rested in the question, commit so capital an oversight? Tantamne rem tam negligentem? (What! treat a matter so weighty in a style so slight and slipshod?) The truth is, that, at this day, after a lapse of forty-seven years, and much discussion, the whole question moved by Wordsworth is still a res integra (a case untouched). And for this reason, that no sufficient specimen has ever been given of the particular phraseology which each party contemplates as good or as bad; no man, in this dispute, steadily understands even himself; and, if he did, no other person understands him, for want of distinct illustrations. Not only the answer, therefore, is still entirely in arrear, but even the question is still in arrear: it has not yet practically explained itself so as that an answer to it could be possible.

Passing from the diction of Wordsworth's poetry to its matter, the least plausible objection ever brought against it was that of Mr Hazlitt: "One would suppose," he said, "from the tenor of his subjects, that on this earth there was neither marrying nor giving in marriage." But as well might it be said of Aristophanes: "One would suppose that in Athens no such thing had been known as sorrow and weeping." Or Wordsworth himself might say reproachfully to some of Mr Hazlitt's more favoured poets: "Judging by your themes, a man must believe that there is no such thing on our planet as fighting and kicking." Wordsworth has written many memorable poems (for instance, "On the Tyrolean and the Spanish Insurrections," "On the Retreat from Moscow," "On the Feast of Brougham Castle"), all sympathising powerfully with the martial spirit. Other poets, favourites of Mr Hazlitt, have never struck a solitary note from this Tyrtaean lyre; and who blames them? Surely, if every man breathing finds his
powers limited, every man would do well to respect this silent admonition of nature, by not travelling out of his appointed walk, through any coxcombrery of sporting a spurious versatility. And in this view, what Mr Hazlitt made the reproof of the poet, is amongst the first of his praiscs. But there is another reason why Wordsworth could not meddle with festal raptures like the glory of a wedding-day. These raptures are not only too brief, but (which is worse) they tend downwards: even for as long as they last, they do not move upon an ascending scale. And even that is not their worst fault: they do not diffuse or communicate themselves: the wretches chiefly interested in a marriage are so selfish, that they keep all the rapture to themselves. Mere joy, that does not linger and reproduce itself in reverberations and endless mirrors, is not fitted for poetry. What would the sun be itself, if it were a mere blank orb of fire that did not multiply its splendours through millions of rays refracted and reflected; or if its glory were not endlessly caught, splintered, and thrown back by atmospheric repercussions?

There is, besides, a still subtler reason (and one that ought not to have escaped the acuteness of Mr Hazlitt) why the muse of Wordsworth could not glorify a wedding festival. Poems no longer than a sonnet he might derive from such an impulse: and one such poem of his there really is. But whosoever looks searchingly into the characteristic genius of Wordsworth, will see that he does not willingly deal with a passion, in its direct aspect, or presenting an unmodified contour, but in forms more complex and oblique, and when passing under the shadow of some secondary passion. Joy, for instance, that wells up from constitutional sources, joy that is ebullient from youth to age, and cannot cease to sparkle, he yet exhibits
in the person of Matthew,* the village schoolmaster, as touched and overgloomed by memories of sorrow. In the poem of "We are Seven," which brings into day for the first time a profound fact in the abysses of human nature—viz., that the mind of an infant cannot admit the idea of death, cannot comprehend it, any more than the fountain of light can comprehend the aboriginal darkness (a truth on which Mr Ferrier has since commented beautifully in his "Philosophy of Consciousness")—the little mountaineer, who furnishes the text for this lovely strain, she whose fulness of life could not brook the gloomy faith in a grave, is yet (for the effect upon the reader) brought into connection with the reflex shadows of the grave: and if she herself has not, the reader has, and through this very child, the gloom of that contemplation obliquely irradiated, as raised in relief upon his imagination, even by her. That same infant, which subjectively could not tolerate death, being by the reader contemplated objectively, flashes upon us the tenderest images of death. Death and its sunny antipole are forced into connection. I remember, again, to have heard a man complain, that in a little poem of Wordsworth's, having for its very subject the universal diffusion (and the gratuitous diffusion) of joy—

"Pleasure is spread through the earth,
In stray gifts to be claim'd by whoever shall find,"

a picture occurs which overpowered him with melancholy: it was this—

"In sight of the spires
All alive with the fires
Of the sun going down to his rest,
In the broad open eye of the solitary sky

* See the exquisite poems, so little understood by the commonplace reader, of the "Two April Mornings," and the "Fountain."
They dance—there are three, as jocund as free,
While they dance on the calm river's breast.”

Undeniably there is (and without ground for complaint there is) even here, where the spirit of gaiety is professedly invoked, an oblique though evanescent image flashed upon us of a sadness that lies deep behind the laughing figures, and of a solitude that is the real possessor in fee of all things, but is waiting an hour or so for the dispossession of the dancing men and maidens who for that transitory hour are the true, but, alas! the fugitive tenants.

An inverse case, as regards the three just cited, is found in the poem of "Hart-leap-well," over which the mysterious spirit of the noonday Pan seems to brood. Out of suffering there is evoked the image of peace. Out of the cruel leap, and the agonising race through thirteen hours—out of the anguish in the perishing brute, and the headlong courage of his final despair,

"Not unobserved by sympathy divine”—

out of the wined lodge and the forgotten mansion, bowers that are trodden under foot, and pleasure-houses that are dust—the poet calls up a vision of palingenesis (or restorative resurrection); he interposes his solemn images of suffering, of decay, and ruin, only as a visionary haze through which gleams transpire of a trembling dawn far off, but surely even now on the road.

* Coleridge had a grievous infirmity of mind as regarded pain. He could not contemplate the shadows of fear, of sorrow, of suffering, with any steadiness of gaze. He was, in relation to that subject, what in Lancashire they call nest—i. e., soft, or effeminate. This frailty claimed indulgence, had he not erected it at times into a ground of superiority. Accordingly, I remember that he also complained of this passage in Wordsworth, and on the same ground, as being too overpoweringly depressing in the fourth line, when modified by the other five.
ON WORDSWORTH'S POETRY.

"The pleasure-house is dust: behind, before,
This is no common waste, no common gloom;
But Nature in due course of time once more
Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.
She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
That what we are, and have been, may be known;
But, at the coming of the milder day,
These monuments shall all be overgrown."

This influx of the joyous into the sad, and of the sad into the joyous—this reciprocal entanglement of darkness in light, and of light in darkness—offers a subject too occult for popular criticism; but merely to have suggested it, may be sufficient to account for Wordsworth not having chosen a theme of pure garish sunshine, such as the hurry of a wedding-day, so long as others, more picturesque or more plastic to a subtle purpose of creation, were to be had. A wedding-day is, in many a life, the sunniest of its days. But, unless it is overcast with some event more tragic than could be wished, its uniformity of blaze, without shade or relief, makes it insipid to the mere bystander. It must not be forgotten, that a wedding is pre-eminently that sort of festival which swamps all individuality of sentiment or character. The epitalamium of Edmund Spenser are the most impassioned that exist; but nobody reads them.

But far beyond these causes of repulsiveness to ordinary readers was the class of subjects selected, and the mode of treating them. The earliest line of readers, the van in point of time, always includes a majority of the young, the commonplace, and the unimpassioned. Subsequently these are sifted and winnowed, as the rear-ranks come forward in succession. But at first it was sure to ruin any poems, if the situations treated are not those which reproduce to the fancy of readers their own hopes and prospects. The meditative are interested by all that has an interest for human nature; but what cares a young
lady, dreaming of lovers kneeling at her feet, for the agitations of a mother forced into resigning her child? or for the sorrow of a shepherd at eighty parting for ever amongst mountain solitudes with an only son of seventeen, innocent and hopeful, whom soon afterwards the guilty town seduces into ruin irreparable? Romances and novels in verse constitute the poetry which is immediately successful; and that is a poetry, it may be added, which, being successful through one generation, afterwards is unsuccessful for ever.

But from this theme, as too extensive, let us pass to the separate works of Wordsworth; and, in deference to the opinion of the world, let us begin with the "Excur- sion." This poem, as regards its opening, seems to require a recast. The inaugurating story of Margaret is in a wrong key, and rests upon a false basis. It is a case of sorrow from desertion. So at least it is represented. Margaret loses, in losing her husband (parted from her by mere stress of poverty), the one sole friend of her heart. And the Wanderer, who is the presiding philosopher of the poem, in retracing her story, sees nothing in the case but a wasting away through sorrow, natural in its kind, but preternatural in its degree.

There is a story somewhere told of a man who complained, and his friends also complained, that his face looked almost always dirty. The man explained this strange affection out of a mysterious idiosyncrasy in the face itself, upon which the atmosphere so acted as to force out stains or masses of gloomy suffusion just as it does upon some qualities of stone in rainy or vapoury weather. But, said his friend, had you no advice for this strange affection? Oh yes: surgeons had prescribed; chemistry had exhausted its secrets upon the case; magnetism had
done its best; electricity had done its worst. His friend mused for some time, and then asked—"Pray, amongst these painful experiments, did it ever happen to you to try one that I have read of—viz., a basin of soap and water?" And perhaps, on the same principle, it might be allowable to ask the philosophic wanderer, who washes the case of Margaret with so many coats of metaphysical varnish, but ends with finding all unavailing, "Pray, amongst your other experiments, did you ever try the effect of a guinea?" Supposing this, however, to be a remedy beyond his fortitude, at least he might have offered a little rational advice, which costs no more than civility. Let us look steadily at the case. The particular calamity under which Margaret groaned was the loss of her husband, who had enlisted—not into the horse marines, too unsettled in their head-quarters, but into our British army. There is something, even on the husband’s part, in this enlistment to which the reader can hardly extend his indulgence. The man had not gone off, it is true, as a heartless deserter of his family, or in profligate quest of pleasure. Cheerfully he would have staid and worked, had trade been good; but, as it was not, he found it impossible to support the spectacle of domestic suffering. He takes the bounty of a recruiting serjeant, and off he marches with his regiment. Nobody reaches the summit of heartlessness at once; and accordingly, in this early stage of his desertion, we are not surprised to find that part (but what part?) of the bounty had been silently conveyed to his wife. So far we are barely not indignant; but as time wears on we become highly so, for no letter does he ever send to his poor forsaken partner, either of tender excuse, or of encouraging prospects. Yet, if he had done this, still we must condemn him. Millions have sup-
ported (and supported without praise or knowledge of man) that trial from which he so weakly fled. Even in this, and going no further, he was a voluptuary. Millions have heard and acknowledged, as a secret call from Heaven, the summons, not only to take their own share of household suffering, as a mere sacrifice to the spirit of manliness, but also to stand the far sterner trial of witnessing the same privations in a wife and little children. To evade this, to slip his neck out of the yoke, when God summons a poor man to such a trial, is the worst form of cowardice. And Margaret’s husband, by adding to this cowardice subsequently an entire neglect of his family, not so much as intimating the destination of the regiment, forfeits his last hold upon our lingering sympathy. But with him, it will be said, the poet has not connected the leading thread of the interest. Certainly not; though in some degree, by a reaction from his character, depends the respectability of Margaret’s grief. And it is impossible to turn away from his case entirely, because from the act of the enlistment is derived the whole movement of the story. Here it is that we must tax the wandering philosopher with treason to his obvious duty. He found so luxurious a pleasure in contemplating a pathetic phthisis of heart in the abandoned wife, that the one obvious word of counsel in her particular distress, which dotage could not have overlooked, he suppresses. And yet this one word in the revolution of a week would have brought her effectual relief. Surely the regiment into which her husband had enlisted bore some number: it was the king’s “dirty half-hundred,”* or the rifle brigade, or some corps

* “Dirty half-hundred:”—By an old military jest, which probably had at first some foundation in fact, the 50th regiment of foot has been so styled for above a century.
known to men and the Horse Guards. Instead, therefore, of suffering poor Margaret to loiter at a gate, looking for answers to her questions from vagrant horsemen, a process which reminds one of a sight, sometimes extorting at once smiles and deep pity, in the crowded thoroughfares of London—viz., a little child innocently asking with tearful eyes from strangers for the mother whom it has lost in that vast wilderness—the Wanderer should at once have inquired for the station of that particular detachment which had enlisted him. This must have been in the neighbourhood. Here he would have obtained all the particulars. That same night he might have written to the War-Office; and in a very few days, an official answer, bearing the indorsement, On H. M.'s Service, would have placed Margaret in communication with her truant. To have overlooked a point of policy so broadly apparent as this, vitiates and nullifies the very basis of the story. Even for a romance it will not do, far less for a philosophic poem, dealing with intense realities. No such case of distress could have lived for one fortnight; nor could it have survived a single interview with the rector, the curate, or the parish-clerk, with the schoolmaster, the doctor, the attorney, the innkeeper, or the exciseman.

But, apart from the vicious mechanism of the incidents, the story is far more objectionable by the doubtful quality of the leading character from which it derives its pathos. Had any one of us the readers discharged the duties of coroner in her neighbourhood, he would have found it his duty to hold an inquest upon the body of her infant. This child, as every reader could depose (now when the case has been circumstantially reported by the poet), died of neglect; not originating in direct cruelty, but in criminal self-indulgence. Self-indulgence in what? Not in liquor,
yet not altogether in fretting. Sloth, and the habit of
gadding abroad, were most in fault. The Wanderer* himself might have been called, as a witness for the crown, to
prove that the infant was left to sleep in solitude for
hours: the key even was taken away, as if to intercept the
possibility (except through burglary) of those tender atten-
tions from some casual stranger, which the thoughtless
and vagrant mother had withdrawn. The child absolutely
awoke whilst the philosopher was listening at the door.
It cried; but finally hushed itself to sleep. That looks
like a case of Dalby’s carminative.† But this solution of
the case (the soothing into sleep) could not have been re-
lied on; tragical catastrophes arise from neglected crying;
ruptures in the first place, a very common result in in-
fants; rolling out of bed, followed by dislocation of the
neck; fits, and other short cuts to death. It is hardly
any praise to Margaret that she carried the child to that
consummation by a more lingering road.

This first tale, therefore, must, and will, if Mr Words-
worth retains energy for such recasts of a laborious work,
be cut away from its connection with the “Excursion.”
Such an amputation is the more to be expected from a
poet aware of his own importance, and anxious for the
perfection of his works, because nothing in the following
books depends upon this narrative. No timbers or main
beams need to be sawed away; it is but a bolt that is to

* “The Wanderer” (as should be explained to the reader) is the tech-
nical designation of the presiding philosopher in Wordsworth’s “Excurs-
ion.”

† “Dalby’s carminative;” — This, and another similar remedy, called
Godfrey’s cordial, both owing their main agencies to opium, have through
generations been the chief resource of poor mothers when embarrassed in
their daily labours by fretful infants. Fine ladies have no such difficulty
to face, and are apt to forget that there is any such apology to plead.
be slipped, a rivet to be unscrewed. And yet, on the other hand, if the connection is slight, the injury is great; for we all complain heavily of entering a temple dedicated to new combinations of truth through a vestibule of falsehood. And the falsehood is double; falsehood in the adjustment of the details (however separately possible), falsehood in the character which, wearing the mask of profound sentiment, does apparently repose upon dyspepsy and sloth.

Far different in value and in principle of composition is the next tale in the "Excursion." This occupies the fourth book, and is the impassioned record from the infidel solitary of those heart-shaking chapters in his own life which had made him what the reader finds him. Once he had not been a solitary; once he had not been an infidel; now he is both. He lives in a little urn-like valley (a closet-recess from Little Langdale, to judge by the description), amongst the homely household of a yeoman; he has become a bitter cynic; and not against man alone, or society alone, but against the laws of hope or fear, upon which both repose. If he endures the society with which he is now connected, it is because, being dull, that society is of few words; it is because, being tied to hard labour, that society goes early to bed, and packs up its dulness at eight p.m. in blankets; it is because, under the acute inflections of Sunday, or the chronic inflections of the Christmas holidays, that dull society is easily laid into a magnetic sleep by three passes of metaphysical philosophy. The narrative of this misanthrope is grand and impassioned; not creeping by details and minute touches, but rolling through capital events, and uttering its pathos through great representative abstractions. Nothing can be finer than when, upon the desolation of his household, upon the
utter emptying of his domestic chambers by the successive deaths of children and youthful wife, just at that moment the mighty phantom of the French Revolution rises solemnly above the horizon; even then, even by this great vision, new earth and new heavens are promised to human nature; and suddenly the solitary man, translated by the frenzy of human grief into the frenzy of supernatural hopes, adopts these radiant visions for the darlings whom he has lost—

"Society becomes his glittering bride,  
And airy hopes his children."

Yet it is a misfortune in the fate of this fine tragic movement, rather than its structure, that it tends to collapse; the latter strains, coloured deeply by disappointment, do not correspond with the grandeur of the first. And the hero of the record becomes even more painfully a contrast to himself than the tenor of the incidents to their own earlier stages. Sneering and querulous comments upon so broad a field as human folly, make poor compensation for the magnificence of youthful enthusiasm. But may not this defect be redressed in a future section of the poem? It is probable, from a hint dropped by the author, that one collateral object of the philosophical discussions is, the reconversion of the splanetic infidel to his ancient creed in some higher form, and to his ancient temper of benignant hope; in which case, what now we feel to be a cheerless depression, will sweep round into a noble reascend, quite on a level with the aspirations of his youth, and differing, not in degree, but only in quality of enthusiasm. Yet, if this is the poet's plan, it seems to rest upon a misconception. For how should the sneering sceptic, who has actually found solace in Voltaire's "Candide," be restored to the benignities of faith and hope by argument?
It was not in this way that he lost his station amongst Christian believers. No false philosophy it had been which wrecked his Christian spirit of hope; but, in the very inverse order, his bankruptcy in hope it was which wrecked his Christian philosophy. Here, therefore, the poet will certainly find himself in an "almighty fix;" because any possible treatment, which could restore the solitary's former self, such as a course of tonic medicines or sea-bathing, could not interest the reader; and reversely, any successful treatment through argument that could interest the philosophic reader, would not, under the circumstances, seem a plausible restoration commensurate with the case.

What is it that has made the recluse a sceptic? Is it the reading of bad books? In that case he may be reclaimed by the arguments of those who have read better. But not at all. He has become the unbelieving cynic that he is, first, through his own domestic calamities predisposing him to gloomy views of human nature; and, secondly, through the overclouding of his high-toned expectations from the French Revolution; which overclouding has disposed him, in a spirit of revenge for his own disappointment, to contemptuous views of human nature. Now, surely the dejection which supports his gloom, and the despondency which supports his contempt, are not of a nature to give way before philosophic reasonings. Make him happy by restoring what he has lost, and his genial philosophy will return of itself. Make him triumphant by realising what had seemed to him the golden promises of the French Revolution, and his political creed will moult her sickly feathers. Do this, and he is still young enough for hope; but less than this restoration of his morning visions will not call back again his morning happiness;
and breaking spears with him in logical tournaments will injure his temper without bettering his hopes.

Indirectly, besides, it ought not to be overlooked, that, as respects the French Revolution, the whole college of philosophy in the "Excursion," who are gathered together upon the case of the recluse, make the same mistake that he makes. Why is the recluse disgusted with the French Revolution? Because it had not fulfilled many of his expectations; and, of those which it had fulfilled, some had soon been darkened by reverses. But really this was childish impatience. If a man depends for the exuberance of his harvest upon the splendour of the coming summer, we do not excuse him for taking prussic acid because it rains cats and dogs through the first ten days of April. All in good time, we say; take it easy; make acquaintance with May and June before you do anything rash. The French Revolution has not, even yet (1845), come into full action: This mighty event was the explosion of a prodigious volcano, which scattered its lava over every kingdom of every continent, silently manuring them for social struggles; this lava is gradually fertilising all soils in all countries; the revolutionary movement is moving onwards at this hour as inexorably as ever. Listen, if you have ears for such spiritual sounds, to the mighty tide even now slowly coming up from the sea to Milan, to Rome, to Naples, to Vienna. Hearken to the ominous undulations already breaking against the steps of that golden throne which stretches from St Petersburg to Astrakan; tremble at the hurricanes which have long been mustering about the pavilions of the Ottoman Padishah. All these are long swells setting in from original impulses and fermentations of the French Revolution. Even as regards France herself, that which gave the mortal offence to the sympathies
of Wordsworth's "Solitary" was the Reign of Terror. But how thoughtless to measure the cycles of vast national revolutions by metres that would not stretch round an ordinary human career. Even to a frail sweetheart, you would grant more indulgence than to be off in a pet because some momentary cloud arose between you. The Reign of Terror was a mere fleeting and transitional phasis. The Napoleon dynasty was nothing more. Even that very Napoleon scourge, which was supposed by many to have consummated and superseded the Revolution, has itself passed away upon the wind—has itself been superseded—leaving no wreck, relic, or record behind, except precisely those changes which it worked, not in its character of an enemy to the Revolution (which also it was), but as its servant and its tool. See, even whilst we speak, the folly of that cynical sceptic who would not allow time for great natural processes of purification to travel onwards to their birth, or wait for the evolution of natural results; the storm that shocked him has wheeled away; the frost and the hail that offended him have done their office; the rain is over and gone; happier days have descended upon France; the voice of the turtle is heard in all her forests; once again, after two thousand years of servitude, man walks with his head erect; bastiles are no more; every cottage is searched by the golden light of law; and the privileges of religious conscience have been guaranteed and consecrated for ever and ever.

Here, then, the poet himself, the philosophic Wanderer, the learned vicar, are all equally in fault with the solitary sceptic; for they all agree in treating his disappointment as sound and reasonable in itself; but blameworthy only in relation to those exalted hopes which he never ought to have encouraged. Right (they say), to consider the French
Revolution, now, as a failure: but not right originally to have expected that it should succeed. Whereas, in fact, gentlemen blockheads, it has succeeded; it is far beyond the reach of ruinous reactions; it is propagating its life; it is travelling on to new births—conquering, and yet to conquer.

It is not easy to see, therefore, how the Laucrice can avoid making some change in the constitution of his poem, were it only to rescue his philosophers, and therefore his own philosophy, from the imputation of precipitancy in judgment. They charge the sceptic with rash judgment à parte ante; and, meantime, they themselves are very much more liable to that charge à parte post. If he, at the first, hoped too much (which is not clear, but only that he hoped too impatiently), they afterwards recant too rashly. And this error they will not, themselves, fail to acknowledge, as soon as they awaken to the truth, that the French Revolution did not close on the 18th Brumaire, 1799, at which time it suffered eclipse, but not final eclipse; at which time it entered a cloud, but not the cloud of death; at which time its vital movement was arrested by a military traitor, but that this Revolution is still mining underground, like the ghost in Hamlet, through every quarter of the globe.*

* The reader must not understand the writer as unconditionally approving of the French Revolution. It is his belief that the resistance to the Revolution was, in many high quarters, a sacred duty; and that this resistance it was which forced out, from the Revolution itself, the benefits which it has since diffused. The Revolution, and the resistance to the Révolution, were the two powers that quickened—each the other—for ultimate good. To speak by the language of mechanics, the case was one which illustrated the composition of forces. Neither the Revolution singly, nor the resistance to the Revolution singly, was calculated to regenerate social man. But the two forces in union, where the one modified, mitigated, or even neutralised the other, at times; and where, at
In paying so much attention to the "Excursion" (of which, in any more extended notice, the two books entitled, the "Churchyard amongst the Mountains," would have claimed the profoundest attention), I yield less to my own opinion than to that of the public. Or, perhaps, it is not so much the public as the vulgar opinion, governed entirely by the consideration that the "Excursion" is very much the longest poem of its author; and, secondly, that it bears currently the title of a philosophic poem; on which account it is presumed to have a higher dignity. The big name and the big size of the particular volume are allowed to settle its rank. But in this there is much delusion. In the very scheme and movement of the "Excursion" there are two defects which interfere greatly with its power to act upon the mind with any vital effect of unity; so that, infallibly, it will be read, by future generations, in parts and fragments; and, being thus virtually dismembered into many small poems, it will scarcely justify men in allowing it the rank of a long one. One of these defects is the undulatory character of the course pursued by the poem, which does not ascend uniformly, or even keep one steady level, but trespasses, as if by forgetfulness or chance, into topics yielding a very humble inspiration, and not always closely connected with the presiding theme. In part this arises from the accident that a slight tissue of narrative connects the different sections; and to this movement of the narrative, the fluctuations of the speculative themes are in part obedient: the succession of the incidents becomes a law for the succession of the thoughts, as oftentimes it happens that these incidents

(times, each entered into a happy combination with the other, yielded for the world those benefits which, by its separate tendency, either of the two had been fitted to stifle.

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are the proximate occasions of the thoughts. Yet, as the narrative is not of a nature to be moulded by any determinate principle of controlling passion, but bends easily to the caprices of chance and the moment, unavoidably it stamps, by reaction, a desultory or even incoherent character upon the train of the philosophic discussions. You know not what is coming next as regards the succession of the incidents; and, when the next movement does come, you do not always know why it comes. This has the effect of crumbling the poem into separate segments, and causes the whole (when looked at as a whole) to appear a rope of sand. A second defect lies in the colloquial form which the poem sometimes assumes. It is dangerous to conduct a philosophic discussion by talking. If the nature of the argument could be supposed to roll through logical quilllets or metaphysical conundrums, so that, on putting forward a problem, the interlocutor could bring matters to a crisis, by saying, “Do you give it up?” in that case there might be a smart reciprocation of dialogue, of asserting and denying, giving and taking, butting, rebutting, and “surrebutting,” and this would confer an interlocutory or amœbasian character upon the process of altercation. But the topics and the quality of the arguments being moral, in which always the reconciliation of the feelings is to be secured by gradual persuasion, rather than the understanding to be floored by a solitary blow, inevitably it becomes impossible that anything of this brilliant conversational sword-play, cut-and-thrust, “carte” and “tierce,” can make for itself an opening. Mere decorum requires that the speakers should be prosy. And you yourself, though sometimes disposed to say, “Do now, dear old soul, cut it short,” are sensible that very often he cannot cut it short. Disquisitions, in a certain key, can no more turn round
within the compass of a sixpence than a coach-and-six. They must have sea-room to "wear" ship, and to tack. This in itself is often tedious; but it leads to a worse tediousness: a practised eye sees from afar the whole evolution of the coming argument. And this second blemish, unavoidable if the method of dialogue is adopted, becomes more painfully apparent through a third, almost inalienable from the natural constitution of the subjects concerned. It is, that in cases where a large interest of human nature is treated, such as the position of man in this world, his duties, his difficulties, many parts become necessary as transitional or connecting links, which, per se, are not attractive, nor can by any art be made so. Treating the whole theme in extenso, the poet is, therefore, driven into discussions that would not have been chosen by his own taste, but dictated by the logic of the question, and by the impossibility of evading any one branch of a subject which is essential to the integrity of the speculation, simply because it is irreconcilable with poetic brilliancy of treatment.

Not, therefore, in the "Excursion" must we look for that reversionary influence which awaits Wordsworth with posterity. It is the vulgar superstition in behalf of big books and sounding pretensions, that must have prevailed upon Coleridge and others to undervalue, by comparison with the direct philosophic poetry of Wordsworth, those earlier poems which are all short, but generally scintillating with gems of far profounder truth. I speak of that truth which strengthens into solemnity an impression very feebly acknowledged previously, or truth which suddenly unveils a connection between objects hitherto regarded as irrelate and independent. In astronomy, to gain the rank of discoverer, it is not required that you should reveal a.
star absolutely new: find out with respect to an old star some new affection—as, for instance, that it has an ascer-
tainable parallax—and immediately you bring it within
the verge of a human interest; or with respect to some old
familiar planet, that its satellites suffer periodical eclipses,
and immediately you bring it within the verge of terres-
trial uses. Gleams of steadier vision, that brighten into
certainty appearances else doubtful, or that unfold rela-
tions else unsuspected, are not less discoveries of truth
than the downright revelations of the telescope, or the ab-
solute conquests of the diving-bell. It is astonishing how
large a harvest of new truths would be reaped, simply
through the accident of a man's feeling, or being made to
feel, more deeply than other men. He sees the same ob-
jects, neither more nor fewer, but he sees them engraved
in lines far stronger and more determinate: and the differ-
ence in the strength makes the whole difference between
consciousness and sub-consciousness. And in questions of
the mere understanding, we see the same fact illustrated:
the author who wins notice the most, is not he that per-
plexes men by truths drawn from fountains of absolute
novelty—truths as yet unsunned, and from that cause ob-
scure; but he that awakens into illuminated consciousness
ancient lineaments of truth long slumbering in the mind,
although too faint to have extorted attention. Words-
worth has brought many a truth into life both for the eye
and for the understanding, which previously had slum-
bered indistinctly for all men.

For instance, as respects the eye, who does not acknow-
ledge instantaneously the magical strength of truth in his
saying of a cataract seen from a station two miles off, that
it was "frozen by distance?" In all nature, there is not
an object so essentially at war with the stiffening of frost,
as the headlong and desperate life of a cataract; and yet notoriously the effect of distance is to lock up this frenzy of motion into the most petrific column of stillness. This effect is perceived at once when pointed out; but how few are the eyes that ever would have perceived it for themselves! Twilight, again—who before Wordsworth ever distinctly noticed its abstracting power?—that power of removing, softening, harmonising, by which a mode of obscurity executes for the eye the same mysterious office which the mind so often, within its own shadowy realms, executes for itself. In the dim interspace between day and night, all disappears from our earthly scenery, as if touched by an enchanter’s rod, which is either mean or inharmonious, or unquiet, or expressive of temporary things. Leaning against a column of rock, looking down upon a lake or river, and at intervals carrying your eyes forward through a vista of mountains, you become aware that your sight rests upon the very same spectacle, unaltered in a single feature, which once at the same hour was beheld by the legionary Roman from his embattled camp, or by the roving Briton in his “wolf-skin vest,” lying down to sleep, and looking

"Through some leafy bower,
Before his eyes were closed."

How magnificent is the summary or abstraction of the elementary features in such a scene, as executed by the poet himself, in illustration of this abstraction daily executed by nature, through her handmaid Twilight! Listen, reader, to the closing strain, solemn as twilight is solemn, and grand as the spectacle which it describes:

"By him [i.e., the roving Briton] was seen,
The self-same vision which we now behold,
At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power, brought forth,
These mighty barriers, and the gulf between;
ON WORDSWORTH'S POETRY.

The floods, the stars—a spectacle as old
As the beginning of the heavens and earth."

Another great field there is amongst the pomp of nature, which, if Wordsworth did not first notice, he certainly has noticed most circumstantially. I speak of cloud-scenery, or those pageants of sky-built architecture, which sometimes in summer, at noonday, and in all seasons about sunset, arrest or appal the meditative; "perplexing monarchs" with the spectacle of armies manœuvring, or deepening the solemnity of evening by towering edifices, that mimic—but which also in mimicking mock—the transitory grandeurs of man. It is singular that these gorgeous phenomena, not less than those of the *Aurora Borealis*, have been so little noticed by poets. The *Aurora* was naturally neglected by the southern poets of Greece and Rome, as not much seen in their latitudes.* But the cloud-architecture of the daylight belongs alike to north and south. Accordingly, I remember one notice of it in Hesiod, a case where the clouds exhibited

"The beauteous semblance of a flock at rest."

Another there is, a thousand years later, in *Lucan:* amongst the portents which that poet notices as prefiguring the dreadful convulsions destined to shake the earth

* But then, says the reader, why was it not proportionably the more noticed by poets of the north? Certainly that question is fair. And the answer, it is scarcely possible to doubt, is this:—That until the rise of Natural Philosophy, in Charles II.'s reign, there was no name for the appearance; on which account, some writers have been absurd enough to believe that the *Aurora* did not exist, noticeably, until about 1690. Shakspeare, in his journeys down to Stratford (always performed on horseback), must often have been belated: he must sometimes have seen, he could not but have admired, the fiery skirmishing of the *Aurora*. And yet, for want of a word to fix and identify the gorgeous phenomenon, how could he introduce it as an image, or even as the subject of an allusion, in his writings?"
at Pharsalia, I remember some fiery coruscation of arms in the heavens; but, so far as I recollect, the appearances might have belonged equally to the workmanship of the clouds or the Aurora. Up and down the next eight hundred years, are scattered evanescent allusions to these vapoury appearances; in "Hamlet" and elsewhere occur gleams of such allusions; but I remember no distinct sketch of such an appearance before that in the "Antony and Cleopatra" of Shakspere, beginning,

"Sometimes we see a cloud that's dragonish."

Subsequently to Shakspere, these notices, as of all phenomena whatsoever that demanded a familiarity with nature in the spirit of love, became rarer and rarer. At length, as the eighteenth century was winding up its accounts, forth stepped William Wordsworth, of whom, as a reader of all pages in nature, it may be said that, if we except Dampier, the admirable buccaneer, the gentle flibustier,* and some few professional naturalists, he first and he last looked at natural objects with the eye that neither will be dazzled from without nor cheated by preconceptions from within. Most men look at nature in the hurry of a confusion that distinguishes nothing; their error is from without. Pope, again, and many who live in towns,†

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* Flibustier, the ordinary French term for a buccaneer in the last forty years of the seventeenth century, is supposed to be a Spanish or French mispronunciation of the English word freebooter.

† It was not, however, that all poets then lived in towns; neither had Pope himself generally lived in towns. But it is perfectly useless to be familiar with nature unless there is a public trained to love and value nature. It is not what the individual sees that will fix itself as beautiful in his recollections, but what he sees under a consciousness that others will sympathise with his feelings. Under any other circumstances familiarity does but realise the adage, and "breeds contempt." The great despisers of rural scenery, its fixed and permanent undervaluers, are rustics.
make such blunders as that of supposing the moon to tip with silver the hills behind which she is rising, not by erroneous use of their eyes (for they use them not at all), but by inveterate preconceptions. Scarcely has there been a poet with what could be called a learned eye, or an eye extensively learned, before Wordsworth. Much affection there has been of that sort since his rise, and at all times much counterfeit enthusiasm; but the sum of the matter is this, that Wordsworth had his passion for nature fixed in his blood; it was a necessity, like that of the mulberry-leaf to the silk-worm; and through his commerce with nature did he live and breathe. Hence it was—viz., from the truth of his love—that his knowledge grew; whilst most others, being merely hypocrites in their love, have turned out merely sciolists in their knowledge. This chapter, therefore, of sky-scenery may be said to have been revivified amongst the resources of poetry by Wordsworth—rekindled, if not absolutely kindled. The sublime scene indorsed upon the draperies of the storm in the fourth book of the "Excursion"—that scene again witnessed upon the passage of the Hamilton Hills in Yorkshire—the solemn "sky prospect" from the fields of France, are unrivalled in that order of composition; and in one of these records Wordsworth has given first of all the true key-note of the sentiment belonging to these grand pageants. They are, says the poet, speaking in a case where the appearance had occurred towards night,

"Meek nature's evening comment on the shows
And all the fuming vanities of earth."

Yes, that is the secret moral whispered to the mind. These miseries express the laughter which is in heaven at earthly poms. Frail and vapoury are the glories of man, even as the visionary parodies of those glories are frail,
even as the scenical copies of these glories are frail, which
nature weaves in clouds.

As another of those natural appearances which must
have haunted men's eyes since the Flood, but yet had
never forced itself into conscious notice until arrested by
Wordsworth, I may notice an effect of iteration daily ex-
hibited in the habits of cattle:

"The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising,
There are forty feeding like one."

Now, merely as a fact, and if it were nothing more, this
characteristic appearance in the habits of cows, when all
repeat the action of each, ought not to have been over-
looked by those who profess themselves engaged in hold-
ing up a mirror to nature. But the fact has also a pro-
found meaning as a hieroglyphic. In all animals which
live under the protection of man a life of peace and quiet-
ness, but do not share in his labours or in his pleasures,
what we regard is the species, and not the individual.
Nobody but a grazier ever looks at one cow amongst a
field of cows, or at one sheep in a flock. But as to those
animals which are more closely connected with man, not
passively connected, but actively, being partners in his
toils, and perils, and recreations—such as horses, dogs,
falcons—they are regarded as individuals, and are allowed
the benefit of an individual interest. It is not that cows
have not a differential character, each for herself; and
sheep, it is well known, have all a separate physiognomy
for the shepherd who has cultivated their acquaintance.
But men generally have no opportunity or motive for
studying the individualities of creatures, however other-
wise respectable, that are too much regarded by all of us
in the reversionary light of milk, and beef, and mutton.
Far otherwise it is with horses, who share in man's martial risks, who sympathise with man's frenzy in hunting, who divide with man the burdens of noonday. Far otherwise it is with dogs, that share the hearths of man, and adore the footsteps of his children. These man loves; of these he makes dear, though humble friends. These often fight for him; and for them he reciprocally will sometimes fight. Of necessity, therefore, every horse and every dog is an individual—has a sort of personality that makes him separately interesting—has a beauty and a character of his own. Go to Melton, therefore, on some crimson morning, and what will you see? Every man, every horse, every dog, glorying in the plenitude of life, is in a different attitude, motion, gesture, action. It is not there the sublime unity which you must seek, where forty are like one; but the sublime infinity, like that of ocean, like that of Flora, like that of nature, where no repetitions are endured, no leaf is the copy of another leaf, no absolute identity, and no painful tautologies. This subject might be pursued into profounder recesses; but in a popular discussion it is necessary to forbear.

A volume might be filled with such glimpses of novelty as Wordsworth has first laid bare, even to the apprehension of the senses. For the understanding, when moving in the same track of human sensibilities, he has done only not so much. How often (to give an instance or two) must the human heart have felt the case, and yearned for an expression of the case, when there are sorrows which descend far below the region in which tears gather; and yet who has ever given utterance to this feeling until Wordsworth came with his immortal line:—

"Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears!"

This sentiment, and others that might be adduced (such
as "The child is father of the man"), have even passed into the popular heart, and are often quoted by those who know not whom they are quoting. Magnificent, again, is the sentiment, and yet an echo to one which lurks amongst all hearts, in relation to the frailty of merely human schemes for working good, which so often droop and collapse through the unsteadiness of human energies—

"Foundations must be laid
In heaven."

How? Foundations laid in realms that are above? But that is impossible; that is at war with elementary physics; foundations must be laid below. Yes; and even so the poet throws the mind yet more forcibly on the hyperphysical character—on the grandeur transcending all physics—of those spiritual and shadowy foundations which alone are enduring.

But the great distinction of Wordsworth, and the pledge of his increasing popularity, is the extent of his sympathy with what is really permanent in human feelings, and also the depth of this sympathy. Young and Cowper, the two earlier leaders in the province of meditative poetry, are too circumscribed in the range of their sympathies, too narrow, too illiberal, and too exclusive. Both these poets manifested the quality of their strength in the quality of their public reception. Popular in some degree from the first, they entered upon the inheritance of their fame almost at once. Far different was the fate of Wordsworth; for in poetry of this class, which appeals to what lies deepest in man, in proportion to the native power of the poet, and his fitness for permanent life, is the strength of resistance in the public taste. Whatever is too original will be hated at the first. It must slowly mould a public for itself; and the resistance of the early thoughtless judg-
ments must be overcome by a counter resistance to itself, in a better audience slowly mustering against the first. Forty and seven years* it is since William Wordsworth first appeared as an author. Twenty of those years he was the scoff of the world, and his poetry a by-word of scorn. Since then, and more than once, senates have rung with acclamations to the echo of his name. Now at this moment, whilst we are talking about him, he has entered upon his seventy-sixth year. For himself, according to the course of nature, he cannot be far from his setting; but his poetry is only now clearing the clouds that gathered about its rising. Meditative poetry is perhaps that province of literature which will ultimately maintain most power amongst the generations which are coming; but in this department, at least, there is little competition to be apprehended by Wordsworth from anything that has appeared since the death of Shakspere.

* Written in 1845.
Mr. Gilfillan (in his "Gallery of Literary Portraits") introduces this section with a discussion upon the constitutional peculiarities ascribed to men of genius; such as nervousness of temperament, idleness, vanity, irritability, and other disagreeable tendencies ending in *ty* or in *ness*—one of the *ties* being "poverty;" which disease is at least not amongst those morbidly cherished by the patients. All that can be asked from the most penitent man of genius is, that he should humbly confess his own besetting infirmities, and endeavour to hate them; and, as respects this one infirmity at least, I never heard of any man (however eccentric in genius) who did otherwise. But what special relation has such a preface to Keats? His whole article occupies twelve pages, and six of these are allotted to this preliminary discussion, which perhaps equally concerns every other man in the household of literature. Mr. Gilfillan seems to have been acting here on celebrated precedents. The "*Omnes homines qui sese student præstare cæteris animatibus*" has long been "smoked" by a wicked posterity as an old hack of Sallust's, fitted on with paste and scissors to the Catalinarian conspiracy. Cicero candidly admits that he kept in his writing-desk
an assortment of moveable prefaces, beautifully fitted, (by means of avoiding all questions but "the general question") for parading, en grand costume, before any conceivable book. And Coleridge, in his early days, used the image of a man's "sleeping under a manchineel tree," alternately with the case of Alexander's killing his friend Clitus, as resources for illustration which Providence had bountifully made inexhaustible in their applications. No emergency could by possibility arise to puzzle the poet, or the orator, but one of these similes (please Heaven!) should be made to meet it. So long as the manchineel continued to blister with poisonous dews those who confided in its shelter, so long as Niebuhr should kindly forbear to prove that Alexander of Macedon was a hoax, and his friend Clitus a myth, so long was Samuel Taylor Coleridge fixed and obdurate in his determination that one or other of these images should come upon duty whenever, as a youthful rhetorician, he found himself on the brink of insolvency.

But it is less the generality of this preface, or even its disproportion, which fixes the eye, than the questionableness of its particular statements. In that part which reviews the idleness of authors, Horace is given up as too notoriously indolent; the thing, it seems, is past denying; but "not so Lucretius." Indeed! and how shall this be brought to proof? Perhaps the reader has heard of that barbarian prince, who sent to Europe for a large map of the world, accompanied by the best of English razors; and the clever use which he made of his importation was, that, first cutting out with exquisite accuracy the whole ring-fence of his own dominions, and then doing the same office, with the same equity (barbarous or barber-ous), for the dominions of a hostile neighbour, next he proceeded to weigh
off the rival segments against each other in a pair of gold scales; after which, of course, he arrived at a satisfactory algebraic equation between himself and his enemy. Now, upon this principle of comparison, if we should take any common edition (as the Delphin or the Variorum) of Horace and Lucretius, strictly shaving away all notes, prefaces, editorial absurdities, &c., all “flotsom” and “jetsom” that may have gathered like barnacles about the two weather-beaten hulls; in that case we should have the two old files undressed, and in puris naturalibus; they would be prepared for being weighed; and going to the nearest grocer’s, we might then settle the point at once as to which of the two had been the idler man. I back Horace for my part; and it is my private opinion that, in the case of a quarto edition, the grocer would have to throw at least half-a-pound of sugar into the scale of Lucretius before he could be made to draw against the other. Yet, after all, this would only be a collation of quantity against quantity; whilst, upon a second collation of quality against quality (quality as regards the difficulties in the process of composition), the difference in amount of labour would appear to be as between the weaving of a blanket and the weaving of an exquisite cambric. The curiosa felicitas of Horace in his lyric compositions, the elaborate delicacy of workmanship in his thoughts and in his style, argue a scale of labour that, as against any equal number of lines in Lucretius, would measure itself by months against days. There are single odes in Horace that must have cost him a six weeks’ seclusion from the wickedness of Rome. Do I then question the extraordinary power of Lucretius? On the contrary, I admire him as the first of demoniacs. The frenzy of an earth-born or a hell-born inspiration; divinity of stormy music
sweeping round us in eddies, in order to prove that for us there could be nothing divine; the grandeur of a prophet's voice rising in angry gusts, by way of convincing us that all prophets were swindlers; oracular scorn of oracles; frantic efforts, such as might seem reasonable in one who was scaling the heavens, for the purpose of degrading all things, making man to be the most abject of necessities as regarded his origin, to be the blindest of accidents as regarded his expectations; these fierce antinomies expose a mode of insanity, but of an insanity affecting a sublime intellect.* And most people who read Lucretius at all, are aware of the traditional story current in Rome, that he did actually write in a delirious state; not under any figurative disturbance of brain, but under a real physical disturbance from philtres administered to him by some enamoured woman. But this kind of morbid aflatus did not deliver itself into words and metre by lingering oscillations, and through processes of stealthy growth: it threw itself forward, and precipitated its own utterance, with the headlong movement of a cataract. It was an

* There is one peculiarity about Lucretius which, even in the absence of all anecdotes to that effect, would have led an observing reader to suspect some unsoundness in his brain. It is this, and it lies in his manner. In all poetic enthusiasm, however grand and sweeping may be its compass, so long as it is healthy and natural, there is a principle of self-restoration in the opposite direction; there is a counter state of repose, a compensatory state, as in the tides of the sea, which tends continually to re-establish the equipoise. The fall is no less intense than the fury of commotion. But in Lucretius there is no fall. Nor would there seem to be any, were it not for two accidents—first, the occasional pause in his raving tone enforced by the interruption of an episode; secondly, the restraints (or at least the suspensions) imposed upon him by the difficulties of argument conducted in verse. To dispute metrically, is as embarrassing as to run or dance when knee-deep in sand. Else, and apart from these counteractions, the motion of the style is not only stormy, but self-kindling, and continually accelerated.
astrum, a rapture, the bounding of a maenad, by which the muse of Lucretius lived and moved. So much is known by the impression about him current among his contemporaries; so much is evident in the characteristic manner of his poem, if all anecdotes had perished. And, upon the whole, let the proportions of power between Horace and Lucretius be what they may, the proportions of labour are absolutely incommensurable: in Horace the labour was directly as the power, in Lucretius inversely as the power. Whosoever in Horace was best, had been obtained by most labour; whosoever in Lucretius was best, by least. In Horace, the exquisite skill co-operated with the exquisite nature; in Lucretius, the powerful nature disdained the skill, which, indeed, would not have been applicable to his theme, or to his treatment of it, and triumphed through mere precipitation of volume, and headlong fury.

Another paradox of Mr Gilfillan's, under this head, is, that he classes Dr Johnson as indolent; and it is the more startling, because he does not utter it as a careless opinion upon which he might have been thrown by inconsideration, but as a concession extorted from him reluctantly: he had sought to evade it, but could not. Now, that Dr Johnson had a morbid predisposition to decline labour from his scrofulous habit of body,* is probable. The question

* "Habit of body:" but much more from mismanagement of his body. Dr Johnson tampered with medical studies, and fancied himself learned enough in such studies to prescribe for his female correspondents. The affectionateness with which he sometimes did this is interesting; but his ignorance of the subject is not the less apparent. In his own case he had the merit of one heroic self-conquest: he weaned himself from wine, once having become convinced that it was injurious. But he never brought himself to take regular exercise. He ate too much at all times of his life. And in another point, he betrayed a thoughtlessness, which (though really common as laughter) is yet extravagantly childish. Everybody knows that Dr Johnson was all his life repreaching himself with
for us, however, is not what nature prompted him to do, but what he did. If he had an extra difficulty to fight with in attempting to labour, the more was his merit in the known result, that he did fight with that difficulty, and that he conquered it. This is undeniable. And the attempt to deny it presents itself in a comic shape, when one imagines some ancient shelf in a library that has groaned for nearly a century under the weight of the doctor's works, demanding, "How say you? Is this Sam Johnson, whose 'Dictionary' alone is a load for a camel, one of those authors whom you call idle? Then Heaven preserve us poor oppressed book-shelves from such as you will consider active." George III., in a compliment as happily turned as any one of those ascribed to Louis XIV., expressed his opinion upon this question of the doctor's industry by saying, that he also should join in thinking Johnson too voluminous a contributor to literature, were lying too long in bed. Always he was sinning (for he thought it a sin); always he was repenting; always he was vainly endeavouring to reform. But why vainly? Cannot a resolute man in six weeks bring himself to rise at any hour of the twenty-four? Certainly he can; but not without appropriate means. Now the doctor rose about eleven A.M. This, he fancied, was shocking; he was determined to rise at eight, or at seven. Very well; why not? But will it be credited that the sole change occurring to the doctor's mind was to take a flying leap backwards from eleven to eight, without any corresponding leap at the other terminus of his sleep. To rise at eight instead of eleven, presupposes that a man goes off to bed at twelve instead of three. Yet this recondite truth never to his dying day dawned on Dr Johnson's mind. The conscientious man continued to offend; continued to repent; continued to pave a disagreeable place with good intentions, and daily resolutions of amendment; but at length died full of year., without having once seen the sun rise, except in some Homeric description, written (as Mr Fynes Clinton makes it probable) thirty centuries before. The fact of the sun's rising at all the doctor adopted as a point of faith, and by no means of personal knowledge, from an insinuation to that effect in the most ancient of Greek books.
it not for the extraordinary merit of the contributions. Now it would be an odd way of turning the royal praise into a reproach, if we should say: "Sam, had you been a pretty good writer, we, your countrymen, should have held you to be also an industrious writer; but, because you are a very good writer, therefore we pronounce you a lazy vagabond."

Upon other points in this discussion there is some room to differ from Mr Gilfillan. For instance, with respect to the question of the comparative happiness enjoyed by men of genius, it is not necessary to argue, nor does it seem possible to prove, even in the case of any one individual poet, that, on the whole, he was either more happy or less happy than the average mass of his fellow-men: far less could this be argued as to the whole class of poets. What seems really open to proof is, that men of genius have a larger capacity of happiness, which capacity, both from within and from without, may be defeated in ten thousand ways. This seems involved in the very word genius. For, after all the pretended and hollow attempts to distinguish genius from talent, I shall continue to think (what heretofore I have advanced) that no distinction in the case is tenable for a moment but this—viz., that genius is that mode of intellectual power which moves in alliance with the genial nature: i.e., with the capacities of pleasure and pain; whereas talent has no vestige of such an alliance, and is perfectly independent of all human sensibilities. Consequently, genius is a voice or breathing that represents the total nature of man, and, therefore, his enjoying and suffering nature, as well as his knowing and distinguishing nature; whilst, on the contrary, talent represents only a single function of that nature. Genius is the language which interprets the synthesis of the human spirit with
the human intellect, each acting through the other; whilst
talent speaks only from the insulated intellect. And hence
also it is that, besides its relation to suffering and enjoy-
ment, genius always implies a deeper relation to virtue
and vice; whereas talent has no shadow of a relation to
moral qualities any more than it has to vital sensibilities.
A man of the highest talent is often obtuse and below the
ordinary standard of men in his feelings; but no man of
genius can unyoke himself from the society of moral per-
ceptions that are brighter, and sensibilities that are more
tremulous, than those of men in general.

As to the examples* by which Mr Gilfillan supports his
prevailing views, they will be construed by any ten thou-
sand men in ten thousand separate modes. The objec-
tions are so endless, that it would be abusing the reader's
time to urge them; especially as every man of the ten
thousand will be wrong, and will also be right, in all varie-
ties of proportion. Two only it may be useful to notice
as examples, because involving some degree of error—viz.,

* One of these examples is equivocal, in a way that Mr Gilfillan is ap-
parently not aware of. He cites Tickell, "whose very name" (he says)
"savour of laughter," as being, "in fact, a very happy fellow." In the
first place, Tickell would have been likely to "square," at Mr Gilfillan
for that liberty taken with his name; or might even, in Falstaff's lan-
guage, have tried to "tickle his cataract." It is a ticklish thing to
lark with honest men's names. But, secondly, which Tickell? For there
are two at the least in the field of English literature. The first Tickell,
who may be described as Addison's Tickell, never tickled anything, that
I know of, except Addison's vanity. But Tickell the second, who came into
working order about fifty years later, was really a very pleasant fellow.
In the time of Burke he divertecl the whole nation by his poem of "Antici-
patiation," in which he anticipated and dramatically rehearsed the course
of a whole parliamentary debate (on a forged king's speech), which did
not take place till a week or two afterwards. Such a mimicry was easy
enough: but that did not prevent its fidelity and characteristic truth
from delighting the political world.
Addison and Homer. As to the first, the error, if an error, is one of fact only. Lord Byron had said of Addison, that he "died drunk." This seems to Mr Gilfillan a "horrible statement," for which he supposes that no authority can exist, but "a rumour circulated by an inveterate gossip," meaning Horace Walpole. But gossips usually go upon some foundation, broad or narrow; and, until the rumour had been authentically put down, Mr Gilfillan should not have pronounced it a "malignant calumny." Me this story caused to laugh exceedingly; not at Addison, whose fine genius extorts pity and tenderness towards his infirmities; but at the characteristic misanthropy of Lord Byron, who chuckles, as he would do over a glass of nectar, on this opportunity for confronting the old solemn legend about Addison's sending for his stepson, Lord Warwick, to witness the peaceful death of a Christian, with so rich a story as this, that he, the said Christian, which is really not improbable, "died drunk." Supposing that he did, the mere physical fact of inebriation, in a stage of debility where so small an excess of stimulating liquor (though given medicinally) sometimes causes such an appearance, would not infer the moral blame of drunkenness; and if such a thing were ever said by any person present at the bedside, I should feel next to certain that it was said in that spirit of exaggeration to which most men are tempted by circumstances unusually fitted to impress a startling piqueness upon the statement. But, without insisting on Lord Byron's way of putting the case, there is no doubt that, latterly, Addison gave way to habits of intemperance. He had married a woman of rank, the Countess of Warwick; a woman by general report not amiable, but, at any rate, of trying and uneasy tem-
per.* From this cause he suffered considerably, but also (and probably much more) from dyspepsy and *tadium vitae*. He did not walk one mile a-day, and he ought to have walked ten. To remedy these evils, I have always understood that every day (and especially towards night) he drank too much of that French liquor, which, calling itself *water of life*, nine times in ten proves the water of death. He lived latterly at Kensington—viz., in Holland House, the well-known residence of the Fox family, consequently for generations the hospitable rendezvous of the Whigs; and there it was, in this famous mansion (where, as Jack Cade observes, the very stones survive to this day as witnesses of the fact), that his intemperance was finished. The tradition attached to the gallery in that house is, that duly as the sun drew near to setting, on two tables, one at each end of the long *ambulachrum*, the Right Honourable Joseph placed, or caused to be placed, two tumblers, not of water slightly coloured with brandy, but of brandy slightly diluted with water; and those, the said tumblers, then and there did alternately to the lips of him, the aforesaid Joseph, diligently apply, walking to and fro during the process of exhaustion, and dividing his attentions between the two poles, arctic and antarctic, of his evening *diaulos*, with the impartiality to be expected from a member of the Privy Counc*. How often the two “blessed bears,” northern and southern, were replenished, entered into no *affidavit* that ever reached my unworthy self. But so much I have always understood, that in the

* There is a well-known old Irish ballad repeatedly cited by Maria Edgeworth, which opens thus:—

"There was a young man in Ballinacraisy
That took him a wife to make him uneasy."

Such to the letter was the life-catastrophe of Addison.
gallery of Holland House, the ex-Secretary of State caught a decided hiccough, which right-honourable hiccough never afterwards subsided. In all this there would have been little to shock people, had it not been for the sycophancy which ascribed to Addison a religious reputation such as he neither merited nor wished to claim. But one penal reaction of mendacious adulation, for him who is weak enough to accept it, must ever be, to impose restraints upon his own conduct, which otherwise he would have been free to decline. How lightly would Sir Roger de Coverly have thought of a little sotting in any honest gentleman of right politics! And Addison would not, in that age, and as to that point, have carried his scrupulosity higher than his own Sir Roger. But such knaves as he who had complimented Addison with the praise of having furnished a model to Christians of extra piety, whereas, in fact, Addison started in life by publishing a translation of Petronius Arbiter, had painfully coerced his free agency. This knave, I very much fear, was Tickell the first; and the result of his knavery was, to win for Addison a disagreeable sanctimonious reputation that was, first, founded in lies; secondly, that painfully limited Addison's free agency; and, thirdly, that provoked insults to his memory, since it pointed a censorious eye upon those things viewed as the acts of a demure pretender to extra devotion, which would else have passed without notice as the most venial of frailties in an unsanctimonious layman.

Something I had to say also upon Homer, who minglest amongst the examples cited by Mr Gilfillan of apparent happiness connected with genius. But, for want of room,*

* For the same reason, I refrain from discussing the pretensions of Savage. Mr Gilfillan gives us to understand, that not from want of
I forbear to go further, than to lodge my protest against imputing to Homer, as any personal merit, what belongs altogether to the stage of society in which he lived. "They," says Mr Gilfillan, speaking of the "Iliad"—and the "Odyssey," "are the healthiest of works. There are in them no sullenness, no querulous complaint, not one personal allusion." But I ask, how could there have been? Subjective poetry had not an existence in those days. Not only the powers for introverting the eye upon the spectator, as himself the spectaculum, were then undeveloped and inconceivable, but the sympathies did not exist to which such an appeal could have addressed itself. Besides, and partly from the same cause, even as objects, the human feelings and affections were too grossly and imperfectly distinguished; had not reached even the infancy of that stage in which the passions begin their processes of modification; nor could have reached it, from the simpli-

materials, but of time, he does not (which else he could) prove him to be the man he pretended to be. For my own part, I believe Savage to have been the vilest of swindlers; and in these days, under the surveillance of a searching police, he would have lost the chance which he earned of being hanged,* by being long previously transported to the Plantations. How can Mr Gilfillan allow himself, in a case of this nature, to speak of "universal impression" (if it had even existed) as any separate ground of credibility for Savage's tale? When the public have no access at all to sound means of judging, what matters i. in which direction their "impression" lies, or how many thousands swell the belief for which not one in all these thousands has anything like a reason to offer?

* Savage had actually received sentence of death for murder perpetrated in a tavern brawl. The royal clemency interposed most critically to save him from the scaffold; but under an impression utterly without foundation as to his maternal persecutions. Not he by his mother, but his pretended mother by him, was systematically persecuted for years, as a means of extorting money. Suppose his pretensions true, would a person of any manliness have sought to win his daily bread from the terrors of her whom he claimed as his mother?
city of social life, as well as from the barbarism of the Greek religion. The author of the "Iliad," or even of the "Odyssey" (though, doubtless, belonging to a later period), could not have been "unhealthy," or "sullen," or "querulous," from any cause, except psora or elephantiasis, or scarcity of beef, or similar afflictions, with which it is quite impossible to inoculate poetry. The metrical romances of the middle ages have the same shivering character of starvation, as to the inner life of man; and, if that constitutes a meritorious distinction, no man ought to be excused for wanting what it is so easy to obtain by simple neglect of culture. On the same principle, a cannibal, if truculently indiscriminate in his horrid diet, might win sentimental praises for his temperance; others (it might be alleged) were picking and choosing, miserable epicures! but he, the saint upon earth, cared not what he ate; any joint satisfied his moderate desires; shoulder of man, leg of child; anything, in fact, that was nearest at hand, so long as it was good, wholesome human flesh; and the more plainly dressed the better.

But these topics, so various and so fruitful, I touch only because I find them introduced, amongst many others, by Mr Gilfillan. Separately viewed, some of these would be more attractive than any merely personal interest connected with Keats. His biography, stripped of its false colouring, offers little to win attention; for he was not the victim of any systematic malignity, as has been represented. He met, as I have the best reason to believe, with unusual kindness from his liberal publishers, Messrs Taylor & Hessey. He met with unusual severity from a cynical reviewer, the late Mr Gifford, then editor of the "Quarterly Review." The story ran, that this article of Mr Gifford's had killed Keats; upon which, with natural
astonishment, Lord Byron thus commented, in the eleventh canto of "Don Juan:"—

"John Keats—who was kill’d off by one critique,
Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible—without Greek,
Contrived to talk about the gods of late,
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
Poor fellow! his was an untoward fate:
'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,*
Should let itself be snuff’d out by an article."

Strange, indeed! and the friends who honour Keats’s memory should not lend themselves to a story so degrading. He died, I believe, of pulmonary consumption, and would have died of it, probably, under any circumstances of prosperity as a poet. Doubtless, in a condition of languishing decay, slight causes of irritation act powerfully. But it is hardly conceivable that one ebullition of splanetic bad feeling, in a case so proverbially open to endless revision as the pretensions of a poet, could have overthrown any masculine life, unless where that life had already been irrecoverably undermined by sickness. As a man, and viewed in relation to social objects, Keats was nothing. It was as mere an affectation when he talked with apparent zeal of liberty, or human rights, or human prospects, as is the hollow enthusiasm which innumerable people profess for music, or most poets for external nature. For these things Keats fancied that he cared; but in reality, from all I can learn, he cared next to nothing. Upon them, or any of their aspects, he had thought too little, and too indeterminately, to feel for them as personal concerns. Whereas Shelley, from his earliest days, was mastered and shaken by the great moving realities of life, as

* "Fiery particle."—Lord Byron is loosely translating the expression of Horace—divinae particulae aures.
a prophet is by the burden of wrath or of promise which he has been commissioned to reveal. Had there been no such thing as literature, Keats would have dwindled into a cipher. Shelley, in the same event, would hardly have lost one plume from his crest. It is in relation to literature, and to the boundless questions as to the true and the false arising out of literature and poetry, that Keats challenges a fluctuating interest, sometimes an interest of strong disgust, sometimes of deep admiration. There is not, I believe, a case on record throughout European literature, where feelings so repulsive of each other have centred in the same individual. The very midsummer madness of affectation, of false vapoury sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy, seemed to me combined in Keats's "Endymion," when I first saw it, near the close of 1821. The Italian poet, Marino, had been reputed the greatest master of gossamery affectation in Europe. But his conceits, showed the palest of rosy blushes by the side of Keats's bloody crimson. Naturally, I was discouraged at the moment from looking further. But about a week later, by pure accident, my eye fell upon his "Hyperion." The first feeling was that of incredulity that the two poems could, under change of circumstances or lapse of time, have emanated from the same mind. The "Endymion" trespasses so strongly against good sense and just feeling, that, in order to secure its pardon, we need the whole weight of the imperishable "Hyperion," which, as Mr Gilfillan truly says, "is the greatest of poetical torsos." The first belongs essentially to the vilest collections of wax-work filagree, or gilt gingerbread. The other presents the majesty, the austere beauty, and the simplicity of a Grecian temple enriched with Grecian sculpture.

We have in this country a word—viz, the word folly—
which has a technical appropriation to the case of fantastic buildings. Any building is called a "folly"* which mimics purposes incapable of being realised, and makes a promise to the eye which it cannot keep to the experience. The most impressive illustration of that idea which modern times have seen was, undoubtedly, the ice-palace of the Empress Elizabeth—†

"That most magnificent and mighty freak,"

which, about eighty years ago, was called up from the depths of winter by

"The imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ."

Winter and the Czarina were, in this architecture, fellow-

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* "A folly:"—We English limit the application of this term to buildings; but the idea might as fitly be illustrated in other objects. For instance, the famous galley presented to one of the Ptolemies, which offered the luxurious accommodations of capital cities, but required a little army of four thousand men to row it, whilst its draught of water was too great to allow of its often approaching the shore; this was a "folly" in our English sense. So again was the Macedonian phalanx: the Roman legion could form upon any ground: it was a true working tool. But the phalanx was too fine and showy for use. It required for its manœuvring a sort of opera stage, or a select bowling-green, such as few fields of battle offered.

† I had written the "Empress Catherine," but, on second thoughts, it occurred to me that the "mighty freak" was, in fact, due to the Empress Elizabeth. There is, however, a freak connected with ice, not quite so "mighty," but quite as autocratic, and even more feminine in its caprice, which belongs exclusively to the Empress Catherine. A lady had engaged the affections of some young nobleman, who was already regarded favourably by the imperial eye. No pretext offered itself for interdicting the marriage; but, by way of freeing it a little at the outset, the Czarina coupled with her permission this condition—that the wedding night should be passed by the young couple on a mattress of her gift. The mattress turned out to be a block of ice, elegantly cut by the court upholsterer into the likeness of a well-stuffed Parisian mattress. One pities the poor bride, whilst it is difficult to avoid laughing in the midst of one's sympathy. But it is to be hoped that no such was issued against spreading seven Turkey carpets, by way of under-blankets, over this amiable nuptial present. Amongst others to whom I may refer as having noticed the story, is Captain Colville Frankland, of the navy.
labourers. She, by her servants, furnished the blocks of ice, hewed them, dressed them, laid them; winter furnished the cement, by freezing them together. The palace has long since thawed back into water; and the poet who described it best—viz., Cowper—is perhaps but little read in this age, except by the religious. It will, therefore, be a sort of resurrection for both the palace and the poet, if I cite his description of this gorgeous folly. It is a passage in which Cowper assumes so much of a Miltonic tone, that, of the two, it is better to have read his lasting description, than to have seen, with bodily eyes, the fleeting reality. The poet is apostrophising the Empress Elizabeth.

"No forest fell,
When thou wouldst build: no quarry sent its stores
To enrich thy walls: but thou didst hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.

Silently as a dream the fabric rose;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there;
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoin'd, nor other cement ask'd
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps gracefully disposed, and of all hues,*
Illumin'd every side; a watery light
Gleam'd through the clear transparency, that seem'd
Another moon new-risen:

Nor wanted aught within
That royal residence might well befit
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flowers, that fear'd no enemy but warmth,
Blush'd on the panels. Mirror needed none,
Where all was vitreous: but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seem'd at least commodious seat) were there;
Sof'fa, and couch, and high-built throne august. *
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again."
The poet concludes by viewing the whole as an unintentional stroke of satire by the Czarina

"On her own estate,
On human grandeur, and the courts of kings.
'Twas transient in its nature, as in show
'Twas durable; as worthless, as it seem'd
Intrinsically precious: to the feet
Treachorous and false—it smiled, and it was cold.'

Looking at this imperial plaything of ice in the month of March, and recollecting that in May all its crystal arcades would be weeping away into vernal brooks, one would have been disposed to mourn over a beauty so frail, and to marvel at the solemn creation of a frailty so elaborate. Yet still there was some proportion observed: the saloons were limited in number, though not limited in splendour. It was a petit Trianon. But what if, like Versailles, this glittering bauble, to which all the science of Europe could not have secured a passport into June, had contained six thousand separate rooms? A "folly" on so gigantic a scale would have moved every man to indignation. For all that could be had, the beauty to the eye, and the gratification to the fancy, in seeing water tortured into every form of solidity, resulted from two or three suites of rooms, as fully as from a thousand.

Now, such a folly, as would have been the Czarina's, if executed upon the scale of Versailles, or of the new palace at St Petersburg, was the "Endymion:" a gigantic edifice (for its tortuous enigmas of thought multiplied every line of the four thousand into fifty) reared upon a basis slighter and less apprehensible than moonshine. As reasonably, and as hopefully in regard to human sympathies, might a man undertake an epic poem upon the loves of two butterflies. The modes of existence in the two parties to the
love-fable of the "Endymion," their relations to each other and to us, their prospects finally, and the obstacles to the instant realisation of these prospects—all these things are more vague and incomprehensible than the reveries of an oyster. Still the unhappy subject, and its unhappy expansion, must be laid to the account of childish years and childish inexperience. But there is another fault in Keats, of the first magnitude, which youth does not palliate, which youth even aggravates. This lies in the most shocking abuse of his mother-tongue. If there is one thing in this world which, next after the flag of his country and its spotless honour, should be holy in the eyes of a young poet—it is the language of his country. He should spend the third part of his life in studying this language, and cultivating its total resources. He should be willing to pluck out his right eye, or to circumnavigate the globe, if by such a sacrifice, if by such an exertion, he could attain to greater purity, precision, compass, or idiomatic energy of diction. This if he were even a Kalmuck Tartar—who, by the way, has the good feeling and patriotism to pride himself upon his beastly language.* But Keats was an English-

* Borgmann, the German traveller, in his account of his long rambles and residence amongst the Kalmucks, makes us acquainted with the delirious vanity which possesses these demi-savages. Their notion is, that excellence of every kind, perfection in the least things as in the greatest, is briefly expressed by calling it Kalmuckish. Accordingly, their hideous language, and their vast national poem (doubtless equally hideous), they hold to be the immediate gifts of inspiration: and for this I honour them, as each generation learns both from the lips of their mothers. This great poem, by the way, measures (if I remember) seventeen English miles in length; but the most learned man amongst them, in fact a monster of erudition, never read farther than the eighth milestone. What he could repeat by heart was little more than a mile and a-half; and, indeed, that was found too much for the choleric part of his audience. Even the Kalmuck face, which to us foolish Europeans looks so unnecessarily flat and ogre-like, these honest Kalmuckish Tartars have ascertained to be the
man; Keats had the honour to speak the language of Chaucer, Shakspere, Bacon, Milton, Newton. The more awful was the obligation of his allegiance. And yet upon this mother-tongue, upon this English language, has Keats trampled as with the hoofs of a buffalo. With its syntax, with its prosody, with its idiom, he has played such fantastic tricks as could enter only into the heart of a barbarian, and for which only the anarchy of Chaos could furnish a forgiving audience. Verily it required the "Hyperion" to weigh against the deep treason of these unparalleled offences.

pure classical model of human beauty—which, in fact, it is, upon the principle of those people who hold that the chief use of a face is—not at all to please one's wife, but to frighten one's enemy.
HOMER AND THE HOMERIDÆ.

Homer, the general patriarch of occidental literature, reminds us oftentimes, and powerfully, of the river Nile. If you, reader, should (as easily you may) be seated on the banks of that river in the months of February or March, 1858, you may count on two luxuries for a poetic eye—first, on a lovely cloudless morning; secondly, on a gorgeous Flora. For it has been remarked, that nowhere out of tropical regions is the vernal equipage of nature so rich, so pompously variegated, in buds, and bells, and blossoms, as precisely in this unhappy Egypt—"a house of bondage," undeniably, in all ages, to its own working population; and yet, as if to mock the misery it witnesses, the gayest of all lands in its spontaneous Flora. Now, supposing yourself to be seated, together with a child or two, on some flowery carpet of the Delta; and supposing the Nile—"that ancient river"—within sight; happy infancy on the one side, the everlasting pomp of waters on the other; and the thought still intruding, that on some quarter of your position, perhaps fifty miles out of sight, stand pointing to the heavens the mysterious pyramids; these circumstances presupposed, it is inevitable that your thoughts should wander upwards to the dark fountains of origination. The pyramids, why
and when did they arise? This infancy, so lovely and innocent, whence does it come, whither does it go? This creative river, what are its ultimate well-heads? That last question was viewed by antiquity as charmed against solution. It was not permitted, they fancied, to dishonour the river Nile by stealing upon his solitude in a state of weakness and childhood—

"Nec licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre."

"No license there was to the nations of earth for seeing thee, O Nile! in a condition of infant imbecility."

So said Lucan. And in those days no image that the earth suggested could so powerfully express a mysterious secrecy, as the coy fountains of the Nile. At length came Abyssinian Bruce; and that superstition seemed to vanish. Yet no: for now again the mystery has revolved upon us. 'You have drunk, you say, from the fountains of the Nile. Good; but, my friend, from which fountains? "Which king, Bezonian?" Understand that there is another branch of the Nile—another mighty arm, whose fountains lie in far other regions. The great letter Y, that Pythagorean marvel, is still covered with shades in one-half of its bifurcation. And the darkness which, from the eldest of days, has invested Father Nile with fabulous awe, still broods over the most ancient of his fountains, defies our curious impertinence, and will not suffer us to behold the survivor of Memphis in his cradle, and of Thebes the hundred-gated other than in his grandeur as the benefactor of nations.

Such thoughts, a world of meditations pointing in the same direction, settle also upon Homer. Eight-and-twenty hundred years, according to the improved views of chronology, have men drunk from the waters of this earliest among known poets. Himself, under one of his denominations, the son of a river (Melesigenes), or the grandson
of a river [Mæonides], he has been the parent of fertilising streams carried off derivatively into every land. Not the fountains of the Nile have been so diffusive, or so creative, as those of Homer—

"A quo, ecu fonte perenni,
Vatum Pieris ora rigantur aquis."

"From whom, as from a perennial fountain, the mouths of poets are refreshed with Pierian streams."

There is the same guicty of atmosphere, the same "blue rejoicing sky," the same absence of the austere and the gloomy sublime, investing the Grecian Homer as invests the Nile of the Delta. And again, if you would go upwards to the fountains of this ancient Nile, or of this ancient Homer, you would find the same mysterious repulsion. In both cases you find their fountains shyly retreating before you; and like the sacred peaks of Ararat, where the framework of Noah's ark reposcs, never less surmounted than when a man fancies himself within arm's reach of their central recesses.*

A great poet appearing in early ages, and a great river, bear something of the same relation to human civility and culture. In this view, with a peculiar sublimity, the Hindoos consider a mighty fertilising river, when bursting away with torrent rupture from its mountain cradle, and billowing onwards through two thousand miles of realms made rich by itself, as in some special sense "the Son of God." The word Burrampooter is said to bear that sublime interpretation. Hence arose the profound interest about the Nile: what cause could produce its annual

* Seven or eight Europeans—some Russian, some English—have not only taken possession of the topmost crag on Ararat by means of the broadest disk which their own persons offered, but have left flags flying, to mark out for those below the exact station which they had reached. All to no purpose! The bigoted Armenian still replied—these are mere illusions worked by demons. This incredulity in the people of Armenia
swelling? Even as a phenomenon (had it led to nothing) this was awful, but much more so as a creative agency; for it was felt that Egypt, which is but the valley ploughed out for itself by the Nile, had been the mere creation of the river annually depositing its rich layers of slime. Hence also arose the corresponding interest about Homer; for Greece and the Grecian Isles were in many moral respects as much the creation of Homer as Egypt of the Nile. And if, on the one hand, it is unavoidable to assume some degree of civilisation before a Homer could exist, on the other, it is certain that Homer, by the picture of unity which he held aloft to the Greeks, in making them co-operate to a common enterprise against Asia, and also by the intellectual pleasure which he first grafted upon the innumerable festivals of Hellas, did more than lawgivers to propagate this early civilisation, and to protect it against those barbarising feuds or migrations which through some centuries menaced its existence.

Having, therefore, the same motive of curiosity—having, in the indulgence of this curiosity, the same awe, connected, first, with secrecy; secondly, with remoteness; and thirdly, with beneficent power, which turn our inquiries

is the result of mere religious bigotry. But in a similar case, amongst people that ought to be more enlightened—yes, amongst educated Sicilians of high social standing—the same angry disbelief is the product of pure mortified vanity. About the time of Waterloo, Captain Smyth settled the height of Mount Etna finally at 10,874 feet; this result was scientifically obtained, and not open to any reasonable doubts. Nine years later, Sir John Herschel, knowing nothing of this previous measurement, ascertained the height to be 10,872 1/3 feet—a most remarkable coincidence; and the more satisfactory as being obtained barometrically, whilst Captain Smyth's measurement had been trigonometrical. Many of the people in Catania, however, who had been in the habit for half-a-century of estimating the height at 18,000 feet, were so incensed at this degradation of their pretensions, that even yet (thirty-three years later) they have not reconciled themselves to the mathematical truth.
to the infant Nile, let us pursue a parallel investigation with regard to the infant Homer. How was Homer possible? how could such a poet as Homer—how could such a poem as the "Iliad"—arise in days so illiterate? Or rather, and first of all, was Homer possible? If the "Iliad" could and did arise, not as a long series of separate phenomena, but as one solitary birth, of revolutionary power, how was it preserved? how passed onwards from generation to generation? how propagated over Greece during centuries, when our modern facilities for copying on paper, and the general art of reading, were too certainly unknown?

I presume every man of letters to be aware, that, since the time of the great German philologer, Fred. Augustus Wolf (for whose life and services to literature, see Wilhelm Koertce's "Leben und Studien Friedr. Aug. Wolfs:" "Life and Studies of F. A. Wolf," 1833), a great shock has been given to the slumbering credulity of men on these Homeric subjects; a galvanic resuscitation to the ancient scepticism on the mere possibility of an "Iliad," such as we now have it, issuing sound and complete, in the tenth or eleventh century before Christ, from the brain of a blind man, who had not (they say) so much as chalk towards the scoring down of his thoughts. The doubts moved by Wolf in 1795 propagated a controversy in Germany which has subsisted down to the present time. This controversy concerns Homer himself, and his first-born child, the "Iliad;" for as to the "Odyssey," sometimes reputed the child of his old age, and as to the minor poems, which never could have been ascribed to him by philosophic critics, these are universally given up, as having no more connection with Homer personally than any other of the many epic and cyclical poems which arose during post-
Homeric ages, in a spirit of imitation, more or less widely diverging from the primitive Homeric model.

Fred. Wolf raised the question soon after the time of the French Revolution. Afterwards he pursued it (1797) in his letters to Heyne. But it is remarkable that a man so powerful in scholarship, witnessing the universal fermentation he had caused, should not have responded to the general call upon himself to come forward and close the dispute with a comprehensive valuation of all that had been said, and all that yet remained to be said, upon this difficult problem. Voss, the celebrated translator of Homer into German dactylic hexameters, was naturally interested by a kind of personal stake in the controversy. He wrote to Wolf—warmly, perhaps, and in a tone almost of moral remonstrance—but without losing his temper, or forgetting the urbanity of a scholar. "I believe," said he in his later correspondence of the year 1796—"I believe in one 'Iliad,' in one 'Odyssey,' and in one Homer as the sole father of both. Grant that Homer could not write his own name—and so much I will concede that your acute arguments have almost demonstrated—still to my thinking that only enhances the glory of the poet. The unity of this poet (that there were not more authors of the 'Iliad' than one), and the unity of his works (that the 'Iliad' was not made up by welding into a fictitious unity many separate heroic ballads), are as yet to me unshaken ideas. But what then? I am no bigot in my creed, so as to close my ears against all hostile arguments. And these arguments, let me say plainly, you now owe to us all; arguments drawn from the internal structure of the Homeric poems. You have wounded us, Mr Wolf, in our affections; Mr Wolf, you have affronted us in our tenderest sensibilities. You have, Mr Wolf. But still we are just
men; ready to listen, willing to bear and to forbear. Mean-
time the matter cannot rest here. You owe it, Mr Wolf, 
to the dignity of the subject, not to keep back those proofs 
which doubtless you possess; proofs, observe, conclusive 
proofs. For hitherto, permit me to say, you have merely 
played with the surface of the question. True, even that 
play has led to some important results; and for these no 
man is more grateful than myself. 'But the main battle, 
Mr Wolf, is still in arrear.'

Mr Wolf, however, hearkened not to such appeals. He 
had called up spirits, by his evocation, more formidable 
than he looked for or could lay. Perhaps, like the god-
dess Eris at the wedding feast, he had merely sought to 
amuse himself by throwing a ball of contention amongst 
the literati: a little mischief was all that he intended, and 
a little learned Billingsgate all that he expected. Things 
had taken a wider circuit. Wolf's acuteness in raising 
objections to all the received opinions had fallen upon a 
kindly soil; the public mind had reacted powerfully; for 
the German mind is but too naturally disposed to scep-
ticism; and Mr Wolf found himself at length in this di-
lemma—viz., that either, by writing a very inadequate 
sequel, he must forfeit the reputation he had acquired; or 
else that he must prepare himself for a compass of research 
to which his spirits were not equal, and to which his studies 
had not latterly been directed. A man of high celebrity 
may be willing to come forward in undress, and to throw 
out such casual thoughts as the occasion may prompt, 
provided he can preserve his incognito; but, if he sees a 
vast public waiting to receive him with theatrical honours, 
and a flourish of trumpets announcing his approach, 
reasonably he may shrink from facing expectations so 
highly raised; and perhaps in this case he might truly
plead an absolute impossibility of pursuing further the many questions arising under such original sterility of materials, and after so elaborate a cultivation by other labourers.

Wolf, therefore, is not to be blamed for having declined, in its mature stages, to patronise his own quarrel. *His own* I call it, because he first pressed its strongest points; because he first kindled it into a public feud; and because, by his own revival of the Homeric text, he gave to the world, simultaneously with his doubts, the very strongest credentials of his right to utter doubts. And the public, during the interval of half-a-century which has succeeded to his first opening of the case, have viewed the question as so exclusively *his*, that it is generally known under the name of the Wolfian hypothesis. All this is so natural, that it is almost fair; that rebel who heads the mob of insurging is rightly viewed as the father of the insurrection, whether partially disowning it or not. Yet still, in the rigour of justice, we must not overlook the earlier conspirators. Not to speak here of more ancient sceptics, it is certain that in modern times Bentley, something more than one hundred and sixty years back, with his usual divinity of eye, saw the opening for doubts. Already in the year 1639, when he was a young man fresh from college, Bentley gave utterance to several of those particular scruples which a later generation called by the too exclusive name of "Wolfian." And, indeed, had he done nothing more than call attention to the digamma, as applied to the text of Homer, he could not have escaped feeling and communicating these scruples. To a man who was one day speaking of some supposed *hiatus* in the "Iliad," Bentley, from whom courtesy flowed as naturally as "milk from a male tiger," called out, "*Hiatus*, man! *Hiatus* in your
throat! There is no such thing in Homer." And, when the other had timidly submitted to him such cases as μεγά
ευςων or καλα εγγα, or μεληδεα οινον, Bentley showed him that, unless where the final syllable of the prior word hap-
penned to be in arsi (as suppose in Πηλμαδων Λυξαννος), uni-
versally the hiatus had not existed to the ears of Homer. And why? Because it was cured by the interposition of the digamma: "Apud Homerum säpe videtur hiatus esse, ubi prisca littera digamma explebat intermedium spatium."
[In Homer there often seems to be a hiatus, where in fact that ancient letter the digamma filled up the intermediate
space.] Thus μεληδεα οινον in Homer’s age was μεληδεα
Fωνον (from which Αeolic form of οινος (the Greek word for
wine) is derived our modern word for wine in all the western and central languages of Christendom; F is V, and V is W, all the world over—whence, therefore, vin, wine, vino, wein, wün, and so on; all originally depending upon that Αeolic letter F, or digamma, that is V, that is W, which is so necessary to the metrical integrity of Homer).
Now, when once a man of Bentley’s sagacity had made that step—forcing him to perceive that here of old time had been people tampering with Homer’s text (else how had the digamma dropped out of the place which once it must have occupied?)—he could not but go a little further. If you see one or two of the indorsements on a bill mis-
spelt, you begin to suspect a case of general forgery. When
the text of Homer had once become frozen and settled, no
man could take liberties with it at the risk of being tripped up himself on its glassy surface, and landed in a lugubrious sedentary posture, to the derision of all critics, compositors, pressmen, devils, and devillets. But, whilst the text was yet in a state of fusion, or lukewarm, or in the transitional state of cooling, every man who had a private purpose to
serve might impress upon its plastic wax whatever altera-
tions he pleased, whether by direct addition or by substi-
tution, provided only he had skill to evade any ugly seam
or cicatrice. It is true he could run this adulterated Homer
only on that particular road to which he happened to have
access. But then, in after generations, when all the Homers
were called in by authority for general collation, his would
go up with the rest; his forgery would be accepted for a
various reading, and would thus have a fair chance of com-
ing down to posterity—which word means, at this moment,
the reader and myself. We are posterity. Yes, even we
have been humbugged by this Pagan rascal; and have
doubtless drunk off much of his swipes, under the firm
faith that we were drinking the pure fragrant wine (the
μελιθέα Φοινος) of Homer.

Bentley having thus warned the public, by one general
caveat, that tricks upon travellers might be looked for on
this road, was succeeded by Wood, who, in his “Essay on
the Genius of Homer,” occasionally threw up rockets in
the same direction. This essay first crept out in the year
1769, but only to the extent of seven copies; and it was
not until the year 1775 * that a second edition diffused
the new views freely amongst the world. The next memorable
era for this question occurred in 1788, during which year
it was that Villoison published his “Iliad;” and, as part
of its apparatus, he printed the famous Venetian “Scholia,”
hitherto known only to inspectors of MSS. These “Scholia”
gave strength to the modern doubts, by showing that many

* It is a proof, however, of the interest, even at that time, taken by
German in English literature, as well as of the interest taken in this
Homerian question, that one of the seven copies published in 1769 must
have found its way to some German scholar; for already, in 1773, a Ger-
man translation of Wood had been published at Frankfort.
of them were but ancient doubts in a new form. Still, as the worshipful Scholiasts do not offer the pleasantest reading in the world, most of them being rather drowsy or so—truly respectable men, but somewhat apoplectic—it could not be expected that any explosion of sympathy should follow: the clouds thickened; but the man who was to draw forth the lightnings from their surcharged volumes had not yet come forward. In the meantime, Herder, not so much by learning as by the sagacity of his genius, threw out some pregnant hints of the disputable points. And finally, in 1795, Wolf marched forth in complete mail, a sheaf of sceptical arrows rattling on his harness, all of which he pointed and feathered, giving by his learning, or by masculine sense, buoyancy to their flight, so as to carry them into every corner of literary Europe. Then began the "row"—then the steam was mounted which has never since subsided—and then opened upon Germany a career of scepticism, which from the very first promised to be contagious. It was a mode of revolutionary disease, which could not by its very nature confine itself to Homer. The religious reader has since had occasion to see, with pain, the same principles of audacious scepticism applied to books and questions more important; but, as might be shown upon a fitting occasion, with no reason whatever for serious anxiety as to any popular effect. Meantime, for those numerous persons who do not read Latin or German with fluency, but are familiar with French, the most comprehensive view of Wolf's arguments (as given in his Homeric "Prolegomena," or subsequently in his "Briefe an Heyne:" "Letters to Heyne"), is to be found in Franceson's "Essai sur la question—Si Homère a connu l'usage de l'écriture: Berlin, 1818."

This French work on the question whether Homer were
acquainted with the art of writing, I mention, as meeting the wants of those who simply wish to know how the feud began. But, as that represents only the early stages of the entire speculation, it will be more satisfactory for all who are seriously interested in Homer, and without partisanship seek to know the plain unvarnished truth—"Is Homer a hum, and the 'Iliad' a hoax?"—to consult the various papers on this subject which have been contributed by Nitzsch to the great "Allgemeine Encyclopædie" ("Universal Encyclopædia") of modern Germany. Nitzsch's name is against him; it is intolerable to see such a thicket of consonants with but one little bit of a vowel amongst them; it is like the proportions between Falstaff's bread and his sack. However, after all, the man did not make his own name; and the name looks worse than it sounds; for it is but our own word niche, barbarously written. This man's essays are certainly the most full and representative pleadings which this extensive question has produced. On the other hand, they labour in excess with the prevailing vices of German speculation—viz., first, vague indeterminate conception; secondly, total want of power to methodise or combine the parts, and indeed, generally a barbarian inaptitude for composition. But, waiving our quarrel with Nitzsch and with Nitzsch's name, no work of his can be considered as generally accessible; his body is not in court, and, if it were, it talks German. So in his chair I shall seat myself; and now, with one advantage over him—viz., that I shall never leave the reader to muse for an hour over my meaning—I propose to state the outline of the controversy; to report the decisions upon the several issues sent down for trial upon this complex suit; and the apparent tendencies, so far as they are yet discoverable, towards that kind of general judgment which must be deli-
covered by the Chancery of European criticism, before this dispute will subside into repose.

The great sectional or subordinate points into which the Homeric controversy breaks up, are these:—

1. Homer—that is, the poet as distinct from his works; the poet apart from the poems.

2. The “Iliad” and the “Odyssey”—that is, the poems as distinct from their author; the poems apart from the poet.

3. The Rhapsodoi, or poetic chanters of Greece; these, and their predecessors or their contemporaries—the Aoidoi, the Citharædi, the Homeridæ.

4. Lycurgus.

5. Solon—and the Pisistratidæ.

6. The Diasceustæ; the Remodellers, or publishers of Recasts.

I hardly know at what point to take up this ravelled tissue; but, by way of tracing the whole theme \textit{ab ovó}, suppose, reader, we begin by stating the chronological bearings of the principal objects (things as well as persons) connected with the “Iliad.”

Ilium, or Troy, was that city of Asia Minor whose memorable fortunes and catastrophe furnished the subject of the “Iliad.” At what period of human history may we reasonably suppose this catastrophe to have occurred? Never did a great man err so much as apparently Sir Isaac Newton, on this very question, in deducing the early chronology of Greece. The semi-fabulous section of Grecian annals he crowded into so narrow a space, and he depressed the whole into such close proximity to the regular opening of history (that is, to the Olympiads), that we are perfectly at a loss to imagine with what sort of men, events, and epochs, Sir Isaac would have peopled that par-
ticular interval of a thousand years in Grecian chronology, which corresponds to the scriptural interval between the patriarch Abraham and Solomon the Jewish king. This interval commences with the year 2000 before Christ, and terminates with the year 1000 before Christ. But such is the fury of Sir Isaac for depressing all events not absolutely fabulous below this latter terminus, that he has really left himself without counters to mark the progress of man, or to fill the cells of history, through a millennium of Grecian life. The whole thousand years, as respects Hellas, is a mere desert upon Sir Isaac's map of time. As one instance of Sir Isaac's modernising propensities, I never could sufficiently marvel at his supposing the map of the heavens, including those constellations which are derived from the Argonautic enterprise, to have been completed about the very time of that enterprise; as if it were possible that a coarse clumsy hulk like the ship Argo, at which no possible Newcastle collier but would have sneezed, or that any of the men who navigated her, could take a consecrated place in men's imagination, or could obtain an everlasting memorial in the starry heavens, until time, by removing gross features, and by blending all the circumstances with the solemnities of vast distance, had reconciled the feelings to a sanctity which must have been shocking, if applied to things local and familiar.

Far different from Sir Isaac's is the present chronological theory. Almost universally it is now agreed, that the siege of Troy occurred about 1300, or, at the lowest calculation, more than 1200 years before Christ. 'What, then, is the chronological relation of Homer to Troy? Perhaps the most tenable theory on this relation is that which represents the period of his flourishing as having been from two to three centuries after Troy. By some it was ima-
gined that Homer himself had been a Trojan; and therefore contemporary with the very heroes whom he exhibits. Others, like our Jacob Bryant, have fancied that he was not merely co-eval with those heroes, but actually was one of those heroes—viz., Ulysses; and that the "Odyssey," therefore, rehearses the personal adventures, the voyages, the calamities of Homer himself. It is our old friend the poet, but with a new face; he is now a soldier, a sailor, a king; and, in case of necessity, a very fair boxer, or "fistic artist," for the abatement of masterful beggars, "sorners," and other nuisances. But these wild fancies have found no success. All scholars have agreed in placing a deep gulf of years between Homer and that Ilium which he sang. Aristarchus fixes the era of Homer at 140 years after the Trojan war; Philochorus at 180 years; Apollodorus at 240; the Arundel Marbles at 302; and Herodotus, who places Homer about 400 years before his own time (which "own time" may be dated as about 450 B.C.), ought, therefore, to be interpreted as assuming 350 years at least between Homer and Troy. So that the earliest series of events connected from before and from behind with the Grecian bard may be thus arranged:—

Years bef. Christ.

1220—Trojan expedition.

1000—Homer a young man, and contemporary with the building of the first Temple at Jerusalem.

820—Lycurgus brings into the Peloponnesus from the island of Crete (or else from Ionia—that is, not from any island, but from some place in the mainland of Asia Minor), the Homeric poems, hitherto unknown upon the Grecian continent.

Up to this epoch (the epoch of transplanting the "Iliad" from Greece insular and Greece colonial to Greece conti-
nental), the Homeric poems had been left to the custody of
two schools or professional orders, interested in the text
of these poems: how interested, or in what way their duties
connected them with Homer, I will not at this point in-
quire. Suffice it, that these two separate orders of men
did confessedly exist; one being elder, perhaps, than Homer
himself, or even than Troy—viz., the Aoidoi, or Chanters,
and Citharædi, or Harpers. These, no doubt, had origin-
ally no more relation to Homer than to any other narra-
tive poet; their duty of musical recitation had brought
them connected with Homer, as it would have done with
any other popular poet; and it was only the increasing
. current of Homer's predominance over all rival poets,
which gradually gave such a bias and inflection to these
men's professional art, as at length to suck them within
the great Homeric tide; they became, but were not origin-
ally, a sort of Homeric choir and orchestra—a chapel of
priests having a ministerial duty in the vast Homeric
cathedral. Through them exclusively, or, if not, certainly
through them chiefly, the two great objects were secured
—first, that to each successive generation of men Homer
was published with all the advantages of a musical accom-
paniment; secondly, that for distant generations Homer
was preserved. I do not thus beg the question as to the
existence of alphabetic writing in the days of Homer; on
the contrary, I go along with Nitzsch and others in oppos-
ing Wolf upon that point. I believe that a laborious and
painful art of writing did exist; but with such disadvantages
as to writing materials, that Homer (I am satisfied) would
have fared ill as regarded his chance of reaching the polished
age of Pericles, had he relied on written memorials, or
upon any mode of publication less impassioned than the
orchestral chanting of the Rhapsodoi. The other order of
men dedicated to some Homeric interest, whatever that might be, were those technically known as the Homeridae. The functions of these men have never been satisfactorily ascertained, or so as to discriminate them broadly and firmly from the Citharædi and Rhapsodoi. But in two features it is evident that they differed essentially—first, that the Homeridae constituted a more local and domestic college of Homeric ministers, confined originally to a single island, not diffused (as were the Rhapsodoi) over all Greece; secondly, that by their very name, which refers them back to Homer as a mere radiation from his life-breathing orb, this class of followers is barred from pretending, in the Homeric equipage, (like the Citharædi), to any independent existence, still less to any anterior existence. The musical reciters had been originally a general and neutral class of public ministers, gradually sequestered into the particular service of Homer; but the Homeridae were, in some way or other, possibly by blood, or by fiction of love and veneration, Homer’s direct personal representatives; like the green-turbaned Seyuds of Islamism, who claim a relation of consanguinity to the Prophet himself.

Thus far, however, though there is evidence of two separate colleges or incorporations who charged themselves with the general custody, transmission, and publication of the Homeric poems, we hear of no care applied to the periodical review of the Homeric text; we hear of no man taking pains to qualify himself for that office by collecting copies from all quarters, or by applying the supreme political authority of his own peculiar commonwealth to the conservation and the authentication of the Homeric poems. The text of no book can become an object of anxiety, until by numerous corruptions it has become an object of doubt. Lycurgus, it is true, the
Spartan lawgiver, did apply his own authority, in a very early age, to the general purpose of importing and naturalising the "Iliad." But there his office terminated. Critical skill, applied to the investigation of an author's text, was a function of the human mind as much unknown in the Greece of Lycurgus as in the Germany of Tacitus, or in the Tongataboo of Captain Cooke. And of all places in Greece, such delicate reactions of the intellect upon its own creations were least likely to arise amongst the illiterate Dorian tribes of the Peloponnesus—wretches that hugged their own barbarising institutions as the very jewels of their birthright, and would most certainly have degenerated rapidly into African brutality, had they not been held steady, hustled and forcibly shouldered into social progress, by the press of surrounding tribes, fortunately more intellectual than themselves.

Thus continued matters through about four centuries from Homer. And by that time we begin to feel anxious about the probable state of the Homeric text. Not that I suppose any interregnum in Homer's influence—not that I believe in any possible defect of links in that vast series of traditional transmitters; the integrity of that succession was guaranteed by its interwreathing itself with human pleasures, with religious ceremonies, with household and national festivals. It is not that Homer would have become apocryphal or obscure for want of public repetition; on the contrary, he would have suffered by too much repetition—too constant and too fervent a repetition would have been the main source of corruptions in the text. Sympathy in the audience must always have been a primary demand with the Rhapsodeoi; and, to perfect sympathy, it is one antecedent condition to be perfectly understood. Hence, when allusions were no longer intelligible
or effectual, what result would be likely to follow? Too often it must happen that they would be dropped from the text; and when any Homeric family or city had become extinct, the temptation would be powerful for substituting the names of others who could delight the chanter by fervid gratitude for such a vicarious distinction where it had been visited, or could reward him with gifts where it had not. But it is not necessary to go over the many causes in preparation, after a course of four centuries, for gradually sapping the integrity of Homer's text. Everybody will agree, that it was at length high time to have some edition "by authority;" and that, had the "Iliad" and "Odyssey" received no freezing arrest in their licentious tendency towards a general interfusion of their substance, and an adulterating of their diction with modern words and ideas, most certainly by the time of Alexander—i.e., about seven centuries from Homer—either poem would have existed only in fractions. The connecting parts between the several books would have dropped out; and all the αἰγίστραι, or episodes dedicated to the honour of a particular hero, might, with regard to names less hallowed in the imagination of Greece, or where no representatives of the house remained, have perished utterly. Considering the great functions of the Greek language subsequently in propagating Christianity, it was a real providential provision which caused the era of state editions to supersede the ad libitum text of the careless or the interested; and just at that precise period when the rapidly rising tide of Athenian refinement would else soon have swept away all the landmarks of primitive Greece, and when the altered character of the public reciters would have co-operated with the other difficulties of the case to make a true Homeric text irrecoverable. For the
Rhapsodés were in a regular course of degradation to the rank of mere mercenary artists, from that of sacred minstrels, who connected the past with the present, and who sang—precisely because their burden of truth was too solemn for unimpassioned speech. This was the station they had occupied; but it remains in evidence against them, that they were rapidly sinking under the changes of the times; were open to bribes; and, as one consequence (whilst partly it was one cause) of this degradation, that they had ceased to command the public respect. The very same changes, and through the very same steps, and under the very same agencies, have been since exhibited to Europe in the parallel history of our mediæval minstrels. The pig-headed Ritson, in mad pursuit of that single idea (no matter what) which might vex Bishop Percy, made it his business, in one essay, to prove, out of the statutes at large, and out of local court records, that the minstrel, so far from being that honoured guest in the courts of princes whom the bishop had described, was in fact, by Act of Parliament, a rogue and a vagabond, standing in awe of the parish beadle, and liable to be kicked out of any hundred or titling where he should be found trespassing. But what nonsense! All that Ritson said was virtually false, though plausibly half-true. The minstrel was, and he was not, all that the bishop and others had affirmed. The contradiction lay in the time: Percy and Ritson were speaking of different periods; the bishop of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries—the attorney* of the sixteenth and seventeenth. Now the

* Ritson was the most litigious of attorneys; the leader of all black-letter literature; dreaded equally by Bishop Percy and Sir Walter Scott; but constantly falling into error through pure mulish perverseness. Of Greek he knew nothing. In Latin he was self-taught, and consequently laid himself open to the scoffs of scholars better taught.
Grecian *Rhapsodoi* passed through corresponding stages of declension. Having ministered through many centuries to advancing civilisation, finally they themselves fell before a higher civilisation; and the particular aspect of the new civilisation, which proved fatal to *them*, was the general diffusion of reading as an art of liberal education. In the age of Pericles, every well-educated man could read; and one result from his skill, as no doubt it had also been one amongst its exciting causes, was, that he had a fine copy at home, beautifully adorned, of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey." Paper and vellum, for the last six centuries B.C. (that is, from the era of the Egyptian king Psammetichus), were much less scarce in Greece than during the ages immediately consecutive to Homer; and this scarcity it was that had retarded manuscript literature, as subsequently it retarded the art of printing.

How providential, therefore—and with the recollection of that great part played by Greece in propagating Christianity through the previous propagation of her own literature and language, what is there in such an interference unworthy of Providence?—how providential, that precisely in that interval of one hundred and eleven years, between the year 555 B.C., the *locus* of Pisistratus, and 444 B.C., the *locus* of Pericles, whilst as yet the traditional text of Homer was retrievable, though rapidly nearing to the time when it would be strangled with weeds, and whilst as yet the arts of reading and writing had not weakened the popular devotion to Homer by dividing it amongst multiplied books; just then in that critical isthmus of transitional time, did two or three Athenians of rank—first Solon, next Pisistratus, and lastly (if Plato is right), Hipparchus—step forward to make a public, solemn, and legally operative review of the Homeric poems. They drew the
old hulk into dock; laid bare its timbers; and stopped the further progress of decay. What more they did than this, and by what characteristic services each connected his name with a separate province in this memorable restoration of the “Iliad” and “Odyssey,” I shall inquire further on.

One century after Pisistratus we come to Pericles; or, counting from the *locus* of each (555 B.C., and 444 B.C.), exactly one hundred and eleven years divide them. One century after Pericles we come to Alexander the Great; or, counting from the *locus* of each (444 B.C., and 333 B.C.), exactly one hundred and eleven years divide them. During this period of two hundred and twenty-two years Homer had rest. Nobody was tempted by any oblique interest to torment his text any more. And it is singular enough that this period of two hundred and twenty-two years, during which Homer reigned in the luxury of repose, having nothing to do but to let himself be read and admired, was precisely that ring-fence of years within which lies true Grecian history; for, if any man wishes to master the Grecian history, he needs not to ascend above Pisistratus, nor to come down below Alexander. Before Pisistratus all is mist and fable; after Alexander all is dependency and servitude. And remarkable it is, that, soon after Alexander, and indirectly through changes caused by him, Homer was again drawn out for the pleasure of the tormentors. Among the dynasties founded by Alexander’s lieutenants was one memorably devoted to literature. The Macedonian house of the Ptolemies, when seated on the throne of Egypt, had founded the very first public library and the first learned public. Alexander died in the year 320 B.C.; and already in the year 280 B.C. (that is, not more than forty years after), the learned Jews of
Alexandria and Palestine had commenced, under the royal patronage, that translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek which, from the supposed number of the translators—(viz., septuaginta—seventy), has obtained the name of the "Septuagint." This was a service to posterity. But the earliest Grecian service to which this Alexandrian Library ministers was Homeric; and strikes us as singular, when we contrast it with the known idolatry towards Homer of that royal soldier from whom the city itself, with all its novelties, drew its name and foundation. Had Alexander survived forty years longer, as very easily he might, if he had insisted upon leaving his heel-taps at Babylon, how angry it would have made him that the very first trial of this new and powerful galvanic battery, involved in the institution of a public library, should be upon the body of the "Iliad!"

From 280 B.C. to 160 B.C., there was a constant succession of Homeric critics. The immense material found in the public library towards a direct history of Homer and his fortunes, would alone have sufficed to evoke a school of critics. But there was, besides, another invitation to Homeric criticism, more oblique, and eventually more effective. The Alexandrian Library contained vast collections towards the study of the Greek language through all its dialects, and through all its chronological stages. This study led back by many avenues to Homer. A verse or a passage which hitherto had passed for genuine, and which otherwise, perhaps, yielded no internal argument for suspicion, was now found to be veined by some phrase, dialect, terminal form, or mode of using words, that might be too modern for Homer's age, or too far removed in space from Homer's Ionian country. We moderns, from our vast superiority to the Greeks themselves
in Greek metrical science, have in this science found an extra resource laid open to us for detecting the spurious in Greek poetry; and many are the condemned passages in our modern editions of Greek books, against which no jealousy would ever have arisen amongst unmetrical scholars. Here, however, the Alexandrian critics, with all their slashing insolence, showed themselves sons of the feeble; they groped about in twilight. But, even without that resource, they contrived to riddle Homer through and through with desperate gashes. In fact, after being “treated” and “handled” by three generations of critics, Homer came forth (just as we may suppose one of Lucan’s legionary soldiers, from the rencounter with the amphिसbæna, the dipsas, and the water-snake of the African wilderness) one vast wound, one huge system of confluent ulcers. Often, in reviewing the labours of three particularly amongst these Alexandrian scorpions, I think of the Æsopian fable, in which an old man with two wives, one aged as befitted him, and the other young, submits his head alternately to what may be called the Alexandrian revision of each. The old lady goes to work first; and upon “moral principle” she indignantly extirpates all the black hairs which could ever have inspired him with the absurd fancy of being young, and making love to a girl. Next comes the young critic: she is disgusted with age; and upon system eliminates (or, to speak with Aristarchus, “obelises”) all the grey hairs. And thus, between the two ladies and their separate editions of the old gentleman, he, poor Homeric creature, cómës forth as bald as the back of another hand. Aristarchus might well boast that he had cëwed Homer of the dry-rot! he has; and by leaving hardly one whole spar of his ancient framework. Nor can I, with my poor share of penetration, comprehend what sort of
abortion it is which Aristarchus would have us to accept and entertain in the room of our old original "Iliad" and "Odyssey." To cure a man radically of the toothache, by knocking all his teeth down his throat, seems a suspicious recommendation for "dental surgery." And, with respect to the Homer of Aristarchus, it is to be considered, that besides the lines, sentences, and long passages, to which that Herod of critics affixed his obelus (†) or stiletto,* there were entire books which he found no use in obelising piecemeal; because it was not this line or that line into which he wished to thrust his dagger, but the whole rabble of lines—"tag, rag, and bobtail." Which reminds me of John Paul Richter, who suggests to some author anxiously revising the table of his own errata, that, perhaps, on reflection, he might see cause to put his whole book into the list of errata; requesting of the reader kindly to erase the total work as one entire oversight and continuous blunder, from page one down to the word finis. In such cases, as Martial observes, no plurality of cancellings or erasures will answer the critic's purpose: but "una litura potest." One mighty bucket of ink thrown over the whole will execute the critical sentence; but, as to obelising, that is no better than snapping pocket-pistols in a sea-fight.

With the Alexandrian tormentors, we may say that Homer's pre-Christian martyrdom came to an end. His post-Christian sufferings have been due chiefly to the Germans, who have renewed the warfare not only of Alexandrian critics, but of the ancient Chorizontes. These people I have not mentioned separately, because, in fact, nothing remains of their labours, and the general spirit of

* This obelus, or little spit, or in fact dagger, prefixed to a word, or verse, or paragraph, indicated that it might consider itself stabbed, and assassinated for ever.
their warfare may be best understood from that of modern Germany. They acquired their name of Chorizontes (or separators) from their principle of breaking up the “Iliad” into multiform groups of little tadpole “Iliads,” as also of splitting the one old hazy but golden Homer, that looms upon us so venerably through a mist of centuries, into a vast reverberation of little silver Homers, that twinkled up and down the world, and lived when they found it convenient.

Now, let us converge the separate points of this chronological deduction into one focus, after which I will try to review, each for itself, the main questions which I have already numbered as making up the elements of the controversy.

Years bef. Christian Era.

1220—Troy captured and burned after a ten years’ siege.

1000—Solomon the king of Jewry, and Homer the Gre- cian poet, both young men “on the spree.” In the thousandth year before Christ, without sound of chisel or hammer, the elder Temple was built in Jerusalem. In that same year, or thenceabouts, rose silently, like an exhalation, the great Homeric temple of the “Iliad.”

800—Lycurgus the lawgiver imports the “Iliad” into Sparta; and thus first transplants it from Greece insular and Greece continental.

555—Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, Pisistratus, the ruler of Athens, and Hipparchus, his son, do something as yet undetermined for the better ascertaining and maintaining of the original Homeric text.

From the text thus settled must presumably have been cited the numerous Homeric passages which we find in Plato, and other wits of this period, the noontide of Greek literature—viz. the period
of Pericles; and these passages generally coincide with our present text, so that, upon the whole, we have good reason to rely upon our present "Iliad" as essentially the same with that which was used and read in the family of Pisistratus.

333—This is the main year (at least it is the inaugurating year) of Alexander's Persian expedition; and probably the year in which his tutor, Aristotle, published those notions about the tragic and epic "unities," which have since had so remarkable effect upon the arrangement of the "Iliad." In particular, the notion of "episodes," or digressional narratives, interwoven parenthetically with the principal narrative, was entirely Aristotelian, and was explained and regulated by him; and under that notion, people submitted easily to interpolations in the text of the "Iliad," which would else have betrayed themselves for what they are.

320—Alexander the Great dies.

280—The Alexandrian Library is applied to the search-down to 160 ing revision of Homer; and a school of Alexandrian critics (in which school, through three consecutive generations, flourished, as its leaders, Zenodotus, Aristophanes, and Aristarchus) dedicated themselves to Homer. They are usually called the Alexandrian "grammatici;" which word "grammatici," as I have explained some scores of times, did not express so limited a notion as that of grammarians, but was the orthodox mode of indicating classically those whom the French call litterateurs, and we English less compactly call men of letters.
After the era of 160 B.C., by which time the Second (which is in effect the only great) Punic War had liberated Rome from her African rival, the Grecian or eastern states of the Mediterranean began rapidly to fall under Roman conquest. Henceforward the text of Homer suffered no further disturbance or inquisition, until it reached that little wicked generation (ourselves and our immediate fathers) which I have the honour to address. Now, let us turn from the "Iliad" viewed in its chronological series of fortunes, to the "Iliad" viewed in itself and its relations; i.e., in reference to its author, to its Grecian propagators, to its reformers or restorers, its re-casters or interpolators, and its critical explorers.

A.—Homer.

About the year 1797, Messrs Pitt and Harry Dundas laboured under the scandal of sometimes appearing drunk in the House of Commons; and on one particular evening this impression was so strong against them, that the morning papers of the following three days fired a salute of exactly one hundred-and-one epigrams on the occasion. One was this:—

PITT.—I cannot see the Speaker, Hal—can you?
DUND.—Not see the Speaker! D—m'e, I see two.

Thus it has happened to Homer. Some say, "There never was such a person as Homer."—"No such person as Homer! On the contrary," say others, "there were scores." This latter hypothesis has much more to plead for itself than the other. Numerous Homers were postulated with some apparent reason, by way of accounting for the numerous Homeric poems, and numerous Homeric birth-places. One man, it was felt, never could be equal to so many claims. Ten camel-loads of poems you may see
ascribed to Homer in the "Bibliotheca Græca" of Fabricius; and more states than seven claimed the man. These claims, it is true, would generally have vanished, if there had been the means of critically probing them; but still there was a primâ facie case made out for believing in a plurality of Homers; whilst, on the other hand, for denying Homer, there never was any but a verbal reason. The Polytheism of the case was natural; but the Atheism was monstrous. Ilgen, in the preface to his edition of the Homeric Hymns, says, "Homeri nomen, si recte video, derivandum est ex ὠμοῦ et ἀγω." And so, because the name (like many names) can be made to yield a fanciful emblematic meaning, Homer must be a myth. But, in fact, Mr Ilgen has made little advance towards a settlement, if that was what he aimed at, with his ὠμοῦ ἀγω. What do the words mean? ἀγω is to join, to fit, to adapt—ὁμος is together, or in harmony. But such a mere outline or schematism of an idea may be filled up under many different constructions. One critic, for instance, understands it in the sense of dovetailing, or metaphorical cabinet-making, as if it applied chiefly to the art of uniting words into metrical combinations. Another—viz., Mr Ilgen himself—takes it quite differently; it describes not the poetical composition, or any labour whatever of the poet as a poet, but the skill of the musical accompaniment and adaptations. Homer means the man that put together, or fitted into concert, the words and the music—the libretto of the opera and its fine Mozartian accompaniment. By accident the poet may chance to be also the musical reciter of the poem; and in that character he may have an interest in this name of ὁμογενεῖς, but not as a poet. ὁμογενεῖς and ὁμογενεῖν, says Hesychius, mean ὑμοράνειν (to harmonise in point of sound); the latter of
the two is used in this sense by Hesiod; and more
nicely, says Mr Ilgen, it means accinere, to sing an ac-
companiment to another voice or to an instrument; and
it means also succinere, to sing such an accompaniment
in an under-key; or to sing what we moderns call a
second—i.e., an arrangement of notes corresponding, but
subordinated to the other or leading part. So says Ilgen
in mixed Latin, German, and Greek. Now, I also have
my pocket theory. I maintain that ὅποις αὐτῷ is Greek for
packing up. And my view of the case is this—"Homer"
was a sort of Delphic or prophetic name given to the poet,
under a knowledge of that fate which awaited him in Crete,
where, if he did not pack up any trunk that has yet been
discovered, he was, however, himself packed up in the
portmanteau of Lycurgus. Such, at least, is the colouring
which the credulous Plutarch, nine hundred years after
Lycurgus, gives to the story. "Man alive!" says a Ger-
man, apostrophising this thoughtless Plutarch, how could
Lycurgus make a shipment of Homer’s poems in the shape
of a parcel for importation, unless there were written
copies in Crete, at a time when nobody could write? Or,
how, why, and for what intelligible purpose, could he have consigned this bale to a house in the Pelopon-
nesus—viz., Somebody & Co.—when notoriously neither
Somebody nor Co. could read? Homer, he thinks, could
be imported at that period only in the shape of an
orchestra, as a band of Homeric chanter. But, return-
ing seriously to the name Ὀμήρος, I say that, were this
name absolutely bursting with hieroglyphic life, that would
be no proof that the man Homer, instead of writing a con-
siderable number of octavo volumes, was (to use Mr Ilgen’s
uncivil language) "an abstract idea." Decent people’s
children are not to be treated as "abstract ideas," because
their names may chance to look allegoric. Bunyan's "Mr Ready-to-sink" might seem suspicious in offering himself for a life-insurance; but Mr Strong-i'-th'-arm, who would have been a desirable companion for such an exhausted gentleman, is no abstract idea at all; he is, to my personal knowledge, a broad-shouldered reality in a most celebrated street of London, liable to bills, duns, and other affections of our common humanity. Suppose, therefore, that Homer, in some one of his names, really had borne a designation glancing at a symbolical meaning, what of that? this should rather be looked upon as a reflex name, artificially constructed for expressing and reverberating his glory after it had gathered, than as any predestinating (and so far marvellous) name. Chrysostom, for instance, that eloquent father of early Christianity, had he been baptised by such a name as golden-mouthed (Chrysostomos), you would have suspected for one of Mr Ilgen's "abstract ideas;" but, as it happens, we all know that he existed in the body; and that the appellation by which he is usually recognised was a name of honour conferred upon him by the public in commination of his eloquence. However, I will bring this point to a short issue, by drawing the reader's attention to the following case: Any man, who has looked into the body of Greek rhetoricians, must know that, in that hebdomas idearum, or septenary system of rhetorical forms which Hermogenes and many others illustrated, two of the seven (and the foremost two) were the qualities called gorgotes and deinotes. Now, turn to the list of early Greek rhetoricians or popular orators, and who stands first? Chronologically, the very first is a certain Tisias, perhaps; but he is a mere nominis umbra. The first who made himself known to the literature of Greece is Gorgias; that Gorgias who visited Athens in the days of Socrates (see
Athenæus, for a rigorous examination of the date assigned to that visit by Plato); the same Gorgias from whose name Plato has derived a title for one of his dialogues. Again, amongst the early Greek orators, you will see Deinarchus. Gorgias and Deinarchus! Who is there but would say, were it not that these men had flourished in the meridian light of Athenian literature—"Here we behold two ideal or symbolic orators typifying the qualities of gorgotes and deinotes!" But a stronger case still is that of Demosthenes. Were this great orator not (by comparison with Homer) a modern person, under the full blaze of history, and co-eval with Alexander the Great, 333 years B.C., who is there that would not pronounce him a mere allegoric man, upon reflecting that the name was composed of these two elements—Demos, the "people" in its most democratic expression, and sthenos, "strength?" this last word having been notoriously used by Homer (mega sthenos Okeanoio) to express that sort of power which makes itself known by thundering sound, "the thundering strength of the people!" or, "the people's fulminating might!"—who would believe that the most potent of Greek orators had actually brought with him into his cradle this ominous and magnificent name, this natural patent of precedence to the Athenian hustings? It startles us to find lurking in any man's name a prophecy of his after career; as, for instance, to find a Latin legend—"And his glory shall be from the Nile" (Est honor à Nilo), concealing itself in the name Horatio Nelson.† But there the prophecy lies hidden, and cannot be extracted without a painful corkscrew process of anagram. Whereas,