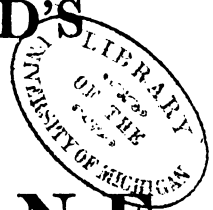


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**WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH;**

**AND**

**JOHN MURRAY, LONDON.**

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**1818.**

Tertiaque innocuus est; tamen illum mole  
valentem

Hic melior motu in terram bis præcipitavit.  
In quarta et quinta cum Pullo Bourkius ultro  
Congressus quoties, toties prostravit arena,  
Naribus ex Bourki quamquam vis sanguinis  
ibat.

Tunc illi sexta impedit violentius ictum  
Lumine sub lævo, et vasto cadit impete Pullus.  
Septena, octavaque valet vis vivida Pulli  
In caput adversum Bourki, qui plurima jactat  
Vulnera, quorum unum incutiens crudelius  
ora

Includit vocem et tantum non sanguine vitam.  
Ex templo quovis contendunt pignore cuncti  
Victorem fore, sed nono in certamine major  
Bourkius evadit, plagasque repercutit omnes;  
Atque iterum in terram Pullus procumbit  
anhelans.

Sic optata brevem nectit Victoria Palmam  
Alterutri; nunc cæditur Hic, nunc Ille tri-  
umphat.

Quatuor inque vices quæ tempora nona se-  
quuntur

Jam memorata, leves ægre Dea ventilat alas,  
Inque caput Bourki recto pede stare videtur;  
Lucta ferox interdum, et parte severa ab  
utraque est,

Jamque ter, et vicies pugnatum est; nec  
mora. Victor

Vi genium nitens, nec non fretus pede dextro,  
Bourkiadem terra immanem applicat, insu-  
per ipsum

Ridet anhelantem dura ad discrimina casus;  
Perque vices trinas minor ex certamine semper  
Bourkius excessit, nec dextram tollere contra  
Vixque oculum est ausus: quin certi protin-  
us omnes

Uno ore exclamant, cuinam prætere  
palmam

Et dubitamus adhuc? dum clamant, Bour-  
kius ultro

Efferus ecce iterum in pugnam ruit, omnis,  
et ingens

Mole suâ in terram gravis indicit; adstat  
Amicus,

Suadet et Adjutor sævo cessare duello  
Semper inæquali, et cedendo victus abire.

Nondum animo domitus negat Hic, longe-  
que recusat,

Extremasque vices pugnae integrat, et sibi  
fidens

Os offert Pullo incautum: sub pondere dextræ  
Contusæ resonant nares; torrente sonoro  
It sanguis; conduntur lumina, et effugit  
omnis,

Aut omnem fugisse putes, evandia vita,  
Hic finis Bourki in præsens; hic exitus illum  
Hac vice devictum agnovit, Pulloque mi-  
norem.

Vulneribus lotis, deleto stigmate vultus,  
Et cute curatâ, forsan te, Pulle, domabit.  
Plus æquo ne victor ovans tua cornua tollas  
Aut nimium tibi mens elata superbiat, oro.

V. P.\*

\* V. P. may stand for Victoria Pugilis-  
tica, Victor Pearcius, Versus Faramiacus,  
or any thing else that the reader chooses.

TESTIMONIA

*Virorum doctorum in Stephanum Pearcium  
Wimbletonicæ Victorem.*

Τὸν κλεινὸν Στίφωνα Στίφαιος Στίφαιου Στι-  
φανίσεως

Τῶν τοῦ πύλου ἰσμάλα παγκραχίσεω  
Τμίσην Στιφάνου φρονία τις μεῖλα σίλινα,  
"Λέξιος ἴσι φίραν ἄλλου Οὐμὲλλεινον. B.

Stephen beat this time, but Time will beat  
Stephen,

Square all the rounds, and make the odds  
even. R.

Tinge rubore genas, velo caput abde Camana,  
Spreta jocos, Burki prælia quæ cecinit.

C. M. A.

O caro Stephano una selva di lauro a te non  
basta. MATΘΙΑΙ.

REMARKS ON THE PERIODICAL CRITICISM OF ENGLAND—IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

(Translated from the German of Von  
Lauerwinkel.\*)

THE observations which I made on the periodical critics of Britain, in my last letter, do not satisfy you.—You insist that my late journey to London must have furnished me with much new and interesting information concerning English literature in all its branches; and you request me to communicate to you whatever I may have learned respecting those strange *Reviews*, which at present rule the authors and readers of the freest country in Europe, with as arbitrary and merciless a sway as was ever exerted over the civil and political world by a sportive Nero, or a gloomy Tiberius. My dear friend, I went to London to transact a very delicate piece of business, not at all connected with literature; and during my stay in its metropolis, the great men whom I saw were not the great men of literature. I will do, however, all that I can to satisfy your desires.

\* When we announced this letter some months ago, we mentioned it as the composition of a certain celebrated German critic. We delayed its publication in consequence of some suspicions we entertained as to that point, and have since learned from the translator, that the author is not the writer we had named, but his friend the Baron von Lauerwinkel. EDITOR.

Remember only this much, that if my remarks appear less bitter than those of your illustrious friend, you must not on that account suppose that we radically differ in opinion. The privy councillor\* must be excused for speaking with a little extra-severity, for he has had reason to think on this subject more than once, with the feelings of personal resentment and insulted genius;—but of this in the sequel.

Although you are well read in English authors, it may not be unnecessary to tell you, that nothing is more unlike a German Review than an English one. If you look first at the table of contents in an Edinburgh, and then at that in a Leipzig Review, you perceive, indeed, that the books criticised are not the same books, but you would not suspect that the whole system and style of criticism adopted in the two works are far more different than the languages in which they are composed. A German Reviewer is a plain, sensible, sober professor, doctor, or master of arts, hired by his bookseller to compose a simple analysis of a new work, in the very same dispassionate and reflective manner wherein an abstract of any book of antiquity, dug up at Pompeii or Pæstum, would probably be written. It is no matter although the first leaf be wanting, and the author's name a mystery; the poem, history, or treatise, is judged according to its own merits by the critic; and the reader is presented with one or two interesting extracts, enough to excite, not to satisfy, the appetite of his curiosity.—An English Reviewer is a smart, clever man of the world, or else a violent political zealot. He takes up a new book either to make a jest of it, and amuse his readers and himself at the expense of its author, or he makes use of the name of it merely as an excuse for writing, what he thinks the author might have been better employed in doing, a dissertation, *in favour* of the minister, if the Review be the property of a Pittite, *against* him and all his measures, if it be the property of a Foxite, bookseller. It is no matter although the poor author be a man who cares nothing at all about politics, and has never once thought either of Pit or Fox, Castlereagh or Napoleon, during the whole time of composing

his book. The English Reviewers are of the opinion of Pericles, that politics are, or should be, in some way or other, the subject of every man's writings. “*τοι μὲν οὖν ταῦτα μετιχόμεθα ἢ ἀπραγμῶνα ἀλλ’ ἀχρεῖον νομιζόμεν.*” The book itself is perhaps as far, both in subject and spirit, from politics, as can well be imagined. The Reviewer does not mind that: when he sits down to criticise it, his first question is not, “Is this book good or bad?” but it is, “Is this writer a ministerialist or an oppositionist?” No one knows: the author is a person who lives in his province, and eats beef and drinks port, without ever asking who is minister, regent, or king. But he has a nephew, a cousin, or an uncle, who is member of parliament, and votes. This is quite sufficient. If he votes with Lord Castlereagh, the poetry, or biography, or history, or philosophy, or erudition, of his kinsman, is excellent in the eyes of the Quarterly, and contemptible in those of the Edinburgh Reviewer. Does he oppose the minister? then the tables are turned: the Quarterly despises, and the Edinburgh extols him. His genius is tried, not by the rules of Aristotle, but by those of St Stephen's chapel. A man may be a dunce,—that is a trifle. If he can influence a single vote in the House of Commons, he may reckon upon being trumpeted up as a great man by either one set of critics or another.

The truth is, that the English Reviewer does not much care what the merit of the author is. The author is a mere puppet in the hands of the critic. His name indeed appears at the top of the page; he is the ostensible *punch* of the exhibition; but the person behind the curtain is very ill satisfied unless your admiration is reserved for himself. He can make his doll scream or growl as he pleases: he makes it hop through a jig, or swim through a minuet, as it suits his fancy. My dear friend, the author is nothing—the Reviewer every thing. It is he that pockets your money, and is it not but fair that he should furnish you with the amusement?

You remember what I have said of Shakspeare, that he is an angelic being, a pure spirit, who looks down upon “the great globe itself, and all which it inhabits,” as if from the elevation of some higher planet. He is,

\* He means *Gotha*.

like Uriel, the angel of the sun, partaker in all the glories of the orb in which he dwells. Undazzled by the splendour which surrounds himself, he sees every thing with the calm eye of intellect. It is true, that at the moment when he views any object, a flood of light and warmth are thrown over it from the passing sun of genius. Still he sees the world as it is; and if the beams love to dwell longest on some favoured region, there is none upon which they never shine. It is a bold thing to compare Shakspeare with a Reviewer; but if ever the world shall possess a perfect Reviewer, be assured that he will bear, in many respects, a striking resemblance to this first of poets. Like him he will be universal—inpartial—rational. The serious and the mirthful will be alike his favourites. He will dissect with equal acuteness the character of a Caliban or a Coriolanus. He will have divine intellect and human feeling so blended within him, that he shall sound, with equal facility, the soul of a Hamlet, and the heart of a Juliet. What a being would this be! Compared with him, the present critics of England are either satirical buffoons, like Foote or Aristophanes, or they are truculent tragedians, like the author of *The Revenge*. But it is time that I should introduce them a little more fully to your acquaintance.

I said, in the first sentence of this letter, that the present Reviewers of England are as despotical as Nero or Tiberius. An oligarchy is always a tyrannical government; and such is at this moment the constitution of their literary empire. The oligarchy is made up of two parties, who detest each other with a virulence of hatred never surpassed either in Syracuse or in Florence. The heads of these two factions,—these *Neri* and *Bianchi* of criticism,—are Jeffrey and Gifford. The former resembles the gay despot of Rome, the latter the bloody and cruel one of Capree. Both are men of great talents, and both are, I think, very bad Reviewers. We have never had any thing like either of them in Germany, therefore I must describe them at some length.

I think that no man can ever be a good critic, unless he be something more than a Reviewer. Aristotle and Lessing remain, but Chamfort and all the wits of the *Mercur*e have

perished. We will not take our opinion of a great poet from one whom, in spite of all the cleverness which can be shewn in a Review, we still feel to be immeasurably the inferior of the person whom he criticises. Mr Gifford (Editor of the *Quarterly* or *Ministerial Review*) is merely a critic and a satirist. He has translated Juvenal, and done full justice, if not to the majestic eloquence, at least to the savage spleen of that terrible declaimer. He has written one celebrated satire of his own. He has also been Editor of almost all the old dramatists of England; and he has displayed, in his illustrations of these writers, great verbal acumen, and great penetration into some parts of human nature; but he has done all this with a perpetual accompaniment of ill-natured abuse, and cold rancorous raillery. He appears to be admirably fitted for deciding among readings, and for reviling his enemies. He is exquisitely formed for the purposes of political oburgation, but not at all for those of gentle and universal criticism. He is, besides, a man who has raised himself from a low rank in society, by his great and powerful talents; and he still retains not a little of that coarseness and insensibility in regard to small things, which are always inseparable from the character of one whose youthful education has been conducted without the delicacy and tenderness natural to people of the more refined orders of society. We often read the Reviews in his journal with great pleasure,—such are the strength of his language and the malignity of our nature;—but all who are, who have been, or who mean to be authors, must, I think, “join trembling with their mirth.” To say the truth, Mr Gifford is one of the last persons whose opinion I should think of asking, with respect to a great work of genius. The glass through which he looks is indeed one of great power, but it is tinged with the darkness of bile; and although it reveals distant objects, it at the same time discolours them.

The worst thing about this gentleman's severity is, that in most instances it is quite disproportioned to the offences which call it forth. His reputation, as a man who has deserved well of English literature, rests chiefly on his poetical satire, which I have mentioned above—the *“Bariad and*

Mæviad." That production possesses certainly some merit; it is well written and pungent, and reminds us more than any other English poem of this age, of some of the best features of the school of Pope. But its principal characteristic is the keenness of its abuse; one not much acquainted with the later English literature, would never doubt that the indignation of the author had been kindled against some new and monstrous heresy, supported by powerful genius, and likely to produce some serious or fatal change in the literary tenets of the English. Must we not be astonished to learn, that all this wrath has overflowed upon the foolish frail whim of a few newspaper and magazine poetasters—a silliness too contemptible ever to have been regarded, except with a transitory contempt, by any man capable of appreciating the true character of authors? How can one, who thinks the *Lauras* and *Della Cruscus* matters of so great moment, form any rational opinion concerning such men as Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, or Goëthe? You can never discover the motions of distant worlds by means of the same instrument which enables you to detect a mighty population in a rotten leaf.

Mr Gifford is a mighty bigot, both in religion and politics. I fear that this is almost necessary in one who is brought up in the midst of a country so rent and tortured by the spirit of sect as England. We Germans have no idea of the extreme to which these freemen carry their animosities. They are, after all, agreed upon most matters of any serious moment, so that the whole of their contentions turn on things which we should consider as quite unworthy of much attention. The Quarterly Review is a work of high talent, and the political opinions of its conductors are, I think, in general such as you and I approve. But every thing is strained to a point of bigotry, which has a mighty tendency "to make the better appear the worse reason." They deserve well of their country, and of Europe, for the tone of decided opposition which they always maintained towards the ambitious schemes of the common enemy of Christendom. But surely the effect of their truly English speculations in regard to him and his projects, would not have been at all lessened,

had they learned to treat his personal character with a little more candour. Napoleon was a wicked and unprincipled monarch; but who is so blind as not to see that mere wickedness, and extraordinary luck, could never possibly have elevated the son of an obscure gentleman of Ajaccio to the elevation which this prince of adventurers attained in the centre of civilized Europe? Nations yet to come will look back to his history, as to some grand and supernatural romance. The fiery energy of his youthful career, and the magnificent progress of his irresistible ambition, have invested his character with the mysterious grandeur of some heavenly apparition; and when all the lesser tumults, and lesser men of our age, shall have passed away into the darkness of oblivion, history will still inscribe one mighty era with the majestic name of Napoleon. It is very likely that some of the clever and sarcastic wits of Athens thought and spoke of Alexander as a madman and a fool. So perhaps might the loungers of the Roman porticos think and speak of Julius in Gaul. But the world has grown wiser since those days, and it is an insult upon common understanding to tell London, in the nineteenth century, that Bonaparte is an ordinary man. Now, above all things, that the danger is gone by, is it not extremely offensive to hear Englishmen railing against a fallen enemy, insulting one who seems to have been raised up by the finger of Providence, to stand for ever in the very frontispiece of fame, as the symbol of fallen ambition and ill-directed genius? We have suffered more from Napoleon than ever Englishmen did; we have seen our plains fattened with the blood of our heroes; we have seen our monarchs insulted, and our sanctuaries outraged; but scarcely, even in the very moment of our most hostile fury, did we ever speak of our enemy in such terms of exaggerated and insulting rancour, as this grave Journal perpetually pours forth upon the captive of St Helena. There is something dignified and sacred in human genius, even although it be misapplied. The reverence which we feel for it is an instinct of nature, and cannot be laid aside without a sin. He who is insensible to its influence, has committed

sacrilege against his own spirit, and degraded himself from the height of his original elevation. It is clear, that they who think Napoleon a man of a secondary class, do not belong to the first order themselves. The optics of a Lilliputian cannot take in the dimensions of a giant.

I may venture, before I dismiss Mr Gifford, to notice just one other of his many bigotries,—it is one which to German ears must, I think, appear still more extraordinary. His prejudice against Napoleon is founded in justice, and we can pardon his transferring some portion of a legitimate aversion from the ambitious schemes to the personal character of the conqueror. But no apology can be offered for the indiscriminating hatred he seems to feel towards a whole nation of his fellow-countrymen—the Scots. The Tweed, to be sure, flows between England and Scotland, but in government, constitution, laws,—and above all, in literature,—these two rival countries have long since become entirely united. To revive the feelings of those old warlike days which have been immortalized by a series of poets, not in the world of politics, but in that of letters, is an idea worthy only of an old woman on the Border. The literature of Great Britain forms a whole of exquisite variety, and among modern nations, of unrivalled excellence. It has been reared by the hands of English, Scots, and Irish; and to disturb the union of their labours is in vain. What should we think of an Austrian, who should be insensible to all the merits of Saxon literature? and yet the Austrian and Saxon are brethren only in one respect, while in no point whatever, that I know of, has the Englishman different interests from the Scotsman. It is a shame that the good sense of the English should have been so long insulted by such miserable trash, as the abuse of Scots universities, Scots religion, and Scots learning, in the Quarterly Review. It is no wonder that the northern wits are sometimes tempted to retaliate with equal injustice, and equal want of success. Men who shew such a little way of thinking in regard to matters of common life, can never expect to be consulted by those who have detected their meanesses, in respect to a subject of such peculiar delicacy of literary merit.

The Quarterly Review, excellent as its general politics are, and highly interesting as many even of its literary criticisms have been, would long since have ceased to flourish, but for the admirable accounts it contains of all the books of travels. Its editor collects, with infinite assiduity, the MS. journals of every traveller who returns to London, and by digesting the information these contain, into the form of criticisms on some new book, he continues to render his work by far the richest geographical and statistical journal in the world. But this has nothing to do with Mr Gifford as a critic.

I find that I have already said a great deal concerning the Quarterly Review and its editor, and yet I am very sensible that I ought to have directed your attention in the first instance to their elder and still more important adversaries, the Edinburgh Review and Mr Jeffrey. The journal, conducted by this gentleman in a provincial town of Britain, has, notwithstanding it is opposed by the whole weight of ministerial influence, a circulation far beyond any periodical work in England,\* and such as, even among the more numerous readers of Germany, is altogether unrivalled. It is said, that upwards of fifteen thousand copies are sold of every number which is published, so that it forms, in fact, an excellent estate for those who conduct it. When it began to be published about twenty years ago, the periodical criticism of England had fallen into great disrepute, and the new work being supported by several young men of great talents, who had adopted a mode of writing quite novel in England, although sufficiently hackneyed elsewhere, soon attracted a great share of admiration from all the politicians and literati of the island. During the first splendour of its success, it came to possess all the authority of an oracle, and although a considerable number of its first worshippers have withdrawn to a different shrine, its influence is still held in no small reverence by those who have adhered to it. At first its reputation was raised by the united

\* We suspect that our author's information is not correct with regard to some of these circumstances.

zeal of four or five writers, but, as in the subsequent period, its character has been sustained and modified chiefly by one ingenious individual, it is impossible to consider the work except in the most intimate connexion with him, and all the peculiarities of his habits, prejudices, and genius.

Mr Jeffray is an advocate before the parliament of Edinburgh,\* and is supposed to be surpassed by few of his brethren, either in the dexterity or eloquence of his judicial pleadings. I lament extremely that I myself have never heard him speak, but I suppose the barrister very nearly resembles the reviewer; and if this be so, I have no doubt that the client, whose interest it is that the minds of his judges should be perplexed by the intricacies of subtle argument, or dazzled by the splendour of sophistical declamation, cannot place his fee in better hands than those of Mr Jeffray. His writings manifest, indeed, the most complete possession of all those faculties which form the armour of a pleader. He can open his case in such a way as to make you think favourably of the blackest, or suspiciously of the fairest cause. He can throw a radiance of magnanimity over the character of a murderer, or plant, if it so pleases him, the foulest weeds of distrust and envy round the resting place of a saint. He can examine his witnesses with so much dexterity as to make them reveal every thing he wishes to know, and preserve inviolable silence respecting whatever it is his interest to have concealed. The question with him is never, which side is the right, but which side he has undertaken to defend. He never shews any keen feeling in his case, till he has become, as it were, a party in it, by having conducted it long, and engaged his self-love in its issue. Light, careless, and perfectly self-possessed, he runs from one bar to another, and pleads, in the same day, twenty different causes, all agreeably, many ingeniously, a few powerfully; but none with that plain straight-forward earnestness which marks the manner of a man speaking in his own just cause. A lawyer is always a man of doubts; and the intellectual timidity of Jeffray's profession has clung to him in

all his pursuits, and prevented him from coming manfully and decidedly to any firm opinion respecting matters of such moment, that it is absolutely impossible to be a great critic while the mind remains unsettled in regard to them. The mercenary transitions of a barrister are but a bad preparation for the gravity of a judge; and I suspect that no metamorphosis can be more hopeless than that of an accomplished advocate into a calm and trust-worthy Reviewer. He that is obliged to plead causes every day, soon begins to find that it is a wearisome thing to tell a plain, simple, true story, and refuses to rouse his vigour for the debate, unless he is conscious that it will require all his ingenuity to give the side he has undertaken to defend even the semblance of justice. The man who is accustomed to exert all his power of speaking, in order to defend crimes and fraud, and darken the light of justice, cannot but look upon it as a small matter to write in support of paradoxes, and derision of intellectual greatness.

I look upon it as a very great misfortune, both for England and for Jeffray himself, that he should have devoted his talents to administer food to the diseased and novelty-hunting appetites of superficial readers. He shews an acuteness of discernment, a power of arranging arguments, an irresistible tact in deducing inferences, and at times, too, a manly dignity of sentiment and feeling, which prove abundantly, that had he educated his mind in more profound habits of meditation, and enlarged his views with a more copious erudition, he might easily have attained a station in the world of intellect, far, very far above what the utmost perfection of ingenious and elegant sophistries ever can confer. He might have taken his place among the great thinkers of England, the Bacons, the Hobbeses, the Lockes, and the Humes, or among her masters of enduring and magnificent eloquence, the rich and various Barrow, the sublime and energetic Chatham, and the classic Burke. A man of genius, like Mr Jeffray, who chooses to devote himself to please the multitude, can very easily accomplish this ignoble purpose. He can very easily persuade them that nothing is

\* The Court of Session is meant.

worth knowing but what they can comprehend; that true philosophy is quite attainable without the labour of years; and that whenever we meet with any thing new, and at first sight unintelligible, the best rule is to take for granted that it is something mystical and absurd. But Mr Jeffray must be well aware, that it is one thing to be the favourite of an age and nation, and another to be revered by posterity and the world. So acute a man as he is cannot conceal from himself the fact, that however paramount may be his authority among the generation of indolent and laughing readers to whom he dictates opinion, he has as yet done nothing which will ever induce a man of research, in the next century, to turn over the volumes of his Review. When the foolish works which he has so happily ridiculed are entirely forgotten, the wit which he has expended upon them will lose its point. When the great men whom he has insulted by his mirth shall have received their due recompense in the admiration of our children, it will appear but an unprofitable task to read his shallow and ineffectual pleasantries. The topics which he has handled are so ephemeral, that already the first volumes of his journal have lost a very great part of their interest; and the many writers who have already attained to the first eminence, in spite of all his cavils, have furnished to the world, and to himself, a sufficient proof of the fallibility and perverseness of his judgment. He treated Madame de Stael, when *Delphine* was published, as a person whose writings would be extremely dangerous, were not her stupidity still more remarkable than her depravity. The world gave sentence in her favour; and he has since retracted his opinion, both of her moral and her intellectual qualities, with a fawning submission, almost as contemptible as the original offence for which it was intended to atone. He trampled upon the youthful genius of Byron, but has since had full time to repent his audacious mockeries of a being, compared with whom in the eyes of the world, he is as nothing. He has spoken of Wordsworth, that first poet of Nature, that mild and lofty spirit, the worthy offspring of Milton, in terms of the same trivial and self-complacent abuse with

which a licentious poet once dared to scoff at the most godlike of all the sages of Greece. Walter Scott is the only great poet whom he has uniformly praised; but how poor, and injudicious, and unworthy, has been his commendation! The flow of his verse, the rapidity of his narrative, the strength and vivacity of his imagination—these were qualities which could not escape the observation of the most superficial critic; and upon these Mr Jeffray has abundantly enlarged. But in no instance has he appeared to feel that majestic depth and expansion of thought and feeling, which form the true and distinguishing excellence of this last and greatest of all the poets of romance and chivalry. But I need only recall to your recollection an instance yet nearer to ourselves. When the good and venerable Goëthe told the stories of his youth to a people who all look upon him with the affectionate admiration of children, this foreigner, who cannot read our language, amused his countrymen, equally ignorant as himself, with an absurd and heartless caricature of the only poet, in modern times, who is entitled to stand in the same class with Dante, Calderon, and Shakspeare. These are certainly the most illustrious writers among the contemporaries of Jeffray; and yet he has shewn himself to be incapable of appreciating the genius of any one among their number.

In regard to poetry (and I believe his poetical criticisms are commonly supposed to be among the most brilliant of his productions), it is quite clear, that if he has any proper feelings of its true purpose and excellence now, he had them not when he began his Review, and has since acquired them, not from his own reflection and taste, but from the irresistible impulse of example, and the good sense of a public more wise than its instructors. For the first eight or ten years of the Edinburgh Review, the school of Pope was uniformly talked of as the true one, and the English poets of the present day were disapproved of, because they had departed from its precepts. A true poet has, however, a weapon in his hands, far more powerful than that which is wielded by any critic; and Mr Jeffray, when he perceived the direction which the public taste was taking, at last found it necessary



to become a violent admirer of the old dramatists, and a despiser of the poetry of Pope. He has, in fact, given up all the critical principles upon which his journal was at first conducted, and has shewn himself equally devoid of consistency in his general theory, as in his judgment of individuals. Surely the English should not reproach the French with their passion for frivolity, while they themselves submit to be schooled by one whose wit and sarcasms are engrafted upon so much ignorance, and disgraced by so much error.

I am so much a lover, both of the literature and of the people of England, that I cannot help speaking of Mr Jeffray with almost as much warmth as I should have deemed proper, in case he had been a countryman of our own. I admire his talents, I lament their misapplication, and I prophesy that they will soon be forgotten. In all his volumes, I know of no original speculation in philosophy, no new rule of criticism, likely to make him ever be appealed to as authority hereafter. In truth, I suspect, that but for the political dissertations with which it is often almost entirely filled, the reputation of the *Edinburgh Review*, in spite of all the cleverness of Mr Jeffray, would before this time have been very much on the decline. Even here, I think it is by no means entitled to the patronage of enlightened Britons, still less to the favour of patriotic Germans.

During the greater part of the years in which this journal has been published, Great Britain has been engaged in a struggle, not for extended empire nor flattered ambition, but for her existence as the country of a free and Christian people. Throughout the whole of this eventful period, unawed by the majesty of this sacred cause, a set of Englishmen, distinguished by splendid talents, and possessing, to an astonishing degree, the public ear, have devoted their exertions to the unworthy purpose of deriding the zeal and paralysing the efforts of their generous nation. A great country, in the hour of her conflict, should not hear the voice of despondency from her children. The whisper of despair is treason, when the vessel is in danger; and they who have escaped the shipwreck without having assisted at the pump, should blush for the safety

which they do not deserve. This journal was uniformly the apologist of Napoleon. What would Greece have thought of the Athenian wit who should have extolled Xerxes while he was on his way from Sardis, or called Leonidas a madman, because he was willing to be the guardian of Thermopylæ? How ungenerous must those spirits be, which, that they might gratify the vulgar spleen of petty politicians, could deride the young ardour of renovated Spain, or pour contempt, at that soul-stirring moment, upon the magnanimous devotion of indefatigable England! Such is the blindness of party rage, that these monstrous offences are, even at this moment, looked upon as patriotic services by many well-meaning countrymen of Elizabeth, Hampden, and Pitt. The delusion cannot long survive; for Europe is of one mind, and the right cause has triumphed.

The cause of Christianity is still more sacred than that of our country; and I think that it too has been attacked, if not with the same open violence, at least with the same rancour of hostility. The malevolence does not appear less odious because it is combined with cowardice. This journal has never ventured to declare itself boldly the champion of infidelity; but there is no artifice, no petty subterfuge, no insidious treachery, by which it has not endeavoured to weaken the influence which the Bible possesses over the minds of a devout and meditative people. Mr Jeffray does not choose to speak out, and tell the world that he is a disciple of Hume: we should then know with whom we have to contend, and provide for the conflict the same weapons which have so often been victorious over such an enemy. But he has recourse to a thousand little unworthy tricks, which could only be tolerable for a moment, were the country in which he writes as remarkable for slavery as it is for freedom. Does any author write a paragraph of foolish blasphemy? Mr Jeffray is sure to quote it in his *Review* as a piece of "innocent pleasantry." Does any man dare to speak, with the feeling and the fearlessness of a Christian, concerning God and the destiny of man? Mr Jeffray is sure to ridicule his piety as Methodism, and stoops to court the silly sneer of striplings against a faith, which, as he

well knows, neither he nor they have ever taken the trouble to understand. Is it worthy of one who aspires to the name of an English philosopher and patriot, to be thus perpetually offending a weary world with the *crumbe recolté* of revolutionary Deism? It is true, that the fault more frequently consists in what he omits to say, than in what he says. What treachery is this to the confidence of the public ear! Does any one imagine, that he who undertakes to be the regular instructor of his countrymen in science, in ethics, in politics, in poetry, can avoid being either the friend or the foe of their religion? The intellect of man is one mighty whole; and his energies cannot be directed aright, unless they be directed in unison. The would-be philosophers of the French school attempted, indeed, to reduce every thing to their own level, and were satisfied with the wisdom of the senses, because they felt themselves to be unworthy of a revelation from heaven. But Condillac has not been able to maintain his place among the great and guiding intellects; far less need such a triumph be hoped for by those who inherit those degrading dogmas, which they have neither the genius to invent, nor the courage openly to defend. I accused Mr Gifford and the Quarterly Review of bigotry. It is true, that in that journal the high church of England is represented as too exclusively the church of Christ. A Catholic Christian cannot easily forgive the many cold-blooded and ignorant dissertations with which it has endeavoured to blacken the reputation of us and our much misrepresented faith. But although the Edinburgh Reviewers have always advocated the cause of the Catholics, I confess that I approve still less of their friendship than I do of the hostility of their opponents. The others are indeed the enemies of some parts of our creed, and they would punish too severely the crime of differing from themselves. But this journal is the enemy of all our faith; it befriended Catholicism only because it despises Christianity. It is not upon the strength of such aid as this, that I wish to see the civil condition of British Catholics amended. He that would reconcile the Catholic and the Protestant must not tell us that we are falling out about

the small items of a fiction, but that the points upon which we are at variance are trifling, both in number and importance, when compared with those upon which we are agreed. He must win us to unanimity or mutual forbearance, not by breathing upon us the chill air of indifference, but by fanning the pure flame of Christian charity and love.

I have spoken of Mr Jeffray as if he were the sole conductor and animating spirit of this Review. Of late he has, as I understand, become more exclusively so than before, in consequence of the death of some of his original coadjutors—particularly the member of parliament, Horner. But I suspect that although the fault of the conceptions is generally his, the details of execution are not unfrequently intrusted by him into the hands of those, who, if they should write without being anonymous, could not for a moment be listened to without contempt. It should convince Jeffray that he has sadly misdirected a genius so powerful as his, when he perceives that these assistants, whom he despises, can nevertheless imitate the style of writing which he has brought into vogue with so much success, that the public are often much at a loss to discover which papers are his, and which theirs. There is a reaction in the case more unfortunate for him than for them; for as they have approached to him in one way, he has found himself obliged to approach to them in another; and as they have borrowed much of his apparent cleverness, so he has too often satisfied himself with not a little of their real dulness. It is a thousand pities that such a mind as his should have consented to wear an impress which can so easily be counterfeited. When high genius is well applied, its productions can never fail to be inimitable.

The writers of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, could they be persuaded to publish only one journal, and to unite their talents, might easily produce a work very far superior to either of those which now exist. Mr Gifford could bring with him an abundance of information, and even erudition, in which Mr Jeffray and his friends are altogether defective; and Mr Jeffray, on the other hand, possesses that knowledge of the world,

that ready and instinctive perception of what is pleasing to the public, and all those graces of elegant composition, the want of which not unfrequently renders the valuable knowledge of his present opponents less acceptable than it deserves to be to the great majority of English readers.

After all, what permanently good effect would this produce? I am far from being of the opinion of those who hate criticism because they consider it as the token of a declining literature. I know that Greece had no great poets after the time of Aristotle; but I think that this defect was produced by causes very different from the publication of the Rhetorick and the Poetick. Our own literature produced the greatest of all modern critics, before we had a single great poet. Spirits of the highest order can never be injured by knowledge. It is true, that Homer and Shakspeare made no critical prefaces; but is it possible to believe, that these men were really ignorant of any thing worth knowing respecting their own art, which a Gifford, a Jeffray, or even, to take much higher men, which a Lessing or a Herder could have taught them? My dear friend, journals such as the modern English critics can produce, have in truth no influence at all over the minds of men capable of attaining the first eminence in literature. These go on in their destined way, rejoicing in the consciousness of their own strength, and having their eyes fixed upon the sure prospect of immortality—far above the reign, either of calumniating wit or ignorant approbation. But the world produces many gentle and elegant minds, which might contribute both to the delight and instruction of their species—minds on which the first of men would look with benevolent affection, but which cannot endure the cold jeers and taunts even of those whom they feel to be their inferiors. To these men the dun-coloured cover of the *Quarterly*, or the bright blue and yellow of the *Edinburgh Review*, is as horrible as the gorgon's head upon the buckler of Pallas. It is sufficiently unfortunate that these bugbears exist,—why should any one desire to see all their terrific influences united? As for the effects which the habitual perusal of such works as these journals has upon the manners and minds

of the English, that is a subject which will require a letter for itself. I confess that my hopes of their recovery from the state of contented ignorance and conceit, into which they have been brought by the ministrations of their Reviewers, are still entire. I doubt not, that ere long, as Shakspeare has said of Prince Henry,

“—Like bright metal on a sullen ground,  
Their reformation, glittering o'er their fault,  
Shall shew more goodly, and attract more  
eyes,  
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.”

NOTICE OF MR HAZLITT'S LECTURES  
ON ENGLISH POETRY, NOW IN THE  
COURSE OF DELIVERY AT THE SUR-  
REY INSTITUTION, LONDON.

No II.

*Lecture Fourth.—On Dryden and Pope.*

THE Lecturer began by remarking, that the fine arts, in different ages and countries, had usually reached their utmost point of perfection, almost immediately after their birth; and used this fact to combat the doctrine of the progressive perfectibility of the human mind. He admitted that the opposite of this had been the case with respect to science; and made it the distinctive difference between that and art, that the one never arrives at perfect maturity, and the other leaps from infancy to manhood at once. After corroborating these positions by examples, and touching slightly on the causes of them, Mr Hazlitt proceeded to speak of DRYDEN and POPE as distinguished from the great poets of whom he had already treated, viz. Chaucer, Spencer, Shakspeare and Milton,—not by different *degrees* of excellence, but by excellence of an entirely different *kind*. The former, as well as the latter, stood at the head of a class, though a confessedly inferior one; but they were entitled to rank higher than those who occupied a lower station in the superior class. The inferior poets of the higher class must be content to follow in the train of Shakspeare and Milton; but Dryden and Pope walk by their side, though of unequal stature. The question, whether Pope was a poet, said Mr H., has hardly been settled yet, and is hardly worth settling; for, if he was not a great poet, he must have been a great prose-writer, for he was a great writer of some sort. If, indeed,