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Wm. H. Goold

ART. I.—*The works of John Owen, D. D.* Edited by the Rev. William H. Goold, Edinburgh. New York: Carter and Brothers, 1850, 1851, 1852. 8vo.

THAT this is the best edition of Owen's works, we do not doubt for a moment. It is identical as to every letter and point with the Edinburgh edition of Messrs. Johnstone and Hunter, everywhere known for the beautiful impressions which they have produced, under the auspices of the Free Church. The series of volumes is rapidly coming out, and five have already appeared. For such a book, the price is surprisingly low. What is of more importance, the edition is a critical one, under the eye and hand of a clergyman of Edinburgh, Mr. Goold, who unites for his task several admirable qualities; extensive reading, accurate scholarship, a turn for minute collation, indefatigable labour, and a thorough acquiescence in the theology of the seventeenth century.

It was fit that the great Puritan champion should be introduced to our generation by a Calvinist and a Presbyterian, rather than by any laxer descendant of the nonconformists, who, if they should revisit their old haunts, would scarcely recognize their ancient Independency among the Congregationalists of England.

Bible as the sole infallible rule of faith and practice, in opposition to the assumed authority of tradition, or of councils and popes. True Protestantism, whether in early or in latter days, has ever been and is now characterized by Scripture doctrine in opposition to the inventions of men; God's way of salvation, in opposition to the ways of man's devising; freedom of thought, in opposition to ecclesiastical tyranny; primitive simplicity in the order and government of God's house, in opposition to prelatical orders of clergy and gorgeous rites and ceremonies; Christ, in opposition to Antichrist. Nothing can exceed the wickedness of papal Christianity. Nothing can be more disgraceful than its history. As the witnessing remnant of the Church of Christ among our forefathers did, so let us also make no compromise, enter into no alliance with this son of perdition; let us give no encouragement to this monstrous anti-christian establishment; and let us faithfully seek to resist its progress and thwart its designs by proclaiming far and wide "the truth as it is in Jesus." For ourselves, let our motto be, in the words of John Lambert, the English martyr, who when fixed to the stake, his legs being burned up to the stumps, lifted up his hands flaming with fire, and cried, "NONE BUT CHRIST!—NONE BUT CHRIST!" A living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will break down the most complete system of scholastic subtlety and popish superstition. Let us oppose to the pomp, the lordliness and the tyranny of Romanism, the simplicity, purity and freedom of the religion of Christ our Saviour.

John H. Johnson

ART. III.—*National Literature, the Exponent of National Character.*

WE may know what manner of spirit a man is of, with far more certainty from his writings, than from his biography—from what is inevitably disclosed, than from what is designedly confided to us. We may have as perfect a daguerreotype of a man's mind as of his face; as faithful an impression of his moral nature as of his personal appearance.

Milman's edition of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" of the Ro-

man empire is garnished with a frontispiece representing the author's face. But the features of that sleek, obese and self-satisfied countenance are not more distinctly visible to the bodily sight, than the intellectual and moral attributes of the man, as depicted in his great work, to the mind's eye; his admirable constructive ability, reducing to perspicuous and philosophic forms, vast masses of intractable materials—bringing into orderly array, and distributing into picturesque and graceful groups, innumerable hordes, barbaric and semi-civilized—conducting his majestic narrative with clearness, simplicity and ease, over periods divided by centuries, and over regions separated by continents. And the moral qualities of the man—with what painful distinctness—with what undeviating consistency—do they appear! His perpetual proneness to doubt when the agency of God is in question, together with an unbounded and unfailling confidence in his own self-sufficiency—the stubborn sceptic in regard to every thing divine—the prostrate idolater of human reason and earthly glory—his subtle spirit of malignant hate of God and of his Christ—his unslumbering venom and insidious unbelief,

“Sapping a solemn creed, with solemn sneer;”—

his profuse professions of philosophic candour, together with his disingenuous shifts and Iago-like innuendoes—his essential coarseness of mind and his icy coldness of heart—his utter insusceptibility of pure sentiment and lofty emotion—are qualities stamped as visibly on his pages, as the features on his face. Admirably as he has depicted other characters, Gibbon has delineated none more faithfully than his own.

The word is the mind uttered; the writing is the mind recorded. Every writer, therefore, does and must express his character in his works. He may try to conceal or to change it; but the thing is impossible. He may imitate another man's characteristic style; he may adopt another man's known sentiments; but let him speak, and he will instantly betray himself in spite of his disguise. The hands may be the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob.

It is felt to be morally impossible that a kind-hearted man

could have written the letters of Junius. The fountain of their inspiration is Marah. The strong, essential spirit which preserves them from decay and oblivion, is a spirit, not of pure patriotism nor of profound wisdom, but of satanic spite, exulting in the consciousness of the pain it inflicts. His genius is animated; his eloquence inspired by malignity.

The stronger and the more simple the nature of the writer, the more adequately is it expressed in his writings. In the very greatest mind, there is a union of manly strength and child-like candour, and these are the qualities which impress themselves most obviously, most readily, and most indelibly on one's writings. Milton needs no biographer; his writings show us the man—in all the strength of his vehement convictions—in the too dogmatic confidence, in the conclusions of his own reason, with a too proud consciousness of the purity of his purposes, the strength and splendour of his genius, and the deathless duration of his fame. Lord Byron too, although he has often spoken, written, and acted falsely, on system, and with set purpose to mislead, yet has deceived no one, or none but men extremely credulous. He has twice drawn his own portrait, yet no practised eye will mistake one for the other, the false for the true. In the one, he has represented himself as he desired men to think of him, as isolated in feeling from his race, because so immeasurably elevated by genius above it, as having little in common with mankind, and therefore indifferent alike to their censure and their praise, while dreading the one and panting for the other. Again, he has drawn the picture of one, whose moral culture in early youth was entirely neglected, or most unwisely conducted;—of one, conscious of great talents and great ambition, but withal wayward, impulsive, self-indulgent, and impatient alike of opposition or constraint;—of one, not peculiarly insensible by nature to moral obligations, nor dead to the sublime sentiments and sympathies of natural piety, nor incapable of generous impulses and noble deeds; especially when they were likely to attract admiration, and elicit applause;—of a man really unhappy, because too sagacious not to see his errors; with a moral sense too enlightened, not to know his guilt; unable always, and altogether to stifle the voice of an unwelcome monitor within,

threatening the just judgment of God;—of a man, to whom repose was indeed impossible, because of the ceaseless conflict between his conscience and his passions; because of the abuse of great powers, of high aims, and the everlasting forfeiture of fair renown. The most high God himself has revealed his nature in his word. As in the prophet's vision the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels, so in the very words of Scripture does there reside the Spirit of the incorruptible God. "The words that I speak unto you, (says our Lord) they are spirit and they are life:" John vi. 63. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," is in the highest signification of the term *θεοπνευστος*. 2 Tim. iii. 16. God expresses the eternal majesty, the untainted and infinite truth, the glorious fulness, the transcendent and holy beauty of his nature in his word, as apostate man exhibits the feebleness, the ignorance and the perverseness of human nature in every thing that he writes, as in every thing that he does, in every imagination of his heart, and in every work of his hands.

The ground on which all men, wise and unwise, learned and ignorant, are required to receive the Bible as divine is, that it is instinct with the Spirit; it is invested with the incommunicable glory of the Most High God. As the Roman penny bore the image and superscription of Cæsar, so does the Bible the image and superscription of Jehovah. These the devout believer rejoices to recognize, in representations of the divine nature everywhere consistent with itself and accordant with his own most intimate, exalted and hallowed convictions; in the authority with which it addresses his conscience; in the consolation which it administers to his bruised spirit; in the holy peace which it diffuses through his troubled bosom; in the superhuman majesty of its doctrines; in the simple grandeur of the style in which men inspired of God speak of the things of God. The Author of this book, in full, must be more than man, for he knows man far better than man knows himself. The feeling expressed by the woman at the well of Samaria is perfectly coincident with the common experience. "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" John iv. 29. The language of the mind enlightened and renewed by the Spirit of truth is, "To whom shall we go?

Thou hast the words of eternal life." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, (said our Saviour of the unbelieving Jews) they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." John xv. 22.

While the external evidences of Christianity are to be reckoned of great value as the proper accompaniments, appendages and vouchers of the truth, the most convincing and essential of its evidences are to be found in the substance of the faith itself; in the correspondence of divine revelation with all that we know of God, while it conveys an immeasurable and inestimable addition to the stock of our knowledge, and corrects that which we may have derived from the contemplation of his works, the course of his providence, and the constitution of our own nature. The internal evidences of the Bible are the contents of the Bible; and they are to the external what the altar is to the gift that it sanctifies, and the temple to the gold. The word, therefore, whether it be of God or of man, is the infallible revealer of character.

To pass from the proposition that the writings of an individual indicate his individual character, to the position that the literature of a nation is the exponent of the nation's character, is only to pass from a lower and more limited generalization to one higher and larger. It is not to assert any thing intrinsically more improbable, or in the nature of things more inconceivable. The analogy between the manifestations of individual and of national character in the intellectual productions of each respectively, if not perfect and uniform, are yet sufficiently marked and sufficiently sustained to afford valuable instruction. The literature of a nation is the purest expression of the nation's life. The prevailing literature of France, of England, of Germany, or of Italy, conveys an impression of these several nations scarcely less definite, and not at all less just, than that which is left on the mind by the traits of particular writers, as of Gibbon, Milton, Junius, or Byron. Nay, the prevailing literature of a nation as represented by several, sometimes by a single writer, thoroughly national and in perfect sympathy with his generation, may reflect the political, social and spiritual condition of the nation at the time.

Chaucer, the bright morning-star of English poesy, was

born in 1328, and died in 1400. He may be taken as the poetic representative of England during the latter half of the fourteenth century. Possessing a mind of extraordinary cultivation and calibre, enlarged by travel, and enlightened by familiar acquaintance with the men and manners of many nations—of a free, joyous, and princely spirit—pronounced “wise” by Milton, and quoted as authority in one of the most elaborate of his immortal and invaluable treatises—writing a rude language with unrivalled and inimitable sweetness—and infusing a portion of the harmony of his own spirit into his mother-tongue—softening its rigours, and imparting to it a graceful cadence and refined music, while he retained its native vigour and untamed energy, he may be taken as the representative of an age marked by turbulence—by frequent disorders—often by terrible calamities and crimes—as we learn from the pictorial page of Froissart—but often adorned by examples of knightly courtesy and heroic valour, and occasionally by the influence of lettered taste and true piety. Himself not only a scholar, but a soldier, Chaucer may be regarded as especially the representative of the reign of Edward III., a prince eminently sagacious, enterprising, and successful, in the arts both of peace and war.

Every great writer reflects while he receives the spirit of his age; thus the literature of a nation becomes its interpreter and witness. He acts powerfully upon that spirit, but it in turn reacts upon him. Accordingly we discern a family likeness—a cyclical character—in writers who appear at or about the same period. Among the great writers of the Augustan age of old Rome, not only do we find a community of language and of general culture, but of moral sentiment and feeling. The same general harmony may be observed in the splendid constellation of taste and genius which gave such an impulse to the fine arts, and imparted so æsthetic a character to the earlier years of the pontificate of Leo X. Modern Italy can boast no nobler names in painting—in poetry, with the solitary exception of Dante—or in architecture—than those which grace this epoch. The majestic forms of Michael Angelo and Raphael rise at once before us, as the representatives and ornaments of this brilliant era.

So far is superiority of endowment from conferring peculiar exemption from this prevailing influence, that the most gifted men have invariably been found most fully imbued with the reigning spirit of the time and country in which they lived, to be at once the most faithful interpreters and the noblest ornaments of the age. The greatest writers have always been most intensely national, while they have been most truly catholic. The fruit which they bore belonged not only to the soil, but to the season. The name of the original must be appended to a bad portrait, that the observer may know whom it was intended to represent. But no one who had ever seen the originals of the pictures executed by Lely, Van Dyke, or Sir Joshua Reynolds, could be at a loss for a moment to identify them. These great painters were not more faithful to nature and art, than are great writers to themselves and to their times.

No man, assuredly, ever possessed a more original and comprehensive spirit than Shakspeare. There was no enigma of character which he could not interpret, no phase of character which he could not depict. While nobly negligent of petty and pedantic proprieties, he is instinctively observant of permanent and universal truth. His soul, clear and ample as the sky, spreads over every land, and gives its proper colouring to every object. He is beyond all comparison the best delineator not only of individual peculiarities, but of national manners. His Romans are true Romans, genuine descendants of the son of Mars and Ilia. His Frenchmen are real Frenchmen. They belong to the gay land of hills and vines; and are as native there as the hills and vines themselves. Although men—having a human heart and countenance—they would be out of place in any other country—aliens and strangers speaking in an unknown tongue. But of all the men that ever lived, Shakspeare was the most truly and thoroughly national. Homer was not so intensely Greek, Burns was not so profoundly Scotch, as Shakspeare was intensely and profoundly English. We see this not only in the affectionate and exalted tribute which he bestows upon his country—in the dower of beauty, far more precious than of gold and silver, with which he has lavishly enriched her;

This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,
 This earth of majesty, this scat of Mars,
 This other Eden, demi-paradise ;
 This fortress, built by Nature for herself,
 Against infection, and the hand of war ;
 This happy breed of men, this little world ;
 This precious stone set in the silver sea,
 * * * * *
 This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

Richard II. Act 2d.

But we see it in the whole tenor of his writings and in the whole structure of his character. Not only has he dramatised a large portion of her history, but whenever he may be supposed to be uttering his own sentiments, he speaks of his country with the fond enthusiasm and unconscious exaggeration of a lover. Even Shakspeare himself rises to unwonted warmth of fancy and ardour of emotion, when England is his theme. He is then refreshed in spirit and renewed in strength—like Antæus when he touched the earth. But not only is Shakspeare an Englishman, he is an Englishman of the age of Elizabeth and James I.—the grandest period in the intellectual history of his country, if not the grandest in the intellectual history of mankind.

The same common resemblance which we perceive among the great minds of the time of Augustus in ancient Rome, of Leo X. in modern Rome—of Queen Anne, in the later history of England—and of George III. at a period still more recent—we find in the age of Elizabeth and James I. Although Shakspeare occupies an unapproachable eminence above all his variously and greatly gifted contemporaries—although in that “charmed circle none durst walk but he”—yet did he stand in relations of most intimate sympathy and brotherhood, to the men of his own time. So strong indeed is the family-likeness between the dramatic works of Shakspeare, Ben Johnson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford and Massinger, that it is morally impossible for the most sagacious critic to decide with rational confidence on the authorship of the particular parts of plays, in the composition of which several were jointly concerned; not to insist upon the well-known fact, that in every tolerably complete edition of Shakspeare’s dramatic works, whole plays are to be found whose title to such an exalted position

has been questioned by the best informed and most discerning critical judges. That Shakspeare was in most perfect sympathy with the age in which he lived, no one can doubt, who to the knowledge of his works, unites even a moderate acquaintance with the contemporary dramatic literature. Even the common rural superstitions of the age are preserved in the imperishable productions of his genius, as in most precious amber.

The literature of a particular period is the reflex of the agencies at work. It is the general *resultant* of the forces, operating on the nation's mind at the time. The character of the national literature, therefore, must of necessity vary, at the different periods of the nation's progress or decline. As there are certain geological phenomena connected with the earth's strata, which are supposed not only to indicate the formation of the soil, but the precise period of its history; so there are certain forms and phases of mental manifestations, which not only point out the particular cast of the national mind, but the particular stage of intellectual and moral advancement which the nation has reached. Thus the actual progress of a people may be inferred from the species of literature which it has produced, as well as from the success with which it has been cultivated. In the mind, as in the garden, certain plants and flowers appear to attain maturity more rapidly than others. Epic poetry had well nigh arrived at perfection in Greece long before the best productions of the historian appeared. The chronological relations between Homer and Herodotus—still more between Homer and Thucydides—are neither fortuitous nor uninformative. It may indeed be generally observed that the earliest historical records partake of the epical character. The partitions which divide truth and fable, history and poetry, are then too thin to be exactly regarded. Men first admire, then analyze, and finally understand the objects and phenomena presented to their observation. Accordingly we have first the poetical-historical narrative, as illustrated in the early chronicles of almost all nations, especially in Herodotus and Froissart—and afterward the historical-philosophical disquisition—the nearest approaches to which among the ancients, we find in Thucydides and Tacitus; and which among the moderns has well nigh reached perfection in Niebuhr's His-

tory of Rome, and in several of the leading historical writers of Germany, France, and England, who, animated by his example, have been emulous of a like fame. It might seem almost a profanation to rank poetry among the fine arts. There is, however, a degenerate species of poetry, which like architecture, sculpture and painting, may exist in an effeminate age, and among a fettered race, as the minister of a refined voluptuousness. But the noblest poetry, like the loftiest oratory and history, can live only when it respires the breath of heaven, the pure and sweet air of freedom. As none but a free people can possess a noble, national character, so none but a free people can produce a noble, national literature.

The nations of the earth do undoubtedly perform an appointed and appropriate part, in accordance with the purpose of God. They describe a circle which he has designed. They fill the place which he has assigned them. They accomplish the end which his all-wise providence contemplated. Every thing connected with the nation's life—every element which enters into the constitution—every influence which even indirectly and remotely modifies the nation's character, especially its literature—determines the permanent influence which it is to exert, and the particular place in the annals of mankind which it is to occupy. These influences are often extremely subtle, delicate, fugitive, in their nature; irregular, partial and interrupted in their action; and therefore peculiarly difficult to define and trace. Like the great agencies of nature, they are more intelligible in their results than in their processes; more perceptible in their ultimate issue, than in their immediate action. Thus much, however, seems certain, that as in the case of an individual, early influences and events, those which work while the nation is receiving its bias and its bent, are most durable and decisive. In the testimony borne to this point, the history of all the great nations, ancient and modern, appears to be coincident and conclusive. The character and institutions of Moses are perpetually visible in the history of his people, even to the present hour. Never perhaps, before or since, was the influence of one man on a whole nation, so pervading and so permanent. An impression far less profound indeed, but still lasting and important, was left

on Sparta and Athens, by Lycurgus and Solon. And although we may not be able to discern so clearly the influence of any one commanding mind upon the character and destiny of the Roman people, yet who can fail to see the collective spirit of their early rulers, and the cherished traditions of their early youth, reproduced and constantly active in their aggressive policy—in their stern military discipline—their unquenchable thirst of martial glory—their inhuman indifference to the rights, the feelings and the interests of individuals, save as connected with the collective majesty of the State, and conducive to its security and renown? All these influences we discern in their proper representative, the Roman literature. Their very language, harsh, abrupt, energetic, and decisive, is evidently the language of empire and of law. It is the language of a people, destined to be the military rulers of the world. It is wholly destitute of the harmony, the flexibility, the variety, the copiousness, and the sweetness of the Greek tongue—as the literature which it embodied was wanting in the originality—the untutored and inimitable grace—the imaginative richness—the philosophic subtlety—the unmeasured and inexhaustible fulness, of that natural fountain of knowledge, refinement, sensibility and power—the Hellenic mind.

Influences akin to these, if not identical with them, have hitherto operated among ourselves, and imparted their peculiar character to American literature. It has been reproached, and not without the semblance, at least, of justice, with being too decidedly practical in its character—too gross and utilitarian in its tendencies—as having too little of the pure polish—the high culture—which marks comparatively the literature of England, and injuriously, perhaps, because in excess tending to barrenness and effeminacy, the literature of several of the older nations of Europe, as France, Italy and Spain. In a word, our contributions to literature have been thought to resemble our contributions to the World's Fair—to be more remarkable for solid and sterling utility, than for curious workmanship and nice art.

While homely vigour, strong sense, and earnest purpose, are qualities which have generally been accorded to our literature, it has been thought to sustain a relation to the literature of

England like that which the literature of Rome bore to the literature of Greece; to be comparatively deficient both in originality and in elegance.

So far as the charge of a lack of refinement is true, the character and circumstances of the early fathers of our republic will serve to account for it, while the acknowledged elegance of many of our living writers proves that it has already lost much of its force.

The order of our literary development was just the reverse of that of classical antiquity and of England. In them, there was first the development of the imaginative faculties; in us, of practical thought. The noblest poem of antiquity was produced in the infancy of the nation, and is coloured with the rosy light of the early morning. Our first literature, on the contrary, was almost exclusively confined to the domain of practical theology and political oratory. Springing out of urgent circumstances, it is eminently direct, bold and business-like; and to this fact mainly may we impute the reputation of our country for utilitarian tendencies in literature. It was not until times comparatively recent, that the nation has enjoyed the repose necessary to the production of the finer forms of literature. We are, besides, too near the period and persons of grand historic interest for the purposes of the imagination. Literature has its perspective not less than painting. The spectator may stand too near in time to an event, as he may stand too near in space to a picture, to gain the best impression of either. In gazing on a historical epoch, as on a natural landscape,

“ 'Tis distance lends enchantment.”

Not to speak of the original settlers of our country, who had to contend with want and the wilderness, the men who laid the foundations of our government were eminently practical men. They had a higher and a harder work to do than merely to study, to enjoy, or even to create the elegances of literature. It was theirs not indeed to devise, but to develope and perfect the theory, to define the powers and to regulate the action of the wisest, happiest and freest government which the world has ever known. The works of Franklin, the patriot-sage, and of

Washington, the father of his country, may be taken as the representatives of this period of our national history. If these men and their illustrious compeers did not write poetry, they performed deeds which it will be the brightest ambition and glory of the poet fitly to celebrate, in epic or in lyric strains.

"In chorus or iambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight received . .
High actions and high passions best describing."
Paradise Regained. Book IV.

When we look over our broad land and happy people—when we survey the goodly heritage of our free government and equal laws—our liberties, civil and religious, gratitude to our revolutionary fathers may properly mingle with our thanksgivings to the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. And if the heart of the Greek dilated with pride, when he recalled the fabled exploits of Theseus and Hercules, surely the American may exult, when he revives within him the recollection of this, the Heroic Age of his country. Patriotism is partly an instinctive sentiment, partly a rational conviction. As a conviction, it rests a preference of our own above every other land—not on the single circumstance that it is our own—that we were born in it—but on an intelligent apprehension of the incomparable advantages which it possesses and confers. Hence the peculiar importance of a knowledge of the historical and present condition of other nations, on the part of our own people.

We are now, it may be hoped, prepared to answer the scornful interrogatory of Sidney Smith, "Who reads an American book?" The inquiry was made in the year 1820, in the *Edinburgh Review*. "In the four quarters of the globe," says the reviewer, "who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue? What does the world yet owe to American physicians or surgeons? What new substances have their chemists discovered? or what old ones have they analyzed? What new constellations have been discovered by the telescopes of Americans?" &c., &c.

Even thirty years ago this wholesale charge of absolute intellectual barrenness was exaggerated and unjust. For even

then we had produced orators as eloquent as Bolingbroke, Chatham, or Burke, and three divines at least who might bear comparison, each in his own proper province, with any on the long and honoured roll of England's ecclesiastical authorship. We allude of course to President Edwards, President Davies, and Doctor John M. Mason.

Jonathan Edwards would have been an eminent man in any age of the Church. Had he lived within the first five centuries, he would have taken rank for metaphysical acuteness and immovable adherence to what he believed to be the truth, with Athanasius and Augustine. In the thirteenth century his scholastic subtlety and inexhaustible fertility of ingenious thought would have made him the rival of Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus. In the sixteenth century he would have been regarded by all good men as the fit associate of Calvin and Melancthon, to whom indeed he was related, not only by his personal excellence and general theological agreement, but as an able minister of the New Testament, and a good steward of the manifold grace of God. Since his time our country has produced many very able and many very excellent divines; many far more learned than Edwards, especially in the important department of scientific exegesis. But we suppose it will not be thought injustice to any living or to any departed divine, to assert that in originality and depth of mind, and in the value of his contributions to theological literature, President Edwards remains unrivalled. For popular use and for popular edification, no sermons in the English language surpass those of President Davies. As a vigorous and polished writer, as a popular and effective preacher, Dr. Mason was acknowledged in his own day to be fully equal to any English clergyman.

With the splenetic violence not rare with him, Dr. Samuel Johnson is reported to have said to a person with whom he was disputing, "Sir, I am bound to furnish you with arguments; I am not bound to furnish you with brains." In like manner may we say to the witty reviewer—Sir, we are bound to furnish you with good books; we are not bound to furnish you with knowledge and candour.

We are glad to see that the tone of the British press in

regard to our literature, as well as every thing else connected with our country, has very much improved of late. The time has passed by when the ridiculous fictions of Mrs. Trollope, Captain Hall, Mr. Dickens, *et id omne genus*, could be confided in, even by the more ignorant and credulous of their own countrymen. The last English travellers whose writings have reached us, Lord Carlisle and Lady Mary Wortley, are with few exceptions as favourable in their judgments as any candid American could desire. For our own part, we believe the former contemptuous tone of the English press toward American literature to have proceeded not more from political jealousy than from pure ignorance. We therefore attribute the altered tone of their public journals quite as much to improvements in steam navigation, as to the obvious advance in our national literature.

It will be as much for the literary as for the political interest of England and America, that a good understanding should subsist between them. Our own originality will hardly be improved by laborious deviations from established models, or the purity of our style by any affected eccentricities of orthography and syntax. Until the Revolution their literature was ours, for until then we were one people. We may therefore lawfully feel pride mingle with the pleasure with which we study the great productions of British genius. We need not eschew every thing received in order to establish our own originality. Our language will not be refined by contempt for Milton, Bacon, Shakspeare, and Addison; nor our theology exalted by a voluntary ignorance of the judicious Hooker, the eloquent Bishop Taylor, the gentle-hearted Leighton, the exhaustive Barrow, the invincible Chillingworth, the learned and vigorous South, the ingenious and unanswerable Butler—men who were the strength of the English Establishment—the ornaments and defenders of our common Christianity. And are we likely to profit by a neglect of the great nonconformist divines, John Owen, the glory of Oxford and prince of the Puritan theologians—the profound and philosophic Howe—the fervent and saintly Baxter—the silver-tongued Bates—the heart-searching and heavenly minded Flavel? Are these the men to be despised and neglected?

Toward English literature, we should seek to steer clear of the two extremes of servile imitation on the one hand, and ignorant contempt on the other. Real originality, whether in an individual or in a nation, is never repressed by a wise and generous culture. It is only the feeble who sink beneath the weight of other men's thoughts. The strong are made stronger by knowledge, as the arch is strengthened by the weight it sustains. A common soldier might have fainted under the weight of armour which an Ajax or Achilles could wear with graceful agility and wield with deadly effect.

It must be conceded, however, that American literature has borne its fairest fruit since the illiberal criticism of the Edinburgh Reviewer was made. In historical composition, Sparks, Marshall, Irving, Bancroft, and Prescott, have nobly asserted our country's claim to an honourable place in this high department of letters.

In poetry, also, we can "note no deficiency"—to adopt a favourite phrase of Lord Bacon. Our poets have been both abundant and prolific. It would be grossly unjust and invidious to compare the poets of youthful America with the "sceptred kings" of old England's poetical realm—with the patriarch Chaucer—"the sage and serious" Spenser—"the myriad-minded" Shakspeare—and the colossal Milton. Still we have several, as Bryant and Longfellow, who in purity of sentiment, in exact and various learning, and in sweetness and elegance of versification, are even by the admission of British critics fully equal to the most gifted of their living bards. In a very acute and intelligent reviewal of "The Golden Legend," which appeared in the February number of Blackwood, the following estimate of the accomplished author is given. "In perfect candour (says the critic) we must own, that in our opinion, Longfellow at this moment stands beyond comparison at the head of the poets of America, *and may be considered as an equal competitor for the palm with any of the younger poets of England.*"

Of the literary criticism in our country, it may be remarked that it is too uniformly laudatory, and therefore comparatively powerless and worthless. But, akin to this amiable error is one of its most conspicuous and characteristic excellences. It is

eminently catholic. Owing in part, perhaps, to the conflux of many men of various races and nations to our hospitable shores; in part, perhaps, to the very immaturity of our literature, there has not yet arisen among us any one decidedly predominant school or system. Our critics and our people appear to possess a hearty relish for very different kinds and styles of excellence. In this particular we think it should be granted that we contrast favourably with the older nations of Europe. The spirit of British criticism, for example, is extremely contracted. We should be disposed to attribute the fact alleged mainly to the operation of two causes—political bias, together with family influence and personal considerations. It is hard for us to believe that the purest and most native school of modern English poetry—that which is proud to acknowledge Wordsworth as its hierarch and head—could have been assailed with such rancorous virulence by so discerning a critic as Lord Jeffrey, had he not considered their politics worse than their poetry. The favour extended to *Joan of Arc*—a juvenile and very imperfect poem—compared with the coldness with which *Thalaba* and *Kehama* were received—works produced in the full vigour of a remarkably gifted and richly cultivated mind—may show to some extent the operation of these malign influences.

Our most eminent essayists—Channing, Everett, Bancroft, Prescott, Whipple, Legare and Webster—illustrate the more liberal spirit of American criticism. As a philosophical essay on the objects and writers of history, Mr. Webster's recent lecture before the Historical Society of New York will not suffer by comparison with Macaulay's masterly and elevated essay on the same subject. Indeed, as a diplomatist, orator, statesman and scholar, in the native majesty of his thoughts, in the admirable perspicuity, the idiomatic grace, the elegant simplicity and manly strength of his style, we should be inclined to pronounce Mr. Webster the equal, at least, of any living Englishman.

The most important element of national, as of individual character, is Christianity. An intelligent and heart-felt faith in God is incomparably the most powerful and salutary influence which can operate on any subject. That which has impressed its comparatively high and pure character upon the literature of the leading nations of the modern world, is the truth and

Spirit of the Lord from heaven. Purifying the hearts of men—those hidden fountains of thought and feeling—the faith of Christ has purified their words and actions. Like the tree pointed out by Jehovah to Moses, which possessed the singular property of rendering the bitter waters sweet, Christianity infused into the corrupt spring of human sentiment and emotion has made it comparatively pure.

When faithful to the essential condition—the invariable law—of its existence, the literature of Rome had declined with the declining character of the nation, Christianity appeared to revive and restore it. And although the purposes of Providence, in raising up that ambitious and aggressive power, were almost accomplished at this period, and the Roman people were about to be trodden down and dispersed, or to lose their hereditary and distinctive character by amalgamation with the barbarous tribes which overran the empire; yet it was light from the Star of Bethlehem, which shone on their darkness; it was Christianity, which seasonably intervening operated alike on captive and conqueror. The strong man armed, represented by Pagan literature, was dispossessed by one stronger than himself. The votaries of the old idolatry made a desperate but ineffectual resistance to the aggressions of the new religion. But their most powerful champions were silenced or converted. The efforts of the emperor Julian to restore the mythology of Homer to its ancient place, in the faith and reverence of mankind, were as futile as his endeavour to rebuild Jerusalem. From the schools of Pagan idolatry, issued the doctors and champions of the Christian church. Among the Greeks, Origen, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzum, and Chrysostom; among the Latins, Cyprian, Tertullian, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Lactantius, showed that the sceptre of intellectual empire had passed into the hands of a conqueror; and that, thenceforward, men of another faith and a different spirit were to rule human opinion. The confusion of ancient idols, the downfall of heathen altars, and the long silence of Pagan oracles, so vividly described by the most sublime and learned of our Christian poets, were only types and tokens of the lost empire of Paganism over the emancipated spirit.

The oracles are dumb,
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the arched roof, in words deceiving;
 Apollo from his shrine,
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek, the steep of Delphos leaving.
 No nightly trance, or breathed spell
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

Peor and Baalim
 Forsake their temples dim,
 With that twice battered god of Palestine;
 And mooned Ashtaroth,
 Heaven's queen and mother both,
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shrine,
 The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn,
 In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.
Milton's Ode on the Nativity.

Of the bearing and energetic influence of Christianity on national character, Britain affords the most striking illustration. Her literature is a perfect barometer, by which we may note the rise and depression of England in every element and in every quality of national greatness. In the age of Elizabeth—before which time the faith of the nation was scarcely steady and mature enough to bring forth its proper fruit—in the age of Elizabeth, we find a cast of grandeur in the nation's thinking unknown before, and a constellation of poets, statesmen, lawyers, navigators, warriors, and heroes, who have given undying lustre to the reign of the Virgin Queen—Raleigh, Drake, Coke, Bacon, Sydney, Hooker, Spenser, rare Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakspeare. In the reign of the profane and trembling pedant who succeeded her, we find most of these lights, together with others of scarcely less magnitude and lustre.

In the time of Cromwell, when the English nation was more profoundly penetrated by the religious spirit, than at any period before or since, the religious literature of England—leaving out the works of his Latin secretary, in which are celebrated “the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ”—the religious literature of England was more prolific in great and imperishable works, than in any previous or succeeding age.

We can have little sympathy, we confess, with a disposition which we have observed of late among nominal Protestants, not of our denomination only, to disparage the great divines of the Puritan school. They are had in derision by men "whose fathers" these despised Puritans "would have disdained to have set with the dogs of their flock." These are the men who can sneer at the theology of Howe and Owen, as meager and contracted, one-sided and uncatholic,—as a partial exhibition of the gospel of the grace of God! The egregious incongruity of the thing, the extravagant absurdity of the assumption, would be simply amusing, if all sense of mirth were not extinguished by the stronger sentiment of moral condemnation. We would judge nothing rashly and before the time; but to us it is by no means clear that the exemption of England and America from the fate of unhappy France—from perpetual change—from obstinate and unscrupulous factions contending together, not for the good, but for the destruction of their common country—from despotism succeeded by anarchy, and anarchy exchanged for despotism—and last of all, and worst of all, a country which, having forsaken God, he in righteous judgment seems to have forsaken—may not be ascribed to the prayers and pious labours of these, his faithful servants. When we hear the champions of divine truth, and of liberty civil and religious, vilified by the avowed subjects of a foreign despot—the acknowledged members of an apostate church—all is natural, consistent, intelligible. But when we see them jeered at and pointed at with the finger of scorn, by men who profess to receive the recorded and inspired Scriptures as the supreme directory of faith and practice, and to venerate the free institutions of our country as the wisest and best, we own it passes our comprehension. It is our deliberate conviction, that to no class of uninspired men are the world and the church more indebted, than to those despised but devoted Christians; and that toward none has the debt been so reluctantly and inadequately acknowledged. It is our deliberate conviction, that they did more for knowledge, freedom, and piety—more to convert sinners from the error of their ways, and save souls from death—more to multiply jewels which shall shine for ever, in the glorious crown of our exalted Redeemer,

than any other body of uninspired men. May we through abounding grace be permitted in heaven to unite with Bunyan, with Owen, and with Baxter, in the beatific vision of the person and glory of Christ, and in the secure and blessed enjoyment of the saints' everlasting rest!

The degeneracy of the national manners and of the national spirit in the time of Charles II. is faithfully reflected in the mirror of the national literature. Milton, indeed, and others like-minded, survived to rebuke and lament the worthlessness of the age. But in genius and spirit, they were alien to the "evil days" on which they had fallen. In temper and of right they belonged to the brave old days of the Commonwealth, when the name of England was revered abroad, and at home "joy and gladness were found, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." They had nothing in common with the infamous parasites and panders of that polluted court and its heartless king—with the ribaldry of Butler—with the obscenity of Dryden, "who profaned the God-given strength, and marred the lofty line"—with the Settles and Shadwells, the Congreves, Wycherlys, Vanbrughs and Farquhars of the time.

From the period of John Knox to that of Thomas Chalmers, the literature of Scotland has been pre-eminently religious. In very many instances her purely literary offices have been filled by clergymen and by the sons of clergymen. Some of the most distinguished in several of the most exalted departments of letters, as history and intellectual philosophy, have been themselves ministers of the gospel. So prevalent indeed has been the religious spirit, and so strong the religious sensibilities of the Scottish people, that the most popular poems addressed to the taste of the nation—as the *Cotter's Saturday Night*—were suffused with the holy light of religious sentiment, and redolent of the sweet savour of piety. Seeing that such is the character of her literature, it is needless to add that for more than two hundred years the Scottish people have been the most intelligent and religious in Europe.

As works recede from the domain of objective science, and becoming most purely literary, exhibit most fully the interior and profound operation of Christianity on the heart of man,

do we discover the pervading and controlling influence of the Christian element on letters. The fountain of the heart wells up in poesy; and as the limpid water shines with more than the diamond's brightness when its drops are irradiated by the sunbeam—so do the finer feelings of the soul when beautified by the light of the poet's imagination.

All poetry may be generally divided into two kinds, which are well enough characterized by the philosophical terms objective and subjective. In portraying the pomp of war—the glittering array of embattled hosts—the impetuous onset of opposing squadrons—the inspiring influence of martial music—the ancients generally, and Homer in particular, must be pronounced unrivalled. Nor are they destitute of scenes which moved the most powerful and tender sympathies of our nature. Still it must be admitted that in their delineations of the more gentle and delicate—the more deep and sacred feelings of the soul—feelings which we hardly acknowledge to ourselves—which when we find faithfully portrayed in poetry we look upon almost as a revelation—of this poetry Shakspeare and Wordsworth afford specimens, the equals of which we might search for in vain among the most successful and splendid of Apollo's elder sons. The massive glories, the frigid magnificence of the old Pagan poets may be fitly shadowed forth in Catharine the Second's palace cut out of ice. The deep yet tender traits of our Christian bards, their serene wisdom, their genial warmth, and their heavenly radiance, may be feebly imaged in the Jewish Temple—scarcely inferior to the former, perhaps, in outward visible splendour—but within adorned on every side with holy emblems, perfumed with pure incense, and sacred fire perpetually blazing on its altars! If to the distinction which we have now endeavoured to trace, there be some seeming exceptions—if in lyric poetry, Alcæus and Pindar occasionally ascend “a higher heaven of invention,” and rise to a pitch of poetic enthusiasm, which in the same species of poetry Milton and Wordsworth never attained—it must be granted at least, that these Christian poets have a more sustained dignity of thought, are informed with a better spirit, and animated with a more sublime philosophy. If their inspiration be not so spontaneous and

dazzling, it is more genial and agreeable; if their melody be not so wild and varied, it is more artful and impressive. Human language, it should seem, is scarcely capable of expressing harmonies more subtle and delicious than are to be found in the writings of Milton and Shakspeare, Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The ancient poets are unsurpassed in the description of natural scenes, whether of tragic magnificence or graceful repose. But enlightened by the knowledge of Divine revelation, it is not surprising that the moderns should excel them in that poetry which reveals the hidden secrets of the soul, the unprofaned mysteries within, the joys and the sorrows "with which a stranger intermeddleth not." In an early period of society, men rarely indulge in metaphysical or moral speculations on the profound problems connected with their own origin, nature, and destiny. But the splendid phenomena with which the visible universe abounds, excite within them an infant and not unpoetic wonder. This imparts an animation and truth to their descriptive poetry, in which the productions of a more philosophic age are often found wanting. Their successors are too content to paint from a picture, to reconstruct with minute and elaborate elegance, those gigantic edifices which the more energetic genius of their fathers had originally designed and erected.

Their gorgeous mythology was formed upon the perversion of a genuine religious sentiment. The *πρωτον ψευδος*, the initial and essential error of the whole system, as the apostle teaches, consisted in the substitution of Nature for God, in the transfer to the creature of those feelings of religious veneration and trust, which should have centered and terminated in the Creator. It can hardly be necessary to point out the correspondence in principle between the ancient Pagan religion, and the modern Pantheistic philosophy. The one is only an awkward and unlucky exaggeration of the other, "the melancholy madness of poetry without its inspiration." The one in its most improved and accepted form, was a Greek fable, instinct with the poetic beauty which attached to all the imaginative creations of that wonderful people. The other, in its most

approved and accepted form, a German monster, grotesque, and huge, and horrible, and blind;

Monstrum, horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum.

The Greek mythology was little more than an apotheosis of the objects and the powers of nature in their friendly and hostile aspects toward man. If their Dryads, their Naiads, and their Nereids were the creatures of fancy, there was a living reality in the refreshing coolness of the grotto, in the shade, and greenness of the forest—in the sleeping beauty of the quiet lake, and in the awful convulsions of the agitated ocean.

If the ancient poets were fortunate in living at a period when their sensations must be varied and acute—when the mountain awed them by its vastness, the unpierced solitude filled them with a congenial horror, and the sunny landscape inspired a sunnier joy—it must be confessed that the multitude and acuteness of their sensations rendered it more difficult to discriminate and portray them.

It has been sometimes imagined that the manifest advantages of our later and Christian poets are more than balanced by a certain alleged simplicity of ancient manners, which gave their poets an opportunity of seeing the heart without disguise. We may well doubt, however, whether any such simplicity ever could have existed. But granting that it might, the poet does not derive his knowledge of human nature from other men, nor from books. He probes his own heart. He proves its strength and its weakness, and is satisfied that when he knows himself, he knows mankind—"for as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." It was not from books, nor was it mainly from observation, that Shakspeare drew his marvellous knowledge of man. Such knowledge could be gathered only from self-study. Cicero's noble words with reference to the *lex nata, non scripta*, may be applied to the whole science of the soul: *Quam non didicimus, accepimus, legimus, verùm ex naturâ ipsâ arripuimus, hausimus, expressimus; ad quam non docti, sed facti; non instituti, sed imbuti sumus.*

The soul of man, as Wordsworth has told us, is the "haunt and main region" of the poet's study and the poet's song.

But the soul of man has depths which had never been sounded, sensibilities which had never been awakened, mysteries which had never been brought to light, and paths which the eye of man had not pondered, until those depths were explored, those sensibilities stirred, those mysteries revealed, and those paths pointed out, by a supernatural revelation from God.

The highest Christian poetry, embodying the highest Christian philosophy and sensibility, is not an empty indulgence, but an essential good; not a fleeting pastime, but a perpetual delight—yea “a perpetual feast of nectared sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.” It was given not to amuse the idle, but to instruct the wise, to fortify the weak, and to assure the strong. It can impress upon vice the seal of lasting infamy. It can confer upon virtue the grace of exalted sentiment, and the meed of high renown. God, who formed the heart of man, and in whose hand it is, has chosen this—the noblest form of human composition—as the medium of many of his highest communications to mankind: Revelations which we rejoice or tremble to think of—“thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men”—come to us clothed in the consecrated garb of poetry. We look, and lo! a solemn procession of the prophets of Jehovah, and martyred saints who bore record “of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ,” passes slowly before us. We listen, and from that sacred band proceed notes of superhuman sublimity and sweetness, “a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies.” These are the strains that did once in Zion glide, sung by holy men of God on earth, and destined to be repeated in heaven with loftier voice, and on harps of purer gold. “And I looked, and lo! a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.”—Rev. xiv. 1, 2.