CHAPTER II.

The Theatre.

We must look at this world more closely, and beneath the ideas which are developed seek for the living men; it is the theatre especially which is the original product of the English Renaissance, and it is the theatre especially which will exhibit the men of the English Renaissance. Forty poets, amongst them ten of superior rank, as well as one, the greatest of all artists who have represented the soul in words; many hundreds of pieces, and nearly fifty masterpieces; the drama extended over all the provinces of history, imagination, and fancy,—expanded so as to embrace comedy, tragedy, pastoral and fanciful literature—to represent all degrees of human condition, and all the caprices of human invention—to express all the perceptible details of actual truth, and all the philosophic grandeur of general reflection; the stage disencumbered of all precept and freed from all imitation, given up and appropriated in the minutest particulars to the reigning taste and public intelligence: all this was a vast and manifold work, capable by its flexibility, its greatness, and its form, of receiving and preserving the exact imprint of the age and of the nation.  

1 "The very age and body of the time, his form and pressure."—Shakespeare.
I.

Let us try, then, to set before our eyes this public, this audience, and this stage—all connected with one another, as in every natural and living work; and if ever there was a living and natural work, it is here. There were already seven theatres in London, in Shakspeare’s time, so brisk and universal was the taste for dramatic representations. Great and rude contrivances, awkward in their construction, barbarous in their appointments; but a fervid imagination readily supplied all that they lacked, and hardy bodies endured all inconveniences without difficulty. On a dirty site, on the banks of the Thames, rose the principal theatre, the Globe, a sort of hexagonal tower, surrounded by a muddy ditch, on which was hoisted a red flag. The common people could enter as well as the rich: there were sixpenny, twopenny, even penny seats; but they could not see it without money. If it rained, and it often rains in London, the people in the pit, butchers, mercers, bakers, sailors, apprentices, receive the streaming rain upon their heads. I suppose they did not trouble themselves about it; it was not so long since they began to pave the streets of London; and when men, like these, have had experience of sewers and puddles, they are not afraid of catching cold. While waiting for the piece, they amuse themselves after their fashion, drink beer, crack nuts, eat fruit, howl, and now and then resort to their fists; they have been known to fall upon the actors, and turn the theatre upside down. At other times they were dissatisfied and went to the tavern, to give the poet a hiding, or toss him in a blanket; they were coarse fellows, and there was no month
when the cry of "Clubs" did not call them out of their shops to exercise their brawny arms. When the beer took effect, there was a great upturned barrel in the pit, a peculiar receptacle for general use. The smell rises, and then comes the cry, "Burn the juniper!" They burn some in a plate on the stage, and the heavy smoke fills the air. Certainly the folk there assembled could scarcely get disgusted at anything, and cannot have had sensitive noses. In the time of Rabelais there was not much cleanliness to speak of. Remember that they were hardly out of the middle-age, and that in the middle-age man lived on a dunghill.

Above them, on the stage, were the spectators able to pay a shilling, the elegant people, the gentlefolk. These were sheltered from the rain, and if they chose to pay an extra shilling, could have a stool. To this were reduced the prerogatives of rank and the devices of comfort: it often happened that there were not stools enough; then they lie down on the ground: this was not a time to be dainty. They play cards, smoke, insult the pit, who gaveti them back without stinting, and throw apples at them into the bargain. They also gesticulate, swear in Italian, French, English;\(^1\) crack aloud jokes in dainty, composite, high-coloured, words: in short, they have the energetic, original, gay manners of artists, the same humour, the same absence of constraint, and, to complete the resemblance, the same desire to make themselves singular, the same imaginative cravings, the same absurd and picturesque devices, beards cut to a point, into the shape of a fan, a spade, the letter T, gaudy and expensive dresses, copied from five or six neighbouring nations, embroidered, laced

\(^1\) Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*; *Cynthia's Revels.*
with gold, motley, continually heightened in effect, or changed for others: there was, as it were, a carnival in their brains as well as on their backs.

With such spectators illusions could be produced without much trouble: there were no preparations or perspectives; few or no moveable scenes: their imaginations took all this upon them. A scroll in big letters announced to the public that they were in London or Constantinople; and that was enough to carry the public to the desired place. There was no trouble about probability. Sir Philip Sidney writes:

"You shall have Asia of the one side, and Africke of the other, and so many other under-kingdomes, that the Plaier when hee comes in, must ever begin with telling where hee is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three Ladies walke to gather flowers, and then wee must beleeve the stage to be a garden. By and by wee heare newes of shipwracke in the same place, then wee are to blame if we accept it not for a rocke; . . . while in the meane time two armiies flie in, represented with four swordes and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberall. For ordinary it is, that two young Princes fall in love, after many traverses, shee is got with childe, delivered of a faire boy, hee is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is readie to get another childe; and all this in two houres space." \(^1\)

Doubtless these enormities were somewhat reduced under Shakspeare; with a few hangings, crude representations of animals, towers, forests, they assisted somewhat the public imagination. But after all, in Shakspeare's plays as in all others, the imagination from within is chiefly drawn upon for the machinery;

\(^1\) The Defence of Ponsie, ed. 1629, p. 562.
it must lend itself to all, substitute all, accept for a queen a young man who has just been shaved, endure in one act ten changes of place, leap suddenly over twenty years or five hundred miles,¹ take half-a-dozen supernumeraries for forty thousand men, and to have represented by the rolling of the drums all the battles of Caesar, Henry V., Coriolanus, Richard III. And imagination, being so overflowing and so young, accepts all this! Recall your own youth; for my part, the deepest emotions I have ever felt at a theatre were given to me by a strolling bevy of four young girls, playing comedy and tragedy on a stage in a coffeehouse; true, I was eleven years old. So in this theatre, at this moment, their souls were fresh, as ready to feel everything as the poet was to dare everything.

II.

These are but externals; let us try to advance further, to observe the passions, the bent of mind, the inner man: it is this inner state which raised and modelled the drama, as everything else; invisible inclinations are everywhere the cause of visible works, and the interior shapes the exterior. What are these townspeople, courtiers, this public, whose taste fashions the theatre? what is there peculiar in the structure and condition of their minds? The condition must needs be peculiar; for the drama flourishes all of a sudden, and for sixty years together, with marvellous luxuriance, and at the end of this time is arrested so that no effort could ever revive it. The structure must be peculiar; for of all theatres, old and new, this is distinct in form, and displays a style, action, characters, an idea of life, which are not found in any age or any country besides

¹ Winter's Tale; Cymbeline; Julius Caesar
This particular feature is the free and complete expansion of nature.

What we call nature in men is, man such as he was before culture and civilisation had deformed and reformed him. Almost always, when a new generation arrives at manhood and consciousness, it finds a code of precepts impose on it with all the weight and authority of antiquity. A hundred kinds of chains, a hundred thousand kinds of ties, religion, morality, good breeding, every legislation which regulates sentiments, morals, manners, fetter and tame the creature of impulse and passion which breathes and frets within each of us. There is nothing like that here. It is a regeneration, and the curb of the past is wanting to the present Catholicism, reduced to external ceremony and clerical chicanery, had just ended; Protestantism, arrested in its first gropings after truth, or straying into sects, had not yet gained the mastery; the religion of discipline was grown feeble, and the religion of morals was not yet established; men ceased to listen to the directions of the clergy, and had not yet spelt out the law of conscience. The church was turned into an assembly-room, as in Italy; the young fellows came to St. Paul's to walk, laugh, chatter, display their new cloaks; the thing had even passed into a custom. They paid for the noise they made with their spurs, and this tax was a source of income to the canons;¹ pickpockets, loose

¹ Strype, in his Annals of the Reformation (1571), says: "Many now were wholly departed from the communion of the church, and came no more to hear divine service in their parish churches, nor received the holy sacrament, according to the laws of the realm." Richard Baxter, in his Life, published in 1696, says: "We lived in a country that had but little preaching at all. . . . In the village where I lived the Reader read the Common Prayer briefly; and the
girls, came there by crowds; these latter struck their bargains while service was going on. Imagine, in short, that the scruples of conscience and the severity of the Puritans were at that time odious and ridiculed on the stage, and judge of the difference between this sensual, unbridled England, and the correct, disciplined, stiff England of our own time. Ecclesiastical or secular, we find no signs of rule. In the failure of faith, reason had not gained sway, and opinion is as void of authority as tradition. The imbecile age, which has just ended, continues buried in scorn, with its ravings, its verse-makers, and its pedantic text-books; and out of the liberal opinions derived from antiquity, from Italy, France, and Spain, every one could pick and choose as it pleased him, without stooping to restraint or acknowledging a superiority. There was no model imposed on them, as nowadays; instead of affecting imitation, they affected originality. 1 Each strove to be himself, with his own oaths, peculiar ways, costumes, his specialties of conduct and humour, and to be unlike every one else. They said not, "So and so is done," but "I do so and so." Instead of restraining they gave free vent to themselves. There was no etiquette of society; save for an exaggerated jargon of chivalresque courtesy, they are masters of speech and action on the impulse of the moment. You will find them free from decorum, as of all else.

rest of the day, even till dark night almost, except Eating time, was spent in Dancing under a Mappole and a great tree, not far from my father's door, where all the Town did meet together. And though one of my father's own Tenants was the piper, he could not restrain him nor break the sport. So that we could not read the Scripture in our family without the great disturbance of the Taber and Pipe and noise in the street." 1 Ben Jonson, Every Man in his Humour.
In this outbreak and absence of fetters, they resemble fine strong horses let loose in the meadow. Their in-born instincts have not been tamed, nor muzzled, nor diminished.

On the contrary, they have been preserved intact by bodily and military training; and escaping as they were from barbarism, not from civilisation, they had not been acted upon by the innate softening and hereditary tempering which are now transmitted with the blood, and civilise a man from the moment of his birth. This is why man, who for three centuries has been a domestic animal, was still almost a savage beast, and the force of his muscles and the strength of his nerves increased the boldness and energy of his passions. Look at these uncultivated men, men of the people, how suddenly the blood warms and rises to their face; their fists double, their lips press together, and those vigorous bodies rush at once into action. The courtiers of that age were like our men of the people. They had the same taste for the exercise of their limbs, the same indifference toward the inclemencies of the weather, the same coarseness of language, the same undisguised sensuality. They were carmen in body and gentlemen in sentiment, with the dress of actors and the tastes of artists. “At fourtene,” says John Hardyng, “a lorde sonnes shalle to felde hunte the dere, and catch an hardynesse. For dere to hunte and asea, and see them blede, ane hardyment gyfith to his courage. . . . At sextene yere, to werry and to wage, to juste and ryde, and castels to assayle . . . and every day his armure to assay in fete of armes with some of his meyne.”

When ripened to manhood, he is employed with the bow, in wrestling, leaping, vaulting. Henry VIII.'s court, in its noisy merriment, was like a village fair. The king, says Holinshed, exercised himself "dailie in shooting, singing, dancing, wrestling, casting of the barre, plaieing at the recorders, flute, virginals, in setting of songs, and making of ballads." He leaps the moats with a pole, and was once within an ace of being killed. He is so fond of wrestling, that publicly, on the field of the Cloth of Gold, he seized Francis I. in his arms to try a throw with him. This is how a common soldier or a bricklayer nowadays tries a new comrade. In fact, they regarded gross jests and brutal buffooneries as amusements, as soldiers and bricklayers do now. In every nobleman's house there was a fool, whose business it was to utter pointed jests, to make eccentric gestures, horrible faces, to sing licentious songs, as we might hear now in a beer-house. They thought insults and obscenity a joke. They were foul-mouthed, they listened to Rabelais' words undiluted, and delighted in conversation which would revolt us. They had no respect for humanity; the rules of proprieties and the habits of good breeding began only under Louis XIV., and by imitation of the French; at this time they all blurted out the word that fitted in, and that was most frequently a coarse word. You will see on the stage, in Shakspeare's Pericles, the filth of a haunt of vice. The great lords, the well-dressed ladies, speak Billingsgate. When Henry V. pays his court to Catherine of France, it is with the coarse bearing of a sailor who may have taken a fancy to a sutler; and like the tars who tattoo a

1 Act iv. 2 and 4. See also the character of Calypso in Massinger: Putana in Ford; Protalyce in Beaumont and Fletcher.
heart on their arms to prove their love for the girls they left behind them, there were men who “devoured sulphur and drank urine”\(^1\) to win their mistress by a proof of affection. Humanity is as much lacking as decency. Blood, suffering, does not move them. The court frequents bear and bull baitings, where dogs are ripped up and chained beasts are sometimes beaten to death, and it was, says an officer of the palace, “a charming entertainment.”\(^2\) No wonder they used their arms like clodhoppers and gossips. Elizabeth used to beat her maids of honour, “so that these beautiful girls could often be heard crying and lamenting in a piteous manner.” One day she spat upon Sir Mathew’s fringed coat; at another time, when Essex, whom she was scolding, turned his back, she gave him a box on the ear. It was then the practice of great ladies to beat their children and their servants. Poor Jane Grey was sometimes so wretchedly “boxed, struck, pinched, and

\(^1\) Middleton, *Dutch Courtesan*.

\(^2\) Commission given by Henry VIII. to the Earl of Hertford; 1544: “You are there to put all to fire and sword; to burn Edinburgh town, and to raze and deface it, when you have sacked it, and gotten what you can out of it. . . . Do what you can out of hand, and without long tarrying, to beat down and overthrow the castle, sack Holyrood-House, and as many towns and villages about Edinburgh as ye conveniently can; sack Leith, and burn and subvert it, and all the rest, putting man, woman, and child to fire and sword, without exception, when any resistance shall be made against you; and this done, pass over to the Fife land, and extend like extremities and destructions in all towns and villages whereunto ye may reach conveniently, not forgetting amongst all the rest, so to spoil and turn upside down the cardinal’s town of St. Andrew’s, as the upper stone may be the nether, and not one stick stand by another, sparing no creature alive within the same, specially such as either in friendship or blood be allied to the cardinal. This journey shall succeed most to his majesty’s honour.”

\(^3\) Laneham, *A Goodly Relief*. 
ill-treated in other manners which she dare not relate," that she used to wish herself dead. Their first idea is to come to words, to blows, to have satisfaction. As in feudal times, they appeal at once to arms, and retain the habit of taking the law in their own hands, and without delay. "On Thursday laste," writes Gilbert Talbot to the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, "as my Lorde Rytche was rydyenge in the streetes, there was one Wyndam that stode in a dore, and shotte a dagge at him, thynkynge to have slayne him . . . . The same daye, also, as Sr John Conway was goynge in the streetes, Mr. Lodoyveke Grevell came sodenly upon him, and stroke him on the hedd wth a sworde. . . . I am forced to trouble yo' Honors wth thes tryflynge matters, for I know no greater."  

No one, not even the queen, is safe among these violent dispositions. Again, when one man struck another in the precincts of the court, his hand was cut off, and the arteries stopped with a red-hot iron. Only such atrocious imitations of their own crimes, and the painful image of bleeding and suffering flesh, could tame their vehemence and restrain the uprising of their instincts. Judge now what materials they furnish to the theatre, and what characters they look for at the theatre. To please the public, the stage cannot deal too much in open lust and the strongest passions; it must depict man attaining the limit of his desires, unchecked, almost mad, now trembling and rooted before the white palpitating flesh which his eyes devour, now haggard and grinding his teeth before the

1 13th February 1587. Nathan Drake, *Shakespeare and his Times*, ii. p. 165. See also the same work for all these details.

2 Essex, when struck by the queen, put his hand on the hilt of his sword.
enemy whom he wishes to tear to pieces, now carried beyond himself and overwhelmed at the sight of the honours and wealth which he covets, always raging and enveloped in a tempest of eddying ideas, sometimes shaken by impestuous joy, more often on the verge of fury and madness, stronger, more ardent, more daringly let loose to infringe on reason and law than ever. We hear from the stage as from the history of the time, these fierce murmurs: the sixteenth century is like a den of lions.

Amid passions so strong as these there is not one lacking. Nature appears here in all its violence, but also in all its fulness. If nothing had been weakened, nothing had been mutilated. It is the entire man who is displayed, heart, mind, body, senses, with his noblest and finest aspirations, as with his most bestial and savage appetites, without the preponderance of any dominant circumstance to cast him altogether in one direction, to exalt or degrade him. He has not become rigid, as he will be under Puritanism. He is not uncrowned as in the Restoration. After the hollowness and weariness of the fifteenth century, he rose up by a second birth, as before in Greece man had risen by a first birth; and now, as then, the temptations of the outer world came combined to raise his faculties from their sloth and torpor. A sort of generous warmth spread over them to ripen and make them flourish. Peace, prosperity, comfort began; new industries and increasing activity suddenly multiplied objects of utility and luxury tenfold. America and India, by their discovery, caused the treasures and prodigies heaped up afar over distant seas to shine before their eyes; antiquity re-discovered, sciences mapped out, the Reformation begun, books
multiplied by printing, ideas by books, doubled the means of enjoyment, imagination, and thought. People wanted to enjoy, to imagine, and to think; for the desire grows with the attraction, and here all attractions were combined. There were attractions for the senses, in the chambers which they began to warm, in the beds newly furnished with pillows, in the coaches which they began to use for the first time. There were attractions for the imagination in the new palaces, arranged after the Italian manner; in the variegated hangings from Flanders; in the rich garments, gold-embroidered, which, being continually changed, combined the fancies and the splendours of all Europe. There were attractions for the mind, in the noble and beautiful writings which, spread abroad, translated, explained, brought in philosophy, eloquence, and poetry, from restored antiquity, and from the surrounding Renaissances. Under this appeal all aptitudes and instincts at once started up; the low and the lofty, ideal and sensual love, gross cupidity and pure generosity. Recall what you yourself experienced, when from being a child you became a man: what wishes for happiness, what breadth of anticipation, what intoxication of heart wafted you towards all joys; with what impulse your hands seized involuntarily and all at once every branch of the tree, and would not let a single fruit escape. At sixteen years, like Chérubin,¹ we wish for a servant girl while we adore a Madonna; we are capable of every species of covetousness, and also of every species of self-denial; we find virtue more lovely, our meals more enjoyable; pleasure has more zest, heroism more worth; there is no allurement which is not keen; the sweet-

¹ A page in the Mariage de Figaro, a comedy by Beaumarchais.—Tr.
ness and novelty of things are too strong; and in the hive of passions which buzzes within us, and stings us like the sting of a bee, we can do nothing but plunge, one after another, in all directions. Such were the men of this time, Raleigh, Essex, Elizabeth, Henry VIII. himself, excessive and inconstant, ready for devotion and for crime, violent in good and evil, heroic with strange weaknesses, humble with sudden changes of mood, never vile with premeditation like the roysterers of the Restoration, never rigid on principle like the Puritans of the Revolution, capable of weeping like children,¹ and of dying like men, often base courtiers, more than once true knights, displaying constantly, amidst all these contradictions of bearing, only the fulness of their characters. Thus prepared, they could take in everything, sanguinary ferocity and refined generosity, the brutality of shameless debauchery, and the most divine innocence of love, accept all the characters, prostitutes and virgins, princes and mountebanks, pass quickly from trivial buffoonery to lyrical sublimities, listen alternately to the quibbles of clowns and the songs of lovers. The drama even, in order to imitate and satisfy the fertility of their nature, must talk all tongues, pompous, inflated verse, loaded with imagery, and side by side with this, vulgar prose; more, it must distort its natural style and limits; put songs, poetical devices, into the discourse of courtiers and the speeches of statesmen; bring on the stage the fairy world of the opera, as Middleton says, gnomes, nymphs of the land and sea, with their groves and their meadows; compel the gods to descend upon the stage, and hell itself to furnish its

¹ The great Chancellor Burleigh often wept, so harshly was he used by Elizabeth.
world of marvels. No other theatre is so complicated; for nowhere else do we find men so complete.

III.

In this free and universal expansion, the passions had their special bent withal, which was an English one, inasmuch as they were English. After all, in every age, under every civilisation, a people is always itself. Whatever be its dress, goat-skin blouse, gold-laced doublet, black dress-coat, the five or six great instincts which it possessed in its forests, follow it in its palaces and offices. To this day, warlike passions, a gloomy humour, subsist under the regularity and propriety of modern manners. Their native energy and harshness pierce through the perfection of culture and the habits of comfort. Rich young men, on leaving Oxford, go to hunt bears on the Rocky Mountains, the elephant in South Africa, live under canvas, box, jump hedges on horseback, sail their yachts on dangerous coasts, delight in solitude and peril. The ancient Saxon, the old rover of the Scandinavian seas, has not perished. Even at school the children roughly treat one another, withstand one another, fight like men; and their character is so indomitable, that they need the birch and blows to reduce them to the discipline of law. Judge what they were in the sixteenth century; the English race passed then for the most warlike of Europe, the most redoubtable in battle, the most impatient of anything like slavery.

1 Compare, to understand this character, the parts assigned to James Harlowe by Richardson, old Osborne by Thackeray, Sir Giles Overreach by Massinger, and Manly by Wycherley.

2 Hentzner's Travels; Benvenuto Cellini. See passim, the costumes printed in Venice and Germany: Bellicosissimi. Froude, i. pp. 19, 52.
"English savages" is what Cellini calls them; and the "great shins of beef" with which they fill themselves, keep up the force and ferocity of their instincts. To harden them thoroughly, institutions work in the same groove with nature. The nation is armed, every man is brought up like a soldier, bound to have arms according to his condition, to exercise himself on Sundays or holidays; from the yeoman to the lord, the old military constitution keeps them enrolled and ready for action.\(^1\) In a state which resembles an army, it is necessary that punishments, as in an army, shall inspire terror; and to make them worse, the hideous Wars of the Roses, which on every flaw of the succession to the throne are ready to break out again, are ever present in their recollection. Such instincts, such a constitution, such a history, raises before them, with tragic severity, an idea of life: death is at hand, as well as wounds, the block, tortures. The fine cloaks of purple which the Renaissances of the South displayed joyfully in the sun, to wear like a holiday garment, are here stained with blood, and eddied with black. Throughout,\(^2\) a stern discipline, and the axe ready for every suspicion of treason; great men, bishops, a chancellor, princes, the king's relatives, queens, a protector, all kneeling in the straw, sprinkled the Tower with their blood; one after the other they marched past, stretched out their necks; the Duke of Buckingham, Queen Anne Boleyn, Queen Catherine Howard, the Earl of Surrey, Admiral Seymour, the Duke of Somerset, Lady Jane Grey and her husband, the Duke of Nor-

\(^{1}\) This is not so true of the English now, if it was in the sixteenth century, as it is of continental nations. The French lycées are far more military in character than English schools.—Tr.

\(^{2}\) Froude's Hist. of England, vol. i. ii. iii.
thumberland, Mary Stewart, the Earl of Essex, all on
the throne, or on the steps of the throne, in the highest
rank of honours, beauty, youth, and genius; of the bright
procession nothing is left but senseless trunks, marred
by the tender mercies of the executioner. Shall I
count the funeral pyres, the hangings, living men cut
down from the gibbet, disembowelled, quartered,¹
their limbs cast into the fire, their heads exposed on the
walls? There is a page in Holinshed which reads like
a death register:

“The five and twentieth daie of Maie (1535), was in saint
Paules church at London examined nineteen men and six women
born in Holland, whose opinions were (heretical). Fourteene of
them were condemned, a man and a woman of them were burned
in Smithfield, the other twelve were sent to other townes, there
to be burnt. On the nineteenth of June were three moonkes
of the Charterhouse hanged, drawne, and quartered at Tiburne, and
their heads and quarters set up about London, for denying the
king to be supreme head of the church. Also the one and
twentieth of the same moneth, and for the same cause, doctor John
Fisher, bishop of Rochester, was beheaded for denying of the
supremacie, and his head set upon London bridge, but his bodie
buried within Barking churchyard. The pope had elected him
a cardinall, and sent his hat as far as Calais, but his head was
off before his hat was on: so that they met not. On the sixt of
Julie was Sir Thomas Moore beheaded for the like crime, that is
to wit, for denying the king to be supreme head.”²

None of these murders seem extraordinary; the chroni-
clers mention them without growing indignant; the
condemned go quietly to the block, as if the thing were

¹ “When his heart was torn out he uttered a deep groan.”—Exec-
ution of Parry; Strype, iii. 251.
perfectly natural. Anne Boleyn said seriously, before giving up her head to the executioner: "I praiie God save the king, and send him long to reigne over you, for a gentler, nor a more mercifull prince was there never." 1 Society is, as it were, in a state of siege, so incited that beneath the idea of order every one entertained the idea of the scaffold. They saw it, the terrible machine, planted on all the highways of human life; and the byways as well as the highways led to it. A sort of martial law, introduced by conquests into civil affairs, entered thence into ecclesiastical matters, 2 and social economy ended by being enslaved by it. As in a camp, 3 expenditure, dress, the food of each class, are fixed and restricted; no one might stray out of his district, be idle, live after his own devices. Every stranger was seized, interrogated; if he could not give a good account of himself, the parish-stocks bruised his limbs; as in time of war he would have passed for a spy and an enemy, if caught amidst the army. Any person, says the law, 4 found living idly or loiteringly for the space of three days, shall be marked with a hot iron on his breast, and adjudged as a slave to the man who shall inform against him. This one "shall take the same slave, and give him bread, water, or small drink, and refuse meat, and cause him to work, by beating, chaining, or otherwise, in such work and labour as he shall put him to, be it never so vile." He may sell him, bequeath him, let him out for hire, or trade upon him "after the like sort as they may do of any other their moveable goods or chattels," put a ring of iron about his neck or leg; if he runs away and absents

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1 Holinshed, Chronicles of England, iii. p. 797.
2 Under Henry IV. and Henry V.
3 Froude, i. 18.
4 In 1547.
himself, for fourteen days, he is branded on the forehead with a hot iron, and remains a slave for the whole of his life; if he runs away a second time, he is put to death. Sometimes, says More, you might see a score of thieves hung on the same gibbet. In one year \(^1\) forty persons were put to death in the county of Somerset alone, and in each county there were three or four hundred vagabonds who would sometimes gather together and rob in armed bands of sixty at a time. Follow the whole of this history closely, the fires of Mary, the pillories of Elizabeth, and it is plain that the moral tone of the land, like its physical condition, is harsh by comparison with other countries. They have no relish in their enjoyments, as in Italy; what is called Merry England is England given up to animal spirits, a coarse animation produced by abundant feeding, continued prosperity, courage, and self-reliance; voluptuousness does not exist in this climate and this race. Mingled with the beautiful popular beliefs, the lugubrious dreams and the cruel nightmare of witchcraft make their appearance. Bishop Jewell, preaching before the queen, tells her that witches and sorcerers within these few last years are marvellously increased Some ministers assert

"That they have had in their parish at one instant, xvij or xvij witches; meaning such as could worke miracles super naturallie; that they work spells by which men pine away even unto death, their colour fadeth, their flesh roteth, their speech is benumbed, their senses are bereft; that instructed by the devil, they make ointments of the bowels and members of children, whereby they ride in the aire, and accomplish all their desires. When a child is not baptized, or defended by the sign of

\(^1\) In 1596
the cross, then the witches catch them from their mothers sides in the night ... kill them ... or after burial steale them out of their graves, and seeth them in a caldron, untill their flesh be made potable. ... It is an infallible rule, that everie fortnight, or at the least everie moneth, each witch must kill one child at the least for hir part."

Here was something 'o make the teeth chatter with fright. Add to this revolting and absurd descriptions, wretched tomfooleries, details about the infernal caldron, all the nastinesses which could haunt the trite imagination of a hideous and drivelling old woman, and you have the spectacles, provided by Middleton and Shakspeare, and which suit the sentiments of the age and the national humour. The fundamental gloom pierces through the glow and rapture of poetry. Mournful legends have multiplied; every churchyard has its ghost; wherever a man has been murdered his spirit appears. Many people dare not leave their village after sunset. In the evening, before bed-time, men talk of the coach which is seen drawn by headless horses, with headless postilions and coachmen, or of unhappy spirits who, compelled to inhabit the plain, under the sharp north-east wind, pray for the shelter of a hedge or a valley. They dream terribly of death:

"To die and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
The greatest speak with a sad resignation of the infinite obscurity which embraces our poor, short, glimmering life, our life, which is but a troubled dream; the sad state of humanity, which is but passion, madness, and sorrow; the human being who is himself, perhaps, but a vain phantom, a grievous sick man's dream. In their eyes we roll down a fatal slope, where chance dashes us one against the other, and the inner destiny which urges us onward, only shatters after it has blinded us. And at the end of all is "the silent grave, no conversation, no joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers, no careful father's counsel; nothing's heard, nor nothing is, but all oblivion, dust, and endless darkness." If yet there were nothing. "To die, to sleep; to sleep, perchance to dream." To dream sadly, to fall into a nightmare like the nightmare of life, like that in which we are struggling and crying to-day, gasping with hoarse throat!—this is their idea of man and of existence, the national idea, which fills the stage with calamities and despair, which makes a display of tortures and massacres, which abounds in madness and crime, which holds up death as the issue throughout. A threatening and sombre fog veils their mind like their sky, and joy, like the sun, only appears in its full force now and then. They are different from the Latin race,

1 Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, Act iii. 1. See also The Tempest, Hamlet, Macbeth.

2 "We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."—Tempest, iv. 1.

and in the common Renaissance they are regenerated otherwise than the Latin races. The free and full development of pure nature which, in Greece and Italy, ends in the painting of beauty and happy energy, ends here in the painting of ferocious energy, agony, and death.

IV.

Thus was this theatre produced; a theatre unique in history, like the admirable and fleeting epoch from which it sprang, the work and the picture of this young world, as natural, as unshackled, and as tragic as itself. When an original and national drama springs up, the poets who establish it, carry in themselves the sentiments which it represents. They display better than other men the feelings of the public, because those feelings are stronger in them than in other men. The passions which surround them, break forth in their heart with a harsher or a juster cry, and hence their voices become the voices of all. Chivalric and Catholic Spain had her interpreters in her enthusiasts and her Don Quixotes: in Calderon, first a soldier, afterwards a priest; in Lope de Vega, a volunteer at fifteen, a passionate lover, a wandering duellist, a soldier of the Armada, finally, a priest and familiar of the Holy Office; so full of fervour that he fasts till he is exhausted, faints with emotion while singing mass, and in his flagellations stains the walls of his cell with blood. Calm and noble Greece had in her principal tragic poet one of the most accomplished and fortunate of her sons: 1 Sophocles, first in song and palaestra; who at fifteen sang, unclad, the paean before the trophy of Salamis, and who afterwards,

1 Διευκάθησθι ὦ παιδί καὶ περί παλαίστραν καὶ μουσεῖον, ἐξ ἐν ἅμφῳ

θέου εὐσφαίρου... Φιλαθναύςτω καὶ θεοφάνῃ.—Scholium.
as ambassador, general, ever loving the gods and impassioned for his state, presented, in his life as in his works, the spectacle of the incomparable harmony which made the beauty of the ancient world, and which the modern world will never more attain to. Eloquent and worldly France, in the age which carried the art of good manners and conversation to its highest pitch, finds to write her oratorical tragedies and to paint her drawing-room passions, the most able craftsman of words, Racine, a courtier, a man of the world; the most capable, by the delicacy of his tact and the adaptation of his style, of making men of the world and courtiers speak. So in England the poets are in harmony with their works. Almost all are Bohemians; they sprung from the people, were educated, and usually studied at Oxford or Cambridge, but they were poor, so that their education contrasts with their condition. Ben Jonson is the step-son of a bricklayer, and himself a bricklayer; Marlowe is the son of a shoemaker; Shakspeare of a wool merchant; Massinger of a servant of a noble family. They live as they can, get into debt, write for their bread, go on the stage. Peele, Lodge, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Shakspeare, Heywood, are actors; most of the details which we have of their lives are taken from the journal of Henslowe, a retired pawnbroker, later a money-lender and manager of a theatre, who gives them work, advances money to them, receives their manuscripts or their wardrobes as security. For a play he

1 Except Beaumont and Fletcher.

2 Hartley Coleridge, in his Introduction to the Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford, says of Massinger's father: "We are not certified of the situation which he held in the noble household (Earl of Pembroke), but we may be sure that it was neither menial nor mean. Service in those days was not derogatory to gentle birth."—Ts.
gives seven or eight pounds; after the year 1600 prices rise, and reach as high as twenty or twenty-five pounds. It is clear that, even after this increase, the trade of autho. scarcely brings in bread. In order to earn money, it was necessary, like Shakspeare, to become a manager, to try to have a share in the property of a theatre; but such success is rare, and the life which they lead, a life of actors and artists, improvident, full of excess, lost amid debauchery and acts of violence, amidst women of evil fame, in contact with young profligates, among the temptations of misery, imagination and licence, generally leads them to exhaustion, poverty, and death. Men received enjoyment from them, but neglected and despised them. One actor, for a political allusion, was sent to prison, and only just escaped losing his ears; great men, men in office, abused them like servants. Heywood, who played almost every day, bound himself, in addition, to write a sheet daily, for several years composes at haphazard in taverns, labours and sweats like a true literary hack, and dies leaving two hundred and twenty pieces, of which most are lost. Kyd, one of the earliest in date, died in misery. Shirley, one of the last, at the end of his career, was obliged to become once more a schoolmaster. Massinger dies unknown; and in the parish register we find only this sad mention of him: "Philip Massinger, a stranger." A few months after the death of Middleton, his widow was obliged to ask alms of the City, because he had left nothing. Imagination, as Drummond said of Ben Jonson, oppressed their reason; it is the common failing of poets. They wish to enjoy, and give themselves wholly up to enjoyment; their mood, their heart governs them; in their life, as
in their works, impulses are irresistible; desire comes suddenly, like a wave, drowning reason, resistance—often even giving neither reason nor resistance time to show themselves.\footnote{See, amongst others, *The Woman Killed with Kindness*, by Heywood. Mrs. Frankfort, so upright of heart, accepts Wendoll at his first offer. Sir Francis Acton, at the sight of her whom he wishes to dishonour, and whom he hates, falls "into an ecstasy," and dreams of nothing save marriage. Compare the sudden transport of Juliet, Romeo, Macbeth, Miranda, etc.; the counsel of Prospero to Fernando, when he leaves him alone for a moment with Miranda.}

Many are roysterers, sad roysterers of the same sort, such as Musset and Murger, who give themselves up to every passion, and "drown their sorrows in the bowl;" capable of the purest and most poetic dreams, of the most delicate and touching tenderness, and who yet can only undermine their health and mar their fame. Such are Nash, Decker, and Greene; Nash, a fantastic satirist, who abused his talent, and conspired like a prodigal against good fortune; Decker, who passed three years in the King's Bench prison; Greene, above all, a pleasing wit, copious, graceful, who took a delight in destroying himself, publicly with tears confessing his vices,\footnote{Compare *La Vie de Bohème* and *Les Nuits d'Hiver*, by Murger; *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, by A. de Musset.} and the next moment plunging into them again. These are mere androgynes, true courtesans, in manners, body, and heart. Quitting Cambridge, "with good fellows as free-living as himself;" Greene had travelled over Spain, Italy, "in which places he sawe and practizde such villainie as is abominable to declare." You see the poor man is candid, not sparing himself; he is natural; passionate in everything, repentance or otherwise; above all of ever-varying mood; made for self-contradiction; not self-correction. On his return he became, in London, a supporter of taverns,
a haunter of evil places. In his *Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance* he says:

"I was dround in pride, whoredom was my daily exercise, and gluttouy with drunkenness was my onely delight. . . . After I had wholly betaken me to the penning of plaies (which was my continuall exercise) I was so far from calling upon God that I sildome thought on God, but tooke such delight in swearing and blasphencing the name of God that none could thinke otherwise of me than that I was the child of perdition. These vanities and other trifling pamphlets I penned of love and vaine fantasies was my chiefest stay of living; and for those my vaine discourses I was beloved of the more vainer sort of people, who being my continuall companions, came still to my lodging, and there would continue quaffing, carouling, and surfeting with me all the day long. . . . If I may have my desire while I live I am satisfied; let me shift after death as I may. . . . 'Hell!' quoth I; 'what talke you of hell to me? I know if I once come there I shall have the company of better men than myselfe; I shall also meete with some madde knaves in that place, and so long as I shall not sit there alone, my care is the lesse. . . . If I feared the judges of the bench no more than I dread the juvignents of God I would before I slept dive into one carles bagges or other, and make merrie with the shelles I found in them so long as they would last.'"

A little later he is seized with remorse, marries, depicts in delicious verse the regularity and calm of an upright life; then returns to London, spends his property and his wife's fortune with "a sorry ragged queane," in the company of ruffians, pimps, sharers, courtesans; drinking, blaspheming, wearing himself out by sleepless nights and orgies; writing for bread, sometimes amid the brawling and effluvia of his wretched lodging, lighting upon thoughts of adoration and love, worthy
of Rolla;¹ very often disgusted with himself, seized with a fit of weeping between two merry bouts, and writing little pieces to accuse himself, to regret his wife, to convert his comrades, or to warn young people against the tricks of prostitutes and swindlers. He was soon worn out by this kind of life; six years were enough to exhaust him. An indigestion arising from Rhenish wine and pickled herrings finished him. If it had not been for his landlady, who succoured him, he "would have perished in the streets." He lasted a little longer, and then his light went out; now and then he begged her "pittifully for a penny pott of malmesie;" he was covered with lice, he had but one shirt, and when his own was "a washing," he was obliged to borrow her husband's. "His doublet and hose and sword were sold for three shillings," and the poor folks paid the cost of his burial, four shillings for the winding-sheet, and six and fourpence for the burial.

In such low places, on such dunghills, amid such excesses and violence, dramatic genius forced its way, and amongst others, that of the first, of the most powerful, of the true founder of the dramatic school, Christopher Marlowe.

Marlowe was an ill-regulated, dissolute, outrageously vehement and audacious spirit, but grand and sombre, with the genuine poetic frenzy; pagan moreover, and rebellious in manners and creed. In this universal return to the senses, and in this impulse of natural forces which brought on the Renaissance, the corporeal instincts and the ideas which hallow them, break forth impetuously. Marlowe, like Greene, like Kett,² is a

¹ The hero of one of Alfred de Musset's poems.—Tu.
² Burnt in 1589.
sceptic, denies God and Christ, blasphemes the Trinity, declares Moses "a juggler," Christ more worthy of death than Barabbas, says that "if he were to write a new religion, he would undertake both a more excellent and more admirable method," and "almost in every company he commeth, persuadeth men to Atheism." ¹ Such were the rages, the rashnesses, the excesses which liberty of thought gave rise to in these new minds, who for the first time, after so many centuries, dared to walk unfettered. From his father’s shop, crowded with children, from the straps and awls, he found himself studying at Cambridge, probably through the patronage of a great man, and on his return to London, in want, amid the licence of the green-room, the low houses and taverns, his head was in a ferment, and his passions became excited. He turned actor; but having broken his leg in a scene of debauchery, he remained lame, and could no longer appear on the boards. He openly avowed his infidelity, and a prosecution was begun, which, if time had not failed, would probably have brought him to the stake. He made love to a drab, and in trying to stab his rival, his hand was turned, so that his own blade entered his eye and his brain, and he died, cursing and blaspheming. He was only thirty years old.

Think what poetry could emanate from a life so passionate, and occupied in such a manner! First, exaggerated declamation, heaps of murder, atrocities, a pompous and furious display of tragedy bespattered with blood, and passions raised to a pitch of madness. All the foundations of the English stage, Ferrex and

¹ I have used Marlowe’s Works, ed. Dyce, 3 vols., 1850. Append. i vol. 2.—Tr.
Porrex, Cambyses, Hieronymo, even the Pericles of Shakespeare, reach the same height of extravagance, magniloquence, and horror.\(^1\) It is the first outbreak of youth. Recall Schiller’s Robbers, and how modern democracy has recognised for the first time its picture in the metaphors and cries of Charles Moor.\(^2\) So here the characters struggle and roar, stamp on the earth, gnash their teeth, shake their fists against heaven. The trumpets sound, the drums beat, coats of mail file past, armies clash, men stab each other, or themselves; speeches are full of gigantic threats and lyrical figures;\(^3\) kings die, straining a bass voice; “now doth ghastly death with greedy talons gripe my bleeding heart, and like a harpy tires on my life.” The hero in Tamburlaine the Great\(^4\) is seated on a chariot drawn by chained kings;

\(^1\) See especially Titus Andronicus, attributed to Shakespeare: there are parricides, mothers whom they cause to eat their children, a young girl who appears on the stage violated, with her tongue and hands cut off.

\(^2\) The chief character in Schiller’s Robbers, a virtuous brigand and redresser of wrongs.—Th.

\(^3\) For in a field, whose superfluous
Is cover’d with a liquid purple veil,
And sprinkled with the brains of slaughter’d men,
My royal chair of state shall be advanc’d;
And he that means to place himself therein,
Must armed wade up to the chin in blood. . . .
And I would strive to swim through pools of blood,
Or make a bridge of murder’d carcasses,
Whose arches should be fram’d with bones of Turks,
Ere I would lose the title of a king.

Tamburlaine, part ii. i. 3.

\(^4\) The editor of Marlowe’s Works, Pickering, 1826, says in his Introduction: “Both the matter and style of Tamburlaine, however, differ materially from Marlowe’s other compositions, and doubts have more than once been suggested as to whether the play was properly assigned to him. We think that Marlowe did not write it.” Dyce is of a contrary opinion.—Th.
he burns towns, drowns women and children, puts men to the sword, and finally, seized with an inescrutable sickness, raves in monstrous outcries against the gods, whose hands afflict his soul, and whom he would fain dethrone. There already is the picture of senseless pride, of blind and murderous rage, which passing through many devastations, at last arms against heaven itself. The overflowing of savage and immoderate instinct produces this mighty sounding verse, this prodigality of carnage, this display of splendidours and exaggerated colours, this railing of demoniacal passions, this audacity of grand impiety. If in the dramas which succeed it, The Massacre at Paris, The Jew of Malta, the bombast decreases, the violence remains. Barabas the Jew maddened with hate, is thenceforth no longer human; he has been treated by the Christians like a beast, and he hates them like a beast. He advises his servant Ithamore in the following words:

"Hast thou no trade? then listen to my words,
And I will teach thee that shall stick by thee:
First, be thou void of these affections,
Compassion, love, vain hope, and heartless fear;
Be moved at nothing, see thou pity none,
But to thyself smile when the Christians moan.

... I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls;
Sometimes I go about and poison wells... 
Being young, I studied physic, and began
To practise first upon the Italian;
There I enrich'd the priests with burials,
And always kept the sexton's arms in use
With digging graves and ringing dead men's knells...
I fill'd the jails with bankrupts in a year,
And with young orphans planted hospitals;
And every moon made some or other mad,  
And now and then one hang himself for grief,  
Pinning upon his breast a long great scroll  
How I with interest tormented him.”

All these cruelties he boasts of and chuckles over, like a demon who rejoices in being a good executioner, and plunges his victims in the very extremity of anguish. His daughter has two Christian suitors; and by forged letters he causes them to slay each other. In despair she takes the veil, and to avenge himself he poisons his daughter and the whole convent. Two friars wish to denounce him, then to convert him; he strangles the first, and jokes with his slave Ithamore, a cut-throat by profession, who loves his trade, rubs his hands with joy, and says:

“This neatly done, sir; here’s no print at all.  
So, let him lean upon his staff; excellent! he stands as if he were begging of bacon.”

“O mistress, I have the bravest, gravest, secret, subtle, bottle-nosed knave to my master, that ever gentleman had.”

The second friar comes up, and they accuse him of the murder:

“Barabas. Heaven bless me! what, a friar a murderer!  
When shall you see a Jew commit the like?  
Ithamore. Why, a Turk could ha’ done no more.  
Bar. To-morrow is the sessions; you shall to it—  
Come Ithamore, let’s help to take him hence.  
Friar. Villains, I am a sacred person; touch me not  
Bar. The law shall touch you; we’ll but lead you, we:  
’Las, I could weep at your calamity!”

1 Marlowe’s The Jew of Malta, ii. p 275 et passim.  
2 Ibid. iv. p. 311.  
3 Ibid. iii. p. 291.  
4 Ibid. iv. p. 313
We have also two other poisonings, an infernal machine to blow up the Turkish garrison, a plot to cast the Turkish commander into a well. Barabas falls into it himself, and dies in the hot cauldron,\(^1\) howling, hardened, remorseless, having but one regret, that he had not done evil enough. These are the ferocities of the middle-age; we might find them to this day among the companions of Ali Pacha, among the pirates of the Archipelago; we retain pictures of them in the paintings of the fifteenth century, which represent a king with his court, seated calmly round a living man who is being flayed; in the midst the flayer on his knees is working conscientiously, very careful not to spoil the skin.\(^2\)

All this is pretty strong, you will say; these people kill too readily, and too quickly. It is on this very account that the painting is a true one. For the specialty of the men of the time, as of Marlowe's characters, is the abrupt commission of a deed; they are children, robust children. As a horse kicks out instead of speaking, so they pull out their knives instead of asking an explanation. Nowadays we hardly know what nature is; instead of observing it we still retain the benevolent prejudices of the eighteenth century; we only see it humanised by two centuries of culture, and we take its acquired calm for an innate moderation. The foundations of the natural man are irresistible impulses, passions, desires, greeds; all blind. He sees a woman,\(^3\) thinks her beautiful; suddenly he rushes towards her; people try to restrain him, he kills these

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\(^1\) Up to this time, in England, poisoners were cast into a boiling cauldron.

\(^2\) In the Museum of Ghent.

\(^3\) See in the Jew of Malta the seduction of Ithamore, by Bellamira, a rough, but truly admirable picture.
people, glut his passion, then thinks no more of it, save
when at times a vague picture of a moving lake of
blood crosses his brain and makes him gloomy. Sudden
and extreme resolves are confused in his mind with
desire; barely planned, the thing is done; the wide
interval which a Frenchman places between the idea of
an action and the action itself is not to be found here. Barabas
conceived murders, and straightway murders
were accomplished; there is no deliberation, no pricks
of conscience; that is how he commits a score of them;
his daughter leaves him, he becomes unnatural, and
poisons her; his confidential servant betrays him, he
disguises himself, and poisons him. Rage seizes these
men like a fit, and then they are forced to kill. Ben-
venuto Cellini relates how, being offended, he tried to
restrain himself, but was nearly suffocated; and that
in order to cure himself, he rushed with his dagger upon
his opponent. So, in Edward II., the nobles immediately
appeal to arms; all is excessive and unforeseen: be-
tween two replies the heart is turned upside down, trans-
ported to the extremes of hate or tenderness. Edward,
seeing his favourite Gaveston again, pours out before
him his treasure, casts his dignities at his feet, gives
him his seal, himself, and, on a threat from the Bishop
of Coventry, suddenly cries:

"Throw off his golden mitre, rend his stole,
And in the channel christen him anew." 2

1 Nothing could be farther than the hesitation and arguments of Schil-
er's William Tell; for a contrast, see Goethe's Goetz von Berlichingen.
In 1377, Wyclif pleaded in St. Paul's before the Bishop of London, and
that raised a quarrel. The Duke of Lancaster, Wyclif's protector,
"threatened to drag the bishop out of the church by the hair;" and
next day the furious crowd sacked the duke's palace.

2 Marlowe, Edward the Second, i. p. 178.
Then, when the queen supplicates:

"Fawn not on me, French strumpet! get thee gone. . . .

Speak not unto her: let her droop and pine."¹

Furies and hatreds clash together like horsemen in battle. The Earl of Lancaster draws his sword on Gaveston to slay him, before the king; Mortimer wounds Gaveston. These powerful loud voices growl; the noblemen will not even let a dog approach the prince, and rob them of their rank. Lancaster says of Gaveston:

". . . . He comes not back,

Unless the sea cast up his shipwrack’d body.

Warwick. And to behold so sweet a sight as that,

There’s none here but would run his horse to death."²

They have seized Gaveston, and intend to hang him "at a bough;" they refuse to let him speak a single minute with the king. In vain they are entreated; when they do at last consent, they are sorry for it; it is a prey they want immediately, and Warwick, seizing him by force, "strake off his head in a trench." Those are the men of the middle-age. They have the fierceness, the tenacity, the pride of big, well-fed, thorough-bred bulldogs. It is this sternness and impetuosity of primitive passions which produced the Wars of the Roses, and for thirty years drove the nobles on each other’s swords and to the block.

What is there beyond all these frenzies and gluttings of blood? The idea of crushing necessity and inevitable ruin in which everything sinks and comes to an end. Mortimer, brought to the block, says with a smile:

¹ Marlowe, Edward the Second, p. 186. ² Ibid. p. 186.
"Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
There is a point, to which when men aspire,
They tumble headlong down: that point I touch'd,
And, seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
Why should I grieve at my declining fall?—
Farewell, fair queen; weep not for Mortimer,
That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,
Goes to discover countries yet unknown."  

Weigh well these grand words; they are a cry from the heart, the profound confession of Marlowe, as also of Byron, and of the old sea-kings. The northern paganism is fully expressed in this heroic and mournful sigh: it is thus they imagine the world so long as they remain on the outside of Christianity, or as soon as they quit it. Thus, when men see in life, as they did, nothing but a battle of unchecked passions, and in death but a gloomy sleep, perhaps filled with mournful dreams, there is no other supreme good but a day of enjoyment and victory. They glut themselves, shutting their eyes to the issue, except that they may be swallowed up on the morrow. That is the master-thought of Doctor Faustus, the greatest of Marlowe's dramas: to satisfy his soul, no matter at what price, or with what results:

"A sound magician is a mighty god. . . . .
How am I glutted with conceit of this! . . . .
I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for orient pearl. . .
I'll have them read me strange philosophy,
And tell the secrets of all foreign kings;
I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
And make swift Rhine circle fair Wertenberg. . .

1 Edward the Second, last scene, p. 288
Like lions shall they guard us when we please;
Like Almain rutters with their horsemen’s staves,
Or Lapland giants, trotting by our sides;
Sometimes like women, or unwedded maids,
Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than have the white breasts of the queen of love.” ¹

What brilliant dreams, what desires, what vast or voluptuous wishes, worthy of a Roman Cæsar or an eastern poet, eddy in this teeming brain! To satiate them, to obtain four-and-twenty years of power, Faustus gives his soul, without fear, without need of temptation, at the first outset, voluntarily, so sharp is the prick within:

“Had I as many souls as there be stars,
I’d give them all for Mephistophilis.
By him I’ll be great emperor of the world,
And make a bridge thorough the moving air... Why shouldst thou not? Is not thy soul thine own?” ²

And with that he gives himself full swing: he wants to know everything, to have everything; a book in which he can behold all herbs and trees which grow upon the earth; another in which shall be drawn all the constellations and planets; another which shall bring him gold when he wills it, and “the fairest courtezans:” another which summons “men in armour” ready to execute his commands, and which holds “whirlwinds, tempests, thunder and lightning” chained at his disposal. He is like a child, he stretches out his hands for everything shining; then grieves to think of hell, then lets himself be diverted by shows:

¹ Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, i. p. 9, et passim.
CHAP. II. THE THEATRE.

"Faustus. O this feeds my soul!
Lucifer. Tut, Faustus, in hell is all manner of delight.
Faustus. Oh, might I see hell, and return again,
How happy were I then!" . . . . 1

He is conducted, being invisible, over the whole world: lastly to Rome, amongst the ceremonies of the Pope's court. Like a schoolboy during a holiday, he has insatiable eyes, he forgets everything before a pageant, he amuses himself in playing tricks, in giving the Pope a box on the ear, in beating the monks, in performing magic tricks before princes, finally in drinking, feasting, filling his belly, deadening his thoughts. In his transport he becomes an atheist, and says there is no hell, that those are "old wives' tales." Then suddenly the sad idea knocks at the gates of his brain.

"I will renounce this magic, and repent . . .
My heart's so harden'd, I cannot repent:
Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,
But fearful echoes thunder in mine ears,
'Faustus, thou art damn'd!' then swords, and knives,
Poison, guns, halters, and envenom'd steel
Are laid before me to despatch myself;
And long ere this I should have done the deed,
Had not sweet pleasure conquer'd deep despair.
Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
Of Alexander's love and Ænon's death?
And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes
With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
Made music with my Mephistophilis?
Why should I die, then, or basely despair?
I am resolv'd; Faustus shall ne'er repent.—
Come Mephistophilis, let us dispute again,
And argue of divine astrology.

1 Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, i. p. 49.
Tell me, are there many heavens above the moon? 
Are all celestial bodies but one globe,
As is the substance of this centrie earth? . . .” 1

“One thing . . . let me crave of thee . . .
To glut the longing of my heart’s desire. . . .
Was this the face that launch’d a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!
Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!—
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena. . . .
O thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars!” 2

“Oh, my God, I would weep! but the devil draws in
my tears. Gush forth blood, instead of tears! yea, life
and soul! Oh, he stays my tongue! I would lift up
my hands; but see, they hold them, they hold them;
Lucifer and Mephistophilis.” . . . 3

“Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damn’d perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come. . . .
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damn’d.
Oh, I’ll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—
See, see, where Christ’s blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop: ah, my Christ,
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ,
Yet will I call on him. . . .
Ah, half the hour is past! ’twill all be past anon. . . .

1 Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 37.  
2 Ibid. p. 75.  
3 Ibid. p. 78.
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav’d. . . .
It strikes, it strikes. . . .
Oh soul, be chang’d into little water-drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne’er be found !

There is the living, struggling, natural, personal man,
not the philosophic type which Goethe has created, but
a primitive and genuine man, hot-headed, fiery, the slave
of his passions, the sport of his dreams, wholly engrossed
in the present, moulded by his lusts, contradictions, and
follies, who amidst noise and starts, cries of pleasure
and anguish, rolls, knowing it and willing it, down the
slope and crags of his precipice. The whole English
drama is here, as a plant in its seed, and Marlowe is to
Shakspeare what Perugino was to Raphael.

V.

Gradually art is being formed; and toward the close
of the century it is complete. Shakspeare, Beaumont,
Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Webster, Massinger, Ford, Middleton,
Heywood, appear together, or close upon each other,
a new and favoured generation, flourishing largely in the
soil fertilised by the efforts of the generation which
preceded them. Thenceforth the scenes are developed
and assume consistency; the characters cease to move
all of a piece, the drama is no longer like a piece of
statuary. The poet who a little while ago knew only
how to strike or kill, introduces now a sequence of
situation and a rationale in intrigue. He begins to
prepare the way for sentiments, to forewarn us of events,
to combine effects, and we find a theatre at last, the

1 Marlowe, Doctor Faustus, p. 80.
most complete, the most life-like, and also the most strange that ever existed.

We must follow its formation, and regard the drama when it was formed, that is, in the minds of its authors. What was going on in these minds? What sorts of ideas were born there, and how were they born? In the first place, they see the event, whatever it be, and they see it as it is; I mean that they have it within themselves, with its persons and details, beautiful and ugly, even dull and grotesque. If it is a trial, the judge is there, in his minds, in his place, with his physiognomy and his warts; the plaintiff in another place, with his spectacles and brief-bag; the accused is opposite, stooping and remorseful; each with his friends, cobblers, or lords; then the buzzing crowd behind, all with their grinning faces, their bewildered or kindling eyes.¹ It is a genuine trial which they imagine, a trial like those they have seen before the justice, where they screamed or shouted as witnesses or interested parties, with their quibbling terms, their pros and cons, the scribblings, the sharp voices of the counsel, the stamping of feet, the crowding, the smell of their fellow-men, and so forth. The endless myriads of circumstances which accompany and influence every event, crowd round that event in their heads, and not merely the externals, that is, the visible and picturesque traits, the details of colour and costume, but also, and chiefly, the internals, that is, the motions of anger and joy, the secret tumult of the soul, the ebb and flow of ideas and passions which are expressed by the countenance, swell the veins, make a man to grind his teeth, to clench his fists, which urge

¹ See the trial of Vittoria Corombona, of Virginia in Webster, of Coriolanus and Julius Cesar in Shakspeare.
him on or restrain him. They see all the details, the tides that sway a man, one from without, another from within, one through another, one within another, both together without faltering and without ceasing. And what is this insight but sympathy, an imitative sympathy, which puts us in another's place, which carries over their agitations to our own breasts, which makes our life a little world, able to reproduce the great one in abstract? Like the characters they imagine, poets and spectators make gestures, raise their voices, act. No speech or story can show their inner mood, but it is the scenic effect which can manifest it. As some men invent a language for their ideas, so these act and mimic them; theatrical imitation and figured representation is their genuine speech: all other expression, the lyrical song of Æschylus, the reflective symbolism of Goethe, the oratorical development of Racine, would be impossible for them. Involuntarily, instantaneously, without forecast, they cut life into scenes, and carry it piecemeal on the boards; this goes so far, that often a mere character becomes an actor,1 playing a part within a part; the scenic faculty is the natural form of their mind. Beneath the effort of this instinct, all the accessory parts of the drama come before the footlights and expand before our eyes. A battle has been fought; instead of relating it, they bring it before the public, trumpets and drums, pushing crowds, slaughtering combatants. A shipwreck happens; straightway the ship is before the spectator, with the sailors' oaths, the technical orders of the pilot. Of all the details of

1 Falstaff in Shakspeare; the queen in London, by Greene and Decker; Rosaliud in Shakspeare.
human life, tavern-racket and statesmen's councils, scullion's talk and court processions, domestic tenderness and pandering,—none is too small or too lofty: these things exist in life—let them exist on the stage, each in full, in the rough, atrocious, or absurd, just as they are, no matter how. Neither in Greece, nor Italy, nor Spain, nor France, has an art been seen which tried so boldly to express the soul, and its innermost depths—the truth, and the whole truth.

How did they succeed, and what is this new art which tramples on all ordinary rules? It is an art for all that, since it is natural; a great art, since it embraces more things, and that more deeply than others do, like the art of Rembrandt and Rubens; but like theirs, it is a Teutonic art, and one whose every step is in contrast with those of classical art. What the Greeks and Romans, the originators of the latter, sought in everything, was charm and order. Monuments, statues, and paintings, the theatre, eloquence and poetry, from Sophocles to Racine, they shaped all their work in the same mould, and attained beauty by the same method. In the infinite entanglement and complexity of things, they grasped a small number of simple ideas, which they embraced in a small number of simple representations, so that the vast confused vegetation of life is presented to the mind from that time forth, pruned and reduced, and perhaps easily embraced at a single glance. A square of walls with rows of columns all alike; a symmetrical group of draped or undraped forms; a young man standing up and raising one arm; a wounded warrior who will not return to the

1 In Webster's Duchess of Malfi there is an admirable accouchement scene.
camp, though they beseech him: this, in their noblest epoch, was their architecture, their painting, their sculpture, and their theatre. No poetry but a few sentiments not very intricate, always natural, not toned down, intelligible to all; no eloquence but a continuous argument, a limited vocabulary, the loftiest ideas brought down to their sensible origin, so that children can understand such eloquence and feel such poetry; and in this sense they are classical. In the hands of Frenchmen, the last inheritors of the simple art, these great legacies of antiquity undergo no change. If poetic genius is less, the structure of mind has not altered. Racine puts on the stage a sole action, whose details he adjusts, and whose course he regulates; no incident, nothing unforeseen, no appendices or incongruities; no secondary intrigue. The subordinate parts are effaced; at the most four or five principal characters, the fewest possible; the rest, reduced to the condition of confidants, take the tone of their masters, and merely reply to them. All the scenes are connected, and flow insensibly one into the other; and every scene, like the entire piece, has its order and progress. The tragedy stands out symmetrically and clear in the midst of human life, like a complete and solitary temple which limns its regular outline on the luminous azure of the sky. In England all is different. All that the French call proportion and fitness is wanting; Englishmen do not trouble themselves about them, they do not need them. There is no unity; they leap suddenly over twenty years, or

1 This is, in fact, the English view of the French mind, which is doubtless a refinement, many times refined, of the classical spirit. But M. Taine has seemingly not taken into account such products as the Medea on the one hand, and the works of Aristophanes and the Latin sensualists on the other.—Tr.
five hundred leagues. There are twenty scenes in an
act—we stumble without preparation from one to the
other, from tragedy to buffoonery; usually it appears
as though the action gained no ground; the different
personages waste their time in conversation, dreaming,
displaying their character. We were moved, anxious
for the issue, and here they bring us in quarrelling
servants, lovers making poetry. Even the dialogue and
speeches, which we would think ought particularly to
be of a regular and continuous flow of engrossing ideas,
remain stagnant, or are scattered in windings and
deviations. At first sight we fancy we are not advanc-
ing, we do not feel at every phrase that we have made
a step. There are none of those solid pleadings, none
of those conclusive discussions, which every moment
add reason to reason, objection to objection; people
might say that the different personages only knew how
to scold, to repeat themselves, and to mark time. And
the disorder is as great in general as in particular things.
They heap a whole reign, a complete war, an entire novel,
into a drama; they cut up into scenes an English chro-
nicle or an Italian novel: this is all their art; the
events matter little; whatever they are, they accept
them. They have no idea of progressive and individual
action. Two or three actions connected endwise, or
entangled one within another, two or three incomplete
endings badly contrived, and opened up again; no
machinery but death, scattered right and left and
unforeseen: such is the logic of their method. The
fact is, that our logic, the Latin, fails them. Their mind
does not march by the smooth and straightforward paths
of rhetoric and eloquence. It reaches the same end,
but by other approaches. It is at once more compre-
hensive and less regular than ours. It demands a conception more complete, but less consecutive. It proceeds, not as with us, by a line of uniform steps, but by sudden leaps and long pauses. It does not rest satisfied with a simple idea drawn from a complex fact, but demands the complex fact entire, with its numberless particularities, its interminable ramifications. It sees in man not a general passion—ambition, anger, or love; not a pure quality—happiness, avarice, folly; but a character, that is, the imprint, wonderfully complicated, which inheritance, temperament, education, calling, age, society, conversation, habits, have stamped on every man; an incommunicable and individual imprint, which, once stamped in a man, is not found again in any other. It sees in the hero not only the hero, but the individual, with his manner of walking, drinking, swearing, blowing his nose; with the tone of his voice, whether he is thin or fat;¹ and thus plunges to the bottom of things, with every look, as by a miner's deep shaft. This sunk, it little cares whether the second shaft be two paces or a hundred from the first; enough that it reaches the same depth, and serves equally well to display the inner and invisible layer. Logic is here from beneath, not from above. It is the unity of a character which binds the two actions of the personage, as the unity of an impression connects the two scenes of a drama. To speak exactly, the spectator is like a man whom we should lead along a wall pierced at separate intervals with little windows; at every window he catches for an instant a glimpse of a new landscape, with its million details: the walk over,

¹ See Hamlet, Coriolanus, Hotspur. The queen in Hamlet (v. 2) says: "He (Hamlet)'s fat, and scent of breath."
if he is of Latin race and training, he finds a medley of images jostling in his head, and asks for a map that he may recollect himself; if he is of German race and training, he perceives as a whole, by natural concentration, the wide country which he has only seen piecemeal. Such a conception, by the multitude of details which it combines, and by the depth of the vistas which it embraces, is a half-vision which shakes the whole soul. What its works are about to show us is, with what energy, what disdain of contrivance, what vehemence of truth, it dares to coin and hammer the human medal; with what liberty it is able to reproduce in full prominence worn out characters, and the extreme flights of virgin nature.

VI.

Let us consider the different personages which this art, so suited to depict real manners, and so apt to paint the living soul, goes in search of amidst the real manners and the living souls of its time and country. They are of two kinds, as befits the nature of the drama: one which produces terror, the other which moves to pity; these graceful and feminine, those manly and violent. All the differences of sex, all the extremes of life, all the resources of the stage, are embraced in this contrast; and if ever there was a complete contrast, it is here.

The reader must study for himself some of these pieces, or he will have no idea of the fury into which the stage is hurled; force and transport are driven every instant to the point of atrocity, and further still, if there be any further. *Assassinations, poisonings, tortures, outcries of madness and rage; no passion and
no suffering are too extreme for their energy or their effort. Anger is with them a madness, ambition a frenzy, love a delirium. Hippolyto, who has lost his mistress, says, "Were thine eyes clear as mine, thou might'st behold her, watching upon yon battlements of stars, how I observe them." 1 Aretus, to be avenged on Valentinian, poisons him after poisoning himself, and with the death-rattle in his throat, is brought to his enemy's side, to give him a foretaste of agony. Queen Brunhilt has panders with her on the stage, and causes her two sons to slay each other. Death everywhere; at the close of every play, all the great people wade in blood: with slaughter and butcheries, the stage becomes a field of battle or a churchyard. 2 Shall I describe a few of these tragedies? In the Duke of Milan, Francesco, to avenge his sister, who has been seduced, wishes to seduce in his turn the Duchess Marcellia, wife of Sforza, the seducer; he desires her, he will have her; he says to her, with cries of love and rage:

"For with this arm I'll swim through seas of blood,
Or make a bridge, arch'd with the bones of men,
But I will grasp my aims in you, my dearest,
Dearest, and best of women!" 3

For he wishes to strike the duke through her, whether she lives or dies, if not by dishonour, at least by murder; the first is as good as the second, nay better,

1 Middleton, The Honest Whore, part i. iv. 1.
2 Beaumont and Fletcher, Valentinian, Thierry and Theodore. See Massinger's Picture, which resembles Musset's Barberine. Its crudity, the extraordinary and repulsive energy, will show the difference of the two ages.
for so he will do a greater injury. He calumniates her, and the duke, who adores her, kills her; then, being undeceived, loses his senses, will not believe she is dead, has the body brought in, kneels before it, rages and weeps. He knows now the name of the traitor, and at the thought of him he swoons or raves:

‘I'll follow him to hell, but I will find him,
And there live a fourth Fury to torment him.
Then, for this cursed hand and arm that guided
The wicked steel, I'll have them, joint by joint,
With burning irons sear'd off, which I will eat,
I being a vulture fit to taste such carrion.”

1

Suddenly he gasps for breath, and falls; Francesco has poisoned him. The duke dies, and the murderer is led to torture. There are worse scenes than this; to find sentiments strong enough, they go to those which change the very nature of man. Massinger puts on the stage a father who judges and condemns his daughter, stabbed by her husband; Webster and Ford, a son who assassinates his mother; Ford, the incestuous loves of a brother and sister. Irresistible love overtakes them; the ancient love of Pasiphaë and Myrrha, a kind of madness-like enchantment, and beneath which the will entirely gives way. Giovanni says:

“Lost! I am lost! My fates have doom'd my death!
The more I strive, I love; the more I love,
The less I hope: I see my ruin certain...
I have even wearied heaven with pray'rs, dried up

1 Duke of Milan, v. 2.
2 Massinger, The Fatal Dowry; Webster and Ford, A late Murther of the Sonne upon the Mother (a play not extant); Ford, 'Tis pity she's a Whore. See also Ford's Broken Heart, with its sublime scenes of agony and madness.
The spring of my continual tears, even starv’d
My veins with daily fasts: what wit or art
Could counsel, I have practis’d; but, alas!
I find all these but dreams, and old men’s tales,
To fright unsteady youth: I am still the same;
Or I must speak, or burst.”

What transports follow! what fierce and bitter joys,
and how short too, how grievous and mingled with
anguish, especially for her! She is married to another.
Read for yourself the admirable and horrible scene
which represents the wedding night. She is pregnant,
and Soranzo, the husband, drags her along the ground,
with curses, demanding the name of her lover:

“Come strumpet, famous whore? . . .
Harlot, rare, notable harlot,
That with thy brazen face maintain’st thy sin,
Was there no man in Parma to be bawd
To your loose cunning whoredom else but I?
Must your hot itch and plurality of lust,
The heyday of your luxury, be fed
Up to a surfeit, and could none but I
Be pick’d out to be cloak to your close tricks,
Your belly-sports?—Now I must be the dad
To all that gallimaufry that is stuff’d
In thy corrupted bastard-bearing womb?
Say, must I?

I su’d not to thee. . .
S. Tell me by whom.”

She gets excited, feels and cares for nothing more,
refuses to tell the name of her lover, and praises him

1 Ford’s Works, ed. H. Coleridge, 1859, ’Tis pity she’s a Whore, 1. 3.
2 Ibid. iv. 3.
in the following words. This praise in the midst of danger is like a rose she has plucked, and of which the odour intoxicates her:

"A. Soft! 'twas not in my bargain.
Yet somewhat, sir, to stay your longing stomach.
I am content t' acquaint you with the man,
The more than man, that got this sprightly boy,—
(For 'tis a boy, and therefore glory, sir,
Your heir shall be a son.)

S. Damnable monster?

A. Nay, an you will not hear, I'll speak no more.

S. Yes, speak, and speak thy last.

A. A match, a match? . . .

You, why you are not worthy once to name
His name without true worship, or, indeed,
Unless you kneel'd to hear another name him.

S. What was he call'd?

A. We are not come to that;
Let it suffice that you shall have the glory
To father what so brave a father got. . . .

S. Dost thou laugh?

Come, whore, tell me your lover, or, by truth
I'll hew thy flesh to shreds; who is't?" ¹

She laughs; the excess of shame and terror has given her courage; she insults him, she sings; so like a woman?

"A. (Sings) Che morte piu dolce che morire per amore.

S. Thus will I pull thy hair, and thus I'll drag
Thy lust be-leper'd body through the dust. . . .

(Hales her up and down)

A. Be a gallant hangman. . . .
I leave revenge behind, and thou shalt feel 't. . . .

¹ 'Tis pity she's a Whore, iv. 3.
(To Vasques.) Pish; do not beg for me, I prize my life
As nothing; if the man will needs be mad,
Why, let him take it."¹

In the end all is discovered, and the two lovers know
they must die. For the last time, they see each other
in Annabella's chamber, listening to the noise of the
feast below which shall serve for their funeral-feast.
Giovanni, who has made his resolve like a madman, sees
Annabella richly dressed, dazzling. He regards her in
silence, and remembers the past. He weeps and says.

"These are the funeral tears,
Shed on your grave; these furrow'd-up my cheeks
When first I lov'd and knew not how to woo. . . .
Give me your hand: how sweetly life doth run
In these well-colour'd veins! How constantly
These palms do promise health! . . .
Kiss me again, forgive me. . . . Farewell."² . . .

He then stabs her, enters the banqueting room, with her
heart upon his dagger:

"Soranzo see this heart, which was thy wife's.
Thus I exchange it royally for thine."³

He kills him, and casting himself on the swords of
banditti, dies. It would seem that tragedy could go
no further.

But it did go further; for if these are melodramas,
they are sincere, composed, not like those of to-day, by
Grub Street writers for peaceful citizens, but by impas-
sioned men, experienced in tragical arts, for a violent,
over-fed melancholy race. From Shakspeare to Milton,
Swift, Hogarth, no race has been more glutted with coarse

¹ 'Tis pity she's a Whore, iv. 3. ² Ibid. v. 5. ³ Ibid. v. 6.
expressions and horrors, and its poets supply them plenti-
fully; Ford less so than Webster; the latter a sombre
man, whose thoughts seem incessantly to be haunting
tombs and charnel-houses. "Places in court," he says,
are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head
lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower."¹ Such
are his images. No one has equalled Webster in creat-
ing desperate characters, utter wretches, bitter misan-
thropes,² in blackening and blaspheming human life,
above all, in depicting the shameless depravity and
refined ferocity of Italian manners.³ The Duchess of
Malfi has secretly married her steward Antonio, and
her brother learns that she has children; almost mad⁴
with rage and wounded pride, he remains silent, wait-
ing until he knows the name of the father; then he
arrives all of a sudden, means to kill her, but so that
she shall taste the lees of death. She must suffer much,
but above all, she must not die too quickly! She must
suffer in mind; these griefs are worse than the body's.
He sends assassins to kill Antonio, and meanwhile comes
to her in the dark, with affectionate words; pretends to

¹ Webster's Works, ed. Dyce, 1857, Duchess of Malfi, i. 1.
² The characters of Bosola, Flaminio.
³ See Stendhal Chronicles of Italy, The Conci, The Duchess of Pal-
⁴ See Stendhal Chronicles of Italy, The Conci, The Duchess of Pal-
⁵ See Stendhal Chronicles of Italy, The Conci, The Duchess of Pal-
⁶ See Stendhal Chronicles of Italy, The Conci, The Duchess of Pal-

Feudinand, one of the brothers, says (ii. 6):

"I would have their bodies
Burnt in a coal-pit with the vantage stopp'd,
That their curs'd smoke might not ascend to heaven;
Or dip the sheets they lie in in pitch or sulphur;
Wrap them in't, and then light them as a match;
Or else to-boil their bastard to a cullis,
And give't his lecherous father to renew
The sin of his back."
be reconciled, and suddenly shows her waxen figures, covered with wounds, whom she takes for her slaughtered husband and children. She staggers under the blow, and remains in gloom without crying out. Then she says:

"Good comfortable fellow,
Persuade a wretch that's broke upon the wheel
To have all his bones new set; entreat him live
To be executed again. Who must despatch me?...

_Bosola._ Come, be of comfort, I will save your life.

_Duchess._ Indeed, I have not leisure to tend
So small a business.

_B._ Now, by my life, I pity you.

_D._ Thou art a fool, then,
To waste thy pity on a thing so wretched
As cannot pity itself. I am full of daggers." ¹

Slow words, spoken in a whisper, as in a dream, or as if she were speaking of a third person. Her brother sends to her a company of madmen, who leap and howl and rave around her in mournful wise; a pitiful sight, calculated to unseat the reason; a kind of foretaste of hell. She says nothing, looking upon them; her heart is dead, her eyes fixed, with vacant stare:

_Cariola._ What think you of, madam?

_Duchess._ Of nothing:
When I muse thus, I sleep.

_C._ Like a madman, with your eyes open?

_D._ Dost thou think we shall know one another
In the other world?

_C._ Yes, out of question.

_D._ O that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the dead!

¹ _Duchess of Malfi_, iv. 1.
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here. I'll tell thee a miracle;
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow:
The heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.
I am acquainted with sad misery
As the tann'd galley-slave is with his oar.”¹ . . .

In this state, the limbs, like those of one who has been newly executed, still quiver, but the sensibility is worn out; the miserable body only stirs mechanically; it has suffered too much. At last the gravedigger comes with executioners, a coffin, and they sing before her a funeral dirge:

"Duchess. Farowell, Cariola . . .
I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep.—Now, what you please:
What death?

Bosola. Strangling; here are your executioners.

D. I forgive them:
The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' the lungs
Would do as much as they do. . . . My body
Bestow upon my women, will you? . . .
Go, tell my brothers, when I am laid out,
They then may feed in quiet.”²

After the mistress the maid; the latter cries and struggles:

"Cariola. I will not die; I must not; I am contracted
To a young gentleman.

1st Executioner. Here's your wedding ring.

¹ Duchess of Malfî, iv. 2. ² Ibid.
C. If you kill me now, I am damn'd. I have not been at confession This two years.
B. When? 1
C. I am quick with child.” 2

They strangle her also, and the two children of the duchess. Antonio is assassinated; the cardinal and his mistress, the duke and his confidant, are poisoned or butchered; and the solemn words of the dying, in the midst of this butchery, utter, as from funereal trumpets, a general curse upon existence:

“We are only like dead walls or vaulted graves,
That, ruin'd yield no echo. Fare you well...
O, this gloomy world!
In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live!” 3

“In all our quest of greatness,
Like wanton boys, whose pastime is their care,
We follow after bubbles blown in the air.
Pleasure of life, what is't? only the good hours
Of an ague; merely a preparative to rest,
To endure vexation...
Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust,
Like diamonds, we are cut with our own dust.” 4

You will find nothing sadder or greater from the Eddu to Lord Byron.

We can well imagine what powerful characters are necessary to sustain these terrible dramas. All these personages are ready for extreme acts; their resolves break forth like blows of a sword; we follow, meet at

1 “When,” an exclamation of impatience, equivalent to “make haste,” very common among the old English dramatists.—Tr.
2 Duchess of Malfi, iv. 2.  3 Ibid. v. 5.  4 Ibid. v. 4 and 5.
every change of scene their glowing eyes, wan lips, the starting of their muscles, the tension of their whole frame. Their powerful will contracts their violent hands, and their accumulated passion breaks out in thunder-bolts, which tear and ravage all around them, and in their own hearts. We know them, the heroes of this tragic population. Iago, Richard III., Lady Macbeth, Othello, Coriolanus, Hotspur, full of genius, courage, desire, generally mad or criminal, always self-driven to the tomb. There are as many around Shakspeare as in his own works. Let me exhibit one character more, written by the same dramatist, Webster. No one, except Shakspeare, has seen further into the depths of diabolical and unchained nature. The "White Devil" is the name which he gives to his heroine. His Vittoria Corombona receives as her lover the Duke of Brachiano, and at the first interview dreams of the issue:

"To pass away the time, I'll tell your grace
A dream I had last night."

It is certainly well related, and still better chosen, of deep meaning and very clear import. Her brother Flaminio says, aside:

"Excellent devil! she hath taught him in a dream
To make away his duchess and her husband."  

So, her husband, Camillo, is strangled, the Duchess poisoned, and Vittoria, accused of the two crimes, is brought before the tribunal. Step by step, like a soldier brought to bay with his back against a wall, she defends herself, refuting and defying advocates and judges, incapable of blenching or quailing, clear in mind, ready

1 Vittoria Corombona, I. 2.
in word, amid insults and proofs, even menaced with death on the scaffold. The advocate begins to speak in Latin.

"Vittoria. Pray my lord, let him speak his usual tongue; I'll make no answer else.

Francisco de Medicis. Why, you understand Latin.

V. I do, sir; but amongst this auditory
Which come to hear my cause, the half or more
May be ignorant in't."

She wants a duel, bare-breasted, in open day, and challenges the advocate:

"I am at the mark, sir: I'll give aim to you,
And tell you how near you shoot."

She mocks his legal phraseology, insults him, with biting irony:

"Surely, my lords, this lawyer here hath swallow'd
Some pothecaries' bills, or proclamations;
And now the hard and undigestible words
Come up, like stones we use give hawks for physic:
"Why, this is Welsh to Latin."

Then, to the strongest adjuration of the judges:

"To the point,
Find me but guilty, sever head from body,
We'll part good friends; I scorn to hold my life;
At yours, or any man's entreaty, sir. . . .
These are but feigned shadows of my evils:
Terrify babes, my lord, with painted devils;
I am past such needless palsy. For your names
Of whore and murderess, they proceed from you,
As if a man should spit against the wind;
The filth returns in's face." ¹

¹ Webster Dyce, 1857, Vittoria Corombona, p. 20-21.
Argument for argument: she has a parry for every blow: a parry and a thrust:

"But take you your course; it seems you have beggar'd me first,
And now would fain undo me. I have houses,
Jewels, and a poor remnant of crusadoes:
Would those would make you charitable!"

Then, in a harsher voice:

"In faith, my lord, you might go pistol flies;
The sport would be more noble."

They condemn her to be shut up in a house of convertites:

"V. A house of convertites! What's that?
Monticello. A house of penitent whores.
V. Do the noblemen in Rome
Erect it for their wives, that I am sent
To lodge there?" ¹

The sarcasm comes home like a sword-thrust; then another behind it; then cries and curses. She will not bend, she will not weep. She goes off erect, bitter and more haughty than ever:

"I will not weep;
No, I do scorn to call up one poor tear
To fawn on your injustice: bear me hence
Unto this house of—. what's your mitigating title?
Mont. Of convertites.
V. It shall not be a house of convertites;
My mind shall make it honeester to me
Than the Pope's palace, and more peaceable
Than thy soul, though thou art a cardinal." ²

Against her furious lover, who accuses her of unfaithfulness, she is as strong as against her judges; she copes with him, casts in his teeth the death of his duchess, forces him to beg pardon, to marry her; she will play the comedy to the end, at the pistol’s mouth, with the shamelessness and courage of a courtesan and an empress;¹ snared at last, she will be just as brave and more insulting when the dagger’s point threatens her:

"Yes, I shall welcome death
As princes do some great ambassadors;
I’ll meet thy weapon half way... 'Twas a manly blow;
The next thou giv’st, murder some sucking infant;
And then thou wilt be famous."²

When a woman unsexes herself, her actions transcend man’s, and there is nothing which she will not suffer or dare.

VII.

Opposed to this band of tragic characters, with their distorted features, brazen fronts, combative attitudes, is a troop of sweet and timid figures, pre-eminently tender-hearted, the most graceful and loveworthy, whom it has been given to man to depict. In Shakspeare you will meet them in Miranda, Juliet, Desdemona, Virgilia, Ophelia, Cordelia, Imogen; but they abound also in the others; and it is a characteristic of the race to have furnished them, as it is of the drama to have represented them. By a singular coincidence, the women are more of women, the men more of men, here than elsewhere. The two natures go each to its ex-

¹ Compare Mme. Marneffe in Balzac’s La Cousine Bette.
² Vittoria Corombona, v. last scene, pp. 49-50.
treme: in the one to boldness, the spirit of enterprise and resistance, the warlike, imperious, and unpolished character; in the other to sweetness, devotion, patience, inextinguishable affection,—a thing unknown in distant lands, in France especially so: a woman in England gives herself without drawing back, and places her glory and duty in obedience, forgiveness, adoration, wishing and professing only to be melted and absorbed daily deeper and deeper in him whom she has freely and for ever chosen. It is this, an old German instinct, which these great painters of instinct diffuse here, one and all: Penthea, Dorothea, in Ford and Greene; Isabella and the Duchess of Malfi, in Webster; Bianca, Ordella, Arethusa, Juliana, Euphrasia, Amoret, and others, in Beaumont and Fletcher: there are a score of them who, under the severest tests and the strongest temptations, display this wonderful power of self-abandonment and devotion. The soul, in this race, is at once primitive and serious. Women keep their purity longer than elsewhere. They lose respect less quickly; weigh worth and characters less suddenly: they are less apt to think evil, and to take the measure of their husbands. To this day, a great lady, accustomed to company, blushes in the presence of an unknown

1 Hence the happiness and strength of the marriage tie. In France it is but an association of two comrades, tolerably alike and tolerably equal, which gives rise to endless disturbance and buckering.

2 See the representation of this character throughout English and German literature. Stendhal, an acute observer, saturated with Italian and French morals and ideas, is astonished at this phenomenon. He understands nothing of this kind of devotion, "this slavery which English husbands have had the wit to impose on their wives under the name of duty." These are "the manners of a seraglio." See also Corinna, by Madame de Staël.

3 A perfect woman already: meek and patient.—Heywood.
FRANCIS BEAUMONT.
man, and feels bashful like a little girl: the blue eyes are dropt, and a child-like shame flies to her rosy cheeks. English women have not the smartness, the boldness of ideas, the assurance of bearing, the precocity, which with the French make of a young girl, in six months, a woman of intrigue and the queen of a drawing-room.¹ Domestic life and obedience are more easy to them. More pliant and more sedentary, they are at the same time more concentrated and introspective, more disposed to follow the noble dream called duty, which is hardly generated in mankind but by silence of the senses. They are not tempted by the voluptuous sweetness which in southern countries is breathed out in the climate, in the sky, in the general spectacle of things; which dissolves every obstacle, which causes privation to be looked upon as a snare and virtue as a theory. They can rest content with dull sensations, dispense with excitement, endure weariness; and in this monotony of a regulated existence, fall back upon themselves, obey a pure idea, employ all the strength of their hearts in maintaining their moral dignity. Thus supported by innocence and conscience, they introduce into love a profound and upright sentiment, abjure coquetry, vanity, and flirtation: they do not lie nor simper. When they love, they are not tasting a forbidden fruit, but are binding themselves for their whole life. Thus understood, love becomes almost a holy thing; the spectator no longer wishes to be spiteful or to jest; women do not think of their own happiness, but of that of the loved ones; they aim not at pleasure, but

¹ See, by way of contrast, all Molière’s women, so French; even Agnes and little Louison.
at devotion. Euphrasia, relating her history to Philaster, says:

"My father oft would speak
Your worth and virtue; and, as I did grow
More and more apprehensive, I did thirst
To see the man so prais'd; but yet all this
Was but a maiden longing, to be lost
As soon as found; till sitting in my window,
Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
I thought, (but it was you) enter our gates.
My blood flew out, and back again as fast,
As I had puff'd it forth and suck'd it in
Like breath: Then was I call'd away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man,
Heav'd from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, rais'd
So high in thoughts as I: You left a kiss
Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
From you for ever. I did hear you talk,
Far above singing! After you were gone,
I grew acquainted with my heart, and search'd
What stirr'd it so: Alas! I found it love;
Yet far from lust; for could I but have liv'd
In presence of you, I had had my end." ¹

She had disguised herself as a page,² followed him, was his servant; what greater happiness for a woman than to serve on her knees the man she loves? She let him scold her, threaten her with death, wound her.

"Blest be that hand!
It meant me well. Again, for pity's sake!" ³

Do what he will, nothing but words of tenderness and

² Like Kealed in Byron's Lara.
³ Philaster, iv.
adoration can proceed from this heart, these wan lips. Moreover, she takes upon herself a crime of which he is accused, contradicts him when he asserts his guilt, is ready to die in his place. Still more, she is of use to him with the Princess Arethusa, whom he loves; she justifies her rival, brings about their marriage, and asks no other thanks but that she may serve them both. And strange to say, the princess is not jealous.

"Euphrasia. Never, Sir, will I
Marry; it is a thing within my vow:
But if I may have leave to serve the princess,
To see the virtues of her lord and her,
I shall have hope to live.

Arethusa. . . . Come, live with me;
Live free as I do. She that loves my lord,
Curst be the wife that hates her!"  

What notion of love have they in this country? Whence happens it that all selfishness, all vanity, all rancour, every little feeling, either personal or base, flees at its approach? How comes it that the soul is given up wholly, without hesitation, without reserve, and only dreams thenceforth of prostrating and annihilating itself, as in the presence of a god? Biancha, thinking Cesario ruined, offers herself to him as his wife; and learning that he is not so, gives him up straightway, without a murmur:

"Biancha. So dearly I respected both your fame
And quality, that I would first have perish'd
In my sick thoughts, than e'er have given consent
To have undone your fortunes, by inviting
A marriage with so mean a one as I am:

1 Philaster. v.
I should have died sure, and no creature known.
The sickness that had kill’d me. . . . Now since I know
There is no difference ’twixt your birth and mine,
Not much ’twixt our estates (if any be,
The advantage is on my side) I come willingly
To tender you the first-fruits of my heart,
And am content t’ accept you for my husband,
Now when you are at lowest . . .

_Cesario._

_Why, Biancha,_
Report has cozen’d thee; I am not fallen
From my expected honours or possessions,
Tho’ from the hope of birth-right.

_B._ Are you not?
Then I am lost again! I have a suit too;
You’ll grant it, if you be a good man. . . .
Pray do not talk of aught what I have said t’ye. . .

. . . Pity me;
But never love me more! . . . I’ll pray for you,
That you may have a virtuous wife, a fair one;
And when I’m dead . . . _C._ Fy, fy! _B._ Think on me
sometimes,
With mercy for this trespass! _C._ Let’s us kiss
At parting, as at coming! _B._ This I have
As a free dower to a virgin’s grave,
All goodness dwell with you!”

Isabella, Brachiano’s duchess is betrayed, insulted by
her faithless husband; to shield him from the vengeance
of her family, she takes upon herself the blame of the
rupture, purposely plays the shrew, and leaving him at
peace with his courtesan, dies embracing his picture.
Arethusa allows herself to be wounded by Philaster,
stays the people who would hold back the murderer’s
arm, declares that he has done nothing, that it is not

1 Beaumont and Fletcher, _The Fair Maid of the Inn_, iv.
he, prays for him, loves him in spite of all, even to the end, as though all his acts were sacred, as if he had power of life and death over her. Ordella devotes herself, that the king, her husband, may have children; she offers herself for a sacrifice, simply, without grand words, with her whole heart:

"Ordella. Let it be what it may then, what it dare, I have a mind will hazard it.
Thierry. But, hark you;
What may that woman merit, makes this blessing?
O. Only her duty, sir. T. 'Tis terrible!
O. 'Tis so much the more noble.
T. 'Tis full of fearful shadows! O. So is sleep, sir,
Or anything that's merely ours, and mortal;
We were begotten gods else: but those fears,
Feeling but once the fires of nobler thoughts,
Fly, like the shapes of clouds we form, to nothing.
T. Suppose it death! O. I do. T. And endless parting
With all we can call ours, with all our sweetness,
With youth, strength, pleasure, people, time, nay reason!
For in the silent grave, no conversation,
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
No careful father's counsel, nothing's heard,
Nor nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust and an endless darkness: and dare you, woman,
Desire this place? O. 'Tis of all sleeps the sweetest:
Children begin it to us, strong men seek it,
And kings from height of all their painted glories
Fall, like spent exhalations, to this centre. . . .
T. Then you can suffer? O. As willingly as say i'
T. Martell, a wonder!
Here is a woman that dares die.—Yet, tell me,

1 Beaumont and Fletcher, Thierry and Theodoret, The Maid's Tragedy, Philaster. See also the part of Lucina in Valentinian.
Are you a wife?  

O. I am, sir.  

T. And have children?—  

She sighs and weeps!  

O. Oh, none, sir.  

T. Dare you venture  

For a poor barren praise you ne'er shall hear,  

To part with these sweet hopes?  

O. With all but Heaven."¹

Is not this prodigious?  Can you understand how one  

human being can thus be separated from herself, forget  

and lose herself in another?  They do so lose them-  

selves, as in an abyss.  When they love in vain and  

without hope, neither reason nor life resist; they lan-  

guish, grow mad, die like Ophelia.  Aspasia, forlorn,

"Walks discontented, with her watry eyes  

Bent on the earth.  The unfrequented woods  

Are her delight; and when she sees a bank  

Stuck full of flowers, she with a sigh will tell  

Her servants what a pretty place it were  

To bury lovers in; and make her maids  

Pluck 'em, and strew her over like a corse.  

She carries with her an infectious grief,  

That strikes all her beholders; she will sing  

The mournful'st things that ever ear hath heard,  

And sigh and sing again; and when the rest  

Of our young ladies, in their wanton blood,  

Tell mirthful tales in course, that fill the room  

With laughter, she will with so sad a look  

Bring forth a story of the silent death  

Of some forsaken virgin, which her grief  

Will put in such a phrase, that, ere she end,  

She'll send them weeping one by one away."²

Like a spectre about a tomb, she wanders for ever about  

the remains of her destroyed love, languishes, grows pale,  

swoons, ends by causing herself to be killed.  Sadder

¹ Thierry and Theodoret, iv. 1.
² Beaumont and Fletcher, The Maid's Tragedy, i.
still are those who, from duty or submission, allow themselves to be married, while their heart belongs to another. They are not resigned, do not recover, like Pauline in Polyencte. They are crushed to death. Pentea, in Ford's Broken Heart, is as upright, but not so strong, as Pauline; she is the English wife, not the Roman, stoical and calm. She despairs, sweetly, silently, and pines to death. In her innermost heart she holds herself married to him to whom she has pledged her soul: it is the marriage of the heart which in her eyes is alone genuine; the other is only disguised adultery. In marrying Bassanes she has sinned against Orgilus; moral infidelity is worse than legal infidelity, and thenceforth she is fallen in her own eyes. She says to her brother:

"Pray, kill me....
Kill, me, pray; nay, will ye?

Ithocles. How does thy lord esteem thee? P. Such an one
As only you have made me; a faith-breaker,
A spotted whore; forgive me, I am one—
In act, not in desires, the gods must witness....
For she that's wife to Orgilus, and lives
In known adultery with Bassanes,
Is, at the best, a whore. Wilt kill me now?....
The handmaid to the wages,
Of country toil, drinks the untroubled streams.

1 Pauline says, in Corneille's Polyencte (iii. 2):
"Avant qu'abandonner mon âme à mes douleurs,
Il me faut essayer la force de mes pleurs;
En qualité de femme ou de fille, j'espère
Qu'ils vaincront un époux, ou fléchiront un père.
Que si sur l'un et l'autre ils manquent de pouvoir,
Je ne prendrai conseil que de mon désespoir.
Apprends-moi cependant ce qu'ils ont fait au temple."

We could not find a more reasonable and reasoning woman. So with Eliante, and Henriette, in Molière.
With leaping kids, and with the bleating lambs,
And so allays her thirst secure; whiles I
Quench my hot sighs with fleatings of my tears.”

With tragic greatness, from the height of her incurable grief, she throws her gaze on life:

“My glass of life, sweet princess, hath few minutes
Remaining to run down, the sands are spent;
For by an inward messenger I feel
The summons of departure short and certain. . .  Glories
Of human greatness are but pleasing dreams,
And shadows soon decaying; on the stage
Of my mortality, my youth hath acted
Some scenes of vanity, drawn out at length
By varied pleasures, sweeten’d in the mixture,
But tragical in issue. . . . That remedy
Must be a winding-sheet, a fold of lead,
And some untrod-on corner in the earth.”

There is no revolt, no bitterness; she affectionately assists her brother who has caused her unhappiness; she tries to enable him to win the woman he loves; feminine kindness and sweetness overflow in her in the depths of her despair. Love here is not despotic, passionate, as in southern climes. It is only deep and sad; the source of life is dried up, that is all; she lives no longer, because she cannot; all go by degrees — health, reason, soul; in the end she becomes mad, and behold her dishevelled, with wide staring eyes, with words that can hardly find utterance. For ten days she has not slept, and will not eat any more; and the same fatal thought continually afflicts her heart, amidst vague dreams of maternal tenderness and happiness

1 Ford’s Broken Heart, iii. 2.  
2 Ibid. iii. 5.
brought to nought, which come and go in her mind like phantoms:

"Sure, if we were all sirens, we should sing pitifully,
And 'twere a comely music, when in parts
One sung another's knell; the turtle sighs
When he hath lost his mate; and yet some say
He must be dead first: 'tis a fine deceit
To pass away in a dream! indeed, I've slept
With mine eyes open, a great while. No falsehood
Equals a broken faith; there's not a hair
Sticks on my head, but, like a leaden plummet,
It sinks me to the grave: I must creep thither;
The journey is not long... Since I was first a wife, I might have been
Mother to many pretty prattling babes;
They would have smiled when I smiled; and, for certain,
I should have cried when they cried:—truly, brother,
My father would have pick'd me out a husband,
And then my little ones had been no bastards;
But 'tis too late for me to marry now,
I am past child-bearing; 'tis not my fault...

Spare your hand;
Believe me, I'll not hurt it... Complain not though I wring it hard: I'll kiss it;
Oh, 'tis a fine soft palm!—hark, in thine ear;
Like whom do I look, prithee?—nay, no whispering.
Goodness! we had been happy; too much happiness
Will make folk proud, they say... There is no peace left for a ravish'd wife,
Widow'd by lawless marriage; to all memory
Penthea's, poor Penthea's name is strumpeted... Forgive me; Oh! I faint." ¹

She dies, imploring that some gentle voice may sing her

¹ Ford's Broken Heart, iv. 2.
a plaintive air, a farewell ditty, a sweet funeral song. I know nothing in the drama more pure and touching.

When we find a constitution of soul so new, and capable of such great effects, it behoves us to look at the bodies. Man’s extreme actions come not from his will, but his nature. In order to understand the great tensions of the whole machine, we must look upon the whole machine,—I mean man’s temperament, the manner in which his blood flows, his nerves quiver, his muscles act: the moral interprets the physical, and human qualities have their root in the animal species. Consider then the species in this case,—namely, the race; for the sisters of Shakspereac’s Ophelia and Virgilia, Goethe’s Clara and Margaret, Otway’s Belvidera, Richardson’s Pamela, constitute a race by themselves, soft and fair, with blue eyes, lily whiteness, blushing, of timid delicacy, serious sweetness, framed to yield, bend, cling. Their poets feel it clearly when they bring them on the stage; they surround them with the poetry which becomes them, the murmur of streams, the pendent willow-tresses, the frail and humid flowers of the country, so like themselves:

"The flower, that’s like thy face, pale primrose, nor
The azure harebell, like thy veins; no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweeten’d not thy breath."  

They make them sweet, like the south wind, which with its gentle breath causes the violets to bend their heads,

1 Schopenhauer, Metaphysics of Love and Death. Swift also said that death and love are the two things in which man is fundamentally irrational. In fact, it is the species and the instinct which are displayed in them, not the will and the individual.

2 Cymbeline, iv. 2.
abashed at the slightest reproach, already half bowed down by a tender and dreamy melancholy.\textsuperscript{1} Philaster, speaking of Euphrasia, whom he takes to be a page, and who has disguised herself in order to be near him, says:

\begin{quote}
“Hunting the buck,
I found him sitting by a fountain-side,
Of which he borrow'd some to quench his thirst,
And paid the nymph again as much in tears.
A garland lay him by, made by himself,
Of many several flowers, bred in the bay,
Stuck in that mystic order, that the rareness
Delighted me: But ever when he turn'd
His tender eyes upon 'em, he would weep,
As if he meant to make 'em grow again.
Seeing such pretty helpless innocence
Dwell in his face, I asked him all his story.
He told me, that his parents gentle dy'd,
Leaving him to the mercy of the fields,
Which gave him roots; and of the crystal springs,
Which did not stop their courses; and the sun,
Which still, he thank'd him, yielded him his light.
Then he took up his garland, and did shew
What every flower, as country people hold,
Did signify; and how all, order'd thus,
Express'd his grief: And, to my thoughts, did read
The prettiest lecture of his country art
That could be wish'd. . . . I gladly entertain'd him,
Who was as glad to follow; and have got
The trustiest, loving'est, and the gentlest boy
That ever master kept.”\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

The idyl is self-produced among these human flowers: the dramatic action is stopped before the angelic sweet-

\textsuperscript{1} The death of Ophelia, the obsequies of Imogen. \textsuperscript{2} Philaster, i.
ness of their tenderness and modesty. Sometimes even the idyl is born complete and pure, and the whole theatre is occupied by a sentimental and poetical kind of opera. There are two or three such plays in Shakspeare; in rude Jonson, The Sad Shepherd; in Fletcher, The Faithful Shepherdess. Ridiculous titles nowadays, for they remind us of the interminable platitudes of d’Urfé, or the affected conceits of Florian; charming titles, if we note the sincere and overflowing poetry which they contain. Amoret, the faithful shepherdess, lives in an imaginary country, full of old gods, yet English, like the dewy verdant landscapes in which Rubens sets his nymphs dancing:

“Thro’ you same bending plain
That flings his arms down to the main,
And thro’ these thick woods, have I run,
Whose bottom never kiss’d the sun
Since the lusty spring began.” . . .

“For to that holy wood is consecrate
A virtuous well, about whose flow’ry banks
The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds,
By the pale moon-shine, dipping oftentimes
Their stolen children, so to make them free
From dying flesh, and dull mortality.” . . .

“See the dew-drops, how they kiss
Ev’ry little flower that is;
Hanging on their velvet heads,
Like a rope of chystal beads.
See the heavy clouds low falling,
And bright Hesperus down calling
The dead Night from underground.”

1 Beaumont and Fletcher, The Faithful Shepherdess, i. 9 Ibid. ii.
These are the plants and the aspects of the ever fresh English country, now enveloped in a pale diaphanous mist, now glistening under the absorbing sun, teeming with grasses so full of sap, so delicate, that in the midst of their most brilliant splendour and their most luxuriant life, we feel that to-morrow will wither them. There, on a summer night, the young men and girls, after their custom, go to gather flowers and plight their troth. Amoret and Perigot are together; Amoret,

"Fairer far
Than the chaste blushing morn, or that fair star
That guides the wand'ring seaman thro' the deep,"

modest like a virgin, and tender as a wife, says to Perigot:

"I do believe thee: 'Tis as hard for me
To think thee false, and harder, than for thee
To hold me foul."  

Strongly as she is tried, her heart, once given, never draws back. Perigot, deceived, driven to despair, persuaded that she is unchaste, strikes her with his sword, and casts her bleeding to the ground. The "sullen shepherd" throws her into a well; but the god lets fall "a drop from his watery locks" into the wound; the chaste flesh closes at the touch of the divine water, and the maiden, recovering, goes once more in search of him she loves:

"Speak, if thou be here,
My Perigot! Thy Amoret, thy dear,
Calls on thy loved name. . . . 'Tis thy friend,
Thy Amoret; come hither, to give end

1 See the description in Nathan Drake, *Shakespeare and his Times*
2 Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, i.
To these consumings. Look up, gentle boy,
I have forgot those pains and dear annoy.
I suffer'd for thy sake, and am content
To be thy love again. Why hast thou rent
Those curled locks, where I have often hung
Ribbons, and damask-roses, and have flung
Waters distill'd to make thee fresh and gay,
Sweeter than roses on a bridal day?
Why dost thou cross thine arms, and hang thy face
Down to thy bosom, letting fall apace,
From those two little Heav'ns, upon the ground,
Show'rs of more price, more orient, and more round,
Than those that hang upon the moon's pale brow?
Cease these complainings, shepherd! I am now
The same I ever was, as kind and free,
And can forgive before you ask of me:
Indeed, I can and will." 1

Who could resist her sweet and sad smile? Still deceived, Perigot wounds her again; she falls, but without anger:

"So this work hath end!
Farewell, and live! be constant to thy friend
That loves thee next." 2

A nymph cures her, and at last Perigot, disabused, comes and throws himself on his knees before her. She stretches out her arms; in spite of all that he had done, she was not changed:

"I am thy love,
Thy Amoret, for evermore thy love!
Strike once more on my naked breast, I'll prove
As constant still. Oh, could'st thou love me yet,
How soon could I my former griefs forget!" 3

1 The Faithful Shepherdess, iv.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid. v. Compare, as an illustration of the contrast of races, the Italian pastorals, Tasso's Aminta, Guarini's Il Pastor fido, etc.
Such are the touching and poetical figures which these poets introduce in their dramas; or in connection with their dramas, amidst murders, assassinations, the clash of swords, the howl of slaughter, striving against the raging men who adore or torment them, like them carried to excess, transported by their tenderness as the others by their violence; it is a complete exposition, as well as a perfect opposition of the feminine instinct ending in excessive self-abandonment, and of masculine harshness ending in murderous inflexibility. Thus built up and thus provided, the drama of the age was enabled to bring out the inner depths of man, and to set in motion the most powerful human emotions; to bring upon the stage Hamlet and Lear, Ophelia and Cordelia, the death of Desdemona and the butcheries of Macbeth.

END OF VOL. I.