drops of dew are sparkling. Yet the sound of a horn reaches us through the foliage; how sweetly yet cheerfully it falls on the ear, amidst this vast silence! It resounds more loudly; the clatter of a hunt draws near; “¢ft through the thicke they heard one rudely rush;” a nymph approaches, the most chaste and beautiful in the world. Spenser sees her; nay more, he kneels before her:

“Her face so faire, as flesh it seemed not,
But hevenly pourtraict of bright angels hew,
Cleare as the skye, withouten blame or blot,
Through goodly mixture of complexions dew;
And in her cheekes the vermeill red did shew
Like roses in a bed of lillies shed,
The which ambrosiall odours from them threw,
And gazers sence with double pleasure fed,
Hable to heale the sicke and to revive the ded.

In her faire eyes two living lamps did flame,
Kindled above at th' Hevenly Makers light,
And darted fryie beanes out of the same;
So passing persant, and so wondrous bright,
That quite bereav'd the rash beholders sight;
In them the blinded god his lustfull fyre
To kindle oft assayd, but had no might;
For, with dredd maiestie and awfull yre,
She broke his wanton darts, and quenched base desyre.

Her yvorie forhead, full of bountie brave,
Like a broad table did itselfe disprebl,
For Love his loftie triumphes to engrave,
And write the batailles of his great godhed:
All good and honour might therein be red;
For there their dwelling was. And, when she spake,
Sweete wordes, like dropping honny, she did shed;
And 'twixt the perles and rubins softly brake
A silver sound, that heavenly music seems to make.

Upon her eyelids many Graces sate,
Under the shadow of her even browes,
Working belgardes and amorous restrate;
And everie one her with a grace endowes,
And everie one with meekenesse to her bowes:
So glorious mirrhour of celestiall grace,
And soveraine moniment of mortall vowes,
How shall frayle pen describe her heavenly face,
For feare, through want of skill, her beauty to disgrace!

So faire, and thousand thousand times more faire,
She seemd, when she presented was to sight;
And was yclad, for heat of scorching aire,
All in a silken Camus lilly whight,
Purfled upon with many a folded plight,
Which all above besprinkled was throughout
With golden aygulets, that glistred bright,
Like twinkling starres; and all the skirt about
Was hended with golden fringe.

Below her ham her weed did somewhat trayne,
And her streight legs most bravely were embayld
In gilden buskins of costly cordwayne,
All bard with golden bendes, which were entayld
With curious antickes, and full fayre aumayld:
Before, they fastned were under her knee
In a rich jewell, and therein entrayld
The ends of all the knots, that none might see
How they within their fouldings close enwrapped bee.

Like two faire marble pillours they were seene,
Which doe the temple of the gods support,
Whom all the people decke with girlands greene,
And honour in their festivall resort;
Those same with stately grace and princely port
She taught to tread, when she herself would grace;
But with the woody nymphes when she did play,
Or when the flying libbard she did chase,
She could them nimbly move, and after fly apace.

And in her hand a sharpe bore-speare she held,
And at her backe a bow and quiver gay,
Stuft with steel-headed darts wherewith she queld
The salvage beasts in her victorious play,
Knit with a golden bauldricke which forelay
Athwart her snowy brest, and did divide
Her daintie paps; which, like young fruit in May,
Now little gan to swell, and being tide
Through her thin weed their places only signifide.

Her yellow lockes, crisped like golden wyre,
About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
And, when the winde amongst them did inspyre,
They waved like a penon wyde dispred
And low behinde her backe were scattered:
And, whether art it were or heedlesse hap,
As through the flouring forrest rash she fled,
In her rude heares sweet floweres themselves did lap,
And flourishing fresh leaves and blossomes did enwrap.”

“The daintie rose, the daughter of her morne,
More deare than life she tendered, whose flower
The girland of her honour did adorne;
Ne suffered she the middayes scorching powre.
Ne the sharp northerne wind thereon to showre;
But lapped up her silken leaves most chayre,
Whenso the froward skye began to lowre;
But, soone as calmed was the cristall ayre,
She did it fayre dispred, and let to flourish fayre.”

1 *The Faerie Queene*, ii. c. 3, st. 22-30.
2 Ibid. iii. c. 5, st. 51.
He is on his knees before her, I repeat, as a child on Corpus Christi day, among flowers and perfumes, transported with admiration, so that he sees a heavenly light in her eyes, and angel's tints on her cheeks, even impressing into her service Christian angels and pagan graces to adorn and wait upon her; it is love which brings such visions before him;

"Sweet love, that doth his golden wings embay
In blessed nectar and pure pleasures well."

Whence this perfect beauty, this modest and charming dawn, in which he assembles all the brightness, all the sweetness, all the virgin graces of the full morning? What mother begat her, what marvellous birth brought to light such a wonder of grace and purity? One day, in a sparkling, solitary fountain, where the sunbeams shone, Chrysogone was bathing with roses and violets.

"It was upon a sommers shinie day,
When Titan faire his beamës did display,
In a fresh fountaine, far from all mens vo';
She bath'd her brest the boyling heat t' allay;
She bath'd with roses red and violets blew,
And all the sweetest flowers that in the forest grew.
Till faint through yrkesome wearines adowne
Upon the grassy ground herself she layd
To sleepe, the whiles a gentle slombring swowne
Upon her fell all naked bare displayd."  

The beams played upon her body, and "fructified" her. The months rolled on. Troubled and ashamed, she went into the "wildernesse," and sat down, "every sence with sorrow sore opprest." Meanwhile Venus,

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1 The Fabrie Queene, iii. c. 6, st. 6 and 7.
searching for her boy Cupid, who had mutinied and fled from her, "wandered in the world." She had sought him in courts, cities, cottages, promising "kisses sweet, and sweeter things, unto the man that of him tydings to her brings."

"Shortly unto the wastefull woods she came, 
Whereas she found the godesse (Diana) with her crew, 
After late chace of their embrewed game, 
Sitting beside a fountaine in a row; 
Some of them washing with the liquid dew 
From off their dainty limbs the dusty sweat 
And soyle, which did deforme their lively hew; 
Others lay shaded from the scorching heat 
The rest upon her person gave attendance great. 
She, having hong upon a bough on high 
Her bow and painted quiver, had uulaste 
Her silver buskins from her nimble thigh, 
And her lanck loynes ungirt, and brests unbraste, 
After her heat the breathing cold to taste; 
Her golden lockes, that late in tresses bright 
Embroided were for hindring of her haste, 
Now loose about her shoulders hong undight, 
And were with sweet Ambrosia all besprinkled light." 1

Diana, surprised thus, repulses Venus, "and gan to smile, in scorne of her vaine playnt," swearing that if she should catch Cupid, she would clip his wanton wings. Then she took pity on the afflicted goddess, and set herself with her to look for the fugitive. They came to the "shady covert" where Chrysogone, in her sleep, had given birth "unawares" to two lovely girls, "as faire as springing day." Diana took one, and made her the purest of all virgins. Venus carried off the other to the

1 *The Faerie Queene*, iii. c. 6, st. 17 and 18.
Garden of Adonis, "the first seminary of all things, that are borne to live and dye;" where Psyche, the bride of Love, disports herself; where Pleasure, their daughter, wantons with the Graces; where Adonis, "lapped in flowres and pretious spycery," "liveth in eternal bliss," and came back to life through the breath of immortal Love. She brought her up as her daughter, selected her to be the most faithful of loves, and after long trials, gave her hand to the good knight Sir Scudamore.

That is the kind of thing we meet with in the wondrous forest. Are you ill at ease there, and do you wish to leave it because it is wondrous? At every bend in the alley, at every change of the light, a stanza, a word, reveals a landscape or an apparition. It is morning, the white dawn gleams faintly through the trees; bluish vapours veil the horizon, and vanish in the smiling air; the springs tremble and murmur faintly amongst the mosses, and on high the poplar leaves begin to stir and flutter like the wings of butterflies. A knight alights from his horse, a valiant knight, who has unhorsed many a Saracen, and experienced many an adventure. He unlaces his helmet, and on a sudden you perceive the cheeks of a young girl;

"Which doft, her golden lockes, that were upbound
Still in a knot, unto her heele downe traced,
And like a silken veile in compasse round
About her backe and all her bodie wound;
Like as the shining skie in summers night,
What time the dayes with scorching heat abound,
Is creasted all with lines of firle light,
That it prodigious seemes in common peoples sight."

It is Britomart, a virgin and a heroine, like Clorinda

1 The Faerie Queene, iv. c. 1, st. 13.
or Marfisa,¹ but how much more ideal! The deep sentiment of nature, the sincerity of reverie, the overflowing fertility of inspiration, the German seriousness, reanimate in this poem classical or chivalrous conceptions, even when they are the oldest or the most trite. The train of splendidours and of scenery never ends. Desolate promontories, cleft with gaping chasms; thunder-stricken and blackened masses of rocks, against which the hoarse breakers dash; palaces sparkling with gold, wherein ladies, beauteous as angels, reclining carelessly on purple cushions, listen with sweet smiles to the harmony of music played by unseen hands; lofty silent walks, where avenues of oaks spread their motionless shadows over clusters of virgin violets, and turf which never mortal foot has trod;—to all these beauties of art and nature he adds the marvels of mythology, and describes them with as much of love and sincerity as a painter of the Renaissance or an ancient poet. Here approach on chariots of shell, Cymoënt and her nymphs:

"A teme of dolphins raunged in aray,
Drew the smooth charrett of sad Cymoënt;
They were all taught by Triton to obey
To the long raynes at her commaundëment:
As swifte as swallowes on the waves they went,
That their brode flaggy finnes no fome did reare,
Ne bubling roundell they behinde them sent;
The rest, of other fishes drawen weare;
Which with their finny oars the swelling sea did sheare."²

¹ Clarinda, the heroine of the infidel army in Tasso’s epic poem Jerusalem Delivered; Marfisa, an Indian Queen, who figures in Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso, and also in Boyardo’s Orlando Innamorato.—Tr.
² The Fabrica Queene, iii. c. 4, st. 33.
Nothing, again, can be sweeter or calmer than the description of the palace of Morpheus:

"He, making speedy way through spersed ayre,
And through the world of waters wide and deeps,
To Morpheus house doth hastily repaire.
Amid the bowels of the earth full steepe,
And low, where dawning day doth never peep
His dwelling is; there Tethys his wet bed
Doth ever wash, and Cynthia still doth steepe
In silver deaw his ever-drouping hed,
Whiles sad Night over him her mantle black doth spred.

And, more to lulle him in his alumber soft,
A trickling stream from high rock tumbling downe
And ever-drizzling raine upon the loft,
Mixt with a murmuring wind, much like the sowne
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a sowne.
No other noysce, nor peoples troublous cryes,
As still are wont t' annoy the walled towne,
Might there be heard: but careless Quiet lyes,
Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enimyes." ¹

Observe also in a corner of this forest, a band of satyrs dancing under the green leaves. They come leaping like wanton kids, as gay as birds of joyous spring. The fair Hellenore, whom they have chosen for "May-lady," "daunst lively" also, laughing, and "with gir-londs all bespredd." The wood re-echoes the sound of their "merry pypes." "Their horned feet the greene gras wore." "All day they daunced with great lustyhedd," with sudden motions and alluring looks, while about them their flock feed on "the brouzes" at their pleasure.² In every book we see strange processions pass by, allegorical and picturesque shows, like those

¹ The Faerie Queene, I. c. 1, st. 39 and 41. ² Ibid. III. c. 10, st. 43-45.
which were then displayed at the courts of princes; now a masquerade of Cupid, now of the Rivers, now of the Months, now of the Vices. Imagination was never more prodigal or inventive. Proud Lucifer advances in a chariot “adorned all with gold and girlonds gay,” beaming like the dawn, surrounded by a crowd of courtiers whom she dazzles with her glory and splendour: “six unequall beasts” draw her along, and each of these is ridden by a Vice. Idleness “upon a slouthfull asse . . . in habit blacke . . . like to an holy monck,” sick for very laziness, lets his heavy head droop, and holds in his hand a breviary which he does not read; gluttony, on “a filthie swyne,” crawls by in his deformity, “his belly . . . upblowne with luxury, and eke with fatnesse swollen were his eyne; and like a crane his nekke was long and fyne,” drest in vine-leaves, through which one can see his body eaten by ulcers, and vomiting along the road the wine and flesh with which he is glutted. Avarice seated between “two iron coffers,” “upon a camell loaden all with gold,” is handling a heap of coin, with thread-bare coat, hollow cheeks, and feet stiff with gout. Envy “upon a ravenous wolfe still did chaw between his cankred teeth a venemous tode, that all the poison ran about his chaw,” and his discoloured garment “ypainted full of eies,” conceals a snake wound about his body. Wrath, covered with a torn and bloody robe, comes riding on a lion, brandishing about his head “a burning brond,” his eyes sparkling, his face pale as ashes, grasping in his feverish hand the haft of his dagger. The strange and terrible procession passes on, led by the solemn harmony of the stanzas; and the grand music of oft repeated rhymes sustains the imagination in this fantastic world, which, with its
mingled horrors and splendours, has just been opened to its flight.

Yet all this is little. However much mythology and chivalry can supply, they do not suffice for the needs of this poetical fancy. Spenser’s characteristic is the vastness and overflow of his picturesque invention. Like Rubens, whatever he creates is beyond the region of all traditions, but complete in all parts, and expresses distinct ideas. As with Rubens, his allegory swells its proportions beyond all rule, and withdraws fancy from all law, except in so far as it is necessary to harmonise forms and colours. For, if ordinary minds receive from allegory a certain weight which oppresses them, lofty imaginations receive from it wings which carry them aloft. Freed by it from the common conditions of life, they can dare all things, beyond imitation, apart from probability, with no other guides but their inborn energy and their shadowy instincts. For three days Sir Guyon is led by the cursed spirit, the tempter Mammon, in the subterranean realm, across wonderful gardens, trees laden with golden fruits, glittering palaces, and a confusion of all worldly treasures. They have descended into the bowels of the earth, and pass through caverns, unknown abysses, silent depths.

“An ugly Feend . . . with monstrous stalkes behind him stept,” without Guyon’s knowledge, ready to devour him on the least show of covetousness. The brilliancy of the gold lights up hideous figures, and the beaming metal shines with a beauty more seductive in the gloom of the infernal prison.

“That Houses forme within was rude and strong,
Lyke an huge cave hewn out of rocky clifts,
From whose rough vaut the ragged breaches hung
Emboast with massy gold of glorious guiste,
And with rich metall loaded every rife,
That heavy ruine they did seeme to threat.
And over them Arachne high did lifte
Her cunning web, and spred her subtile net,
Enwrapped in fowle smoke and clouds more black than iett.

Both rooef, and floore, and walls, were all of gold,
But overgrowne with dust and old decay,
And hid in darknes; that none could behold
The hew thereof; for vew of cherefull day
Did never in that House itselfe display,
But a faint shadow of uncertain light;
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away;
Or as the moone, cloathed with clowdy night,
Does show to him that walkes in feare and sad affright.

In all that rowme was nothing to be seen
But huge great yron chests and coffers strong,
All bard with double bends, that none could see
Them to enforce by violence or wrong;
On every side they placed were along.
But all the grownd with sculs was scattered
And dead mens bones, which round about were flong;
Whose lives, it seemed, whilome there were shed,
And their vile carcases now left unburied.

Thence, forward he him ledd and shortly brought
Unto another rowme, whose dore forthright
To him did open as it had bene taught:
Therein an hundred raungees weren pight,
And hundred fournaces all burning bright;
By every fournace many Feends did bye,
Deformed creatures, horrible in sight;
And every Feend his busie paines applys
To melt the golden metall, ready to be tryde.
One with great bellowes gathered filling ayre,
And with forst wind the fewell did inflame;
Another did the dying bronds repayre
With yron tongs, and sprinckled ofte the same
With liquid waves, fiers Vulcans rage to tame,
Who, maystring them, renewd his former heat:
Some scumd the drosse that from the metall came;
Some stird the molten swre with ladles great:
And every one did swincke, and every one did sweat...

He brought him, through a darksom narrow strayt,
To a broad gate all built of beaten gold:
The gate was open; but therein did wayt
A sturdie Villein, stryding stiffe and bold,
As if the Highest God defy he would:
In his right hand an yron club he held,
But he himselfe was all of golden mould,
Yet had both life and sence, and well could wield
That cursed weapon, when his cruell foes he queld...

He brought him in. The rowme was large and wyde,
As it some gyeld or solemne temple weare;
Many great golden pillours did upbeare
The massy roofes, and riches huge sustayne;
And every pillour decked was full deare
With crownes, and diademes, and titles vaine,
Which mortall princes wore whiles they on earth did rayne.

A route of people there assembled were,
Of every sort and nation under skye,
Which with great uprore presaced to draw nere
To th' upper part, where was advaunced hye
A stately siege of soveraine maiestye;
And thereon satt a Woman gorgeous gay,
And richly cladd in robes of royaltye,
That never earthly prince in such aray
His glory did enhaunce, and pompous pryde display...
There, as in glistring glory she did sitt,
She held a great gold chaine ylincked well,
Whose upper end to highest heven was knitt,
And lower part did reach to lowest hell." 1

No artist's dream matches these visions: the glow of the furnaces beneath the vaults of the cavern, the lights flickering over the crowded figures, the throne, and the strange glitter of the gold shining in every direction through the darkness. The allegory assumes gigantic proportions. When the object is to show temperance struggling with temptations, Spenser deems it necessary to mass all the temptations together. He is treating of a general virtue; and as such a virtue is capable of every sort of resistance, he requires from it every sort of resistance alike;—after the test of gold, that of pleasure. Thus the grandest and the most exquisite spectacles follow and are contrasted with each other, and all are supernatural; the graceful and the terrible are side by side,—the happy gardens close by with the cursed subterranean cavern.

"No gate, but like one, being goodly dight
With bowes and braunches, which did broad dilate
Their claspinges armes in wanton wreathings intricate:

*So fashioned a porch with rare device,
Archt over head with an embracing vine,
Whose bowmes hanging downe seemed to entice
All passers-by to taste their lusious wine,
And did themselves into their hands incline,
As freely offering to be gathered;
Some deepse empurpled as the hyacine,
Some as the rubine laughing sweetely red,
Some like faire emeraudes, not yet well ripened...  

1 *The Faerie Queene*, ii. c. 7, st. 28-46.
And in the midst of all a fountaine stood,
Of richest substance that on earth might be,
So pure and shiny that the silver flood
Through every channell running one might see;
Most goodly it with curious ymageere
Was over-wrought, and shapes of naked boyes,
Of which some seemed with lively iollitee
To fly about, playing their wanton toyes,
Whyles others did themselves embay in liquid ioyes.

And over all of purest gold was spred
A trayle of yvie in his native hew;
For the rich metall was so coloured,
That wight, who did not well avis’d it vew,
Would surely deeme it to bee yvie trew;
Low his lascivious armes adown did creepe,
That themselves dipping in the silver dew
Their fleecey flowres they fearfully did steepe,
Which drops of chystall seemd for wantones to weep.

Infinit streames continually did well
Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
The which into an ample laver fell,
And shortly grew to so great quantitie,
That like a little lake it seemd to bee;
Whose depth exceeded not three cubits hight,
That through the waves one might the bottom see,
All pav’d bencath with jaspar shining bright,
That seemd the fountaine in that sea did sayle upright.

The ioyous birdes, shrouded in chearefull shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempred sweet;
Th’ angelicalli soft trembling voyces made
To th’ instruments divine respondence meet;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmur of the waters fall;
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all...
Upon a bed of roses she was layd,
As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin;
And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
More subtile web Arachne cannot spin;
Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
Of scorched deaw, do not in th' ayre more lightly flee.

Her snowy brest was bare to ready spoyle
Of hungry eies, which n' ote therewith be fild;
And yet, through languour of her late sweet toyle,
Few drops, more cleare then nectar, forth distild,
That like pure orient perles adowne it trild;
And her faire eyes, sweet smyling in delight,
Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenched not, like starry lights
Which sparckling on the silent waves, does seeine more bright."

Do we find here nothing but fairy land? Yes; here are finished pictures true and complete, composed with a painter's feeling, with choice of tints and outlines; our eyes are delighted by them. This reclining Acrasia has the pose of a goddess, or of one of Titian's courtesans. An Italian artist might copy these gardens, these flowing waters, these sculptured loves, those wreaths of creeping ivy thick with glossy leaves and fleecy flowers. Just before, in the infernal depths, the lights, with their long streaming rays, were fine, half-smothered by the darkness; the lofty throne in the vast hall, between the pillars, in the midst of a swarm-

1 *The Faëris Queene*, ii. c. 12, st. 53-78.
ing multitude, connected all the forms around it, by drawing all looks towards one centre. The poet, here and throughout, is a colourist and an architect. However fantastic his world may be, it is not factitious; if it does not exist, it might have been; indeed, it should have been; it is the fault of circumstances if they do not so group themselves as to bring it to pass; taken by itself, it possesses that internal harmony by which a real thing, even a still higher harmony, exists, inasmuch as, without any regard to real things, it is altogether, and in its least detail, constructed with a view to beauty. Art has made its appearance: this is the great characteristic of the age, which distinguishes the Faërie Queene from all similar tales heaped up by the middle-age. Incoherent, mutilated, they lie like rubbish, or rough-hewn stones, which the weak hands of the trouvères could not build into a monument. At last the poets and artists appear, and with them the conception of beauty, to wit, the idea of general effect. They understand proportions, relations, contrasts; they compose. In their hands the blurred vague sketch becomes defined, complete, separate; it assumes colour—is made a picture. Every object thus conceived and imaged acquires a definite existence as soon as it assumes a true form; centuries after, it will be acknowledged and admired, and men will be touched by it; and more, they will be touched by its author; for, besides the object which he paints, the poet paints himself. His ruling idea is stamped upon the work which it produces and controls. Spenser is superior to his subject, comprehends it fully, frames it with a view to its end, in order to impress upon it the proper mark of his soul and his genius. Each story is modulated with respect to another,
and all with respect to a certain effect which is being worked out. Thus a beauty issues from this harmony,—the beauty in the poet's heart,—which his whole work strives to express; a noble and yet a cheerful beauty, made up of moral elevation and sensuous seductions, English in sentiment, Italian in externals, chivalric in subject, modern in its perfection, representing a unique and wonderful epoch, the appearance of paganism, in a Christian race, and the worship of form by an imagination of the North.

§ 3. Prose.

I.

Such an epoch can scarcely last, and the poetic vitality wears itself out by its very efflorescence, so that its expansion leads to its decline. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the subsidence of manners and genius grows apparent. Enthusiasm and respect decline. The minions and court-ops intrigue and pilfer, amid pedantry, puerility, and show. The court plunders, and the nation murmurs. The Commons begin to show a stern front, and the king, scolding them like a schoolmaster, gives way before them like a little boy. This sorry monarch (James I.) suffers himself to be bullied by his favourites, writes to them like a gossip, calls himself a Solomon, airs his literary vanity, and in granting an audience to a courtier, recommends him to become a scholar, and expects to be complimented on his own scholarly attainments. The dignity of the government is weakened, and the people's loyalty is cooled. Royalty declines, and revolution is fostered. At the same time, the noble chivalric paganism degener-
erates into a base and coarse sensuality. The king, we are told, on one occasion, had got so drunk with his royal brother Christian of Denmark, that they both had to be carried to bed. Sir John Harrington says:

"The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication. . . . The Lady who did play the Queen's part (in the Masque of the Queen of Sheba) did carry most precious gifts to both their Majesties; but, forgetting the steppes arising to the canopy, overset her caskets into his Danish Majesties lap, and fell at his feet, tho I rather think it was in his face. Much was the hurry and confusion; cloths and napkins were at hand, to make all clean. His Majesty then got up and would dance with the Queen of Sheba; but he fell down and humbled himself before her, and was carried to an inner chamber and laid on a bed of state; which was not a little defiled with the presents of the Queen which had been bestowed on his garments; such as wine, cream, jelly, beverage, cakes, spices, and other good matters. The entertainment and show went forward, and most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers. Now did appear, in rich dress, Hope, Faith, and Charity: Hope did assay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the king would excuse her brevity: Faith . . . left the court in a staggering condition. . . . They were both sick and spewing in the lower hall. Next came Victory, who . . . by a strange medley of versification . . . and after much lamentable utterance was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep in the outer steps of the anti-chamber. As for Peace, she most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming. I ne'er did see such lack of good order, discretion, and sobriety in our Queen's days."¹

Observe that these tipsy women were great ladies.

¹ Nuxa Antiqua, l. 349 et passim.
The reason is, that the grand ideas which introduce an epoch, end, in their exhaustion, by preserving nothing but their vices; the proud sentiment of natural life becomes a vulgar appeal to the senses. An entrance, an arch of triumph under James I., often represented obscenities; and later, when the sensual instincts, exasperated by Puritan tyranny, begin to raise their heads once more, we shall find under the Restoration excess revelling in its low vices, and triumphing in its shamelessness.

Meanwhile literature undergoes a change; the powerful breeze which had wafted it on, and which, amidst singularity, refinements, exaggerations, had made it great, slackened and diminished. With Carew, Suckling, and Herrick, prettiness takes the place of the beautiful. That which strikes them is no longer the general features of things; and they no longer try to express the inner character of what they describe. They no longer possess that liberal conception, that instinctive penetration, by which we sympathise with objects, and grow capable of creating them anew. They no longer boast of that overflow of emotions, that excess of ideas and images, which compelled a man to relieve himself by words, to act externally, to represent freely and boldly the interior drama which made his whole body and heart tremble. They are rather wits of the court, cavaliers of fashion, who wish to show off their imagination and style. In their hands love becomes gallantry; they write songs, fugitive pieces, compliments to the ladies. There are no more upwellings from the heart. They write eloquent phrases in order to be applauded, and flattering exaggerations in order to please. The divine faces, the serious or profound looks, the virgin or impassioned
expressions which burst forth at every step in the early poets, have disappeared; here we see nothing but agreeable countenances, painted in agreeable verses. Blackguardism is not far off; we meet with it already in Suckling, and crudity to boot, and prosaic epicurism; their sentiment is expressed before long, in such a phrase as: "Let us amuse ourselves, and a fig for the rest." The only objects they can still paint, are little graceful things, a kiss, a May-day festivity, a dewy primrose, a daffodil, a marriage morning, a bee. ¹ Herrick and Suckling

¹ "Some asked me where the Rubies grew,
   And nothing I did say;
   But with my finger pointed to
   The lips of Julia.

   Some ask'd how Pearls did grow, and where;
   Then spake I to my girls,
   To part her lips, and shew me there
   The quarelets of Pearl.

   One ask'd me where the roses grew;
   I bade him not go seek;
   But forthwith bade my Julia show
   A bud in either cheek."

   Herrick's Hesperides, ed. Walford, 1850;
   The Book of Rubies, p. 32.

"About the sweet bag of a bee,
   Two Cupids fell at odds;
   And whose the pretty prize shu'd be,
   They vow'd to ask the Gods.

   Which Venus hearing, thither came,
   And for their boldness stript them;
   And taking thence from each his flame,
   With rods of mirtle whipt them.

   Which done, to still their wanton cries,
   When quiet grown sh'ad seen them,
   She kist and wip'd their dove-like eyes,
   And gave the bag between them."

especially produce little exquisite poems, delicate, ever pleasant or agreeable, like those attributed to Anacreon, or those which abound in the *Anthology*. In fact, here, as at the Grecian period alluded to, we are in the decline of paganism; energy departs, the reign of the agreeable laments. People do not relinquish the worship of beauty and pleasure, but dally with them. They deck and fit them to their taste; they cease to subdue and bend men, who enjoy them whilst they amuse them. It is the last beam of a setting sun; the genuine poetic

"Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Pr'ythee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can't move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Pr'ythee, why so pale?
Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Pr'ythee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can't win her,
Saying nothing do't?
Pr'ythee, why so mute?
Quit, quit for shame: this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her.
The devil take her!"


"As when a lady, walking Flora's bower,
Picks here a pink, and there a gilly-flower,
Now plucks a violet from her purple bed,
And then a primrose, the year's maidenhead,
There nips the brier, here the lover's pansy,
Shifting her dainty pleasures with her fancy,
This on her arms, and that she lists to wear
Upon the borders of her curious hair;
At length a rose-bud (passing all the rest)
She plucks, and bosoms in her lily breast.

Quarles. Stanzar."
sentiment dies out with Sedley, Waller, and the rhymer's of the Restoration; they write prose in verse; their heart is on a level with their style, and with an exact language we find the commencement of a new age and a new art.

Side by side with prettiness comes affectation; it is the second mark of the decadence. Instead of writing to express things, they write to say them well; they outbid their neighbours, and strain every mode of speech; they push art over on the side to which it had a leaning; and as in this age it had a leaning towards vehemence and imagination, they pile up their emphasis and colouring. A jargon always springs out of a style. In all arts, the first masters, the inventors, discover the idea, steep themselves in it, and leave it to effect its outward form. Then come the second class, the imitators, who sedulously repeat this form, and alter it by exaggeration. Some nevertheless have talent, as Quarles, Herbert, Habington, Donne in particular, a pungent satirist, of terrible crudeness,¹ a powerful poet, of a precise and intense imagination, who still preserves something of the energy and thrill of the original inspiration.²

¹ See, in particular, his satire against courtiers. The following is against imitators.

``But he is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
Others wit's fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spew,
As his owne things; and they 'tis his owne, 'tis true,
For if one eate my meats, though it be knowne
The meat was mine, th' excrement is his owne.''

Donne's Satires, 1639. Satire ii. p. 128.

² "When I behold a stream, which from the spring
Doth with doubtful melodious murmuring,
Or in a speechless slumber calmly ride
Her wedded channel's bosom, and there chide
But he deliberately spoils all these gifts, and succeeds with great difficulty in concocting a piece of nonsense. For instance, the impassioned poets had said to their mistress, that if they lost her, they should hate all other women. Donne, in order to eclipse them, says:

"O do not die, for I shall hate
All women so, when thou art gone,
That thee I shall not celebrate
When I remember thou wast one." ¹

Twenty times while reading him we rub our brow, and ask with astonishment, how a man could have so tormented and contorted himself, strained his style, refined on his refinement, hit upon such absurd comparisons? But this was the spirit of the age; they made an effort to be ingeniously absurd. A flea had bitten Donne and his mistress, and he says:

"This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed and marriage temple is.
Though Parents grudge, and you, w' are met,
And cloyster'd in these living walls of Jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that selfe-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three." ²

And bend her brows, and swell, if any bough
Does but stoop down to kiss her utmost brow;
Yet if her often gnawing kisses win
The traitorous banks to gape and let her in,
She rusheth violently and doth divorce
Her from her native and her long kept-course,
And roares, and braves it, and in gallant scorn
In flatt'ring eddies promising return,
She flouts her channel, which thenceforth is dry,
Then say I: That is she, and this am I.'’—DONNE, Elegy vi.

The Marquis de Mascarille\(^1\) never found anything to equal this. Would you have believed a writer could invent such absurdities? She and he made but one, for both are but one with the flea, and so one could not be killed without the other. Observe that the wise Malherbe wrote very similar enormities, in the Tears of St. Peter, and that the sonneteers of Italy and Spain reach simultaneously the same height of folly, and you will agree that throughout Europe at that time they were at the close of a poetical epoch.

On this boundary line of a closing and a dawning literature a poet appeared, one of the most approved and illustrious of his time, Abraham Cowley,\(^2\) a precocious child, a reader and a versifier like Pope, and who, like Pope, having known passions less than books, busied himself less about things than about words. Literary exhaustion has seldom been more manifest. He possesses all the capacity to say whatever pleases him, but he has precisely nothing to say. The substance has vanished, leaving in its place an empty form. In vain he tries the epic, the Pindaric strophe, all kinds of stanzas, odes, short lines, long lines; in vain he calls to his assistance botanical and philosophical similes, all the erudition of the university, all the recollections of antiquity, all the ideas of new science: we yawn as we read him. Except in a few descriptive verses, two or three graceful tendernesses,\(^3\) he feels nothing, he speaks only; he is a poet of the brain. His collection of

\(^1\) A valet in Molière’s Les Précieuses Ridicules, who apes and exaggerates his master’s manners and style, and pretends to be a marquess. He also appears in L’Elioud and Le dépit Amoureux, by the same author.—Ta.

\(^2\) 1668-1667. I refer to the eleventh edition of 1710.

\(^3\) The Spring (The Mistress, i. 72).
amorous pieces is but a vehicle for a scientific test, and serves to show that he has read the authors, that he knows geography, that he is well versed in anatomy, that he has a smattering of medicine and astronomy, that he has at his service comparisons and allusions enough to rack the brains of his readers. He will speak in this wise:

"Beauty, thou active—passive ill!
Which dy'st thyself as fast as thou dost kill!"

or will remark that his mistress is to blame for spending three hours every morning at her toilet, because

"They make that Beauty Tyranny,
That's else a Civil-government."

After reading two hundred pages, you feel disposed to box his ears. You have to think, by way of consolation, that every grand age must draw to a close, that this one could not do so otherwise, that the old glow of enthusiasm, the sudden flood of rapture, images, whimsical and audacious fancies, which once rolled through the minds of men, arrested now and cooled down, could only exhibit dross, a curdling scum, a multitude of brilliant and offensive points. You say to yourself that, after all, Cowley had perhaps talent; you find that he had in fact one, a new talent, unknown to the old masters, the sign of a new culture, which needs other manners, and announces a new society. Cowley had these manners, and belongs to this society. He was a well-governed, reasonable, well-informed, polished, well-educated man, who after twelve years of service and writing in France, under Queen Henrietta, retires at last wisely into the country, where he studies natural history, and prepares
a treatise on religion, philosophising on men and life, fertile in general reflections and ideas, a moralist, bidding his executor "to let nothing stand in his writings which might seem the least in the world to be an offence against religion or good manners." Such intentions and such a life produce and indicate less a poet, that is, a seer, a creator, than a literary man, I mean a man who can think and speak, and who therefore ought to have read much, learned much, written much, ought to possess a calm and clear mind, to be accustomed to polite society, sustained conversation, pleasantry. In fact, Cowley is an author by profession, the oldest of those, who in England deserve the name. His prose is as easy and sensible as his poetry is contorted and unreasonable. A polished man, writing for polished men, pretty much as he would speak to them in a drawing-room,—this I take to be the idea which they had of a good author in the seventeenth century. It is the idea which Cowley's Essays leave of his character; it is the kind of talent which the writers of the coming age take for their model; and he is the first of that grave and amiable group which, continued in Temple, reaches so far as to include Addison.

II.

Having reached this point, the Renaissance seemed to have attained its limit, and, like a drooping and faded flower, to be ready to leave its place for a new bud which began to spring up amongst its withered leaves. At all events, a living and unexpected shoot sprang from the old declining stock. At the moment when art languished, science shot forth; the whole labour of the age ended in this. The fruits are not unlike; on the con-
trary, they come from the same sap, and by the diversity of the shape only manifest two distinct periods of the inner growth which has produced them. Every art ends in a science, and all poetry in a philosophy. For science and philosophy do but translate into precise formulas the original conceptions which art and poetry render sensible by imaginary figures: when once the idea of an epoch is manifested in verse by ideal creations, it naturally comes to be expressed in prose by positive arguments. That which had struck men on escaping from ecclesiastical oppression and monkish asceticism was the pagan idea of a life true to nature, and freely developed. They had found nature buried behind scholasticism, and they had expressed it in poems and paintings; in Italy by superb healthy corporeality, in England by vehement and unconventional spirituality, with such divination of its laws, instincts, and forms, that we might extract from their theatre and their pictures a complete theory of soul and body. When enthusiasm is past, curiosity begins. The sentiment of beauty gives way to the need of truth. The theory contained in works of imagination frees itself. The gaze continues fixed on nature, not to admire now, but to understand. From painting we pass to anatomy, from the drama to moral philosophy, from grand poetical divinations to great scientific views; the second continue the first, and the same mind displays itself in both; for what art had represented, and science proceeds to observe, are living things, with their complex and complete structure, set in motion by their internal forces, with no supernatural intervention. Artists and savants, all set out, without knowing it themselves, from the same master conception, to wit, that nature subsists of
herself, that every existence has in its own womb the source of its action, that the causes of events are the innate laws of things; an all-powerful idea, from which was to issue the modern civilisation, and which, at the time I write of, produced in England and Italy, as before in Greece, genuine sciences, side by side with a complete art: after da Vinci and Michel Angelo, the school of anatomists, mathematicians, naturalists, ending with Galileo; after Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Shakspeare, the school of thinkers who surround Bacon and lead up to Harvey.

We have not far to look for this school. In the interregnum of Christianity the dominating bent of mind belongs to it. It was paganism which reigned in Elizabeth's court, not only in letters, but in doctrine, —a paganism of the north, always serious, generally sombre, but which was based, like that of the south, on natural forces. In some men all Christianity had passed away; many proceeded to atheism through excess of rebellion and debauchery, like Marlowe and Greene. With others, like Shakspeare, the idea of God scarcely makes its appearance; they see in our poor short human life only a dream, and beyond it the long sad sleep: for them, death is the goal of life; at most a dark gulf, into which man plunges, uncertain of the issue. If they carry their gaze beyond, they perceive,¹ not the spiritual soul welcomed into a purer world, but the corpse abandoned to the damp earth, or the ghost hovering about the churchyard. They speak like sceptics or superstitious men, never as true believers. Their heroes

¹ See in Shakspeare, The Tempest, Measure for Measure, Hamlet; in Beaumont and Fletcher, Thierry and Theodret, Act iv.; Webster, passim.
have human, not religious virtues; against crime they rely on honour and the love of the beautiful, not on piety and the fear of God. If others, at intervals, like Sidney and Spenser, catch a glimpse of the Divine, it is as a vague ideal light, a sublime Platonic phantom, which has no resemblance to a personal God, a strict inquisitor of the slightest motions of the heart. He appears at the summit of things, like the splendid crown of the world, but He does not weigh upon human life; He leaves it intact and free, only turning it towards the beautiful. Man does not know as yet the sort of narrow prison in which official cant and respectable creeds were, later on, to confine activity and intelligence. Even the believers, sincere Christians like Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne, discard all oppressive sternness, reduce Christianity to a sort of moral poetry, and allow naturalism to subsist beneath religion. In such a broad and open channel, speculation could spread its wings. With Lord Herbert appeared a systematic deism; with Milton and Algernon Sidney, a philosophical religion; Clarendon went so far as to compare Lord Falkland's gardens to the groves of Academe. Against the rigorism of the Puritans, Chillingworth, Hales, Hooker, the greatest doctors of the English Church, give a large place to natural reason,—so large, that never, even to this day, has it made such an advance.

An astonishing irruption of facts—the discovery of America, the revival of antiquity, the restoration of philology, the invention of the arts, the development of industries, the march of human curiosity over the whole of the past and the whole of the globe—came to furnish subject-matter, and prose began its reign. Sidney,
Wilson, Ascham, and Puttenham explored the rules of style; Hakluyt and Purchas compiled the cyclopædia of travel and the description of every land; Holinshed, Speed, Raleigh, Stowe, Knolles, Daniel, Thomas May, Lord Herbert, founded history; Camden, Spelman, Cotton, Usher, and Selden inaugurate scholarship; a legion of patient workers, of obscure collectors, of literary pioneers, amassed, arranged, and sifted the documents which Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Thomas Bodley stored up in their libraries; whilst utopians, moralists, painters of manners—Thomas More, Joseph Hall, John Earle, Owen Feltham, Burton—described and passed judgment on the modes of life, continued with Fuller, Sir Thomas Browne, and Isaac Walton up to the middle of the next century, and add to the number of controversialists and politicians who, with Hooker, Taylor, Chillingworth, Algernon Sidney, Harrington, study religion, society, church and state. A copious and confused fermentation, from which abundance of thoughts rose, but few notable books. Noble prose, such as was heard at the court of Louis XIV., in the house of Pollio, in the schools at Athens, such as rhetorical and sociable nations know how to produce, was altogether lacking. These men had not the spirit of analysis, the art of following step by step the natural order of ideas, nor the spirit of conversation, the talent never to weary or shock others. Their imagination is too little regulated, and their manners too little polished. They who had mixed most in the world, even Sidney, speak roughly what they think, and as they think it. Instead of glossing they exaggerate. They blurt out all, and withhold nothing. When they do not employ excessive compliments, they take to coarse jokes. They are ignorant of measured
liveliness, refined raillery, delicate flattery. They rejoice in gross puns, dirty allusions. They mistake involved charades and grotesque images for wit. Though they are great lords and ladies, they talk like ill-bred persons, lovers of buffoonery, of shows, and bear-fights. With some, as Overbury or Sir Thomas Browne, prose is so much run over by poetry, that it covers its narrative with images, and hides ideas under its pictures. They load their style with flowery comparisons, which produce one another, and mount one above another, so that sense disappears, and ornament only is visible. In short, they are generally pedants, still stiff with the rust of the school; they divide and subdivide, propound theses, definitions; they argue solidly and heavily, and quote their authors in Latin, and even in Greek; they square their massive periods, and learnedly knock their adversaries down, and their readers too, as a natural consequence. They are never on the prose-level, but always above or below—above by their poetic genius, below by the weight of their education and the barbarism of their manners. But they think seriously and for themselves; they are deliberate; they are convinced and touched by what they say. Even in the compiler we find a force and loyalty of spirit, which give confidence and cause pleasure. Their writings are like the powerful and heavy engravings of their contemporaries, the maps of Hofnagel for instance, so harsh and so instructive; their conception is sharp and clear; they have the gift of perceiving every object, not under a general aspect, like the classical writers, but specially and individually. It is not man in the abstract, the citizen as he is everywhere, the countryman as such, that they represent, but James or Thomas, Smith or Brown, of
such a parish, from such an office, with such and such attitude or dress, distinct from all others; in short, they see, not the idea, but the individual. Imagine the disturbance that such a disposition produces in a man’s head, how the regular order of ideas becomes deranged by it; how every object, with the infinite medley of its forms, properties, appendages, will thenceforth fasten itself by a hundred points of contact unforeseen to other objects, and bring before the mind a series and a family; what boldness language will derive from it; what familiar, picturesque, absurd words, will break forth in succession; how the dash, the unforeseen, the originality and inequality of invention, will stand out. Imagine, at the same time, what a hold this form of mind has on objects, how many facts it condenses in each conception; what a mass of personal judgments, foreign authorities, suppositions, guesses, imaginations, it spreads over every subject; with what venturesome and creative fecundity it engenders both truth and conjecture. It is an extraordinary chaos of thoughts and forms, often abortive, still more often barbarous, sometimes grand. But from this superfluity something lasting and great is produced, namely science, and we have only to examine more closely into one or two of these works to see the new creation emerge from the blocks and the debris.

III.

Two writers especially display this state of mind. The first, Robert Burton, a clergyman and university recluse, who passed his life in libraries, and dabbled in all the sciences, as learned as Rabelais, having an inexhaustible and overflowing memory; unequal, more-
over, gifted with enthusiasm, and spasmodically gay, but as a rule sad and morose, to the extent of confessing in his epitaph that melancholy made up his life and his death; in the first place original, liking his own common sense, and one of the earliest models of that singular English mood which, withdrawing man within himself, develops in him, at one time imagination, at another scrupulosiry, at another oddity, and makes of him, according to circumstances, a poet, an eccentric, a humorist, a madman, or a puritan. He read on for thirty years, put an encyclopaedia into his head, and now, to amuse and relieve himself, takes a folio of blank paper. Twenty lines of a poet, a dozen lines of a treatise on agriculture, a folio page of heraldry, a description of rare fishes, a paragraph of a sermon on patience, the record of the fever fits of hypochondria, the history of the particle that, a scrap of metaphysics,—this is what passes through his brain in a quarter of an hour: it is a carnival of ideas and phrases, Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian, philosophical, geometrical, medical, poetical, astrological, musical, pedagogic, heaped one on the other; an enormous medley, a prodigious mass of jumbled quotations, jostling thoughts, with the vivacity and the transport of a feast of unreason.

"This roving humour (though not with like success) I have ever had, and, like a ranging spaniel that barks at every bird he sees, leaving his game, I have followed all, saving that which I should, and may justly complain, and truly, qui ubique est, nusquam est, which Gesner did in modesty, that I have read many books, but to little purpose, for want of good method, I have confusedly tumbled over divers authors in our libraries with small profit, for want of art, order, memory, judgment. I
never travelled but in map or card, in which my unconfined
thoughts have freely expatiated, as having ever been especially
delighted with the study of cosmography. Saturn was lord of
my geniture, culminating, etc., and Mars principal significator
of manners, in partile conjunction with mine ascendent; both
fortunate in their houses, etc. I am not poor, I am not rich;
nihil est, nihil deest; I have little; I want nothing: all my
treasure is in Minerva's tower. Greater preferment as I could
never get, so am I not in debt for it. I have a competency
(laus Dec) from my noble and munificent patrons. Though I
live still a collegiat student, as Democritus in his garden, and
lead a monastique life, ipse mihi theatrum, sequestred from those
tumults and troubles of the world, et tanquam in speculâ positus
(as he said), in some high place above you all, like Stoteus
sapiens, omnia sæcula praeterita præsentiaque videns, uno velut
intuitu, I hear and see what is done abroad, how others run,
rise, turmoil, and macerate themselves in court and countrey.
Far from these wrangling lawsuits, aulae vavitatem, fori ambi-
tionem, ridere mecum soles: I laugh at all, only secure, lest my
suit go amiss, my ships perish, corn and cattle miscarry, trade
decay; I have no wife nor children, good or bad, to provide for;
a mere spectator of other men's fortunes and adventures, and
how they act their parts, which methinks are diversely pre-
sented unto me, as from a common theatre or scene. I hear
new news every day: and those ordinary rumours of war,
plagues, fires, inundations, thefts, murders, massacres, meteors,
comets, spectrums, prodigies, apparitions; of towns taken, cities
besieged in France, Germany, Turkey, Persia, Poland, etc., daily
musters and preparations, and such like, which these tempestuous
times afford, battles fought, so many men slain, monomachies,
shipwrecks, piracies, and sea-fights, peace, leagues,
stratagems, and fresh alarms—a vast confusion of vows, wishes,
actions, edicts, petitions, lawsuits, pleas, laws, proclamations,
complaints, grievances,—are daily brought to our ears: new
books every day, pamphlets, currantoes, stories, whole catalogues
of volumes of all sorts; new paradoxes, opinions, schisms, heresies, controversies in philosophy, religion, etc. Now come tidings of weddings, maskings, mummeries, entertainments, jubilées, embassies, tilts and tournaments, trophies, triumphs, revels, sports, playes: then again, as in a new shifted scene, treasons, cheating tricks, robberies, enormous villanies in all kinds, funerals, burials, death of princes, new discoveries, expeditions; now comical, then tragical matters. To-day we hear of new lords and officers created, to-morrow of some great men deposed, and then again of fresh honours conferred: one is let loose, another imprisoned: one purchaseth, another breaketh: he thrives, his neighbour turns bankrupt; now plenty, then again dearth and famine; one runs, another rides, wrangles, laughs, weeps, etc. Thus I daily hear, and such like, both private and publick news.”

“For what a world of books offers itself, in all subjects, arts, and sciences, to the sweet content and capacity of the reader? In arithmetick, geometry, perspective, optick, astronomy, architecture, sculptura, pictura, of which so many and such elaborate treatises are of late written: in mechanicks and their mysteries, military matters, navigation, riding of horses, fencing, swimming, gardening, planting, great tomes of husbandry, cookery, saloonry, hunting, fishing, fowling, etc., with exquisite pictures of all sports, games, and what not. In musick, metaphysicks, natural and moral philosophy, philologie, in policy, heraldry, genealogy, chronology, etc., they afford great tomes, or those studies of antiquity, etc., et quid subtillus arithmeticis inventionibus? quid iucundius musicis rationibus? quid divinius astronomicis? quid rectius geometricis demonstrationibus? What so sure, what so pleasant? He that shall but see the geometrical tower of Garezenda at Bologne in Italy, the steeple and clock at Strasborough, will admire the effects of art, or that engine of Archimedes to remove the earth itself, if he had but a place to fasten

1 Anatomy of Melancholy, 12th ed. 1821, 2 vols.: Democritus to the Reader, l. 4.
his instrument. *Archimedis cochlea*, and rare devises to corruvate waters, musick instruments, and trisyllable Echoes again, again, and again repeated, with miriades of such. What vast tomes are extant in law, physick, and divinity, for profit, pleasure, practice, speculation, in verse or prose, etc. Their names alone are the subject of whole volumes; we have thousands of authors of all sorts, many great libraries, full well furnished, like so many dishes of meat, served out for several palates, and he is a very block that is affected with none of them. Some take an infinite delight to study the very languages wherein these books are written—Hebrew, Greek, Syriack, Chalde, Arabick, etc. Methinks it would well please any man to look upon a geographical map (*suavi animum delectationes allicere, ob incredibilem verum varietatem et jucunditatem, et ad pleniorem sui cognitionem excitare*), chorographical, topographical delineations; to behold, as it were, all the remote provinces, towns, cities of the world, and never to go forth of the limits of his study; to measure, by the scale and compass, their extent, distance, examine their site. Charles the Great (as Platina writes) had three faire silver tables, in one of which superficies was a large map of Constantinople, in the second Rome neatly engraved, in the third an exquisite description of the whole world; and much delight he took in them. What greater pleasure can there now be, than to view those elaborate maps of Ortelius, Mercator, Hondius, etc.? to peruse those books of cities put out by Braunus and Hogenbergius? to read those exquisite descriptions of Maginus, Munster, Herrera, Lact, Merula, Boterus, Leander Albertus, Camden, Leo Afer, Adricomius, Nic. Gerbelius, etc.? those famous expeditions of Christopher Columbus, Americus Vespucius, Marcus Polus the Venetian, Lod. Vertomannus, Aloysius Cadamustus, etc.? those accurate diaries of Portugals, Hollanders, of Bartison, Oliver a Nort, etc., Hacluit’s Voyages, Pet. Martyr’s Decades, Benso, Lerus, Linschoten’s relations, those Hodgesporicons of Jod. a Meggen, Brocarde the Monke, Bredenbachius, Jo. Dublinius, Sands, etc., to Jerusalem, Egypt,
and other remote places of the world? those pleasant itineraries of Paulus Hentzerus, Jodocus Sincerus, Dux Polonus, etc.? to read Bellonius observations, P. Gillius his surveyes; those parts of America, set out, and curiously cut in pictures, by Fratres a Bry? To see a well cut herbal, hearbs, trees, flowers, plants, all vegetals, expressed in their proper colours to the life, as that of Matthiolus upon Dioscorides, Delacampius, Lobel, Bauhinus, and that last voluminous and mighty herbal of Besler of Nuremberg; wherein almost every plant is to his own bignesse. To see birds, beasts, and fishes of the sea, spiders, gnats, serpents, flies, etc., all creatures set out by the same art, and truly expressed in lively colours, with an exact description of their natures, vertues, qualities, etc., as hath been accurately performed by Ælian, Gesner, Ulysses Aldrovandus, Bellonius, Rondoletius, Hippolytus Salvianus, etc."

He is never-ending; words, phrases, overflow, are heaped up, overlap each other, and flow on, carrying the reader along, deafened, stunned, half-drowned, unable to touch ground in the deluge. Burton is inexhaustible. There are no ideas which he does not iterate under fifty forms: when he has exhausted his own, he pours out upon us other men's—the classics, the rarest authors, known only by savants—authors rarer still, known only to the learned; he borrows from all. Underneath these deep caverns of erudition and science, there is one blacker and more unknown than all the others, filled with forgotten authors, with crack-jaw names, Besler of Nuremberg, Adricomius, Linschoten, Brocarde, Bredenbachius. Amidst all these antediluvian monsters, bristling with Latin terminations, he is at his ease; he sports with them, laughs, skips from one to the other, drives them all abreast. He is like old

1 *Anatomy of Melancholy*, i. part 2, sec. 2, Mem. 4, p. 420, et passim.
Proteus, the sturdy rover, who in one hour, with his team of hippopotami, makes the circuit of the ocean.

What subject does he take? Melancholy, his own individual mood; and he takes it like a schoolman. None of St. Thomas Aquinas’ treatises is more regularly constructed than his. This torrent of erudition flows in geometrically planned channels, turning off at right angles without deviating by a line. At the head of every part you will find a synoptical and analytical table, with hyphens, brackets, each division begetting its subdivisions, each subdivision its sections, each section its subsections: of the malady in general, of melancholy in particular, of its nature, its seat, its varieties, causes, symptoms, prognosis; of its cure by permissible means, by forbidden means, by dietetic means, by pharmaceutical means. After the scholastic process, he descends from the general to the particular, and disposes each emotion and idea in its labelled case. In this framework, supplied by the middle-age, he heaps up the whole, like a man of the Renaissance,—the literary description of passions and the medical description of madness, details of the hospital with a satire on human follies, physiological treatises side by side with personal confidences, the recipes of the apothecary with moral counsels, remarks on love with the history of evacuations. The discrimination of ideas has not yet been effected; doctor and poet, man of letters and savant, he is all at once; for want of dams, ideas pour like different liquids into the same vat, with strange spluttering and bubbling, with an unsavoury smell and odd effect. But the vat is full, and from this admixture are produced potent compounds which no preceding age has known.
IV.

For in this mixture there is an effectual leaveu, the poetic sentiment, which stirs up and animates the vast erudition, which will not be confined to dry catalogues; which, interpreting every fact, every object, disentangles or divines a mysterious soul within it, and agitates the whole mind of man, by representing to him the restless world within and without him as a grand enigma. Let us conceive a kindred mind to Shakspeare's, a scholar and an observer instead of an actor and a poet, who in place of creating is occupied in comprehending, but who, like Shakspeare, applies himself to living things, penetrates their internal structure, puts himself in communication with their actual laws, imprints in himself fervently and scrupulously the smallest details of their outward appearance; who at the same time extends his penetrating surmises beyond the region of observation, discerns behind visible phænomena some world obscure yet sublime, and trembles with a kind of veneration before the vast, indistinct, but peopled darkness on whose surface our little universe hangs quivering. Such a one is Sir Thomas Browne, a naturalist, a philosopher, a scholar, a physician, and a moralist, almost the last of the generation which produced Jeremy Taylor and Shakspeare. No thinker bears stronger witness to the wandering and inventive curiosity of the age. No writer has better displayed the brilliant and sombre imagination of the North. No one has spoken with a more eloquent emotion of death, the vast night of forgetfulness, of the all-devouring pit, of human vanity, which tries to create an ephemeral immortality out of glory or sculptured stones. No one has revealed, in
more glowing and original expressions, the poetic sap which flows through all the minds of the age.

"But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana, he is almost lost that built it. Time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal duration; and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon. Who knows whether the best of men be known, or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? Without the favour of the everlasting register, the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.

"Oblivion is not to be hired. The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. Twenty-seven names make up the first story before the flood, and the recorded names ever since contain not one living century. The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live. The night of time far surpasseth the day; and who knows when was the equinox? Every hour adds unto the current arithmetick which scarce stands one moment. And since death must be the Lucina of life, and even Pagans could doubt, whether thus to live were to die; since our longest sun sets at right declensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and have our light in ashes; since the brother of death daily haunts us with dying mementos, and time, that grows old in itself, bids us hope no long duration;—diurnality is a dream, and folly of expectation.

"Darkness and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings; we slightly remember our felicities, and the smartest strokes of
affliction leave but short smart upon us. Sense endureth no extremities, and sorrows destroy us or themselves. To weep into stones are fables. Afflictions induce callosities; miseries are slippery, or fall like snow upon us, which notwithstanding is no unhappy stupidity. To be ignorant of evils to come, and forgetful of evils past, is a merciful provision of nature, whereby we digest the mixture of our few and evil days; and our delivered senses not relapsing into cutting remembrances, our sorrows are not kept raw by the edge of repetitions. . . . All was vanity, feeding the wind, and folly. The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyses or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth. Mummy is become merchandise, Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams. . . . Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing nativities and deaths with equal lustre, nor omitting ceremonies of bravery in the infancy of his nature. . . . Pyramids, arches, obelisks, were but the irregularities of vain glory, and wild enormities of ancient magnanimity.”

These are almost the words of a poet, and it is just this poet’s imagination which urges him onward into science. Face to face with the productions of nature he abounds in conjectures, comparisons; he gropes about, proposing explanations, making trials, extending his guesses like so many flexible and vibrating feelers into the four corners of the globe, into the most distant regions of fancy and truth. As he looks upon the tree-like and foliaceous crusts which are formed upon the surface of freezing liquids, he asks himself if this be not a regeneration of vegetable essences, dissolved in the liquid. At the sight of curdling blood

2 See Milsand, Études sur Sir Thomas Browne, Revue des Deux Mondes, 1858.
or milk, he inquires whether there be not something analogous to the formation of the bird in the egg, or to that coagulation of chaos which gave birth to our world. In presence of that impalpable force which makes liquids freeze, he asks if apoplexy and cataract are not the effects of a like power, and do not indicate also the presence of a coagulating agency. He is in presence of nature as an artist, a man of letters in presence of a living countenance, marking every feature, every movement of physiognomy, so as to be able to divine the passions and the inner disposition, ceaselessly correcting and undoing his interpretations, kept in agitation by thought of the invisible forces which operate beneath the visible envelope. The whole of the middle-age and of antiquity, with their theories and imaginations, Platonism, Cabalism, Christian theology, Aristotle's substantial forms, the specific forms of the alchemists,—all human speculations, entangled and transformed one within the other, meet simultaneously in his brain, so as to open up to him vistas of this unknown world. The accumulation, the pile, the confusion, the fermentation and the inner swarming, mingled with vapours and flashes, the tumultuous overloading of his imagination and his mind, oppress and agitate him. In this expectation and emotion his curiosity takes hold of everything; in reference to the least fact, the most special, the most obsolete, the most chimerical, he conceives a chain of complicated investigations, calculating how the ark could contain all creatures, with their provision of food; how Perpenna, at a banquet, arranged the guests so as to strike Sertorius; what trees must have grown on the banks of Acheron, supposing that there were any; whether quincunx plantations had not
their origin in Eden, and whether the numbers and geometrical figures contained in the lozenge-form are not met with in all the productions of nature and art. You may recognise here the exuberance and the strange caprices of an inner development too ample and too strong. Archaeology, chemistry, history, nature, there is nothing in which he is not passionately interested, which does not cause his memory and his inventive powers to overflow, which does not summon up within him the idea of some force, certainly admirable, possibly infinite. But what completes his picture, what signalises the advance of science, is the fact that his imagination provides a counterbalance against itself. He is as fertile in doubts as he is in explanations. If he sees a thousand reasons which tend to one view, he sees also a thousand which tend to the contrary. At the two extremes of the same fact, he raises up to the clouds, but in equal piles, the scaffolding of contradictory arguments. Having made a guess, he knows that it is but a guess; he pauses, ends with a perhaps, recommends verification. His writings consist only of opinions, given as such; even his principal work is a refutation of popular errors. In the main, he proposes questions, suggests explanations, suspends his judgments, nothing more; but this is enough: when the search is so eager, when the paths in which it proceeds are so numerous, when it is so scrupulous in securing its hold, the issue of the pursuit is sure; we are but a few steps from the truth.

V.

In this band of scholars, dreamers, and inquirers, appears the most comprehensive, sensible, originative of the
minds of the age, Francis Bacon, a great and luminous intellect, one of the finest of this poetic progeny, who, like his predecessors, was naturally disposed to clothe his ideas in the most splendid dress: in this age, a thought did not seem complete until it had assumed form and colour. But what distinguishes him from the others is, that with him an image only serves to concentrate meditation. He reflected long, stamped on his mind all the parts and relations of his subject; he is master of it, and then, instead of exposing this complete idea in a graduated chain of reasoning, he embodies it in a comparison so expressive, exact, lucid, that behind the figure we perceive all the details of the idea, like liquor in a fine crystal vase. Judge of his style by a single example:

"For as water, whether it be the dew of Heaven or the springs of the earth, easily scatters and loses itself in the ground, except it be collected into some receptacle, where it may by union and consort comfort and sustain itself (and for that cause, the industry of man has devised aqueducts, cisterns, and pools, and likewise beautified them with various ornaments of magnificence and state, as well as for use and necessity); so this excellent liquor of knowledge, whether it descend from divine inspiration or spring from human sense, would soon perish and vanish into oblivion, if it were not preserved in books, traditions, conferences, and especially in places appointed for such matters as universities, colleges, and schools, where it may have both a fixed habitation, and means and opportunity of increasing and collecting itself."  

"The greatest error of all the rest, is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or farthest end of knowledge: for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to

1 Bacon's Works. Translation of the De Augmentis Scientiarum, Book ii.; To the King.
entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men: as if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace, for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state, for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground, for strife and contention; or a shop, for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse, for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of man's estate.  

This is his mode of thought, by symbols, not by analysis; instead of explaining his idea, he transposes and translates it,—translates it entire, to the smallest details, enclosing all in the majesty of a grand period, or in the brevity of a striking sentence. Thence springs a style of admirable richness, gravity, and vigour, now solemn and symmetrical, now concise and piercing, always elaborate and full of colour. There is nothing in English prose superior to his diction.

Thence is derived also his manner of conceiving things. He is not a dialectician, like Hobbes or Descartes, apt in arranging ideas, in educing one from another, in leading his reader from the simple to the complex by an unbroken chain. He is a producer of conceptions and of sentences. The matter being explored, he says to us: "Such it is; touch it not on that side; it must be approached from the other." Nothing more; no proof, no effort to convince: he affirms, and does nothing more

1 Bacon's Works. Translation of the De Augmentis Scientiarum, Book i. The true end of learning mistaken.
2 Especially in the Essays.
he has thought in the manner of artists and poets, and he speaks after the manner of prophets and seers. *Cogitata et visa* this title of one of his books might be the title of all. The most admirable, the *Novum Organum*, is a string of aphorisms,—a collection, as it were, of scientific decrees, as of an oracle who foresees the future and reveals the truth. And to make the resemblance complete, he expresses them by poetical figures, by enigmatic abbreviations, almost in Sibylline verses: *Idola specús, Idola tribús, Idola fori, Idola theatrí*, everyone will recall these strange names, by which he signifies the four kinds of illusions to which man is subject.¹ Shakspeare and the seers do not contain more vigorous or expressive condensations of thought, more resembling inspiration, and in Bacon they are to be found everywhere. On the whole, his process is that of the creators; it is intuition, not reasoning. When he has laid up his store of facts, the greatest possible, on some vast subject, on some entire province of the mind, on the whole anterior philosophy, on the general condition of the sciences, on the power and limits of human reason, he casts over all this a comprehensive view, as it were a great net, brings up a universal idea, condenses his idea into a maxim, and hands it to us with the words, "Verify and profit by it."

There is nothing more hazardous, more like fantasy, than this mode of thought, when it is not checked by natural and strong good sense. This common sense, which is a kind of natural divination, the stable equilibrium of an intellect always gravitating to the true,

¹ See also *Novum Organum*, Books i. and ii.; the twenty-seven kinds of examples, with their metaphorical names: *Instantia crucis, divertit janua, Instantia innuentes, polychresta, magica*, etc.
like the needle to the pole, Bacon possesses in the highest degree. He has a pre-eminently practical, even an utilitarian mind, such as we meet with later in Bentham, and such as their business habits were to impress more and more upon the English. At the age of sixteen, while at the university, he was dissatisfied with Aristotle's philosophy, not that he thought meanly of the author, whom, on the contrary, he calls a great genius; but because it seemed to him of no practical utility, incapable of producing works which might promote the well-being of men. We see that from the outset he struck upon his dominant idea: all else comes to him from this; a contempt for antecedent philosophy, the conception of a different system, the entire reformation of the sciences by the indication of a new goal, the definition of a distinct method, the opening up of unsuspected anticipations. It is never speculation which he relishes, but the practical application of it. His eyes are turned not to heaven, but to earth, not to things abstract and vain, but to things palpable and solid, not to curious but to profitable truths. He seeks to better the condition of men, to labour for the welfare of mankind, to enrich human life with new discoveries and new resources, to equip mankind with new powers and new instruments of action. His philosophy itself is but an instrument, *organum*, a sort of machine or lever constructed to enable the intellect to raise a weight, to break through obstacles, to open up vistas, to accomplish tasks which had hitherto surpassed its power.

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2 This point is brought out by the review of Lord Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, vol. iii.
In his eyes, every special science, like science in general, should be an implement. He invites mathematicians, to quit their pure geometry, to study numbers only with a view to natural philosophy, to seek formulas only to calculate real quantities and natural motions. He recommends moralists to study the soul, the passions, habits, temptations, not merely in a speculative way, but with a view to the cure or diminution of vice, and assigns to the science of morals as its goal the amelioration of morals. For him, the object of science is always the establishment of an art, that is, the production of something of practical utility; when he wished to describe the efficacious nature of his philosophy by a tale, he delineated in the New Atlantis, with a poet's boldness and the precision of a seer, almost employing the very terms in use now, modern applications, and the present organisation of the sciences, academies, observatories, air-balloons, submarine vessels, the improvement of land, the transmutation of species, regenerations, the discovery of remedies, the preservation of food. The end of our foundation, says his principal personage, is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible. And this "possible" is infinite.

How did this grand and just conception originate? Doubtless common sense and genius too were necessary to its production; but neither common sense nor genius was lacking to men: there had been more than one who, observing, like Bacon, the progress of particular industries, could, like him, have conceived of universal industry, and from certain limited ameliorations have advanced to unlimited amelioration. Here we see the
power of connection; men think they do everything by their individual thought, and they can do nothing without the assistance of the thoughts of their neighbours; they fancy that they are following the small voice within them, but they only hear it because it is swelled by the thousand buzzing and imperious voices, which, issuing from all surrounding or distant circumstances, are confounded with it in an harmonious vibration. Generally they hear it, as Bacon did, from the first moment of reflection; but it had become inaudible among the opposing sounds which came from without to smother it. Could this confidence in the infinite enlargement of human power, this glorious idea of the universal conquest of nature, this firm hope in the continual increase of well-being and happiness, have germinated, grown, occupied an intelligence entirely, and thence have struck its roots, been propagated and spread over neighbouring intelligences, in a time of discouragement and decay, when men believed the end of the world at hand, when things were falling into ruin about them, when Christian mysticism, as in the first centuries, ecclesiastical tyranny, as in the fourteenth century, were convincing them of their impotence, by perverting their intellectual efforts and curtailing their liberty. On the contrary, such hopes must then have seemed to be outbursts of pride, or suggestions of the carnal mind. They did seem so; and the last representatives of ancient science, and the first of the new, were exiled or imprisoned, assassinated or burned. In order to be developed an idea must be in harmony with surrounding civilisation; before man can expect to attain the dominion over nature, or attempts to improve his condition, amelioration must have begun on all sides, industries
have increased, knowledge have been accumulated, the
arts expanded, a hundred thousand irrefutable witnesses
must have come incessantly to give proof of his power and
assurance of his progress. The “masculine birth of the
time” (temporis partus masculus) is the title which Bacon
applies to his work, and it is a true one. In fact, the
whole age co-operated in it; by this creation it was
finished. The consciousness of human power and pro-
sperity gave to the Renaissance its first energy, its ideal,
its poetic materials, its distinguishing features; and now
it furnishes it with its final expression, its scientific
doctrine, and its ultimate object.

We may add also, its method. For, the end of a
journey once determined, the route is laid down, since the
end always determines the route; when the point to be
reached is changed, the path of approach is changed,
and science, varying its object, varies also its method.
So long as it limited its effort to the satisfying an idle
curiosity, opening out speculative vistas, establishing a
sort of opera in speculative minds, it could launch out
any moment into metaphysical abstractions and dis-
tinctions: it was enough for it to skim over experience;
it soon quitted it, and came all at once upon great words,
quiddities, the principle of individuation, final causes.
Half proofs sufficed science; at bottom it did not care
to establish a truth, but to get an opinion; and its
instrument, the syllogism, was serviceable only for
refutations, not for discoveries: it took general laws for
a starting-point instead of a point of arrival; instead
of going to find them, it fancied them found. The
syllogism was good in the schools, not in nature; it
made disputants, not discoverers. From the moment
that science had art for an end, and men studied in
order to act, all was transformed; for we cannot act, without certain and precise knowledge. Forces, before they can be employed, must be measured and verified; before we can build a house, we must know exactly the resistance of the beams, or the house will collapse; before we can cure a sick man, we must know with certainty the effect of a remedy, or the patient will die. Practice makes certainty and exactitude a necessity to science, because practice is impossible when it has nothing to lean upon but guesses and approximations. How can we eliminate guesses and approximations? How introduce into science solidity and precision? We must imitate the cases in which science, issuing in practice, has proved to be precise and certain, and these cases are the industries. We must, as in the industries, observe, essay, grope about, verify, keep our mind fixed on sensible and particular things, advance to general rules only step by step; not anticipate experience, but follow it; not imagine nature, but interpret it. For every general effect, such as heat, whiteness, hardness, liquidity, we must seek a general condition, so that in producing the condition we may produce the effect. And for this it is necessary, by fit rejections and exclusions, to extract the condition sought from the heap of facts in which it lies buried, construct the table of cases from which the effect is absent, the table where it is present, the table where the effect is shown in various degrees, so as to isolate and bring to light the condition which produced it.¹ Then we shall have, not useless universal axioms, but efficacious mediate axioms, true laws from which we can derive works, and which are the sources of power in the same degree as the sources

¹ *Novum Organum*, ii. 15 and 16.
of light.\textsuperscript{1} Bacon described and predicted in this modern science and industry, their correspondence, method, resources, principle; and after more than two centuries, it is still to him that we go even at the present day to look for the theory of what we are attempting and doing.

Beyond this great view, he has discovered nothing. Cowley, one of his admirers, rightly said that, like Moses on Mount Pisgah, he was the first to announce the promised land; but he might have added quite as justly, that, like Moses, he did not enter there. He pointed out the route, but did not travel it; he taught men how to discover natural laws, but discovered none. His definition of heat is extremely imperfect. His \textit{Natural History} is full of fanciful explanations.\textsuperscript{2} Like the poets, he peoples nature with instincts and desires; attributes to bodies an actual voracity, to the atmosphere a thirst for light, sounds, odours, vapours, which it drinks in; to metals a sort of haste to be incorporated with acids. He explains the duration of the bubbles of air which float on the surface of liquids, by supposing that air has a very small or no appetite for height. He sees in every quality, weight, ductility, hardness, a distinct essence which has its special cause; so that when a man knows the cause of every quality of gold, he will be able to put all these causes together, and make gold. In the main, with the alchemists, Paracelsus and Gilbert, Kepler himself, with all the men of his time, men of imagination, nourished on Aristotle, he represents nature as a compound of secret and living energies, inexplicable and primordial forces, distinct and indecom-

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Novum Organum}, i. i. 3.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Natural History}, 800, 24, etc. \textit{De Augmentis}, iii. 1.
posable essences, adapted each by the will of the Creator to produce a distinct effect. He almost saw souls endowed with latent repugnances and occult inclinations, which aspire to or resist certain directions, certain mixtures, and certain localities. On this account also he confounds everything in his researches in an indistinguishable mass, vegetative and medicinal properties, mechanical and curative, physical and moral, without considering the most complex as depending on the simplest, but each on the contrary in itself, and taken apart, as an irreducible and independent existence. Obstinate in this error, the thinkers of the age mark time without advancing. They see clearly with Bacon the wide field of discovery, but they cannot enter upon it. They want an idea, and for want of this idea they do not advance. The disposition of mind which but now was a lever, is become an obstacle: it must be changed, that the obstacle may be got rid of. For ideas, I mean great and efficacious ones, do not come at will nor by chance, by the effort of an individual, or by a happy accident. Methods and philosophies, as well as literatures and religions, arise from the spirit of the age; and this spirit of the age makes them potent or powerless. One state of public intelligence excludes a certain kind of literature; another, a certain scientific conception. When it happens thus, writers and thinkers labour in vain, the literature is abortive, the conception does not make its appearance. In vain they turn one way and another, trying to remove the weight which hinders them; something stronger than themselves paralyses their hands and frustrates their endeavours. The central pivot of the vast wheel on which human affairs move must be displaced one notch, that all may
move with its motion. At this moment the pivot was moved, and thus a revolution of the great wheel begins, bringing round a new conception of nature, and in consequence that part of the method which was lacking. To the diviners, the creators, the comprehensive and impassioned minds who seized objects in a lump and in masses, succeeded the discursive thinkers, the systematic thinkers, the graduated and clear logicians, who, disposing ideas in continuous series, lead the hearer gradually from the simple to the most complex by easy and unbroken paths. Descartes superseded Bacon; the classical age obliterated the Renaissance; poetry and lofty imagination gave way before rhetoric, eloquence, and analysis. In this transformation of mind, ideas were transformed. Everything was drained dry and simplified. The universe, like all else, was reduced to two or three notions; and the conception of nature, which was poetical, became mechanical. Instead of souls, living forces, repugnances, and attractions, we have pulleys, levers, impelling forces. The world, which seemed a mass of instinctive powers, is now like a mere machinery of cog-wheels. Beneath this adventurous supposition lies a large and certain truth: that there is, namely, a scale of facts, some at the summit very complex, others at the base very simple; those above having their origin in those below, so that the lower ones explain the higher; and that we must seek the primary laws of things in the laws of motion. The search was made, and Galileo found them. Thenceforth the work of the Renaissance, outstripping the extreme point to which Bacon had pushed it, and at which he had left it, was able to proceed onward by itself, and did so proceed, without limit.