemporaries, or even of our more familiar Shakespeare?² Of the existence of the first named we have evidence in his two great epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey; but, though deemed the most famous poet that ever lived, we do not even know his birthplace.

"Ten ancient towns contend for Homer dead,
Through which the living Homer begged his bread."

The cautious historian only tells us that he is supposed to have flourished about nine hundred years before the time of Christ; while there are also learned writers who contend that no such person as Homer³ ever lived, and who attribute the two most famous poems of antiquity to various minstrels or ballad-mongers, who celebrated the "tale of Troy divine" at various periods, and whose songs and legends were fused into unity at the time of Pisistratus.

Over the personality of Aristophanes,⁴ the great comic poet of Greece, who is supposed to have flourished some five or six hundred years later than Homer, there rests the same cloud of obscurity, and he is clearly identified only by eleven authentic comedies which are still extant, though he is believed to have written fifty. Of Shakespeare, born some two thousand years later (1564), how little is actually known beyond the fact of his birthplace! Even the authorship of his plays, like that of Homer's poems, is a subject of dispute. Perhaps, however, this loss of individuality but adds to the influence of the poet's divine mission. The really great men of history, benefactors of their race, are those who still live in the undying thoughts which they have left behind them.

In this familiar gossip we propose to glance briefly at such names as may suggest themselves, without observing any strict system of classification. The theme is so fruitful, the pages of history so teem with portraits which stand forth in groups to attract the eye, that one hardly knows where to begin, what matter to exclude, what to adduce; and therefore, closing the elaborate records of the past, we will trust to momentary inspiration and the ready promptings of memory.

The first thought which strikes us in this connection is, that the origin of those whom the world has called great – men who have written their names indelibly upon the pages of history – is often of the humblest character. Such men have most frequently risen from the ranks. In fact, genius ignores

¹ Goldsmith makes his Chinese philosopher recount the name of Homer as the first poet and beggar among the ancients, – a blind man whose mouth was more frequently filled with verses than with bread.

² Shakespeare's line expired in his daughter's only daughter. Several of the descendants of Shakespeare's sister Joan, bearing a strong family likeness to the great poet, were, so late as 1852, living in and about Stratford, chiefly in a state of indigence.

³ I have no doubt whatever that Homer is a mere concrete name for the rhapsodies of the Iliad. Of course there was a Homer, and twenty besides. I will engage to compile twelve books, with characters just as distinct and consistent as those of the Iliad, from the metrical ballads and other chronicles of England, about Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. —Coleridge.

⁴ They must needs be men of lofty stature, whose shadows lengthen out to remote posterity. —Hazlitt.

all social barriers and springs forth wherever heaven has dropped the seed. The grandest characters known in art, literature, and the useful inventions have illustrated the axiom that "brave deeds are the ancestors of brave men;" and it would almost appear that an element of hardship is necessary to the effective development of true genius. Indeed, when we come to the highest achievements of the greatest minds, it seems that they were not limited by race, condition of life, or the circumstances of their age. "It is," says Emerson, "the nature of poetry to spring, like the rainbow daughter of Wonder, from the Invisible, to abolish the past and refuse all history." But this of course refers only to poetry in its loftiest and noblest conceptions and sentiments; and then only in passages of a great work.

Æsop, the fabulist, who flourished six hundred years before Christ, and whose fables are as familiar to us after the lapse of twenty-five hundred years as household words; Publius Syrus,⁵ the eminent moralist, who lived in the time of Julius Cæsar, and whose wise axioms are to be found in every library; Terence,⁶ the Carthaginian poet and dramatist; Epictetus, the stoic philosopher, – all were slaves in early life,⁷ but won freedom and lasting fame by force of their native genius. No man is nobler than another unless he is born with better abilities, a more amiable disposition, and a larger heart and brain. The field is open to all; for it is fixedness of purpose and perseverance that win the prizes of this world, – qualities that can be exercised by the most humble.

Protagoras, the Greek sophist and orator, was in his youth a street porter of Athens, carrying loads upon his back like a beast of burden. He was a singularly independent genius, and was expelled from his native city because he openly doubted the existence of the gods. His countryman, Cleanthes the stoic, was also "a hewer of stone and drawer of water," but rose among the Athenians to be esteemed as a rival of the great philosopher Zeno. He wrote many works in his day, – about three hundred years before the Christian Era, – none of which have been preserved except a hymn to Jupiter, which is remarkable for purity of thought and elevation of sentiment.

We need not confine ourselves, however, to so remote a period to illustrate that genius is independent of circumstances. In our random treatment of the subject there occurs to us the name of Bandoccin, one of the most learned men of the sixteenth century, who was the son of an itinerant shoemaker, and who was himself brought up to the trade. Gelli, the prolific Italian author, and president of the Florentine Academy, was a tailor by trade, and of very humble birth. His moral dialogues entitled, *I Capricci del Bottajo* ("The Whims of the Cooper"), have been pronounced by competent critics to be extraordinary for originality and piquancy, while all his works are remarkable for purity of diction. Canova, the sculptor of world-wide fame, was the son of a day-laborer in the marble quarries. Opie, the distinguished English painter, earned his bread at the carpenter's trade until his majority, but before his death became professor of painting in the Royal Academy. Amyot, the brilliant scholar, and professor of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, who is ranked among those who have contributed most towards the perfection of the French language, learned to write upon birch-bark with charcoal, while he lived on a loaf of bread per day. This man rose to be grand almoner of France, and proved that courage, perseverance, and genius need no ancestors.⁸

Akenside, the English didactic poet, wit, essayist, and physician, author of the "Pleasures of the Imagination," was a butcher's boy. His developed genius caused him to be appointed to the Queen's household. Sir Humphry Davy was an apothecary's apprentice in his youth. Matthew Prior, the English poet and diplomatist, began life as a charity scholar. Rollin, famous for his "Ancient

⁵ The Edinburgh "Review," once the most formidable of critical journals, took its motto from Publius Syrus: —

⁶ The kindly human sympathy exhibited by Terence contributed largely to the popularity of his dramas. Whenever the often-quoted words, "I am a man; and I have an interest in everything that concerns humanity," were spoken upon the Roman stage, they were received with tumultuous applause by all classes.

⁷ Crassus, a Roman triumvir, noted for his great wealth, who lived about a hundred years before the Christian Era, bought and sold slaves. These he educated, and taught the highest accomplishments of the day, sparing no labor or expense for the purpose. These educated slaves were then sold for large sums of money, so that any rich man could own his private poet and scholar. We are told by Plutarch that some of these slaves brought enormous prices into the treasury of Crassus.

⁸ "What can they see in the longest kingly line in Europe," asks Sir Walter Scott, "save that it runs back to a successful soldier?"

History," was the son of a poor Parisian cutler, and began life at an iron-forge. James Barry, the eminent historical painter, was in his minority a foremast hand on board an Irish coasting-vessel. D'Alembert, the remarkable French mathematician, author, and academician, was at birth a poor foundling in the streets of Paris, though it must be added that he was the illegitimate and discarded son of Madame de Tencin, one of the wickedest, most profligate, most cynical, and ablest of the high-placed women of France. D'Alembert scorned her⁹ proffered help when she, learning that he was the offspring of one of her desultory amours, attempted to assist him by her money and patronage. He lived austere poor, and his love was lavished, not on his natural, or rather unnatural, mother, but on the indigent woman who had picked him up in the street, and who by self-denial had enabled him to obtain sustenance and education. As soon as he was old enough to realize his true situation, he said, "I have no name, but with God's help I will make one!" The time came when Catherine II. of Russia offered him one hundred thousand francs per annum to become the educator of her son, which he declined.

Béranger, the lyric poet of France, whose effectiveness and purity of style defy criticism, was at one time a barefooted orphan on the boulevards of the great city. His verses, bold, patriotic, and satirical, were in every mouth among the masses of his countrymen, contributing more than any other cause to produce the revolution of 1830.¹⁰ He had the noble independence to refuse all official recognition under government. Rachel, it will be remembered, was in her childhood a street-ballad singer. A resident of the French capital once pointed out to the writer a spot on the Champs Élysées where at the age of twelve, so pale as to seem scarcely more than a shadow, she used to appear daily, accompanied by her brother. A rude cloth was spread on the ground, upon which she stood and recited tragic scenes from Corneille and Racine, or sang patriotic songs for pennies, accompanied upon the violin by her brother.

Her attitudes, gestures, and voice always captivated a crowd of people. Rachel was a Jewish pedler's daughter, though she was born in Switzerland; and in these youthful days she wore a Swiss costume upon the boulevards.¹¹

Boccaccio, the most famous of Italian novelists, was the illegitimate son of a Florentine tradesman, and began life as a merchant's clerk. It is well known that Shakespeare borrowed the plot of "All's Well that Ends Well" from Boccaccio.¹² In fact, the "Decamerone" furnished him with plots for several of his plays. Chaucer derived from the same source his poem of the "Knight's Tale." We never hear shallow people reflecting upon the Bard of Avon for taking some of his plots from earlier writers, and weaving about them the golden threads of his superb genius, without recalling Dryden's remark relative to Ben Jonson's adaptations and translations from the classics, in such plays as "Catiline" and "Sejanus." "He invades authors," says Dryden, "like a monarch; and what would be theft in other writers is but victory in him." Sterne's idea upon the same subject also suggests itself. "As monarchs have a right," he says, "to call in the specie of a State and raise its value by their own impression, so are there certain prerogative geniuses who are above plagiaries, who cannot be said

⁹ When approached by Madame de Tencin, who was finally eager to acknowledge so distinguished a son, he replied: —

¹⁰ I knew a very wise man that believed if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation. —*Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun.*

¹¹ Rachel made her debut at the Théâtre Français of Paris, in 1838. She came to this country in 1855, and performed in our Eastern cities. Three years later she died of consumption, near Cannes, in the South of France. When she was giving one of her readings before the Duke of Wellington, she perceived that all her audience were ignorant of the French language except the Duke himself. She went on, however, at her best, consoling herself that he at least understood her. After it was over, the Duke approached the great actress, and said: "Mademoiselle, our guests have had a great advantage over me; they have had the happiness of hearing you: I am as deaf as a post."

¹² Hazlitt, after remarking that Shakespeare's play of "All's Well that Ends Well" is taken from Boccaccio, adds: "The poet has dramatized the original novel with great skill and comic spirit, and has preserved all the beauty of character and sentiment without improving upon it, which is impossible." In the town of Certaldo, Tuscany, the house in which Boccaccio was born is shown to curious travellers. On the façade is an inscription speaking of the small house and a name which filled the world. "Before seven years of age," says Boccaccio, "when as yet I had met with no stories, was without a master, and hardly knew my letters, I had a natural talent for fiction, and produced some small tales."

to steal, but from their improvement of a thought, rather to borrow it, and repay the commonwealth of letters with interest again, and may more properly be said to adopt than to kidnap a sentiment, by leaving it heir to their own fame."

Columbus, who gave a new world to the old, was a weaver's son, and in his youth he earned his bread as a cabin-boy in a coasting-vessel which sailed from Genoa. The story of the great Genoese pilot possesses a more thrilling interest than any narrative which the imagination of poet or romancer has ever conceived. His name flashes a bright ray over the mental darkness of the period in which he lived. In imagination one sees him wandering for years from court to court, begging the necessary means wherewith to prosecute his inspired purpose,¹³ and finally, after successfully accomplishing his mission, languishing in chains and in prison.

How naturally Halleck's invocation to Death, in "Marco Bozarris," occurs to us here, as the hero, when his object has been attained, joyfully faces the grim monarch:

"Thy grasp is welcome as the hand
Of brother in a foreign land;
Thy summons welcome as the cry
That told the Indian isles were nigh,
To the world-seeking Genoese,
When the land wind from woods of palm
And orange-groves and fields of balm
Blew o'er the Haytian seas."

De Foe, the author of "Robinson Crusoe," and of over two hundred other books, was a hosier by trade, the son of a London butcher named James Foe. The particle *De* was added by the son without other authority than the suggestion of his own fancy. Cardinal Wolsey and Kirke White were also sons of butchers.

Claude Lorraine, the glorious colorist, whose very name has become a synonym in art, was in youth employed as a pastry-cook. Molière, the great French dramatist and actor, who presents one of the most remarkable instances of literary success known to history, was the son of a tapestry-maker, and was himself at one time apprenticed to a tailor, and afterwards became a *valet-de-chambre*. When Molière was valet to Louis XIII., he had already appeared upon the stage, and was rather sneered at by the other members of the king's household. The generous monarch observed this, and determined to put a stop to it: "I am told you have short commons here, Molière, and some of my people decline to serve you," said Louis, as he rose from his breakfast one day. "Sit down here at my table. I warrant you are hungry." And the king cut him a portion of chicken and put it upon his plate just at the moment when a distinguished member of the royal household entered. "You see me," said the king, "giving Molière his breakfast, as some of my people do not think him good enough company for themselves." From that hour the royal valet was treated with due consideration. William Cobbett, the English author and vigorous political writer, was a poor farmer's boy and entirely self-educated. Izaak Walton, the delightful biographist and miscellaneous author, whose "Complete Angler" would make any man's name justly famous, was for years a linen-draper in London. Pope and Southey were the sons of linen-drappers.

How rapidly instances of the triumphs of genius over circumstances multiply upon us when the mind is permitted to roam at will through the long vista of the past! Cervantes, the Spanish Shakespeare, whose "Don Quixote" is as much a classic¹⁴ as "Hamlet," was a common foot-soldier

¹³ The author has stood upon the Bridge of Pinos, at Granada, from whence Columbus, discouraged and nearly heart-broken, was recalled by Isabella, after having been denied and dismissed, as he supposed, for the last time. The messenger of the relenting queen overtook the great pilot at the bridge, and conducted him back to the Hall of the Ambassadors, in the Alhambra.

¹⁴ Disraeli tells us that the French ambassador to Spain, meeting Cervantes, congratulated him on the great success and reputation

in the army of Castile. In 1575 he was captured by an Algerine corsair and carried as a slave to Algiers, where he endured the most terrible sufferings. He was finally ransomed and returned to Spain. Alexandre Dumas's grandmother was an African slave. Hugh Miller, author, editor, poet, distinguished naturalist, whose clear, choice Saxon-English caused the Edinburgh "Review" to ask, "Where could this man have acquired his style?" was a stone-mason, and his only college was a stone-quarry.¹⁵

Keats, the sweetest of English poets, whose delicacy of fancy and beauty of versification are "a joy forever," was born in a stable. Oliver Cromwell, one of the most extraordinary men in English history, famous as a citizen, great as a general, and greatest as a ruler, was the son of a malt-brewer. Howard, the philanthropist and author, whose name stands a monument of Christian fame, was at first a grocer's boy. Rossini, one of the greatest of modern composers, was the son of an itinerant musician and a strolling actress. Andrea del Sarto was the son of a tailor, and took his name from his father's trade. Perino del Vaga was born in poverty and nearly starved in his boyhood. Perugino, whose noble painting of the "Infant Christ and the Virgin" adorns the Albani Palace at Rome, grew up in want and misery. We all remember the story of the shepherd-boy Giotto, who finally came to be so eminent a painter, and the intimate friend of Dante; like Michael Angelo, he was an architect and sculptor. Paganini, one of the greatest of instrumental performers that ever lived, was born in poverty and was illegitimate. He gained enormous sums of money by his wonderful exhibitions and musical compositions, but was spoiled by adulation, becoming reckless and dissipated. His performances in the cities of Europe created a *furor* before unparalleled in the history of music, and never since surpassed.

Wilson the unequalled ornithologist, Dr. Livingstone the heroic missionary and African traveller, and Tannahill¹⁶ the Scottish poet, – author of that familiar and favorite song, "Jessie, the Flower of Dumblane," – earned their living in youth as journeymen weavers. Joost van den Vondel, the national poet of Holland, was a hosier's apprentice. Molière, already referred to, began his career as a journeyman tailor, but occasionally his maternal grandfather took him to the play, and thus were sown the seeds which led to his greatness as a dramatic author and actor. Samuel Woodworth, author of the "Old Oaken Bucket," one of the sweetest lyrics in our language, was a journeyman printer. Richard Cobden, statesman, economist, and author, was a poor Sussex farmer's son, whose youthful occupation was that of tending sheep. John Bright, the intimate friend and coadjutor of Cobden, one of the greatest, most eloquent, and most successful of English reformers, was the son of a cotton-spinner. Lord Clyde, the successful general who crushed the rebellion in India, and who was made a peer of England, was the son of a carpenter. The motto of his life, always inscribed upon the fly-leaf of his pocket memorandum-book, was: "By means of patience, common-sense, and time, impossibilities become possible."

John Bunyan,¹⁷ the author of "Pilgrim's Progress," the solace and delight of millions, and a text-book for all future time, was a tinker. His great work is said to have obtained a larger

gained by his "Don Quixote;" whereupon the author whispered in his ear: "Had it not been for the Inquisition, I should have made my book much more entertaining." When Cervantes was a captive, and in prison at Algiers, he concerted a plan to free himself and his comrades. One of them traitorously betrayed the plot. They were all conveyed before the Dey of Algiers, who promised them their lives if they would betray the contriver of the plot. "I was that person," replied Cervantes; "save my companions, and let me perish." The Dey, struck with his noble confession, spared his life and permitted them all to be ransomed.

¹⁵ "The Testimony of the Rocks," a noble and monumental work, by Hugh Miller, was published in 1857. The night following its completion its author shot himself through the heart. The overworked brain had given out, and all was chaos. He had sense enough left to write a few loving lines to his wife and children, and to say farewell.

¹⁶ Falling into a state of morbid despondency and mental derangement, Tannahill committed suicide, by drowning, in his thirty-sixth year. James Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd," visited him a short time before his death. "Farewell," said Tannahill, as he grasped his brother poet's hand; "we shall never meet again!"

¹⁷ One of Bunyan's biographers tells us his library consisted of two books, – the Bible and Fox's "Book of Martyrs." The latter work, in three volumes, is preserved in the Bedford town library, and contains Bunyan's name at the foot of the titlepages written by himself. Bunyan's crime, for which he was imprisoned twelve years, was teaching plain country people the knowledge of the Scriptures

circulation than any other English book except the translation of the Bible. Benjamin Franklin, statesman, philosopher, epigrammatist, was a tallow-chandler.¹⁸ Nathaniel Bowditch, the eminent mathematician, was a cooper's apprentice. He was twenty-one years of age before he may be said to have begun his education, but in his prime was a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, and was offered the chair of mathematics in Harvard College. Hiram Powers, the first sculptor from this country to win European fame, was brought up a ploughboy on a Vermont farm; his "Greek Slave" gave him high rank among modern sculptors. Elihu Burritt, the remarkable linguist, was a Connecticut horse-shoer. Whitefield, the eloquent English preacher and father of the sect of Calvinistic Methodists, was in youth the stable-boy of an English inn. Cardinal Wolsey, chief minister of Henry VIII., was brought up to follow his father's humble calling of a butcher. Horne Tooke, the English wit, priest, lawyer, and genius, was the son of a poulterer.¹⁹ Correra, afterwards president of Guatemala, was born in poverty, and for years was a drummer-boy in the army, where he was laughed at for saying that the world should some day hear from him, being reminded that his present business was to make a noise in the world. But he meant what he said, and acted under Lord Clyde's motto. He rose by degrees to the highest position in the gift of his countrymen. "To the persevering mortal the blessed immortals are swift," says Zoroaster.

Ebenezer Elliott, the English "Corn-Law Rhymer,"²⁰ was a blacksmith, but a poet by nature, and his songs created a political revolution in his native land, though unlike Béranger's, in France, it was a peaceful revolution. He was ever a true champion of the poor and oppressed. In the latter portion of his life he was in easy pecuniary circumstances. William Lloyd Garrison,²¹ the beloved philanthropist, orator, and writer, was born in poverty, and was early apprenticed to a shoemaker, but became a journeyman printer before his majority. He suffered imprisonment for his opinions' sake, and may be said to have been the father of Abolitionism in America, fortunately living long enough to see the grand effort of his life crowned with success, in the emancipation of the blacks and the abolishment of slavery throughout the length and breadth of his native land. Kepler, the famous German astronomer, was the son of a poor innkeeper, and though enjoying royal patronage, often felt the pressure of poverty. Coleridge said: "Galileo was a great genius and so was Newton; but it would take two or three Galileos and Newtons to make one Kepler." We owe our knowledge of the laws of the planetary system to him.

Sir Richard Arkwright, inventor of the spinning-jenny, and founder of the great cotton industries of England, never saw the inside of a schoolhouse until after he was twenty years of age, having long served as a barber's assistant. Justice Tenterden, and Turner, greatest among landscape-painters, were also brought up to the same trade. James Brindley, the English engineer and mechanic, and Cook, the famed navigator, were day-laborers in early life. Romney, the artist, John Hunter, the physiologist, Professor Lee, the Orientalist, and John Gibson, the sculptor, were carpenters by trade. Shakespeare was a wool-comber in his youth. These low estates, the workshop and the mine, have often contributed liberally to recruit the ranks of those whom the world has recognized as men of genius.

and the practice of virtue.

¹⁸ Is it generally known that among the accomplishments of his after years was that of music and an instrumental performer? Leigh Hunt says that "Dr. Franklin offered to teach my mother the guitar, but she was too bashful to become his pupil. She regretted this afterwards, possibly from having missed so illustrious a master. Her first child, who died, was named after him."

¹⁹ His original name was John Horne, but being adopted and educated by William Tooke, he assumed his name. His humble birth being suspected by the proud striplings at Eton, when he was questioned as to his father he replied, "He was a Turkey merchant!" He was imprisoned for a year because he said that certain Americans were "murdered" by the king's troops at Lexington!

²⁰ Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer, was no pander to popular cries unless they were founded on reason. Being asked, "What is a communist?" he answered, "One who has yearnings for equal division of unequal earnings. Idler or bungler, he is willing to fork out his penny and pocket your shilling." Whipple says: "His poetry could hardly be written by a man who was not physically strong. You can hear the ring of his anvil, and see the sparks fly off from his furnace, as you read his verses."

²¹ While these notes are writing, the city of Boston is erecting a bronze statue to the memory of Garrison, which is to adorn one of its finest and largest public parks, – a fitting tribute to the honored philanthropist.

Horace Mann declared that education is our only political safety. He might have gone further, and said our only moral safety also. It is not, however, the school and the college alone that bring about this grand object, though they are natural adjuncts. Real education is the apprenticeship of life, and that is always the best which we realize in our struggle to obtain a livelihood. Genius, as a rule, owes little to scholastic training, – within these pages there will be found proof sufficient of this. Sir T. F. Buxton says he owed more to his father's gamekeeper, who could neither read nor write, than to any other source of knowledge. He said this man was truly his "guide, philosopher, and friend," whose memory was stored with more varied rustic knowledge, good sense, and mother wit, than his young master ever met with afterwards. He adds that he was his first instructor, and that he profited far more by his remarks and admonitions than by those of his more learned tutors.²²

Perhaps at first thought it may seem singular that so many unschooled geniuses should have risen to be famous in their several departments, but it is because they were geniuses. They saw and understood nature and art by intuition, while those of us who can claim no such distinction have been compelled to acquire knowledge by plummet and line, so to speak. "The ambition of a man of parts," says Sydney Smith, "should be not to know books, but things; not to show other men that he has read Locke, and Montesquieu, and Beccaria, and Dumont, but to show that he knows the subjects upon which they have written." Let us pursue our examples still further, for they are both interesting and remarkable when brought thus together.

Benjamin West²³ was born in Pennsylvania, a poor farmer's boy; but the genius of art was in him, and after patient study he became an eminent painter, finally succeeding Sir Joshua Reynolds as president of the Royal Academy in 1792. George III. was his personal friend and patron. He was so thoroughly appreciated there that he made England his home, where he died in 1820. John Britton, author of the "Beauties of England and Wales," as well as of several valuable works on architecture, was born in a mud cabin in Wiltshire, and was for years engaged as a bar-tender. He was finally turned adrift by his employer with two guineas in his pocket, but before his death his list of published books exceeded eighty volumes! Sir Francis Chantrey, the eminent sculptor, was in his minority a journeyman carver in wood. Talma, the great tragic actor of France, and favorite of the first Napoleon, was a dentist by trade. Gifford, the eminent English critic and essayist, was "graduated" from a cobbler's bench. When Cicero was asked concerning his lineage, he replied, "I commence an ancestry." Beaumarchais, the successful French dramatist, author of the "Barber of Seville" and the "Marriage of Figaro," was a watchmaker by trade, but developed such versatile genius as finally to excite the jealousy of the unscrupulous Voltaire.

Thomas Ball, the sculptor, who has done so much to ornament the parks and squares of Boston, used as a lad to sweep out the halls of the Boston Museum.²⁴ The author has often been within the walls of his pleasant studio in the environs of Florence, adjoining his charming domestic establishment. It is near to the spot where Powers produced his "Greek Slave," and overlooks the lovely city of Florence, divided by the Arno. Andrew Jackson, who became President of the United States, was the son of a poor Irish emigrant, and so was John C. Calhoun, the great Southern statesman and Vice-President. Abraham Lincoln and the late President Garfield were both sons of toil, the former being commonly designated as "the rail-splitter," the latter as "the canal-boy." Andrew Johnson was a journeyman tailor. Henry Wilson was a cobbler at the bench until he was nearly twenty-one. So also was Andersen,²⁵ the Danish novelist. Jasmin, who has been called the Burns of France, was the

²² Hosea Biglow's words are specially applicable here: —

²³ His "Death on the Pale Horse," now in the Academy of Fine Arts at Philadelphia, is the most remarkable of his productions in this country. The Pennsylvania Hospital, in the same city, has also "Christ Healing the Sick," by West, – a truly noble conception, a vigorous work of art, and a generous gift from the author.

²⁴ His old employer, Moses Kimball, paid Ball twenty thousand dollars for the bronze group now standing in Park Square. It represents President Lincoln Freeing the Slaves. The purchaser presented it to the city of Boston.

²⁵ Hans Christian Andersen was one of the most gifted of modern authors. In his story entitled "Only a Fiddler," he has given many

son of a street beggar. Allan Cunningham, poet, novelist, and miscellaneous writer, began life as a stone-mason; he became the father of four sons, all of whom won distinction in literature. Among the father's novels was that of "Paul Jones," which was remarkably successful. Dr. Isaac Miller, Dean of Carlisle, began life as a weaver, and Dr. Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester, earned his living in youth as a kitchen-boy at Oxford. Watt, the great Scotch inventor, whose steam-engine has revolutionized modern industry, and Whitney, inventor of the cotton-gin, were street gamins in childhood. Both these inventors were thought by their associates to be "beside themselves" as they grew towards maturity. "No man is quite sane," says Emerson; "each has a vein of folly in his composition, a slight determination of blood to the head, to make sure of holding him hard to some one point which nature has taken to heart."

The world's great men, according to the acceptation of the term, have not always been great scholars. General Nathaniel Greene, the successful Revolutionary commander, second only in military skill to Washington, was brought up at a blacksmith's forge. Horace Greeley, orator and journalist, was the son of a poor New Hampshire farmer and earned his living for years by setting type. William Sturgeon the able and famous electrician, Samuel Drew the English essayist, and Bloomfield the poet, all rose from the cobbler's bench; and so did Thomas Edwards, the profound naturalist. Robert Dodsley, the poet, dramatist, and friend of Pope began life as a London footman in livery. His tragedy of "Cleone" was so successful and well constructed, that Dr. Johnson said, "If Otway had written it, no other of his pieces would have been remembered," which was certainly extravagant praise.²⁶ Douglas Jerrold was born in a garret at Sheerness. Hobson, one of England's admirals, was a tailor's apprentice in early life. Huntington, the remarkable preacher and revivalist, was originally a coal-heaver, and Bewick, the father of wood-engraving, was a laborer in a coal mine for many years.

John Gay, the English poet, was not "born with a silver spoon in his mouth," but in youth he came up to London, where he served as a clerk to a silk-mercier. "How long he continued behind the counter," says Dr. Johnson, "or with what degree of softness and dexterity he received and accommodated the ladies, as he probably took no delight in telling it, is not known." He wrote comedies, fables, farces, and ballads, and wrote well, and was vastly popular. Gay was a great gourmand, very lazy, and fond of society.²⁷ The silk-mercier's clerk attained the much-coveted honor of resting at last in Westminster Abbey. Boffin, the great navigator, served at first before the mast as a common sailor. Robert Dick, the geologist and botanist, followed his trade as a baker through his whole life.

Would it not seem, in the light of these many instances, that practical labor forms the best training even for genius?

Linnæus (Karl von Linné), the great Swedish botanist, the most influential naturalist of the eighteenth century, was a shoemaker's apprentice. His works upon his favorite study are authority with students of science all over the world. He became physician to the king and made his home at Stockholm, but roamed over all Scandinavia in pursuing his special science of botany and also that of zoölogy. He will always be remembered as having been the first to perfect a systematic and scientific classification of plants and animals. He lies buried in the Upsala Cathedral.

Thorwaldsen, the great Danish sculptor, was the son of an humble Icelandic fisherman, but by reason of native genius he rose to bear the name of the greatest of modern sculptors. He left in the Copenhagen museum alone six hundred grand examples of the art he adorned. Many of our readers will remember having seen near Lucerne, Switzerland, one of his most remarkable pieces

striking pictures from the experience of his own life. His best books are his fairy-tales, of which he has published several volumes.

²⁶ Any one who could place the tragedy of "Cleone" before that of "Venice Preserved," by Otway, in point of merit, must have been singularly prejudiced.

²⁷ Thackeray says: "He was lazy, kindly, uncommonly idle; rather slovenly, forever eating and saying good things. A little French abbé of a man, sleek, soft-handed, and soft-hearted." A Mr. Rich was the manager of the theatre in which Gay's "Beggar's Opera" was brought out. Its unprecedented success suggested the epigram that "it made Rich gay, and Gay rich."

of sculpture, representing a wounded and dying lion of colossal size, designed to commemorate the heroic fidelity of the Swiss guards who fell Aug. 10, 1792. Thorwaldsen was passionately fond of children, so that the moment he entered a house he gathered all the juveniles about him; and in most of his marble groups he introduces children. He never married, but made his beautiful mistress, the Roman Fortunata, celebrated by repeating her face in many of his ideal groups. Thorwaldsen gave an impulse to art in his native country which has no like example in history; indeed, art is to-day the religion of Copenhagen, and Thorwaldsen is its prophet.

George Stephenson, the English engineer and inventor, was in his youth a stoker in a colliery, learning to read and write at a laborers' evening school. John Jacob Astor began life as a pedler in the streets of New York, where his descendants own a hundred million dollars worth of real estate.²⁸ The elder Vanderbilt, famous not alone for his millions but also for his vast enterprise in the development of commerce and railroads, served as a cabin-boy on a North River sloop during several years of his youth. George Peabody, the great American philanthropist and millionaire, was born in poverty. Fisher Ames, the eminent statesman and orator, eked out a precarious living for years as a country pedagogue. Greatness lies not alone in the possession of genius, but in the right and effective use of it.

We have given examples sufficient to illustrate this branch of our subject, though they might be almost indefinitely extended. It was Daniel Webster²⁹ who said that "a man not ashamed of himself need not be ashamed of his early condition in life." Titles are vendible, but genius is the gift of Heaven.

Enthusiasm is the heritage of youth; it plans with audacity and executes with vigor: "It is the leaping lightning," according to Emerson, "not to be measured by the horse-power of the understanding." In the accomplishment of great deeds it is undoubtedly the keenest spur, and consequently those who have become eminent in the history of the world have mostly achieved their greatness before gray hairs have woven themselves about their brows. Unless the tree has borne ample blossoms in the spring, we shall look in vain for a generous crop in the fall. Notwithstanding the abundance of axioms as to youth and rashness dwelling together, we have ample evidence that it is the period of deeds, when the senses are unworn and the whole man is in the vigor of strength and earnestness. Goethe tells us that the destiny of any nation depends upon the opinions of its young men. Let us recall a few examples, in corroboration of this view, among those who have made their mark upon the times in which they lived.

Alexander the Great reigned over the Macedonians at sixteen; Scipio was but twenty-nine at the zenith of his military glory; Charles XII.³⁰ was only nineteen when, as commander-in-chief, he won the famous battle of Narva; Condé was twenty-two when he gained the battle of Rocroi; Scipio the Younger conquered Carthage at thirty-six, and Cortes subdued Mexico at the same age. At thirty Charlemagne was master of France and Germany; at thirty-two Clive had established the British power in India. Hannibal won his greatest victories before he was thirty, and Napoleon was but twenty-seven when he outgeneralled the veteran marshals of Austria on the plains of Italy. George Washington won his first battle as a colonel at twenty-two; Lafayette was a major-general in our army at the age of twenty. Nor are we to look only for youthful greatness among those who have won laurels in war. William Pitt was prime minister of England at twenty-four; Calhoun had achieved national greatness before he was thirty; while the names of John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and the elder Pitt in England also suggest themselves in this connection.³¹

²⁸ Among his liberal bequests were four hundred thousand dollars for the establishment of a public library in New York, to which his son, William B. Astor, subsequently added as much more. The Astor Library is therefore one of the best endowed institutions of the kind in America.

²⁹ Webster, when told that there was no room for new lawyers in a profession already overcrowded, answered, with the proud consciousness of genius and character, "There is always room at the top."

³⁰ Charles XII. put his whole soul into the cause of Sweden at the time when she was threatened with extinction by her enemies. He fought all Europe, – Danes, Russians, Poles, Germans, – and gave away a kingdom before he was twenty. At his coronation at Upsala, he snatched the crown from the hands of the archbishop and set it proudly on his head with his own hands.

³¹ Whipple speaks of three characters "who seem to have been statesmen from the nursery." These were: "Octavius Cæsar, more

Handel composed sonatas at ten years of age; Mozart was equally precocious, and died at thirty-six, at which age Shakespeare had written "Hamlet." Bellini, the composer, had produced "Il Pirata," "La Sonnambula," and "La Norma," before his thirtieth year; "I Puritani" was finished at thirty, and he died two years later. Charles Matthews the elder began to write for the press at fourteen, and Moore wrote verses for print at the same age; undoubtedly both were open to cool and judicious criticism.³² Henry Kirke White published a volume of poems at seventeen. Bryant, the first American poet of celebrity, began to write verses at the age of ten, and his most celebrated poem, "Thanatopsis," was written before he was twenty. Fitz-Greene Halleck, author of "Marco Bozzaris," wrote verses for the magazines at fourteen. Congreve was at the height of his literary fame at four-and-twenty, – he to whom Dryden said Shakespeare had bequeathed his poetical crown, and to whom Pope dedicated his version of the Iliad. Watt invented the steam-engine before he was thirty. The reproof administered by his grandmother for his idleness in taking off and replacing the cover of the teakettle, and "playing with the steam to no purpose," will occur to the reader. Joan of Arc³³ was but eighteen when she raised the siege of Orléans and conquered city after city, until Charles VII. was crowned king at Rheims.

Guizot, the distinguished French statesman and historian, seems to have been "a child who had no childhood." At eleven years of age he was able to read in their respective languages Thucydides, Demosthenes, Dante, Schiller, Gibbon, and Shakespeare.

Robert Hall, the eloquent English clergyman, was a remarkable instance of early mental development. It is said that before he was ten years of age he perused with interest and understanding Edwards's treatises on the "Affections" and on the "Will." His sermons, essays, and writings generally were eagerly read and admired by the public; but excessive application at last brought on insanity. It was gracefully said of him that his imperial fancy laid all nature under tribute. Even in madness he did not lose his power of retort. A hypocritical condoler visited him in the mad-house, and asked in a servile tone: "Pray, what brought you here, Mr. Hall?" Hall touched his brow significantly with his finger, and replied, "What'll never bring you, sir, – too much brains!"³⁴

Macaulay had already won an exalted reputation for prose and poetry before he was twenty-three, and N. P. Willis, before he left college, had achieved enduring fame by his sacred poems,³⁵ which, in fact, he never afterwards excelled in a long and successful literary career. Schiller wrote and published in his fourteenth year a poem on Moses. Klopstock began his "Messiah" at seventeen, and Tasso had produced his "Rinaldo," and completed the first three cantos of "Jerusalem Delivered," before he was nineteen. Milton was an unremitting student at ten. Southey began to write verses before he was eleven, Chaucer and Cowley at twelve, and Leigh Hunt at about the same age. Pope,³⁶ like so many others, began to write poetry as a child, thus proving that "poets are born and not made." Chatterton, the remarkable literary prodigy, died at eighteen, but not until he had established a lasting reputation. Bulwer-Lytton was a successful author at about the same age, and so were Keats and Bayard Taylor. Dickens produced the "Pickwick Papers" before he was twenty-five, and it may safely be said that in wit, humor, and originality he never surpassed that delicious book. These seem

successful in the arts of policy than even the great Julius, never guilty of youthful indiscretion, or, we are sorry to say, of youthful virtue; Maurice of Saxony, the preserver of the Reformed religion in Germany, in that memorable contest in which his youthful sagacity proved more than a match for the veteran craft of Charles V.; and the second William of Orange, the preserver of the liberties of Europe against the ambition of Louis XIV., who, as a child, may be said to have prattled treaties and lispéd despatches."

³² Nothing is so beneficial to a young author as the advice of a man whose judgment stands constitutionally at the freezing point. —*Douglas Jerrold*.

³³ The life of Jeanne d'Arc is like a legend in the midst of history. —*Waller*.

³⁴ After a couple of years Hall was restored to the full possession of his faculties, and for twenty years thereafter maintained his high reputation as a pulpit orator. He died in 1831.

³⁵ Fifty years after these poems were published, as we are informed by the publishers, there is a steady demand for from two to three hundred copies annually. Of how many American books, of a similar character, can this be said?

³⁶ I wrote things, I'm ashamed to say how soon. Part of an epic poem when about twelve. The scene of it lay at Rhodes and some of the neighboring islands; and the poem opened under water, with a description of the Court of Neptune. —*Pope*.

interesting facts to remember, though they do not establish any actual criterion, since the thoughtful student of the past can adduce many notable examples of mature development in art and literature.

Among these is that of Edmund Burke, on the whole the greatest of English philosophical statesmen. He is the most remarkable instance of a number of men of genius who seem to have grown younger as they grew older, – that is, mentally and morally. Macaulay has noticed that Bacon's writings towards the close of his career exceeded those of his youth and manhood "in eloquence, in sweetness and variety of expression, and in richness of illustration."³⁷ He adds: "In this respect the history of his mind bears some resemblance to the history of the mind of Burke. The treatises on the 'Sublime and Beautiful,'³⁸ though written on a subject which the coldest metaphysician could hardly treat without being occasionally betrayed into florid writing, is the most unadorned of Burke's works. It appeared when he was twenty-five or twenty-six. When, at forty, he wrote the 'Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents,' his reason and judgment had reached their full maturity, but his eloquence was in its splendid dawn. At fifty his rhetoric was as rich as good taste would admit; and when he died, at almost seventy, it had become ungracefully gorgeous. In his youth he wrote on the emotions produced by mountains and cascades, by the masterpieces of painting and sculpture, by the faces and necks of beautiful women, in the style of a Parliamentary report. In his old age he discussed treaties and tariffs in the most fervid and brilliant language of romance."

Socrates learned to play on musical instruments in his old age. Cato at eighty first studied the Greek language, and Plutarch did not apply himself to learn the Latin language until about the same age. Theophrastus³⁹ began his "Character of Man" on his ninetieth birthday. Peter Rusard, one of the fathers of French poetry, did not develop his poetic faculty until nearly fifty. Arnauld, the learned French theologian and philosopher, translated Josephus in his eightieth year. Lope de Vega, one of the most learned men of the sixteenth century, wrote his best at seventy years of age. Dr. Johnson applied himself to learn the Dutch language at seventy. At seventy-three, when quite feeble, he composed a Latin prayer to test to his own satisfaction the loss or retention of his mental faculties. Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" were the work of the author's last years. Franklin's philosophical pursuits were but fairly begun at fifty. La Mothe le Vayer's best treatises were written after he was eighty years of age, and Izaak Walton's when he was nearly ninety. Thomas Hobbes, the remarkable English philosopher and author, published his version of the Odyssey in his eighty-seventh year, and his Iliad in his eighty-eighth. Winckelmann,⁴⁰ author of the "History of Ancient Art," lived in ignorance and obscurity until the prime of his life, when he became famous. Landor was busy with authorship until after he was eighty. The Earl of Chatham made his most remarkable oratorical effort at seventy, and our own American orator and statesman, Robert C. Winthrop, at a still later period of his life. Fontenelle continued his literary pursuits until he was ninety-nine, "blossoming in the winter of his days," as Lord Orrery wrote of him. Ménage, the celebrated French critic and scholar, wrote sonnets and epigrams at ninety. Julius Scaliger, the renowned Italian scholar and poet, dictated to his son, at the age of seventy, two hundred verses of his own composition from memory. Mr. Gladstone and

³⁷ Lord Brougham hoped to see the day when every man in the United Kingdom could read Bacon. "It would be much more to the purpose," said Cobbett, "if his lordship could use his influence to see that every man in the kingdom could *eat* bacon."

³⁸ On a certain occasion when Barry, the eminent painter, exhibited one of his admirable pictures, some one present doubted that it was his work, so remarkable was its excellence, and Barry at the time had not established any special fame. The artist was so affected by the remark that he burst into tears and retired. Burke, who was present, followed him to pacify his grief. The painter by chance quoted some passages of the newly published essay on the "Sublime and Beautiful." It appeared anonymously, and Burke took occasion to sneer at it, when Barry showed more feeling than he had done about his picture. He commended the essay in the most earnest language. Burke, smiling, acknowledged its authorship. "I could not afford to buy it," replied the astonished artist, "but I transcribed every line with my own hands;" at the same time pulling the manuscript from his pocket. This was commendation so sincere and appreciative, that the great author and the great painter clasped hands in mutual friendship.

³⁹ Menander, the poet, was Theophrastus's favorite pupil.

⁴⁰ Winckelmann, one of the most distinguished writers on classic antiquities and the fine arts, was the son of a shoemaker. He contrived, by submitting to all sorts of personal deprivation, to fit himself for college, and to go through with the studies there by teaching young and less advanced fellow-students, at the same time supporting a bedridden and helpless father.

John Bright, the English statesmen, are more recent examples of oratorical, mental, and physical powers in advanced years. George Bancroft the American historian, in his eighty-sixth year is still engaged in authorship, and Whittier and Holmes are writing with unabated vigor at nearly eighty years of age. Miss Elizabeth Peabody at eighty-four is still a vigorous writer and active philanthropist, and the same may be said of Mrs. Julia Ward Howe at the age of sixty-six. Mrs. Howe, indeed, is one of the foremost of American women, whether we regard the ripeness of her scholarship, the breadth of her understanding, the richness of her imagination, or the quiet intrepidity with which she champions great reforms.

CHAPTER II

Who does not enjoy recalling these silent friends, favorite authors grown dear to us by age and long association? Some one has said that authors, like coins, grow dearer as they grow old. Indeed, Samuel Rogers, the banker and poet, declared that when friends at his famous "breakfasts" were praising a new book, he forthwith began to re-read an old one. All these writers were double-sided, so to speak; they had their book natures and their human natures, and it is when we prefer to contemplate them in the latter aspect that we like them best. Carlyle calls them "the vanguard in the march of mind, the intellectual backwoodsmen reclaiming from the idle wilderness new territory for the thought and activity of their happier brethren." It is true that we can form but a partial judgment of authors by their books, their motives being not always as pure as we are inclined to believe.⁴¹ A traitor like Bolingbroke is quite capable of writing a captivating book on patriotism; and it has been said if Satan were to write one, it would be upon the advantages of virtue.

It is certain he has ever shown such a hearty appreciation of virtue that he holds in highest estimation his success in corrupting it. Examples flash across the memory. There was Sir Thomas More advocating toleration, while he was himself a fierce persecutor; Sallust declaring against the licentiousness of his age, yet addicted to habitual debaucheries; Byron assuming a misanthropy which he never felt; and Cowley boasting of his mistresses, though he had not the courage even to address one. Smollett's descriptions and scenes were often indelicate, though he was himself in that respect a faultless man. "As a rule, the author who is not in genius far above his productions must be a second-rate one at best," says Bulwer-Lytton. Sometimes we detect striking likenesses between the author and his works. Goldsmith, for instance, was the same hero to low-bred women, and the same coward to ladies, that he depicts in his charming comedy. It is difficult, however, in the light of Handel's inspired music, to realize what an animal nature possessed him in his every-day mood, – what a glutton he was at table; or to reconcile the sublime strains of Mozart with his trivial personality.⁴² Still, Buffon persistently declares, "Le style c'est l'homme."

Addison, recognized as the purest and most perspicuous writer of the English language, though exercising such mastership of the pen, had no oral ability, and rarely attempted to talk in social circles. He said of himself that though he had a hundred pounds in the bank, he had no small coin in his pocket.⁴³

Dr. Johnson and Coleridge were famous for their colloquial facility, but both of these were rather lecturers than talkers, however delightful in this respect the latter may have been. Johnson during his life was undoubtedly more of a power as a talker than as a writer. It has been said that Scott talked more poetry and Edmund Burke more eloquence than they ever wrote. Emerson thought that "better things are said, more incisive, more wit and insight are dropped in talk and forgotten, than gets into books." E. H. Chapin and H. W. Beecher have talked sounder and more brilliant theology than they ever preached from the pulpit. Spontaneous thoughts come from our inner consciousness; sermons and essays, from the cooler action of the brain. Coleridge, on first meeting Byron, entertained the poet with one of his monologues, wherein he ascended into the seventh heaven upon wings of theology and metaphysics. Leigh Hunt described the scene to Charles Lamb, and expressed his wonder that Coleridge should have chosen so unsympathetic an auditor. "Oh, it was only his fun,"

⁴¹ "People may be taken in once, who imagine that an author is greater in private life than other men," says Dr. Johnson.

⁴² Such incongruities do exist: nothing is infallible; phrenologists even find the crania of some men to exhibit contradictory evidences. When Sydney Smith with some friends submitted his head to be examined by a phrenologist who did not know him, the party were amused at the examiner declaring him to be a great naturalist, – "never happier than when arranging his birds and fishes." "Sir," said the divine, "I don't know a fish from a bird!"

⁴³ "Men of genius," says Longfellow, "are often dull and inert in society; as the blazing meteor, when it descends to earth, is only a stone."

explained Lamb; "there's an immense deal of quiet humor about Coleridge!" Wordsworth speaks of him as the "rapt one, with the godlike forehead," the "heaven-eyed creature." Hazlitt says that "no idea ever entered the mind of man, but at some period or other it had passed over his head with rustling pinions." Talfourd writes of seeing "the palm-trees wave, and the pyramids tower, in the long perspective of his style." When Coleridge once asked Lamb, "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" he received the quiet reply, "I never heard you do anything else." Rogers tells us: "Coleridge was a marvellous talker. One morning, when Hookham Frere also breakfasted with me, Coleridge talked for three hours without intermission about poetry, and so admirably that I wish every word he uttered had been written down." Madame de Staël said of him that he was great in monologue, but that he had no idea of dialogue.

Macaulay was also remarkable for his conversational powers, which were greatly aided by an excellent memory. He has been accused of talking too much; and Sydney Smith once said of him: "He is certainly more agreeable since his return from India. His enemies might perhaps have said before – though I never did so – that he talked rather too much; but now he has occasional flashes of silence that make his conversation perfectly delightful!" In a party in which eminent men are present, the rule is said to be that, for good conversation, the number of talkers should never be fewer than the Graces or more than the Muses. Goldsmith, who wrote so charmingly and exhibited such a remarkable versatility with the pen, could make no figure in conversation. Fox, Bentley, Burke, Curran, and Swift were all brilliant talkers; Tasso, Dante, Gray, and Dryden⁴⁴ were all taciturn. Of Ben Jonson it is said that he was mostly without speech, sitting by the hour quite silent in society, sucking in the wine and humor of his companions.

Sheridan had the reputation of being a brilliant conversationalist; but we all know that many of his "impromptus" were laboriously prepared beforehand, and that he was wont to lie in wait silently for half an evening watching his opportunity to discharge the arrows of his polished wit. One would be glad to learn how it was with Shakespeare in society. He could hold his own in a controversy, however, as Thomas Fuller, in his "Worthies of England," says, "Many were the wet-combats between him and Ben Jonson:⁴⁵ which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war; master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow, in his performances. Shakespeare, like the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." Shakespeare himself has said, "Silence is only commendable in a neat's tongue dried and a maid not vendible;" but the ancient stoics thought that by silence they heard other men's imperfections and concealed their own.

The diplomatist Metternich said he had never known more than ten or twelve persons with whom it was pleasant to converse. Margaret Fuller said Carlyle's talk was an amazement to her, though she was familiar with his writings. His conversation, she declared, was a splendor scarcely to be faced with steady eye. He did not converse – only harangued. She thought him "arrogant and overbearing, but it was not the arrogance of littleness, nor self-love, but rather the arrogance of some old Scandinavian conqueror; it was his nature, the untamable impulse that had given him power to crush the dragons. She was not led to love or revere him, but liked him heartily, – liked to see him

⁴⁴ Dryden said of himself: "My conversation is slow and dull, my humor saturnine and reserved. In short, I am none of these who endeavor to break jests in company, or make repartees." And yet at Will's Coffee-House, where the wits of the town met, his chair in winter was always in the warmest nook by the fire, and in summer was placed in the balcony. "To bow to him, and to hear his opinion of Racine's last tragedy or of Bossuet's treatise on epic poetry was thought a privilege. A pinch from his snuff-box was an honor sufficient to turn the head of a young enthusiast." Every one must remember how, in Scott's novel of the "Pirate," Claud Halcro is continually boasting of having obtained at least that honor from "Glorious John."

⁴⁵ Jonson was a bricklayer, like his father before him. "Let them blush not that have, but those who have not, a lawful calling," says Thomas Fuller as he records this fact; and goes on to say that "Jonson helped in the construction of Lincoln's Inn, with a trowel in his hand and a book in his pocket. Some gentlemen pitying that his parts should be buried under the rubbish of so mean a calling, did by their bounty manumise him freely to follow his own ingenious inclinations."

the powerful smith, the Siegfried, melting all the old iron in his furnace till it glows to a sunset red and burns you, if you senselessly go too near."⁴⁶

When Dr. Johnson was asked why he was not invited out to dine as Garrick⁴⁷ was, he answered, as if it was a great triumph to him, "Because great lords and ladies don't like to have their mouths stopped!" He indulged a furious hatred to Americans, and whenever there was an opportunity sneered at them even more bitterly than he did at Scotchmen. It will be remembered that he thought something could be made out of a Scotchman "if you caught him young;" but he would not admit even this saving clause as regarded Americans. He said, "I am willing to love all, all mankind, except an American." He called them "robbers and pirates;" adding, "I'd burn and destroy them!"

These words were addressed to Miss Anna Seward, of Lichfield. It was in the grammar school of this ancient cathedral town that Addison, Dr. Johnson, 788788and Garrick received their early education, and Johnson was a native of the place. Miss Seward's father was the canon resident of Lichfield Cathedral. In his family there was a beautiful young lady named Honora Sneyd, a companion to his daughter. John André, a cultured London youth, fell in love with Honora, and was tacitly accepted. The young man was somewhat suddenly called back to the metropolis on business, and a separation thus ensued which seemed to wean the lady's affections from him, so that she soon after married a Mr. Edgeworth and in the course of time became the mother of Maria Edgeworth, the well-known novel-writer.⁴⁸ John André remained faithful to his first love, and came to America carrying in his bosom a miniature of Honora suspended from his neck. His sad fate during our Revolutionary War is well known to all. He was the Major André whom Washington reluctantly executed as a spy, and whose memorial is now conspicuous in Westminster Abbey.

Peter Corneille, the great French dramatic poet, had nothing in his exterior that indicated his genius. As to his conversational powers, they were simply insipid, and never failed to weary all listeners. Nature had endowed him with brilliant gifts, but forgot to grant him the ordinary accomplishments. He did not even speak correct French, which he never failed to write with perfection. When his friends represented to him how much more he might please by not disdaining to correct these trivial errors, he would smile and say, "I am none the less Peter Corneille!" We learn from Rogers that in the early days of his popularity Byron was quite diffident in society, or at least never ventured to take part in the conversation. If any one happened to let fall an observation which offended him, he never attempted to reply, but treasured it up for days, and would then come out with some cutting remarks, giving them as his deliberate opinion, the result of his experience of the individual's character. Southey⁴⁹ was stiff, reserved, sedate, and so wrapped up in a garb of asceticism that Charles Lamb once stutteringly told him he was "m-made for a m-m-monk, but somehow the co-co-cowl didn't fit."

Racine made this confidential confession to his son: "Do not think that I am sought after by the great on account of my dramas; Corneille composed nobler verses than mine, but no one notices him, and he only pleases by the mouth of the actors. I never allude to my works when with men of the world, but I amuse them about matters they like to hear. My talent with them consists not in

⁴⁶ Margaret Fuller by marriage became the Marchioness of Ossoli, and with her husband and child perished in the wreck of the brig "Elizabeth," from Leghorn, near Fire Island, in 1850. She was one of the most gifted literary women of America.

⁴⁷ Garrick was so popular that it was impossible for him to respond to half the social invitations which he received from the nobility. Even royalty itself honored him by private interviews, often listening to his readings in the domestic circle of the palace. Though he was always rewarded by the hearty approval of the king and queen, he said its effect upon him was like a "wet blanket" compared with the thunders of applause which he usually received in public.

⁴⁸ Sir Walter Scott greatly admired Maria Edgeworth's novels, complimenting "her wonderful power of vivifying all her persons and making them live as beings in your mind." Lord Jeffrey honored "their singular union of sober sense and inexhaustible invention." She died in 1849, in her eighty-second year.

⁴⁹ Southey was marvellously industrious, as over one hundred published volumes testify. Few men have been students so long and consecutively. He possessed one of the largest private libraries in England. He says: "Having no library within reach, I live upon my own stores, which are, however, more ample perhaps than were ever before possessed by one whose whole estate was in his inkstand." He generously supported the family of Coleridge, who were left destitute. His first wife was a sister of Coleridge's wife.

making them feel that I have any, but in showing them that they have." The well-remembered saying about Goldsmith's lack of conversational power is excellent because it was so true; namely, that "he wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll."⁵⁰ Fisher Ames and Rufus Choate were distinguished for their conversational powers. Stuart, the American painter, was remarkable in this respect; and so were Washington Allston, Edgar A. Poe, Margaret Fuller, and the late Caleb Cushing. The lady just named was considered to be the best talker of her sex since Madame de Staël. Indeed, those who knew her well said she talked even better than she wrote, which was saying much.

Charles Sumner used to relate a talk in a company where Daniel Webster was present. The question under discussion was what were the best means of culture. Webster was silent until all had spoken. He then said: "Gentlemen, you have overlooked one of the means of culture which I consider of the first importance, and from which I have gained the most; that is, good conversation."⁵¹

Whipple has said in one of his essays that "real, earnest conversation is a kind of intellectual cannibalism, where strong minds feed on each other and mightily enjoy the repast."

Charles Lamb's most sportive essays, which read as though they came almost spontaneously from his pen, are known to have been the result of intense brain labor. He would spend a whole week in elaborating a single humorous letter to a friend. Lamb was so sensitive concerning proof-reading as to be the dread of the printers. It is said of the poet-laureate of England that he has been known to re-write a poem twenty times and more before he was satisfied to give it to the printer. Dickens, when writing a book, was accustomed to shut himself up for days together, and to work with fearful energy until the task was completed; after which he would come forth presenting the appearance of a person recovering from a fit of illness. The free-and-easy spirit which characterizes his pages affords no evidence of the travail through which their author passed in giving them birth. Bulwer-Lytton took matters much more philosophically. He always worked at pen-craft leisurely, never more than three or four hours a day; and yet by carefully observing a system the aggregate of his productions was very large. Balzac, after thinking over a subject, would retire to his study and write it out half a dozen times before he gave the manuscript to the printer, whom he afterwards tormented to the very verge of exasperation by his proof alterations. To come nearer to our own time, we may remark that Longfellow, whose versification seems always to have flowed with such ease and fluency from his pen, was a slow and painstaking producer, sometimes altering and amending until the original draft of an essay or poem was quite improved out of sight.

Dr. Channing nearly drove his printers crazy; after his manuscript – almost illegible by corrections and interlineations – had been returned to them with alterations, omissions, and additions on the first proof-sheets, he would ponder over, alter, and amend three or four successive proofs before he finally allowed the result to meet the public eye, – a new edition involving another series of alterations. The lyric which cost Tennyson the most trouble was "Come into the Garden, Maud." It is said to have been held back from the public after it had been a year in his hands, going through repeated processes of alteration. What time indorses, requires time to create and finish. To this determination of Tennyson to condense all his thoughts into the smallest space, and never to expand when by patient labor he can contract, we owe the few lines in which he states in the "Princess" the whole nebular theory of the universe as expounded by Kant and Laplace; and how much reflection must have been required to condense the description of the fundamental defect of English law, on which volumes have been written, as he has done in "Aylmer's Field: " —

"The lawless science of our law,
That codeless myriad of precedent,

⁵⁰ "To expect an author to talk as he writes is ridiculous," says Hazlitt; "even if he did, you would find fault with him as a pedant."

⁵¹ There is a sort of knowledge beyond the power of learning to bestow, and this is to be had in conversation: so necessary is this to understanding the characters of men, that none are more ignorant of them than those learned pedants whose lives have been entirely consumed in colleges and among books. —*Fielding*.

That wilderness of single instances."

When we observe good workmanship, whether it be by a stone-mason, a cabinet-maker, or a writer, we may be sure that it has cost much patient labor. His biographer tells us that Moore thought ten or fifteen lines in twenty-four hours a good day's accomplishment in poetry; and at this rate he wrote "Lalla Rookh."⁵² Wordsworth wrote his verses, laid them aside for weeks, then, taking them up, frequently rewrote them a score of times before he called them finished. Buffon's "Studies of Nature" cost him fifty years of writing and re-writing before the work was published. John Foster, the profound and eloquent English essayist, often spent hours upon a single sentence. Ten years elapsed between the first sketch of Goldsmith's "Traveller" and its final completion. Rochefoucauld⁵³ spent fifteen years over his little book of Maxims, altering some of them thirty times. Rogers admitted that he had more than once spent ten days upon a single verse before he turned it to suit him. Vaugelas, the great French scholar, devoted twenty years to his admirable translation of "Quintus Curtius."

Some authors have produced with such rapidity as to approach improvisation. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of this was in the case of Lope de Vega, who composed and wrote a versified drama in a single day, and is known to have done so for seven consecutive days. Contemporary with Shakespeare and Cervantes, De Vega has left behind him two thousand original dramas sparkling with vivacity of dialogue and richness of invention. Soldier, duellist, poet, sailor, and priest, his long life was one of intense activity and adventure.⁵⁴ The name of Hardy, the French dramatic author and actor, occurs to us in this connection; though an inferior genius to De Vega, he wrote over six hundred original dramas. He was considered the first dramatic writer of the days of Henry IV. and Louis XIII., before whom Hardy often appeared upon the stage personating the heroes of his own dramas.

Prynne, the English antiquary, politician, and pamphlet-writer, sat down early in the morning to his composition. Every two hours his man brought him a roll and a pot of ale as refreshment; and so he continued until night, when he partook of a hearty dinner. One of his pamphlets was entitled "A Scourge for Stage-Players," which was considered so scurrilous that the Star-Chamber sentenced him to pay a heavy fine, to be exposed in the pillory, to lose his ears, and to be imprisoned for life. He was finally released from prison. While he was confined in the pillory, a pyramid of his offending pamphlets was made close at hand, to windward of his position, and set on fire, so that the author was very nearly choked to death by the smoke. He was almost as incessant and inveterate a writer as Petrarch, and considered being debarred from pen and ink an act more barbarous than the loss of his ears. However, he partially obviated his want of the usual facilities by writing a whole volume on his prison walls while confined in the Tower of London.

Byron wrote the "Corsair" in ten days, which was an average of nearly two hundred lines a day, – a fact which he acknowledged to Moore with a degree of shame. He said he would not confess it to everybody, considering it to be a humiliating fact, proving his own want of judgment in publishing, and the public in reading, "things which cannot have stamina for permanent attention." The surpassing beauty of the "Corsair," however, excuses all the author said or did in connection with it. It may nevertheless be affirmed that, as a rule, no great work has ever been performed with ease, or

⁵² His publishers paid Moore three thousand guineas for the copyright of "Lalla Rookh," his favorite production; and the liberal purchasers, Longman & Co., had no reason to regret their bargain. When Moore's "Lalla Rookh" first appeared, the author was terribly taken aback in company by Lady Holland, who said to him, "Mr. Moore, I don't intend to read your Larry O'Rourke; I don't like Irish stories!"

⁵³ Madame de Lafayette was a warm friend of Rochefoucauld. She was intimately allied to the clever men of the time, and was respected and loved by them. The author of the "Maxims" owed much to her, while she also was under obligations to him. Their friendship was of mutual benefit. "He gave me intellect," she said, "and I reformed his heart."

⁵⁴ His enemies having declared that De Vega's dramas were not judged upon their merit, but were popular because they bore his name, – to try the public taste he wrote and published a book of poems anonymously, entitled "Soliloquies on God." Their merit was undisputed, and they were vastly popular, until the carping critics threatened him with the unknown author as a rival. His triumph when he claimed them as his own was complete.

ever will be accomplished without encountering the throes of time and labor. Dante, we remember, saw himself "growing lean" over his "Divine Comedy." Mary Russell Mitford, the charming English authoress, dramatist, poet, and novelist, who so excelled in her sketches of country life, says of herself: "I write with extreme slowness, labor, and difficulty; and, whatever you may think, there is a great difference of facility in different minds. I am the slowest writer, I suppose, in England, and touch and retouch incessantly." Her life was one of constant labor and self-abnegation in behalf of a worthless, selfish, and imperious father. He was a robust, showy, wasteful profligate, and a gambler. A doctor by profession, he was a spendthrift and sensualist by occupation. He contracted a venal marriage with an heiress much older than himself, and after squandering her entire fortune he fell back upon his daughter as the bread-winner for the whole family. By a remarkable chance she became the possessor of a great lottery prize, from which she realized twenty thousand pounds, every penny of which her beastly father drank and gambled away. Still, the devotion and industry of the daughter never waned for a moment. Her patient struggles have placed her name on the roll of fame, while her father's has sunk into deserved oblivion.

De Tocqueville wrote to his publishers: "You must think me very slow. You would forgive me if you knew how hard it is for me to satisfy myself, and how impossible it is for me to finish things incompletely." Horace suggested that authors should keep their literary productions from the public eye for at least nine years, which certainly ought to produce "the well-ripened fruit of sage delay." After a labor of eleven years Virgil pronounced his *Æneid* imperfect. This recalls the Italian saying, "One need not be a stag, neither ought one to be a tortoise." Tasso's manuscript, which is still extant, is almost illegible because of the number of alterations which he made after having written it. Montaigne, "the Horace of Essayists," could not be induced, so lazy and self-indulgent was he, to even look at the proof-sheets of his writings. "I add, but I correct not," he said.

The writer of these pages has seen the original draft of Longfellow's "Excelsior," so interlined and amended to suit the author's taste as to make the manuscript rather difficult to decipher. The poet wrote a back-hand, as it is called; that is, the letters sloped in the opposite direction from the usual custom, and as a rule his writing was remarkably legible. Coleridge was very methodical as to the time and place of his composition. He told Hazlitt that he liked to compose walking over uneven ground, or making his way through straggling branches of undergrowth in the woods; which was a very affected and erratic notion, and might better have been "whipped out of him."⁵⁵ Wordsworth, on the contrary, found his favorite place for composing his verses in walking back and forth upon the smooth paths of his garden, among flowers and creeping vines. Hazlitt, in a critical analysis of the two poets, traces a likeness to the style of each in his choice of exercise while maturing his thoughts, – which, it would seem to us, is a subtle deduction altogether too fine to signify anything.

Charles Dibdin, the famous London song-writer and musician, whose sea-songs as published number over a thousand, caught his ideas "on the fly." As an example, he was at a loss for something new to sing on a certain occasion. A friend was with him in his lodgings and suggested several themes. Suddenly the jar of a ladder against the street lamp-post under his window was heard. It was a hint to his fertile imagination, and Dibdin exclaimed, "The Lamplighter! That's it; first-rate idea!" and stepping to the piano he finished both song and words in an hour, and sang them in public with great éclat that very night, under the title of "Jolly Dick, the Lamplighter." Like nearly all such mercurial geniuses, Dibdin was generous, careless, and improvident in his habits, dying at last poor and neglected.

Dr. Johnson was so extremely short-sighted that writing, re-writing, and correcting upon paper were very inconvenient for him; he was therefore accustomed to revolve a subject very carefully in his

⁵⁵ Coleridge tells us how he was once cured of infidelity by his teacher. "I told Boyer that I hated the thought of becoming a clergyman. 'Why so?' said he. 'Because, to tell you the truth, sir,' I said, 'I'm an infidel!' For this, without further ado, Boyer flogged me, – wisely, as I think, soundly, as I know. Any whining or sermonizing would have gratified my vanity, and confirmed me in my absurdity; as it was, I was laughed at, and got heartily ashamed of my folly."

mind, forming sentences and periods with minute care; and by means of his remarkable memory he retained them with great precision for use and final transmission to paper. When he began, therefore, with pen in hand, his production of copy was very rapid, and it required scarcely any corrections. Boswell says that posterity will be astonished when they are told that many of these discourses, which might be supposed to be labored with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste, as the moments pressed, without even being read over by Johnson before they were printed. Sir John Hawkins says that the original manuscripts of the "Rambler" passed through his hands, "and by the perusal of them I am warranted to say, as was said of Shakespeare by the players of his time, that he never blotted a line." Johnson tells us that he wrote the life of Savage in six-and-thirty hours. He also wrote his "Hermit of Teneriffe" in a single night. When we consider the amount of literary work performed by Johnson, say in the period of seven years, while "he sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language," and produced his dictionary, we must give him credit for the most remarkable industry and great rapidity of production. During these seven years he found time also to complete his "Rambler," the "Vanity of Human Wishes," and his tragedy, besides several minor literary performances. No wonder he developed hypochondria. Burke was a very slow and painstaking producer; it is even said that he had all his works printed at a private press before submitting them to his publisher.

Hume was more rapid, even careless with his first edition of a work, but went on correcting each new one to the day of his death.⁵⁶ Macaulay, in his elaborate speeches, did not write them out beforehand, but *thought* them out, trusting to his memory to recall every epigrammatic statement and every felicitous epithet which he had previously forged in his mind, so that when the time came for their delivery they appeared to spring forth as the spontaneous outpouring of his feelings and sentiments, excited by the questions discussed. Wendell Phillips followed a similar method.

Thomas Paine, the political and deistical writer, was under contract to furnish a certain amount of matter for each number of the "Pennsylvania Magazine." Aitken the publisher had great difficulty in getting him to fulfil his agreement. Paine's indolence was such that he was always behindhand with his engagements. Finally, after it had become too late to delay longer, Aitken would go to his house, tell him the printers were standing idle waiting for his copy, and insist upon his accompanying him to the office. Paine would do so, when pen, ink, and paper would be placed before him, and he would sit thoughtfully, but produce nothing until Aitken gave him a large glass of brandy. Even then he would delay. The publisher naturally feared to give him a second glass, thinking that it would disqualify him altogether, but, on the contrary, his brain seemed to be illumined by it, and when he had swallowed the third glass, – quite enough to have made Mr. Aitken dead drunk, – he would write with rapidity, intelligence, and precision, his ideas appearing to flow faster than he could express them on paper. The copy produced under the fierce stimulant was remarkable for correctness, and fit for the press without revision.⁵⁷

Charlotte Brontë was a very slow producer of literary work, and was obliged to choose her special days. Often for a week, and sometimes longer, she could not write at all; her brain seemed to be dormant. Then, without any premonition or apparent inducing cause, she would awake in the morning, go to her writing-desk, and the ideas would come with more rapidity than she could pen them. Mrs. Gaskell the novelist, a friend of the Brontës, was exactly the opposite in her style of composition. She could sit down at any hour and lose herself in the process of the story she was composing. She was also a prolific authoress, of whom George Sand said: "She has done what neither I nor other female writers in France can accomplish; she has written novels which excite the deepest

⁵⁶ When Hume was in Paris receiving the homage of the philosophers, three little boys were brought before him, who complimented him after the fashion of grown persons, expressing their admiration for his beautiful history. These children afterwards succeeded to the throne as Louis XVI., his brother, Louis XVIII., and Charles X.

⁵⁷ This was the Tom Paine on whom was written one of the most felicitous of epitaphs: —

interest in men of the world, and which every girl will be the better for reading." Bacon⁵⁸ often had music played in the room adjoining his library, saying that he gathered inspiration from its strains. Warburton said music was always a necessity to him when engaged in intellectual labor. Curran, the great Irish barrister, had also his favorite mode of meditation; it was with his violin in hand. He would seem to forget himself, running voluntaries over the strings, while his imagination, collecting its tones, was kindling and invigorating all his faculties for the coming contest at the bar. Bishop Beveridge adopted Bacon's plan, and said, "When music sounds sweetest in my ears, truth commonly flows the clearest in my mind." Even the cold, passionless Carlyle said music was to him a kind of inarticulate speech which led him to the edge of the infinite, and permitted him for a moment to gaze into it.

John Foster, the English essayist, declared that the special quality of genius was "the power to light its own fire;" and certainly Sir Walter Scott was a shining example of this truth. Shelley, a poet of finer but less robust fibre, decided that "the mind, in creating, is as a fading coal, which some passing influence, like an invisible wind, wakens into momentary brightness."

As already remarked, ten years transpired between the first sketch of the "Traveller," which was made in Switzerland, and its publication; but the history of the "Vicar of Wakefield" was quite different. Goldsmith hastened the closing pages to raise money, being terribly pressed for the payment of numerous small bills, and also by his landlady for rent. He was actually under arrest for this last debt, and sent to Dr. Johnson to come to him at once. Understanding very well what was the trouble, Johnson sent him a guinea, and came in person as soon as he could. He found, on arriving, that Goldsmith had already broken the guinea and was drinking a bottle of wine purchased therewith. The Doctor put the cork into the bottle, and began to talk over the means of extricating the impecunious author from his troubles. Goldsmith told Johnson that he had just finished a small book, and wished he would look at it; perhaps it would bring in some money. He brought forth the manuscript of the "Vicar of Wakefield." Johnson hastily glanced over it, paused, read a chapter carefully, bade Goldsmith to be of good cheer, and hastened away with the new story to Newbury the publisher, who, solely on Johnson's recommendation, gave him sixty pounds for the manuscript and threw it into his desk, where it remained undisturbed for two years.⁵⁹

A voluminous writer once explained to Goldsmith the advantage of employing an amanuensis. "How do you manage it?" asked Goldsmith. "Why, I walk about the room and dictate to a clever man, who puts down very correctly all that I tell him, so that I have nothing to do but to look it over and send it to the printers." Goldsmith was delighted with the idea, and asked his friend to send the scribe to him. The next day the penman came with his implements, ready to catch his new employer's words and to record them. Goldsmith paced the room with great thoughtfulness, just as his friend had described to him, back and forth, back and forth, several times; but after racking his brain to no purpose for half an hour, he gave it up. He handed the scribe a guinea, saying, "It won't do, my friend; I find that my head and hand must work together."

Milton dictated that immortal poem, "Paradise Lost," his daughters being his amanuenses; but Milton was then blind. It is said of Julius Cæsar that while writing a despatch he could at the same time dictate seven letters to as many clerks. This seems almost miraculous; but in our own day Paul Morphy has performed quite as difficult a feat at chess, playing several games at once, blindfolded.

One of the most eminent and eloquent of American preachers and lecturers, Thomas Starr King, was accustomed to dictate to an amanuensis; but when a difficulty would occur in developing his

⁵⁸ Bacon was full of crotchets, so to speak. In spring, he would go out for a drive in an open coach while it rained, to receive "the benefit of irrigation," which, he contended, was "most wholesome because of the nitre in the air, and the universal spirit of the world." He had extraordinary notions and indulged them freely, such as dosing himself with chemicals, rhubarb, nitre, saffron, and many other medicines. At every meal his table was abundantly strewn with flowers and sweet herbs.

⁵⁹ It is curious that St. Pierre's story of Paul and Virginia, which has since proved one of the most popular tales ever written, was at first listened to by the author's friends so coldly that after it was finished he laid it by for months; but when it once got into print the public indorsed it immediately, and fresh editions followed each other in rapid succession.

thought, he would take the pen in his own hand, and, abstracting himself entirely from the wondering reporter by his side, would spend perhaps half an hour in deeper thinking and more exact expression than when he dictated. Those who have examined his manuscript since his death easily perceive that the portions of a sermon or a lecture which he personally wrote are better than those which he poured forth to his amanuensis as he walked the room. On one occasion a friend who was in favor of making the pen and brain work together went to hear Mr. King deliver a lecture on Pope Gregory VII. (Hildebrand), and at its conclusion told the lecturer that he could distinguish, without seeing the manuscript, the portions he wrote with his own hand from those he dictated. He succeeded so well, in the course of half an hour's conversation, as to surprise the orator by hitting on the passages in dispute, and proving his case.

To write an acceptable book, poem, or essay, is quite as much of a trade as to make a clock or shoe a horse. To produce easy-flowing sentences, as they finally appear before the reader's eye, has cost much careful thought, long and patient practice, and even with some famous authors, as we have seen, many hours of writing and re-writing. So far as it is applied to authorship, we are not surprised at Hogarth's remark: "I know no such thing as genius; genius is nothing but labor and diligence." Buffon's definition is nearly the same; he says, "Genius is only great patience." Authors are generally very commonplace representatives of humanity, and remarkably like the average citizen whom we meet in our daily walk. Rogers, in his "Table Talk," says: "When literature is the sole business of life, it becomes a drudgery; when we are able to resort to it only at certain hours, it is a charming relaxation. In my early years I was a banker's clerk, obliged to be at the desk every day from ten to five o'clock, and I shall never forget the delight with which, on returning home, I used to read and write during the evening." He was a great reader, but said that "a man who attempts to read all the new publications must often do as a flea does – skip."⁶⁰

To recur to Charles Dickens, is it generally known that his favorite novel of "David Copperfield" partially relates to the history of his own boyhood? The story of David's employment, when a child, in washing and labelling blacking-bottles in a London cellar, was true of Dickens himself. If it were possible to read between the lines, we should not infrequently find the most effective narrative sketches little less than biography or autobiography. Thackeray and Dickens both wrote under the thin gauze of fiction. "Vivian Gray" is but a photograph of its dilettante author; and every character drawn by Charlotte Brontë is a true portrait, all being confined within so small a circle as to be easily recognizable. Smollett sat for his own personality in that of Roderick Random; while Scott drew many of his most strongly individualized characters, like that of Dominie Sampson, from people in his immediate circle.

Coleridge says of Milton: "In 'Paradise Lost,' indeed in every one of his poems, it is Milton himself whom you see. His Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve, are all John Milton; and it is a sense of this intense egotism that gives one the greatest pleasure in reading Milton's works." It is well known that many of Byron's⁶¹ poetical plots are almost literally his personal experiences. This was especially the case as to the "Giaour." A beautiful female slave was thrown into the sea for infidelity, and was terribly avenged by her lover, while Byron was in the East; being impressed with the dramatic character of the tragedy, he gave it expression in a poem. Carlyle says that Satan

⁶⁰ Poor, dear Rogers! Smith was disposed to be a little too hard on him. Some one having asked after Rogers's health in Smith's presence, he replied, "He's not very well." "Why, what's the matter?" rejoined the querist. "Oh, don't you know," said Smith, "he's produced a couplet;" and added: "When our friend is delivered of a couplet with infinite labor and pain, he takes to his bed, has straw laid down, the knocker tied up, expects his friends to call and make inquiries, and the answer at the door invariably is, 'Mr. Rogers and his little couplet are as well as can be expected!'"

⁶¹ That excellent and conservative critic, Epes Sargent, says of the author of "Don Juan," "He may have been overrated in his day; but his place in English literature must ever be in the front rank of the immortals." "Byron," said Emerson once, "had large utterance, but little to say," – a half-truth pointedly expressed; but, alluding to Byron's poems in his later life, acknowledging their captivating energy, Emerson denied having uttered, even in conversation, so derogatory a remark of him who was, with all his limitations, a bard palpably inspired.

was Byron's grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model, apparently, of his conduct. In Bulwer-Lytton's "Disowned," one of his earliest and best stories, the hero, Clarence Linden, a youth of eighteen, while journeying as a pedestrian, makes the acquaintance of a free-and-easy person named Cole, – a gypsy king, – in whose camp he passes the night: all of which was an actual experience of Bulwer himself. Hans Christian Andersen gives us many of his personal experiences in his popular tale, "Only a Fiddler;" so is "Gilbert Gurney," a novel by Theodore Hook, a biography of himself as a practical joker. It will thus be seen that authors do not always draw entirely upon the imagination for incidents, characters, and plot, but that there is from first to last a large amount of actual truth in seeming fiction.

When Goldsmith was a lad of fifteen or there-about, some one gave him a guinea, with which, and a borrowed horse, he set out for a holiday trip. He got belated when returning, and, inquiring of a stranger if he would point out to him a house of entertainment, was mischievously directed to the residence of the sheriff of the county. Here he knocked lustily at the door, and sending his horse to the stable, ordered a good supper, inviting the "landlord" to drink a bottle of wine with him. The next morning, after an ample breakfast, he offered his guinea in payment, when the squire, who knew Goldsmith's family, overwhelmed him with confusion by telling him the truth. Thirty years afterwards Goldsmith availed himself of this humiliating blunder at the time he wrote that popular comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer." When Goldsmith was talking to a friend of writing a fable in which little fishes were to be introduced, Dr. Johnson, who was present, laughed rather sneeringly. "Why do you laugh?" asked Goldsmith, angrily. "If you were to write a fable of little fishes, you would make them speak like whales!" The justice of the reproof was perfectly apparent to Johnson, who was conscious of Goldsmith's superior inventiveness, lightness, and grace of composition.

Speaking of authors writing from their own personal experience recalls a name which we must not neglect to mention. Laurence Sterne, author of "Tristram Shandy," various volumes of sermons, the "Sentimental Journey," etc., was a curious compound in character, but possessed of real genius. He was quite a sentimentalist in his writings, and those who did not know him personally would accredit him with possessing a tender heart. The fact was, however, as Horace Walpole said of him, "He had too much sentiment to have any feeling." His mother, who had run in debt on account of an extravagant daughter, would have been permitted to remain indefinitely in jail, but for the kindness of the parents of her pupils. Her son Laurence heeded her not. "A dead ass was more important to him than a living mother," says Walpole. Sterne also used his wife very ill. One day he was talking to Garrick in a fine sentimental manner in praise of conjugal love and fidelity. "The husband," said Sterne, "who behaves unkindly to his wife, deserves to have his house burned over his head." Garrick's reply was only just: "If you think so, I hope *your* house is insured." He is known to have been engaged to a Miss Fourmantel for five years, and then to have jilted her so cruelly that she ended her days in a mad-house. Such was the great Laurence Sterne. It was poetical justice that he should repent at leisure of his subsequent hasty marriage to one whom he had known only four weeks. He twice visited the lady whom he had deceived, in the establishment where she was confined; and the character of Maria, whom he so pathetically describes, is drawn from her, showing how cheaply he could coin his pretended feelings. Contradictions in character are often ludicrous, and go to show that the author and the man are seldom one. What can be more contradictory in the nature of the same individual than Sterne whining over a dead ass and neglecting to relieve a living mother; or Prior addressing the most romantic sonnets to his Chloe, and at the same time indulging a sentimental passion for a barmaid?

Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," according to Mr. Best, an Irish clergyman, relates to the scenes in which Goldsmith was himself an actor. Auburn is a poetical name for the village of Lissoy, county of Westneath. The name of the schoolmaster was Paddy Burns. "I remember him well," says Mr. Best; "he was indeed a man severe to view. A woman called Walsey Cruse kept the ale-house. I have often been within it. The hawthorn bush was remarkably large, and stood in front of the ale-house." The author of the "Deserted Village," however, made his best contemporary "hit" with his poem of

the "Traveller." He always distrusted his poetic ability, and this poem was kept on hand some years after it was completed, before he published it in 1764. It passed through several editions in the first year, and proved a golden harvest to Newbury the publisher; but Goldsmith received only twenty guineas for the manuscript.

The character of Sober, in Johnson's "Idler," is a portrait of himself; and he admitted more than once that he had his own outset in life in his mind when he wrote the Eastern story of "Gelaleddin." Is not "Tristram Shandy" a synonym for its author, Sterne? Hazlitt and many others fuse the personality of the author of the "Imaginary Conversations" with this admirable work from his pen: certainly a high compliment to Landor, if the portraiture is a likeness. Walter Savage Landor⁶² was a most erratic genius, a man of uncontrollable passions which led him into constant difficulties; at times he must have been partially deranged. In all his productions he exhibits high literary culture; and being born to a fortune, he was enabled to adapt himself to his most fastidious tastes, though in the closing years of his life, having lost his money, he learned the meaning of that bitter word dependence. The severest critic must accord him the genius of a poet; but his literar reputation will rest upon his elaborate prose work, "Imaginary Conversations" of literary men and statesmen, upon which he was engaged for more than ten years. He lived to the age of ninety, and found solace in his pen to the last.

⁶² "I had learned from his works," remarks Lady Blessington, after meeting Landor at Florence, in May, 1825, "to form a high opinion of the man as well as the author. But I was not prepared to find in him the courtly, polished gentleman of high breeding, of manners, deportment, and demeanor, that one might expect to meet with in one who had passed the greater part of his life in courts."

CHAPTER III

As we have already remarked, authors are very much like other people, rarely coming up to the idea formed of them by enthusiastic readers. They are pretty sure to have some idiosyncrasies more or less peculiar; and who, indeed, has not? To know the true character of these individuals, we should see them in their homes rather than in their books.

Having so lately spoken of Landor, we are reminded of another literary character who in many respects resembled him. William Beckford, the English author, utterly despised literary fame, and when he wrote he could afford to do so, for he was a millionaire. His romance of "Vathek," as an Eastern tale, was pronounced by the critics superior to "Rasselas;" and indeed "Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia," is hardly in any sense an Eastern tale. "Johnson," says Macaulay, "not content with turning filthy savages, ignorant of their letters and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as accomplished as Mrs. Lennox or Mrs. Sheridan, transferred the whole domestic system of England to Egypt." Beckford read to Rogers one of his novels in which the hero was a Frenchman who was ridiculously fond of dogs, and in which his own life was clearly depicted. Even this millionaire author was finally reduced to such necessity as obliged him to sell his private pictures for subsistence. The last which he disposed of was Bellini's portrait of the "Doge of Venice," which was bought for and hung in the National Gallery on the very day that Beckford died, in 1844.

Certainly those authors who give us their own personal experience as a basis for their sketches are no plagiarists. The late Wendell Phillips⁶³ delighted, in his lecture on the "Lost Arts," to prove that there was nothing new under the sun; a not uncongenial task for this "silver-tongued orator," who was an iconoclast by nature. So early as the age of twenty-five he relinquished the practice of the law because he was unwilling to act under an oath to the Constitution of the United States. In one sense there is nothing new under the sun. Genius has not hesitated to borrow bravely from history and legend. The "Amphitrion" of Molière was adopted from Plautus, who had borrowed it from the Greeks, and they from the Indians. Any one reading a collection of the Arabian stories for the first time will be surprised at meeting so many which are familiar, and which he had thought to be of modern birth. La Fontaine borrowed from Petronius the "Ephesian Matron," which had been taken from Greek annals, having been previously transferred from the Arabic, where it appeared taken from the Chinese. There is no ignoring the fact that a large portion of our plots belonged originally to Eastern nations. The graceful, attractive, and patriotic story of William Tell was proven by the elder son of Haller, a century ago, to have been, in the main features, but the revival of a Danish story to be found in Saxo Grammaticus. The interesting legend of the apple was but a fable revived. The English story of Whittington and his Cat was common two thousand years ago in Persia.

When the writer of these pages visited the grand temples of Nikko, in the interior of Japan, he was told that the wonderfully preserved carvings beneath the eaves and on the inner walls, thousands of years old, were executed by one who was known as the "Left-Handed Artist," who was a dwarf, and had but partial use of the right hand. It seems, according to the local legend preserved for so many centuries, that while this artist was working at the ornamentation of the temples at Nikko he saw and fell in love with a beautiful Japanese girl resident in the city; for Nikko was then a city of half a million, though now but a straggling village. The girl would have nothing to do with the artist, on account of his deformity of person. All his attempts to win her affection were vain; she was inflexible. Finally the heart-broken artist returned to Tokio, his native place. Here he carved in wood a life-size figure of his beloved, so perfect and beautiful that the gods endowed it with life, and the sculptor

⁶³ This man scornfully renounces your civil organizations, — county and city, or governor or army; is his own navy and artillery, judge and jury, legislature and executive. He has learned his lessons in a bitter school. — *Emerson*.

lived with it as his wife, in the enjoyment of mutual love, all the rest of his days. Here, then, in Japan, we have the legend upon which the Greek story of Pygmalion and Galatea is undoubtedly founded.

As regards the subject of plagiarism in general, which is so often spoken of as connected with literary productions, it should be remembered, as Ruskin says, that all men who have sense and feeling are being constantly helped. They are taught by every person whom they meet, and enriched by everything that falls in their way. The greatest is he who has been oftenest aided.⁶⁴ "Literature is full of coincidences," says Holmes, "which some love to believe plagiarisms. There are thoughts always abroad in the air, which it takes more wit to avoid than to hit upon."

It has been truthfully said that no man is quite sane; each one has a vein of folly in his composition, a view which would certainly seem to be illustrated by circumstances which are easily recalled. Take, for instance, the fact that Schiller⁶⁵ could not write unless surrounded by the scent of decayed apples, with which he kept one drawer of his writing-desk well filled. Could we have a clearer instance of monomania? He also required his cup of strong coffee when he was composing, and the coffee was well "laced" with brandy. Bulwer-Lytton, in his life of Schiller, declares that when he wrote at night he drank hock wine. As an opposite and much more agreeable habit, we have that of Méhul, the French composer, and author of over forty successful operas, who could not produce a note of original music except amid the perfume of roses. His table, writing-desk, and piano were constantly covered with them; in this delicious atmosphere he produced his "Joseph in Egypt," which alone would have entitled him to undying fame.

Father Sarpi, who was Macaulay's favorite historian, best known as the author of the "History of the Council of Trent," having the idea that the atmosphere immediately about him became in a degree impregnated with the mental electricity of his brain, was accustomed to build a paper enclosure about his head and person while he was writing. "All air is predatory," he said. Salieri, the Venetian composer, prepared himself for writing by filling a capacious dish at his side with candy and bonbons, which he consumed in large quantities during the process. Sarti, the well-known composer of sacred music, was obliged to work in the dark, or thought that he was, as daylight or artificial light of any sort at such moments utterly disconcerted him. Rossini, on the contrary, seemed to have no special ideas about his surroundings when he was in a mood for composing. He sat down among his friends, laughing and talking all the while that he was creating, and framing with marvellous rapidity strains that will live for all time. The whole of "Tancredi," which first made his fame, was produced in the very midst of social life and merry companionship. He said he found inspiration in the cheerful human voices about him. As to the peculiarities we have noted in others, they must at first have been mere affectations; but such is the force of habit, that no doubt these individuals became confirmed in them and really believed their indulgence a necessity.

Carneades, the Greek philosopher, so famed for his subtle and powerful eloquence, before sitting down to write dosed himself with hellebore, – a strange resort, as it is supposed to act directly upon the liver, and only very slightly to stimulate the brain, besides being a fatal poison in large doses. It is well known that Dryden resorted to singular aids as preparatory to literary composition; being in the habit of first having himself bled and then making a meal of raw meat. The former process, he contended, rendered his brain clear, and the latter stimulated his imagination. In 1668 he held the position now filled by Tennyson, as poet-laureate of England. He was a notable instance of power in

⁶⁴ "Every one of my writings," says Goethe, "has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons, by a thousand different things. The learned and the ignorant, the wise and the foolish, infancy and age, have come in turn, generally without having been the least suspicious of it, to bring me the offering of their thoughts, their faculties, their experience; often have they sown the harvest I have reaped. My work is that of an aggregation of human beings taken from the whole of nature; it bears the name of Goethe."

⁶⁵ When only eighteen years of age, in 1777, he wrote "The Robbers," a tragedy of extraordinary power, though he characterized it at a later day as "a monster for which fortunately there was no original." During a few years after its first publication it was translated into various languages and read all over Europe.

poetry, satire, and indecency, whom Cowper characterized as a lewd writer but a chaste companion. Dryden's own couplet will forcibly apply to himself: —

"O gracious God! how far have we
Profaned thy heavenly gift of poesy!"

His "Essay on Dramatic Poesy," according to Dr. Johnson, entitled him to be considered the father of English criticism. His dramas, such as "Mariage à-la-Mode," "All for Love," "Don Sebastian," etc., were, by reason of their indecency, examples of perverted genius. He was sixty-six years old when he wrote his "Alexander's Feast," by far his best literary effort. While Macaulay calls him "an illustrious renegade,"⁶⁶ Dr. Johnson says, "he found the English language brick and left it marble," — a most superlative and ridiculous comment to be made by so erudite a critic.

When James Francis Stephens, the English entomologist, was about to write, he mounted a horse and arranged his thoughts and sentences while at full gallop. This was a plan that Sir Walter Scott also adopted when he wrote "Marmion," galloping up and down the shore of the Firth of Forth. But he concluded that he could do better pen-work in a more rational manner, so this practice did not become habitual with him. Scott made an interesting confession when writing the third volume of "Woodstock." He declared that he had not the slightest idea how the story was to be wound up to a catastrophe. He said he could never lay out a plan for a novel and stick to it. "I only tried to make that which I wrote diverting and interesting, leaving the rest to fate." Sir David Dalrymple (afterwards Lord Hailes) was a voluminous author on historical and antiquarian subjects. His "Annals of Scotland," published in 1792, was his most important work; Dr. Johnson called it "a book which will always sell, it has such a stability of dates, such a certainty of facts, and such punctuality of citation." Lord Hailes's mode of writing was very domestic, so to speak, being performed by the parlor fire, and amid his family circle of wife and children. He was always ready to answer any appeal, however trifling, and to enter cheerfully into all current family affairs. This seems hardly reconcilable with the extreme nicety and absolute correctness of his work.

Cormontaigne, the French military engineer, wrote an elaborate treatise on fortification in the trenches and while under fire. The Duke of Wellington, when his army was at San Christoval awaiting battle with the French, wrote a complete essay on the purpose of establishing a bank at Lisbon after the English methods. Thomas Hood wrote at night, when the house was still and the children asleep. Ouida⁶⁷ writes with her dogs only as companions, while they lie contentedly at her feet in the bright sunny library whose windows overlook the valley of the Arno and her well-beloved Florence. In the flower-garden before the villa her favorite Newfoundland dog, not long since dead, lies buried beneath a marble monument. Her productive literary capacity is wonderfully rapid, but the demand far exceeds it, and the prices she receives are unprecedented. She has few if any intimate friends, and no confidants, leading a life of almost perfect isolation.

Notwithstanding common-sense and experience have ever taught that the brain is capable of producing its best work when in its normal condition, still a host of writers have resorted systematically to some sort of artificial stimulant to aid them in authorship. History tells us that Æschylus, Eupolis, Cratinus, and Ennius, in the olden time, would not attempt to compose until they had become nearly intoxicated with wine. In more modern times, we know that Shadwell, De Quincey, Psalmanazar the famous literary impostor, Coleridge, Robert Hall, and Bishop Horsley

⁶⁶ Such facts as the following lead us to draw rather disparaging conclusions as to Dryden's character. He was short of money at a certain time, and sent to Jacob Tonson, his publisher, asking him to advance him some, which Tonson declined to do; whereupon Dryden sent him these lines, adding, "Tell the dog that he who wrote these can write more": —

⁶⁷ The real name of this lady is Louise de la Rame. Her father was a Frenchman and her mother of English birth. The name of "Ouida" is an infantine corruption of her baptismal name Louise. Her first episode in love occurred when she was a maiden of forty years, resulting finally in a most embittering disappointment.

stimulated themselves with fabulous doses of opium. Alfred de Musset, Burns, Edgar A. Poe, Dickens, Christopher North, and a host of others whose names will only too readily occur to the reader, were reckless as to the use of alcohol. They were both fed and consumed by stimulants. We are inclined, however, to forgive much of indiscretion in a brilliant and ardent imagination. Schiller, so lately referred to, was addicted to Rhenish wine in large quantities. Blackstone, author of "Commentaries on the Laws of England," remarkable for his clearness and purity of style, never wrote without a bottle of port by his side, which he emptied at a sitting.

It is related of Bacon that he did not drink wine when engaged in pen-craft, but he was accustomed to have sherry poured into a broad open vessel, and to inhale its fragrance with great relish. He believed that his brain thus received the stimulating influence without the narcotic effect. Sheridan could neither write nor talk until warmed by wine. If about to make a speech in the House, he would, just before rising, swallow half a tumbler of raw brandy. Burke presents a remarkable contrast; his great stimulant being *hot water*. The most impassioned passages of his speeches had no other physical inspiration; all the rest came from his glowing soul, which was powerful enough to vitalize his body for an oration of four hours' length. The food which sustained him on such occasions was *cold mutton*, the drink being *hot water*. Brandy and port, even claret and champagne, would have driven him wild, though they were the ordinary stimulants of his contemporaries. Burke was, like Burns, a man of an excitable temperament; but, unlike Burns, he was wise enough to avoid all dangerous alcoholic excitements, which increased the impulsive elements of his nature and diminished the action of his reason. It will be observed that even in the occasional violence of his invective, his passion is still reasoned passion, or reason penetrated by passion, so as to reach the will as well as to convince the understanding.

Addison, with his bottle of wine at each end of the long gallery at Holland House, where he walked back and forth perfecting his thoughts, will be sure to be recalled by the reader in this connection. Consciously or unconsciously he took a glass of the stimulant at each turn, until wrought up to the required point. Dr. Radcliffe, the eminent London physician and author, was often found in an over-stimulated condition. Summoned one evening to a lady patient, he found that he was too much inebriated to count her pulse, and so muttered, "Drunk! dead drunk!" and hastened homeward. The next morning, while experiencing intense mortification over the recollection, he received a note from the same patient, in which she said, she knew only too well her own condition when he called, and begged him to keep the matter secret, enclosing a hundred-pound note.

Burns was wont oftentimes to compose, as he tells us, "by the lee side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in the company except the haut-boy and the Muse."⁶⁸ Of course "the pernicious expedient of stimulants," as Carlyle would say, only served to use up more rapidly his already wasted physical strength. Sometimes, however, Burns would compose walking in the open fields. His first effort was to master some pleasing air, and then he easily produced appropriate words for it. One noble trait of Burns's character should not be forgotten. Though he died in abject poverty, he did not leave a farthing of debt owed to any one. Nothing could be finer than Carlyle's exordium in his review of Lockhart's "Life of Burns: " "With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his works ever as they are, pass away from the memory of men. While the Shakespeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves, this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye; for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines."

⁶⁸ Burns realized his own unfortunate lack of self-control, but he gives good advice to others, as follows: —

As we have seen, musical composers, like those devoted to literature, are apt to have singular fancies. Glück, who was at one time the music-teacher of Marie Antoinette, and whose operas have entitled him to a niche in the temple of fame, could compose only while under the influence of champagne, two bottles of which he would consume at a sitting. He was an eccentric individual, singing and acting the part for which he at the same time wrote the music. Handel, when he felt the inspiration of music upon him, sought the graveyard of some village church, and on the moss-grown stones laid his portfolio and wrote his notes, never trying their harmony until he had completed the entire piece. It seems strange to us, in the light of his great genius, to think what an immense glutton Handel was. We have already spoken of this, but recur to it again in this connection; for one is puzzled how to reconcile the grossness of his appetite with his æsthetic nature. He could devour more food at one dinner than any other composer in three.⁶⁹ Never before was height and breadth of musical genius combined with such enormous appetite for the good things of the table; and yet his digestion was as sound as his love and need of food was portentous. Everything about this great composer was gigantesque, as became a giant. His forgetive brain was recruited by the nourishment drawn from a ravenous yet healthy stomach.

Unlike Handel's mode of composition, Mozart played his music upon the harpsichord before he wrote a note of it upon paper; but he had a most exalted idea of his mission, and prepared himself for composition, not by partaking of a hearty dinner, but by reading favorite classic authors for hours before beginning what was to him a sacred task. His favorite authors on such occasions were Dante and Petrarch. He chose the morning for his compositions; but he would often delay writing his scores for the musicians until it was too late to copy them, and sometimes failed altogether to write out the part intended to be performed by himself; yet when the moment arrived, so perfectly had all been arranged in his mind, he played it without hesitation, instrument in hand. The Emperor Joseph, before whom he was performing on one occasion, observed that the music-sheet before him contained no characters whatever, and asked, "Where is your part?" "Here," replied Mozart, pointing with his finger to his forehead.⁷⁰ He became blind before he was forty years of age, but continued to compose. The duet and chorus in "Judas Maccabæus," and some others of his finest efforts were produced after his total deprivation of sight; nor did he cease to conduct his oratorios in public on account of his blindness.

Spontini, the Italian composer, like Sarti, could only produce his music in the dark, dictating to some one sitting in an adjoining room. Rossini, author of the "Barber of Seville," composed his music as the elder Dumas was accustomed to write; namely, in bed. Offenbach, of opera-bouffe notoriety, almost lived on coffee while creating his dainty aerial music. The writer of these pages met this composer in Paris in 1873, when he was at the height of his popularity, and was told by him that he took no wine or spirit until *after* his work of composition was completed. Cimarosa, the Italian composer, who won national fame before he was twenty-five, derived his inspiration from the noisy crowd. Auber, the French composer, could write only among the green fields and the silence of the country. Sacchini, another Italian composer, lost the thread of his inspiration unless attended by his favorite cats, they sitting all about him while he worked, some upon the table, some on the floor, and one always perched contentedly between his shoulders on his neck; he declared that their purring was to him a soothing anodyne, and fitted him for composition by making him content. Eugène Sue would not take up his pen except in full dress and with white kids on his hands. Thus he produced the "Mysteries of Paris," which Dumas designated as "one-gross-of-gloves long." Buffon would only sit down to write after taking a bath and donning pure linen with a full frilled bosom. Haydn⁷¹ declared

⁶⁹ It is said to have been when Handel's great appetite was being spoken of as rather at antipodes with his glorious musical conceptions, that Sydney Smith remarked, "his own idea of heaven was eating *foie gras* to the sound of trumpets!"

⁷⁰ The overture to "Don Giovanni," generally considered to be the best portion of the opera, was written by Mozart in *two hours*, he having overslept himself. It was copied in great haste by the scribes, and actually played for the first time without rehearsal.

⁷¹ The poet Carpani once asked his friend Haydn how it happened that his church music was of so animating and cheerful a

that he could not compose unless he wore the large seal-ring which Frederick the Great had given him. He would sit wrapped in silence for an hour or more, after which he would seize his pen and write rapidly without touching a musical instrument; and he rarely altered a line. In early life, poor, freezing in a miserable garret, he studied the rudiments of his favorite art by the side of an old broken harpsichord. For a period of six years he endured a bitter conflict with poverty, being often compelled for the sake of warmth to lie in bed most of the day as well as the night. Finally he was relieved from this thralldom by the generosity of his patron, Prince Esterhazy, a passionate lover of music, who appointed him his chapel-master, with a salary sufficient to keep him supplied with the ordinary comforts of life.

Crébillon the elder, a celebrated lyric poet and member of the French Academy, was enamoured of solitude, and could only write effectively under such circumstances. His imagination teemed with romances, and he produced eight or ten dramas which enjoyed popularity in their day, – about 1776. One day, when he was alone and in a deep reverie, a friend entered his study hastily. "Don't disturb me," cried the author, "I am enjoying a moment of happiness: I am going to hang a villain of a minister, and banish another who is an idiot."

We have lately mentioned Dumas. Hans Christian Andersen, speaking of the various habits of authors, thus refers to the elder Dumas, with whom he was intimate: "I generally found him in bed, even long after mid-day, where he lay, with pen, ink, and paper by his side, and wrote his newest drama. On entering his apartment I found him thus one day; he nodded kindly to me, and said: 'Sit down a minute. I have just now a visit from my Muse; she will be going directly.' He wrote on, and after a brief silence shouted '*Vivat*' sprang out of bed, and said, 'The third act is finished!'"⁷²

Lamartine was peculiar in his mode of composition, and never saw his productions, after the first draft, until they were printed, bound, and issued to the public. He was accustomed to walk forth in his park during the after part of the day, or of a moonlit evening, with pencil and pieces of paper, and whatever ideas struck him he recorded. That was the end of the matter so far as he was concerned. These pieces of paper he threw into a special box, without a number or title upon them. His literary secretary with much patient ability assorted these papers, arranged them as he thought best, and sold them to the publishers at a royal price. We know of no similar instance where authorship and recklessness combined have produced creditable results. Certainly such indifference argued only the presence of weakness and irresponsibility, which were indeed prominent characteristics of Lamartine.

The remarkable facility with which Goethe's poems were produced is said to have resembled improvisation, an inspiration almost independent of his own purposes. "I had come," he says, "to regard the poetic talent dwelling in me entirely as nature; the rather that I was directed to look upon external nature as its proper subject. The exercise of this poetic gift might be stimulated and determined by occasion, but it flowed forth more joyfully and richly, when it came involuntarily, or even against my will." Addison, whose style is perhaps the nearest to perfection in ancient or modern literature, did not reach that standard without much patient labor. Pope tells us that "he would show his verses to several friends, and would alter nearly everything that any of them hinted was wrong. He seemed to be distrustful of himself, and too much concerned about his character as a poet, or, as he expressed it, 'too solicitous for that kind of praise which God knows is a very little matter after all.'" Pope himself published nothing until it had been a twelvemonth on hand, and even then the printer's proofs were full of alterations. On one occasion this was carried so far that Dodsley, his publisher, thought it better to have the whole recomposed than to attempt to make the necessary alterations.

character. "I cannot make it otherwise," replied the composer; "I write according to the thoughts which I feel. When I think of God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap as it were from my pen."

⁷² Dumas was a charming story-teller in society. Being at a large party one evening, the hostess tried to draw him out to exhibit his powers in this line. At last, weary of being importuned, he said: "Every one to his trade, madam. The gentleman who entered your drawing-room just before me is a distinguished artillery officer. Let him bring a cannon here and fire it; then I will tell one of my little stories."

Yet Pope admits that "the things that I have written fastest have always pleased the most. I wrote the 'Essay on Criticism' fast, for I had digested all the matter in prose before I began it in verse."

"I never work better," says Luther, "than when I am inspired by anger: when I am angry, I can write, pray, and preach well; for then my whole temperament is quickened, my understanding sharpened, and all mundane vexations and temptations depart." We are reminded of Burke's remark in this connection: "A vigorous mind is as necessarily accompanied with violent passions as a great fire with great heat." Luther, however ribald he may have been at times, had the zeal of honesty. There was not a particle of vanity or self-sufficiency in the great reformer. "Do not call yourselves Lutherans," he said to his followers; "call yourselves Christians. Who and what is Luther? Has Luther been crucified for the world?"

Churchill,⁷³ the English poet and satirist, was so averse to correcting and blotting his manuscript that many errors were unexpunged, and many lines which might easily have been improved were neglected. When expostulated with upon this subject by his publisher, he replied that erasures were to him like cutting away so much of his flesh; thus expressing his utter repugnance to an author's most urgent duty. Though Macaulay tells us that his vices were not so great as his virtues, still he was dissipated and licentious. Cowper was a great admirer of his poetry, and called him "the great Churchill." George Wither,⁷⁴

⁷³ Churchill was a spendthrift of fame, and enjoyed all his revenue while he lived; posterity owes him little, and pays him nothing. —*Disraeli*.

⁷⁴ Wither had a strange career. He was imprisoned for some published satire in 1613, at the age of twenty-five, but lived to his eightieth year, dying finally in misery and obscurity.

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