

these, and many concomitant blessings, may be looked forward to with certainty. Such advantages, however, are to be derived only at a distant day, from a state of things, the evils of which form at present an inevitable necessity.

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ART. III. — *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries.*  
By HENRY HALLAM, F. R. A. S., Corresponding Member of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in the French Institute. Paris : Baudry. 1839. 4 vols. 8vo.

SOME years have elapsed since the publication of this work, and, as it is now widely known and highly esteemed, it may seem that its character is sufficiently determined, and that any extended notice of it is unnecessary. In this country, however, its republication is of recent date, and the number of persons who have had opportunity to examine it is comparatively small. A work of such a character is not likely to attract immediate attention among a community of readers, who are deluged with reprints of the more ephemeral productions of the English press ; and the few who are able to appreciate it, are more likely to wait for the chance of obtaining an English or French copy, than to read it in a coarse and clumsily executed American edition. But we will not complain of the demerits of the reprint, since to contribute in any way to the circulation of such a book is to render essential service to the cause of letters on this side of the Atlantic. Some account of its contents may be useful to this end, though the means are here wanting, which could be found only in well-stocked libraries, for a full examination of its statements and the general merits of its execution.

It is remarkable that, before the publication of this work, no English writer had attempted to give a general history of letters, or a particular account of the literature of his own country. No one was willing to undertake a task, for the due performance of which so many qualifications were required, and from which so much would naturally be expected. Accurate learning, much general information, a fair ac-

quaintance with all the sciences, a perfect mastery of the languages of modern Europe, a discriminating taste, a sound judgment, and a pleasing style, are some of the essential requisites for success in such an enterprise, and therefore very few persons could engage in it without incurring the charge of undue presumption. Only the veterans in the literary field could grapple with such a gigantic undertaking, and, even with them, the issue would be very doubtful. They might rather diminish than increase the laurels, which they had earned in less ambitious efforts. More than two centuries ago Lord Bacon perceived the want of a history of letters, and marked out the plan on which it should be prepared ; but the task became no whit less difficult, when that mighty intellect had displayed the importance of the work, and established the principles for its execution. One of his pregnant sentences forms the appropriate motto of the present history, for it describes in few words the general scheme, on which the writer has conducted his labors. We may spare criticism on the plan, which is recommended by such authority.

With the exception perhaps of Dr. Southey, no living English writer appears better qualified than Mr. Hallam for supplying the deficiency, that was pointed out by the great Advancer of learning. His previous writings, if they did not display that wide range of general scholarship, which is essential to success in a task like the present one, afforded good evidence, at least, that he undertook nothing without thorough preparation for it, and that any work from his pen would be elaborated with the utmost care. The "Constitutional History of England," and the "History of Europe during the Middle Ages," were generally admitted as standard works, from the very day of their publication. They were classed at once among "the books, which no gentleman's library should be without ;" they became an essential part of the reading of every well-educated man. And the reputation which they have obtained is a just tribute to the judgment, learning, and discretion of the writer ; for it is not founded on any captivating qualities of the subject, on any studied graces in the treatment of it, or on any subserviency to the passions and prejudices of the day. Mr. Hallam is a political writer without undue bias from the spirit of party and sect, a pleasing one without the affectation of rhetoric

and eloquence, and a learned one without any unnecessary display of erudition. The subject which he has now treated is one of more general interest than those discussed in his previous publications ; and, as the work was known to embody the labors of many years, it was received with curiosity and respect, and is likely to establish for him a wide and enduring reputation.

A leading characteristic of these volumes, as well as of those formerly published, is the grave and dignified impartiality of the writer. We do not allude merely to the absence of party spirit, any indications of which in a history of literature would be not only offensive, but absurd, though too many precedents for their admission into equally improper places might be found in contemporary publications. British writers have too frequently allowed the exciting and distorting influences of modern politics to blind the judgment of the critic and to warp the fidelity of the historian, even when the subjects discussed, or the facts narrated, were apparently removed to the safest distance from the appropriate arena for such disputes. The fouler exhibitions of this malignant spirit of politics have even soiled the pages of ancient history, and bespattered the notes to a Greek play. The parentage of anonymous publications on miscellaneous subjects may often be traced, so far, at least, as to determine whether the writer belongs to the school of the *Quarterly*, the *Edinburgh*, or the *Westminster Review*. As the cool and dispassionate temperament of Mr. Hallam preserved him from this error in a great degree, even when traversing the dangerous ground of English constitutional history, we might well expect, that his good sense would guard against it in the treatment of his present subject. But he is entitled to much higher praise for impartiality. His taste is singularly just and catholic. It is not warped by modern associations, nor blinded by national feeling. His estimate of French literature, for instance, is fair and liberal, forming quite a contrast to the judgments of many of his countrymen, who are very slow to recognise high merit on the other side of the channel. Voltaire's opinion of Shakspeare is but the counterpart in absurdity of many English criticisms on Corneille and Racine. Towards the latter, indeed, Mr. Hallam appears to us to err by excess of praise, prompted perhaps by a sense of the unjust award of former judges on the English bench.

We find it difficult to admit, that, in point of style, "he is second only to Virgil among all poets," or that his female characters "have the ideal grace and harmony of ancient sculpture, and bear somewhat of the same analogy to those of Shakspeare, which that art does to painting;" but we cordially echo the assertion, that "it is a very narrow criticism, which excludes either school from our admiration, which disparages Racine out of idolatry of Shakspeare." A critic would hardly subject himself to this reproach, by maintaining that the female characters of the French poet are too often insipid, and that his versification lacks spirit, and is too uniformly sweet and monotonous.

It is probably more difficult to be just towards the men of science, the metaphysicians, and the political writers of a former age and another church, than to criticize with fairness the elegant literature of a different language. Science advances with slow but sure steps, and it is as easy to detect the mistakes of a former century, as it is flattering to our own pride to expose them. The boundaries of philosophy, ethics, and theology, run into each other, and a Protestant writer may be pardoned for viewing with suspicion the casuistry of the Jesuits, while a countryman of Locke and Newton may very naturally triumph over the errors of Descartes. But our author's resolute impartiality avoids even the more secret and excusable causes of a biassed judgment. He is careful always to obtain the right point of view, — neither to view the past through the atmosphere of the present, nor to allow acknowledged excellences to be shadowed entirely by neighbouring faults. If his judgments are ever impugned, therefore, it must be for natural incorrectness of taste or a faulty discrimination, rather than for borrowed prejudices.

The literary criticism contained in these volumes is of great merit. It is neither commonplace nor affectedly profound. So much has been written upon the poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that it was difficult to offer any thing further, which should bear even the semblance of novelty and truth. But Mr. Hallam's remarks, even here, have all the air of freshness, which naturally invests a virgin subject, and his disquisitions upon the great Italian poets, and even upon Shakspeare and Milton, are among the most ingenious and interesting portions of the work. This task had been an easy one, if his taste had allowed him to

indulge in the misty speculations and fine-spun theories, which too often form the staple of German criticism. An endless thread of this sort may be spun by any one of an ingenious and fanciful turn of mind, but it will not sustain the lightest touch of scrutiny. Naturally averse to this dreamy kind of writing, Mr. Hallam's remarks bear a strong impress of good sense and correct taste, and are adapted rather to please and convince, than to bewilder or astonish the reader. It may not appear the highest praise to say, that the criticism is sound and judicious; but so much *æsthetical* cant, formed upon foreign models, is in vogue at the present day, that it is truly refreshing to find a subdued, temperate, and unambitious tone once more adopted in the school of taste. Paying the tribute of hearty admiration to his favorite authors, our historian is still not carried away so far by his enthusiasm, as to indulge in the rash and extravagant assertions, in which some writers labor to display their sensibility, but which lead one to doubt the sincerity of the very feeling which they are designed to prove. He ventures to point out faults even in Shakspeare, and in nearly every instance to qualify praise with some censure. His carefully regulated judgment appears as much in his notices of individuals, as of books. The Boswellian disease of inordinate admiration never fastens upon him, nor, on the other hand, does he ever appear ambitious of Johnson's favorite character of "a good hater." With such characteristics, it appears, that, if Mr. Hallam is not always a brilliant companion, he is at least a safe guide.

We have spoken of the variety and extent of the reading and general information, which are necessarily embodied in a work of this character. An examination of the volumes bears out the remark, and would seem to prove, that the preparation for them must have been the labor of a whole life. With great candor, the writer has allowed the whole of Bacon's remark to stand as the motto of his work, though it hints at the fact, which might, it is true, be naturally inferred under such circumstances, that, in so vast an undertaking, the whole of the information given, must not be viewed as the fruit of original research. Speaking of the number of books to be examined, for the purpose of a history of letters, Bacon remarks, that the end must be obtained, "*non eorum perlectione, (id enim infinitum quiddam esset,) sed*

*degustatione et observatione argumenti, styli, methodi*, etc. In this way, (he continues, with his usual glowing imagery,) the literary spirit of a former age, as if by an incantation, may be evoked from the dead. If the limitation was necessary in his age, how much is the necessity increased by the almost endless multiplication of books in later times ! Mr. Hallam mentions some subjects, such as mathematical science and anatomy, on which his observations are derived from secondary sources ; and, when characters of books are inserted with a reliance upon other judges, without direct examination, the reader is usually warned of the fact. Such frankness marks the high-minded scholar, and inspires full confidence in his fidelity as a guide. After all these limitations, the work is a singular monument of literary industry, a vast storehouse, in which are garnered the rich accumulations of an active scholar's life. With Italian, French, English, and modern Latin literature, the author seems to be equally familiar. He is less acquainted with Spanish books, and his knowledge of German is evidently partial. The nature of the work imperatively required a full acquaintance with theology, speculative philosophy, ethics, political science, ancient literature, the drama, poetry, and belles-lettres, and on all of these the writer speaks with equal confidence. We could hardly expect more, even from the prodigies of German industry.

In executing such a work, there was evident danger of overlaying it with erudition, and presenting only the lifeless form of general literature, without any of its vivacity and grace. A writer intent only upon the display of his acquisitions would surely have fallen into this error, from which the refined taste and freshness of thought and language, displayed by Mr. Hallam, have effectually preserved him. The volumes abound with curious information, tasteful criticism, and elegant disquisition ; and, considering also the miscellaneous nature of the contents, affording pleasant cates for every kind of appetite, we hardly know of a more readable book. If any portion is open to the charge of dullness, it is the rather diffuse analysis of some ponderous works on ethical and political science, for which the previous studies of Mr. Hallam may have created in him a liking, that many of his readers cannot be expected to share. He probably forgot the extent of such matter, when he wrote the remark in

the preface, that this should not be considered as a book of reference on particular topics, but as an entire and synoptical work. Most persons would rather refer occasionally to such copious abstracts, than read them continuously. One source of interest he has voluntarily resigned, by omitting entirely the biography of authors, and alluding but very seldom to any peculiar traits in their characters, or remarkable incidents in their lives. It is true, that much gleaning in so wide a field would swell the book beyond reasonable compass ; but we incline to believe, that a somewhat larger portion of narrative than he has admitted, would throw light upon many of the topics discussed, and much facilitate the reader's progress. The lives and writings of literary men have such an intimate connexion, that in some cases, as in that of Descartes, for instance, we cannot gain a full knowledge of one, without some acquaintance with the other.

The practice of the French and Germans has been to introduce much general speculation into the history of letters. A full consideration of the general causes affecting the literary character of any age or country is blended with much ingenious theorizing on the possible results of a different combination of circumstances, and on the degree in which external influences may be resisted, or evaded. We cannot entertain much regard for such speculations. Though a proud title, that of "the philosophy of history," is claimed for them, they have been sadly abused in our times, and their utility, to say the least, is not very apparent. It is far more likely, that one's patience will fail in the perusal, than that the writer's fancy will be exhausted in the manufacture of such lucubrations. After an event has taken place, it is very easy to lay down general principles, in virtue of which it may be demonstrated, that it *must* have happened precisely in that way, and in no other. The only question is, whether such a connexion between cause and effect would have been discovered before the event happened. If so, it is a great misfortune, that the theorist was not born in the very age and country wherein his abilities as a prophet might have been manifested. M. Cousin has studied the philosophy of this subject so thoroughly, that he has even discovered a method of writing history *a priori*, founded on the original principles of the human mind, and the necessary connexion between ideas. He has demonstrated his theory



in reference to the past, though we believe he has not yet written out his narration of every thing which is to happen, even to the end of time.

Mr. Hallam has cautiously avoided such fanciful speculations, so that it has even been objected to his work, that it is not so much a history of literature, as a *catalogue raisonné* of books and literary men. If he has erred at all, it is undoubtedly on the safe side, and we are sure that the real value of his work is enhanced by such a course, though it may not at once acquire so brilliant a reputation, as if written on a different model. We feel certain that the writer has gone honestly to work, — that the story is fairly and fully told, — without mutilation or coloring, in order to suit a pre-conceived theory. This assurance is worth all the elaborate fancies, that the most ingenious speculatist ever framed. To inspire perfect confidence is one of the highest results at which a writer, who aims at instruction, can hope to attain. There is little profit in receiving information, when one is obliged to doubt and question at every moment. Let the facts be honestly set forth, and the reader may speculate for himself. If the lesson be not an obvious one, it is probably not true. If it requires to be supported by nice deductions and fine-spun reasoning, arguments of equal tenuity will be able to overthrow it. The writer can claim a power of framing general conclusions superior to that of his reader, only on the ground, that he knows more than he has seen fit to communicate. If so, he is to blame for unnecessary secrecy. Let him keep back the inferences, and divulge the facts. Such was the plan, at least, on which the ancients wrote history, and their other writings show no inaptitude for contriving the most comprehensive theories.

We do not mean, that Mr. Hallam is wholly averse to general speculation. His work is something more than a mere dictionary of books and names. It bears the marks, throughout, of a comprehensive, acute, and thoughtful mind, that cannot watch the succession of facts without being struck with the connexion between them, though he usually puts only the clue to the maze of causes and effects into the reader's hands, and leaves him to trace out its remoter windings. Some of the general remarks, for instance, on the great events which took place in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and their effects on the literary



spirit of the age, and on the circumstances which caused the rise and progress of certain schools of philosophy and letters, are ingenious and profound. But they are everywhere made subsidiary to the leading object of the work. Facts are not overlaid by theory, nor wrested into unnatural conformity with it. The history suggests general reflections, instead of furnishing them ready made. It is a vast repository of materials, on which the future speculatist may build.

But it is time to look more particularly into the contents of these volumes. The work commences with an introductory chapter on the general state of literature in the Middle Ages, up to the end of the fourteenth century. As the writer had treated this subject at length in a former work, a very brief sketch is here given, which, however, supplies many curious additional facts, that have been brought to light by recent researches. The history and antiquities of the Middle Ages have been studied of late with great zeal in Europe, the interest which attaches to the subject being partly a cause and partly a consequence of that great revolution of taste, which has brought the Romantic school in literature into such general favor. Fragments of the popular poetry of those times have been hunted up with great eagerness, and, though we cannot but believe, that its intrinsic merits in most cases have been even ludicrously exaggerated by the zeal of philologists and antiquaries, it is still very interesting, from the light which it throws on the origin and growth of the modern languages of Europe. Mr. Hallam has given a brief, but clear, summary of the results of recent inquiries respecting the formation of the Italian, Provençal, and French languages from the Latin, and of the English from the Anglo-Saxon, and has pointed out the sources of information for those who wish to pursue the subject. His account of the remarkable change in versification, from the metrical verse, marked by quantity, in use by the ancients, to the rhythmical poetry, measured by the accent or emphasis, adopted by the moderns, appeared novel to us, from the very high antiquity ascribed to the latter system. Traces of it, he observes, may be found in the second century, and even much earlier, long before the ancient arrangement by quantity had become obsolete. The two systems existed contemporaneously for a considerable period, the one among the instructed classes, and the other in the songs and

popular poetry of the day, as its jingle was more pleasing to the ears of the vulgar. A necessary inference from this statement is, that "the distinction of long and short syllables, even while Latin remained a living tongue, was lost in speech, and required study to attain it." If this be so, it is strange that no more definite explanation has reached us, of the means by which the quantity of syllables was indicated in the pronunciation. The mode of reciting ancient verse is still a mystery; for no difference of emphasis, or tone, can make a syllable of many letters appear short, and it is extravagant to suppose, either that poetry could be read aloud only in a kind of chant, or that it could be distinguished from prose only by the eye. If the mode of pronouncing words agreeably to quantity was a part of the education of the higher classes, the common people being unacquainted with it, it is strange that we do not find some rules and directions concerning it laid down in the books. It should have formed an obvious topic of speculation and precept, and the total silence respecting it, observed even by the critical and rhetorical writers, is inexplicable. If the common people were ignorant of it in the second century, there is no reason to suppose, that they were better instructed in the days of Augustus; and Mr. Hallam seems to favor this conclusion. But is it credible, that, to the ears of the great body of the people, Virgil and Horace wrote nothing but prose?

Commencing with the fifteenth century, the plan of Mr. Hallam's work includes, in great part, the history of that great awakening of literary spirit in Europe, which is usually called "the Revival of Letters." With more propriety might it be denominated the revival of a taste for the Latin, and subsequently for the Greek, classics. The search after manuscripts, the elucidation of the text, and a painful imitation of the style of the ancient writers, formed almost the only employment of the learned. Science had few votaries, and the nascent literature of their own age and language was viewed rather as a relaxation, than as a broad and honorable field of exertion. Italy alone boasted of three great men, whose writings had purified and strengthened the vernacular tongue, and whose native prose and poetry furnished as bright models for study and imitation as the imperishable remains of Roman and Grecian genius. But these very writers were hardly aware of their own success.

They threw carelessly aside the treasures which they had collected above ground, and continued to delve in the Latin mine. Boccaccio wrote Latin with more care and diligence than he did Italian, and Petrarch prized his poem of "Africa" more highly than his sonnets.

The men who first set the example of this passion for ancient literature, were undoubtedly persons of refined minds and a pure taste, though too many of their eminent successors appear to us, at least, only as laborious pedants. The former were weary of the subtle and vain disputes of scholastic philosophy and theological literature, and of the barbarous Latin in which they were carried on; and to their refined perceptions, the elegance, harmony, and correctness, the faultless purity, of ancient Roman poetry and eloquence came like the revelation of a new world of intellect. The classics occupied their whole minds, and they naturally disregarded the contemporaneous literature which was beginning to spring up around them, — the ballad epics of Germany and the poetry of the Troubadours, for instance, — in which strength was attended with rudeness and impurity, and a luxuriant fancy borrowed no grace or polish from art. Familiarity with Latin, and a competent knowledge of Greek, became the common badge of all the learned. By means of the former, scholars of different countries corresponded with each other, and a clannish and emulous feeling was kept alive among them, without the necessity of learning their respective vernacular languages, which they seem to have considered almost as barbarous dialects, fit only for the vulgar. It was a fortunate circumstance for the progress of learning, that the scholars dispersed through Europe possessed this substitute for a common language, without which, in that age, communication with each other had been difficult, and in many cases impossible. They were few in number, comparatively, and widely scattered among the nations; and without this means of intercourse many of them would doubtless have lived and died in perfect seclusion. Another advantage was, that each university was thrown open to pupils of all countries, and learned men of every clime could be invited to take a share in instruction. The practice of giving lectures, conducting correspondence, and writing books in Latin, has been long since abandoned; and the consequences have been very favorable to the diffusion

of learning ; but it may well be doubted, whether they have equally aided its progress. It were idle now to discuss the project of a universal language ; for the age in which alone, if at all, it was practicable, has long since passed away. But the substitute for it, which was possessed for a long period by European scholars, exerted a greater influence, than is commonly attributed to it, in promoting the revival of a literary spirit, and aiding the progress of science throughout the civilized world.

In searching for the causes of the enthusiasm for antiquity, which manifested itself particularly in Italy in the beginning of the fifteenth century, Mr. Hallam attributes much to the pride, which the inhabitants of that country felt in their descent from the Romans ; and he alludes to the story of Rienzi, as a proof of the ardor which might be kindled by ancient recollections. But it may be doubted, whether this feeling was strong and permanent enough to exert so much influence on the pursuits of the learned, and whether classical studies were not rather a cause, than a consequence, of the proud sense, which the Italians entertained of their high parentage. Besides, though the scholars of Italy led the way, the enthusiasm soon spread into other countries, and became as vivid and lasting there, though it was fostered by no national associations. A more natural explanation presents itself in the contrast, to which men of taste must have been keenly sensible, between the polished specimens of Roman genius, and the rude literature and other half-barbarous studies of that age. A perception of this contrast evidently animated the exertions of such persons as Petrarch and Poggio, and probably kindled equal zeal in many of their contemporaries. Born in this way, the devotion to classical studies was kept alive and strengthened by a less honorable feeling, — by the pride which scholars felt in an exclusive means of intercourse with each other, and in a pursuit so far removed from the taste and occupations of the common people. In every subsequent age, also, the pride of scholarship has centred particularly in these studies, an acquaintance with them being made to constitute, often very improperly, the only distinction between an educated and an uneducated man. No exclusiveness of this sort was ever maintained by the votaries of science. It was enough, that their pursuits were tolerated by the side of an employment, distinction in which formed the chief triumph of the learned.

The exaggerated estimate of ancient genius undoubtedly caused the neglect, with which the first blossoms of modern literature were received. Some of the most remarkable productions of the human mind, like Dante's great poem, attracted but little notice for many years after the death of their authors. Mr. Hallam says, that, for a hundred years, it was thought unworthy of a man of letters, even though a poet, to write in Italian. A more important effect of this classical zeal was manifested in erecting a standard of taste, and establishing principles of criticism, on which the literature of after times was formed. Greek and Roman associations reigned paramount for a long period in the schools of taste. An undue importance was attributed to method, polish, correctness, and purity, while vivacity, strength, and naturalness were held in lighter esteem. The effect of establishing such a standard of excellence was felt particularly in Italy and France, where the enthusiasm for antiquity, nursed by the pride of descent and consanguinity of language, was first felt and most widely diffused. It was less perceptible in England, where classical studies never flourished in an equal degree. The elaborate and artificial style of the Italian prose writers may be traced to this cause, which produced its most striking effects, however, in forming the pedantic taste and solemn stiffness, which characterize the literature of the age of Louis the Fourteenth. The separation between the Classical and Romantic schools of criticism, may be considered as beginning in the fifteenth or in the eighteenth century. In the former case, the taste of the educated classes was formed entirely on the ancient models, while the popular poetry was adapted of course to the feelings and associations of the multitude, to whom it was addressed. The two schools stood side by side, but not in opposition. But in later times, the relative importance of classical studies has sensibly diminished, even with the learned. The Middle Ages have assumed the dignity of antiquity in our eyes, and the poetry, which once formed the amusement of the populace, is now the object of the scholar's anxious research and careful study. The opposition between the two kinds of taste has become obvious and striking; it is waged with equal arms, and Romanticism, aided as it always is by the popular voice, threatens to push its old rival wholly off the throne.

Leaving this rather worn subject, we come to a few more

general remarks of our author on the prevailing trains of sentiment and opinion, which shaped the public mind at the close of the mediæval period. Our readers may like to possess Mr. Hallam's opinion on one of the most interesting topics which here come into notice, and we therefore extract the passage.

"The popular taste had been also essentially affected by changes in social intercourse, rendering it more studiously and punctiliously courteous, and especially by the homage due to women under the modern laws of gallantry. Love, with the ancient poets, is often tender, sometimes virtuous, but never accompanied by a sense of deference or inferiority. This elevation of the female sex through the voluntary submission of the stronger, though a remarkable fact in the philosophical history of Europe, has not, perhaps, been adequately developed. It did not originate, or at least very partially, in the Teutonic manners, from which it has sometimes been derived. The love-songs again, and romances of Arabia, where others have sought its birthplace, display, no doubt, a good deal of that rapturous adoration which distinguishes the language of later poetry, and have, perhaps, in some measure, been the models of the Provençal troubadours; yet this seems rather consonant to the hyperbolical character of Oriental works of imagination, than to a state of manners where the usual lot of women is seclusion, if not slavery. The late editor of Warton has thought it sufficient to call 'that reverence and adoration of the female sex which has descended to our own times, the offspring of the Christian dispensation.' But, until it can be shown that Christianity establishes any such principle, we must look a little farther down for its origin.

"Without rejecting, by any means, the influences of these collateral and preparatory circumstances, we might ascribe more direct efficacy to the favor shown towards women in succession to lands, through inheritance or dower, by the later Roman law, and by the customs of the northern nations; to the respect which the clergy paid them (a subject which might bear to be more fully expanded); but above all, to the gay idleness of the nobility, consuming the intervals of peace in festive enjoyments. In whatever country the charms of high-born beauty were first admitted to grace the banquet or give brilliancy to the tournament, — in whatever country the austere restraints of jealousy were most completely laid aside, — in whatever country the coarser, though often more virtuous, simplicity of unpolished ages was exchanged for winning and delicate artifices, — in

whatever country, through the influence of climate or polish, less boisterousness and intemperance prevailed, — it is there that we must expect to find the commencement of so great a revolution in society." — Vol. i. p. 101.

Most of the circumstances here assigned as causes seem rather to be manifestations of the very change of opinion, the origin of which is sought to be explained. The question is, why were the women admitted to inherit lands, or why did the clergy show them more respect, or the nobility esteem servitude to them as the highest distinction of a true knight? Mr. Hallam appears to underrate the influence of the only cause, which is sufficiently general and powerful to account for this striking alteration of sentiment. It is true, that the Christian doctrine does not directly prescribe respect and forbearance towards the weaker sex, but its indirect influences, especially in that form, — the Romish faith, — which was then almost universal in Europe, were highly favorable to the advancement of woman in society. The worship of the Virgin Mother necessarily redounded to the advantage of her sex. In hymning the praises of the blessed Mary, the priest and the devotee were led by an easy transition to the kindred excellences of female saints and martyrs, and then to the general qualities of the female character, which always affords the brightest patterns of unbounded faith, meekness, fortitude, and love. An imperfect understanding of the Gospel scheme could not wholly obscure the truth, that these gentler virtues, most unlike the strong and stern qualities of man's ruder nature, still occupied a much higher rank than the latter as Christian graces. In this way, without the force of direct commands, the silent influence of our religion constantly leads to a higher appreciation of the weaker sex. Woman has gained estimation, and even reverence, wherever the Gospel has been preached.

Besides, the natural constitution of the sexes, when its effects are not restrained or modified by positive institutions, makes the strong a suitor to the weak. The passion of love, when custom or law does not allow it the unnatural right of manifesting itself through harsh authority, or brute force, humbles man into a suppliant, and dignifies woman with the power to grant or refuse. Hence, to do away the prejudices, and the absurd institutions, derived from Paganism and Oriental manners, was to restore woman to the use



of a natural advantage, by which Providence has balanced the superior strength of the other sex, and to give her an immediate superiority. In other words, when opinion establishes the rightful equality of the two, so that man is debarred the privilege of strength, woman at once becomes his superior,—his sovereign. He must bend at her footstool, and execute her behests. Now, Christianity teaches the natural equality of the whole race, and by doing away with Pagan institutions, and thus directly rescuing females from the condition of slaves, it indirectly raised them to a higher state. Men fell into natural subjection to them, and became proud of their chains. We trust that this solution of the problem, which we honestly believe to be the true one, is satisfactory to our fairer readers.

Mr. Hallam thinks, that a respectful deference to woman first began to appear as an element of European manners in the south of France, and near the close of the tenth century. It is very probable, that the condition of the sex was sensibly ameliorated at a much earlier date, though it is impossible to affirm this with certainty, as we possess so few indications of the state of manners and domestic life in those ages. Very naturally, the imperfect civilization of the times, with the constant wars and intestine commotions which accompanied and followed the fall of the Roman Empire, greatly retarded the change, which the spread of the Christian religion was slowly bringing about. Real gallantry at last appeared among the people, who have ever since boasted of it as a peculiar trait of their national manners, and at a time when various circumstances were preparing the way for an outburst of religious enthusiasm. Somewhat later, poetry and romance, by inculcating a deeper vein of sentiment, and lending more varied, fanciful, and exaggerated expressions to passion, powerfully contributed to the progress of female ascendancy.

Chivalry and some kindred subjects are here briefly considered by our author, but though the topics are tempting, we must pass on to the graver portions of the work. The history is divided in chronological order, with a minuteness and strict adherence to the plan, which are rather perplexing, from the frequent change of subject and the scattered position of the materials. Thus the introductory chapter is followed by a general account of European literature from 1400 to 1440, and then the circumstances of most

importance in literary history, and the books published, are ranged into decennial periods, and considered in this fragmentary way up to the end of the century. After 1500, another division, into subjects, is added to the chronological arrangement, and philology, science, philosophy, theology, poetry, the literature of taste, &c., are separately treated, usually by half centuries, up to the end of the work. Hence, when an author wrote on several subjects, and published at different periods, one is obliged to look at half a dozen places in the several volumes, in order to gather a full account of his writings. Lord Bacon's "Essays" are considered in one division, his larger philosophical works in another, and his "History of Henry the Seventh" in a third. Some of Shakspeare's plays fall into the latter half of the sixteenth century, and the remainder into the first half of the seventeenth; in a third place, we find a notice of his Sonnets, and in a fourth one of the two longer poems, — these being separated from the plays by the division of subjects. Mr. Hallam's general scheme of distribution is a good one, and, as we have said, it has the weight of Lord Bacon's authority; but it seems to be too rigidly followed out. It were better to treat of one author in full, in that half century in which his principal works were published, and under that subject to which he chiefly devoted himself.

The brilliant period of Lorenzo de' Medici, when Florence became for a time the Athens of the civilized world, is sketched by Mr. Hallam with the brevity, which his limits required, but with a glow of language, that marks the natural attractions of the subject. The names of Politian, Ficinus, and John Picus of Mirandola are enough to cause one to pardon much to the political faults of the prince who patronized them, and of the city which gave them a home. They were men who enriched genius with learning, and if they allowed the one to pass out in extravagance, they prevented the other from degenerating into slavishness and pedantry. If the Platonic enthusiasm of the two latter displayed itself with too little regard to the limitations of reason and good sense, much excuse for them may be found in the circumstances, which first kindled their ardent feelings and gave too wide a range to their speculations. The study of Greek, a taste for which followed so soon upon the revival of Latin literature, enabled them to pass from the elegant but meagre

disquisitions of Cicero, to the eloquent and suggestive dreams of the Platonic philosophy. Their own minds were bold and inventive, and they found ample nutriment for speculation in the dogmas of their own church, and the mingled philosophy and theology of the Grecian sage. They were shielded from the charge of heresy by the recondite nature of their studies, and the lofty flight and mystical expression of their doctrines. Their taste first led them to the study of Plato, whose full-robed and gorgeous speculations in their eyes far outshone the dry technicalities and verbal subtleties, to which the philosophy of Aristotle had been reduced. Afterwards, the license of speculating on such lofty themes began to be fascinating in itself, apart from external decorations, and they learned to mingle the still more fanciful doctrines of the later Platonists, — the Alexandrian school, — with the original teachings of the master. The casual coincidence of these dogmas with some parts of the Christian scheme has often contributed to their popularity, and made them an object of study with those whose minds were naturally inclined to religious mysticism. This partial agreement was sufficient to shield the system that Ficinus published, from the attacks of a bigoted and ignorant priesthood; but his friend and pupil, Picus of Mirandola, whose ardent temperament and thirst for knowledge had involved him in the mysteries of Oriental philosophy and the Jewish Cabala, was not so fortunate. The nine hundred theses on all subjects, metaphysical, theological, magical, and cabalistical, which he published at Rome, and offered to defend against all comers, roused the suspicion of churchmen, who could not understand them. A great clamor was raised, and he was obliged to retract and explain to a considerable extent, before the Pope pronounced him free from censure.

Mr. Hallam remarks, that the whole Platonic theology of Ficinus “appears a beautiful, but too visionary and hypothetical system of theism, the ground-works of which lay deep in the meditations of ancient Oriental sages.” It belongs to a class of speculations, which have exercised more or less the aspiring and fanciful minds of every age. The eager curiosity of men respecting the nature and origin of the human soul, its connexion with the Deity, and the possibility of a chain of intermediate intelligences, has caused the formation of a great number of systems, imposing from the

grandeur of the subject considered, captivating from the gorgeous dress in which the doctrines are usually conveyed, but heating and unsatisfactory in their effects, and having no support either in reason or revelation. Indulgence in such fancies seems to incapacitate the mind for calm judgment and sound reasoning, and for any application of the common laws of scientific inquiry. In reading the exposition of them, one is at a loss to know whether the writer puts them forth as serious doctrines, which are to be examined and admitted, or rejected, on the strength of the reasons advanced, or as mere poetical dreams, which may please the intellect for a time, in the same manner that the taste and fancy are gratified by fiction and romance. Revelation affords no materials for them, and seems even to discountenance their formation. The teachings of Christianity are exclusively practical in their aim, though, to a certain extent, speculative truths, great facts, are made known, as a basis, or sanction, for the moral precept. Mere curiosity is never indulged, for the object of religion is not knowing, but doing. The immortality of the soul, and the being and attributes of a God, are revealed as furnishing objects for pious meditation, and incentives to virtuous conduct; but no information is vouchsafed respecting the mode of a future life, the manner of spiritual existence, or the relation which the enfranchised spirit will bear to the Deity. The ambitious mind may speculate upon these questions, but it will speculate in vain. The entire want of success in the inquiry is apparent at once to the cool observer, though it is hidden from the wild imagination and excited brain of him who is engaged in the profitless pursuit. Gleams of the invisible world seem to open upon his straining eyes. Things around him appear to lose their reality. The words of Scripture no longer convey a plain precept, or narrate a simple fact; they are invested with a hidden meaning, and darkly indicate the secrets of a higher state of being. An ambitious and erratic philosophy thus passes over into an insane illuminatism, and he, who began as a scientific inquirer, ends with bringing forward the absurd pretensions of a miracle-worker and a prophet. Spiritual impostures have germinated alike in the cell of the fanatic, and in the closet of the over ardent and daring seeker after speculative truth.

Picus of Mirandola is one of the most remarkable in-

stances of a great mind, unhappily perverted by such delusions. As a prodigy of early attainments, no parallel can be found for him, except in the half fabulous story of the Admirable Crichton. He came to Florence when he was but twenty-two years old, having at that early age exhausted all the metaphysics and theology that were taught in the schools, acquired a knowledge of Hebrew and other Eastern languages, and made for himself a name among scholars and men of taste by the graces of his Latin composition and Italian poetry. He had come to loathe the philosophy then commonly taught in the schools, and, under the instruction of Ficinus, studying more closely the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, he became convinced, that they were but different expositions of the same system, and were both derived in the main from the books of Moses, which appeared to him to be the common storehouse of all science and art. This notion inspired him with new zeal for the study of the Oriental languages, and especially of the Cabalistic books, whence he derived the greater part of his celebrated theses. Though many of these books, which he had sought out with great pains, were but modern forgeries, he believed that they contained a true revelation, and furnished the only means for demonstrating the divine mission of the Saviour, and explaining the mysteries of Christianity. His great plan, which he did not live to finish, was but an expansion of that of the later Platonists, being intended to reconcile all differences of doctrine, and to unite all theories in one grand eclectic system. He died at the early age of thirty-two, leaving a wide reputation as a prodigy of youthful talent and learning, and a warning example against those pursuits, on which he had expended his marvellous industry and genius, without profit either to himself, or to his fellow-man.

The Platonic Academy at Florence, which engrossed so much of the favor of Lorenzo de' Medici, and of which Ficinus and Picus were the distinguished ornaments, hardly survived their deaths ; but the disposition which it had created for wild and fanciful speculations in theology and philosophy, continued to be perceptible in the schools for nearly a century. The mystics and theosophists henceforward occupy a prominent place in the history of philosophy, till the labors of Bacon and Descartes exposed the fruitlessness and vanity of their theories, and established the method and principles

of philosophizing for modern times. The history of this speculative movement in the fifteenth and a part of the sixteenth century is curious, as it shows the first effect of the new-born zeal for letters, and the increased study of the languages, on the philosophical tendencies of the age. The knowledge of Greek and Hebrew disinterred many old opinions and theories, which now appeared with all the freshness of recent inquiries, and enriched what had seemed hitherto as an exhausted ground of speculation. On the first opening of a new store of systems, the points of similarity, which they exhibit with each other, and with theories previously known, naturally come first into notice, and the primary effect is to encourage the introduction of *Eclecticism* into philosophy. In this way, the Alexandrian school arose, forming a connecting link between the ancient systems of the Greeks, and the theology of later times, and of other countries. The comprehensive view of other theories, which forms the groundwork of an Eclectic philosophy, encourages lofty expectations of the ultimate ends to be obtained; and the forced and allegorical interpretations, which are rendered necessary by the attempt to reconcile conflicting doctrines, lead to a mystical form of thought and language. Enthusiasm and mysticism are the twin children of an Eclectic spirit in the schools of speculation. The Platonic Academy at Florence commenced a movement, which was at once a revival and a continuation of the efforts of the later Platonists, and which would have produced equally great results, if the rapidly increased learning and intelligence of the age had not earlier checked its progress. Maturer study and reflection bring out the points of contrast and the antagonist principles of different theories, and expose the futility of any attempt to melt them into one. The invention of the art of printing, and the reformation in the church, with the consequent enlarged freedom of thought and inquiry, were destined to produce better fruits in philosophy, than the mere revival and conglomeration of old errors. Descartes showed, that the whole work must be commenced anew, on a different foundation, and with fresh materials; and Bacon established the method and the principles, on which the new structure was to be reared.

The character and labors of the most eminent men of letters during the first century and a half after the invention of

the art of printing appear in strong contrast, in some respects, with those of a similar class in our own age. In comparing them together, we are at first struck with what appears to be the superior industry of the former, and their greater devotedness to the cause. The men of this generation seem like dwarfs, following in the footsteps of giants. Scholars then worked without any of the rich means and appliances of study, which now enable a schoolboy to accomplish in a month, what then required the toil of years. Grammars and dictionaries were either to be prepared for the first time, or could be found only in a rude and imperfect state. Separate and full treatises on collateral subjects did not assist the student with a rich store of subsidiary information. But modern scholarship, with its ample apparatus, and all its accuracy and refinement, looks puny and trivial, when one contemplates the gigantic monuments of toil, that were left behind them by such men as Budæus, Scaliger, Turnebus, and Stephens. Weighing the two classes of scholars together, seems to be like an attempt to balance the ponderous folios, which inclose the learning of those times, against the light and elegant duodecimo volumes, with large-print text and a generous breadth of margin, which gratify the luxurious tastes of our contemporaries. Both in London and Paris, a little army of commentators and other laborers were recently employed on a new edition of Henry Stephens's *Thesaurus*, one of the earliest Greek lexicons, as it certainly is one of the largest. The original work was perfected by one man, and was by no means the only, or even the chief, labor of his life, while the modern edition employed so many hands, and was several years in progress. A fanciful writer might compare the modern editors to a swarm of insects, hovering over the carcass of a lion. It may be noticed also, that competent judges do not find the new edition so far superior to the original in fullness and accuracy, as might be expected from the great facilities for rendering it a perfect work.

The division of labor, and the distraction of different employments, are undoubtedly the cause of this apparent inferiority of modern days. The scholars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries cultivated the ground well, because they worked only a small field. They were well acquainted with the Latin and Greek classics, because they had no occasion



to study any thing else. Science was hardly created, at least in the extended modern signification of the term. How many branches of it exist now, and how comprehensive and varied, a general knowledge of which is essential to every well-educated person, though he may choose to concentrate his own efforts, in the main, on a single department of letters, or one object of research. The accumulated productions of the human mind during three active centuries lie around the scholar in endless profusion, and, as it is ever more easy and delightful to receive than to create, it needs no little self-denial to turn away from such a banquet, and devote one's labors to a single and narrow task. Besides, in a former age, the work was to be commenced from the very foundation, and every inch of an individual's progress carried forward the limits of general knowledge for the whole race. Now, it requires much time and toil to reach the starting-point of fresh inquiry, and many are employed on a secondary task, — in working over again, putting into new shapes, and reducing to a shorter compass, the stores of learning inherited from former centuries. There is as much activity of mind as ever, but the fruits of it do not all appear on the surface. But it must be conceded, that the labor of working up to the present boundaries of knowledge does not favor the disposition or the capacity to extend those limits. A new science, a new object of study or effort, is prosecuted with much greater zeal and success in the earlier years of its history, than after it has made considerable progress, and is established as a regular department of education.

The published correspondence of such men as Erasmus, Scaliger, and their learned contemporaries, shows the singular acerbity with which their literary controversies and personal disputes were managed. The whole vocabulary of abuse is applied with a vigor and earnestness, from which even the editors of political newspapers in modern times might derive a lesson. Judging from the specimens that we have of their letters, and other controversial writings, it does not appear, that the "still air of delightful studies" was favorable to gentleness of disposition or patience under wrong. Perhaps it may be laid down as a general truth, that men who are more conversant with books than with society, who are more accustomed to use language on paper than in conversation, do not weigh the force of harsh terms, or observe

the proprieties of dispute with that caution, which characterizes the speech of persons, who mingle much with the world. It requires more effrontery to speak with freedom, than to write with it; and reproachful language committed to paper is dwelt upon and studied, till it rouses all the angry passions of him to whom it is addressed. When the matter in dispute borders upon theological ground, the violence with which it is urged is naturally increased, and this circumstance explains much of the haste and warmth, with which the controversies, that we are now speaking of, were conducted. Nearly all the actors in them were excited by the strife in words that accompanied the Reformation, and it is well known with how much heat this great religious quarrel was carried on. Many of Luther's publications are summarily characterized by Mr. Hallam as "bellowing in bad Latin."

The remarks of our author on the Reformation and its effects are very brief, but they are well considered, and display very favorably his cool and impartial judgment. The theme lay in his path, for the influence of this great religious movement is very apparent in the history of letters in general, to say nothing of the store of publications which it directly occasioned. We extract a paragraph, that contains an ingenious and striking comparison.

"We cannot give any attention to the story of the Reformation, without being struck by the extraordinary analogy it bears to that of the last fifty years. He who would study the spirit of this mighty age may see it reflected as in a mirror from the days of Luther and Erasmus. Man, who, speaking of him collectively, has never reasoned for himself, is the puppet of impulses and prejudices, be they for good or for evil. These are, in the usual course of things, traditional notions and sentiments, strengthened by repetition, and running into habitual trains of thought. Nothing is more difficult, in general, than to make a nation perceive any thing as true, or seek its own interest in any manner, but as its forefathers have opined or acted. Change in these respects has been, even in Europe, where there is most of flexibility, very gradual; the work, not of argument or instruction, but of exterior circumstances slowly operating through a long lapse of time. There have been, however, some remarkable exceptions to this law of uniformity, or, if I may use the term, of *secular variation*. The introduction of Christianity seems to have produced a very rapid subversion of ancient prejudices, a very conspicuous alternation of the whole channel

through which moral sentiments flow, in nations that have at once received it. This has also not unfrequently happened through the influence of Mohammedism in the East. Next to these great revolutions in extent and degree, stand the two periods we have begun by comparing; that of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and that of political innovation wherein we have long lived. In each, the characteristic features are a contempt for antiquity, a shifting of prejudices, an inward sense of self-esteem leading to an assertion of private judgment in the most uninformed, a sanguine confidence in the amelioration of human affairs, a fixing of the heart on great ends, with a comparative disregard of all things intermediate. In each there has been so much of alloy in the motives, and, still more, so much of danger and suffering in the means, that the cautious and moderate have shrunk back and sometimes retraced their own steps, rather than encounter evils which at a distance they had not seen in their full magnitude. Hence we may pronounce with certainty what Luther, Hutten, Carlostadt, what again More, Erasmus, Melancthon, Oriander, would have been in the nineteenth century, and what our own contemporaries would have been in their times. But we are too apt to judge others, not as the individualities of personal character and the varying aspects of circumstances rendered them, and would have rendered us, but according to our opinion of the consequences, which, even if estimated by us rightly, were such as they could not determinately have foreseen." — pp. 283, 284.

Among the more valuable portions of Mr. Hallam's work are the clear and full notices of the philosophical writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The summary given in each instance is necessarily brief, but it is distinct and precise, so far as it goes. The historian is content to act in his only proper office, which from the nature of the case is a secondary one, — to develop the views or the system of another, without interlarding it too much with his own opinions, or forcing it into a preconceived scheme of philosophy. He never uses the theory of another only as a pretext for expounding his own. Frequently he confines himself to the humble task of making an analysis or abstract of a particular treatise, and allowing the reader to form his own conclusions respecting its truth and value. The influence of a system is estimated from effects actually produced, from known facts in the subsequent history of speculation, and not from a dogmatical view of the necessary consequences of

certain opinions. In the amount and clearness of the information afforded, Mr. Hallam's work is far superior to Dugald Stewart's agreeable but sketchy "Dissertation on the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy." It does not contain so many pleasing disquisitions, nor is it written with such copiousness and elegance of style. But the parts are more justly proportioned and coherent with each other, and the history is more definite and complete in itself. Stewart too often takes for granted the reader's general acquaintance with the subject, and therefore considers it only in fragments, or under certain aspects. He touches here and there upon the main topic, but does not consider it methodically and at length. His dissertation affords some very pleasant reading, but is unsatisfactory as a whole, and is almost useless as a work of general reference. Mr. Hallam's book is less ambitious in its aim, but it is more complete and instructive.

The account of Lord Bacon's writings, and of the chief characteristics of his philosophy, is carefully labored, and fully sustains the justness of the preceding remarks. The topic was a perplexing one to manage, not that it is difficult to offer something new respecting it, for though trite it is not exhausted; but because so many clashing opinions and superficial views are entertained respecting the nature and the value of the Baconian philosophy. Few subjects are so much talked about and so imperfectly studied. It is no trifling task to master its details and become thoroughly acquainted with its spirit and general bearing, though fragments may be gathered, and crude and imperfect notions imbibed, in every quarter. It is important to recollect, that we possess only a part of the system, which was laid out with such wonderful breadth and method in the *Instauratio Magna*, but which the author did not live to finish. It may be questioned, whether he ever expected to finish it himself, even if he had hoped for a longer life and greater leisure, than he was destined to enjoy. His scheme covered the whole ground, reaching up not only to the actual, but to the possible limits of human knowledge, and, notwithstanding the great progress of science since his day, we are still far from realizing his magnificent anticipations. Laboring at once on several portions of the grand plan, endeavouring not only to establish the theory, but to exemplify it by his own discoveries, and frequently interrupted

in his studies by the active business of life, it is not strange, that some difficulty should be found in piecing together the parts of his unfinished work, and ascertaining the whole reach and aim of his philosophy. It is easy to gain a general but vague idea of his system, to show the direction in which it leads, and to comment on a few of the pregnant and instructive maxims, which are found in its details. But it does not admit of being summed up in a single aphorism. It probably did not dawn upon Bacon himself as one idea, capable, indeed, of numberless applications, and leading a thousand ways, but all referrible to a single point. Those who speak of induction and experiment as his sole method, of physical science as the only field, and of practical utility as the solitary aim of his speculations, have but a very imperfect idea of the Baconian philosophy.

The great merit of Bacon does not consist in his overthrow of the philosophy of the schools, any more than that of Socrates depends on the refutation of the Sophists. Both these great minds were more skilful to create than to destroy, and their fame rests on their success in animating and directing the efforts of their followers and successors, and on the consequent positive accession of human knowledge and happiness. Even in Bacon's time, the authority of the Aristotelian philosophy had visibly declined. Within the moss-covered walls of the universities, indeed, its adherents still maintained their ground ; but the barrenness of the system was perceived, and it continued to be taught only because nothing but mystical speculations or arbitrary hypotheses were offered in its place. The subtilities and vain refinements of the scholastic logic and philosophy were still exercised in the theological field, but science gained nothing in this warfare of words, and the futility of the dispute was generally manifest. The *Instauratio Magna* begins with remarks on the decayed condition of philosophy and natural science, as an admitted fact. "The very authors," — we paraphrase rather than translate the words of Bacon, — "the very authors who have arrogated to themselves a dictatorship in the sciences, and decide with so much confidence on all subjects, when they come to themselves after a short interval, begin to complain of the subtilty of Nature, the dark recesses in which truth is hidden, the obscurity of all things, the intertexture and complexity of causes, and the weakness

of human intellect ; appearing none the more modest for this, — that they chose to refer their failure to the common unlucky fate of men and things, rather than confess their individual weakness.” The wisdom which we have inherited from the Greeks, he continues, has become a kind of scientific play, and is proper only for boys. It is fertile in controversies, but barren of fruit.

A particular examination of the state of the sciences at this period, would cast another shade over this gloomy picture. Astrology, alchemy, and natural magic were still favorite objects of inquiry and research. There were glimmerings of dawn in the science of the heavens, but the true theory was not yet separated from the false. It was one guess among many. The sailor steered his vessel by the compass and the pole-star, and not by regular observations of the heavenly bodies. Still he went boldly on his course, and geography as a science had made rapid strides. Everywhere but within the scholastic institutions men were weary of the prevalent systems of philosophy, and wished for a better, but knew not whither to turn. With such aids and lights on his path, Bacon commenced his task of legislating for science, — of governing a kingdom that existed as yet only in the far-reaching sagacity of his own mind. The task seemed much like that of Plato, establishing laws for his ideal republic, or of Sir Thomas More, directing the affairs of Utopia. But how different the result ! To illustrate his precepts by a running commentary of examples, we must have recourse to the most brilliant discoveries of modern times, — to the Optics of Newton, the experiments of Lavoisier on the gases, those of Davy on the alkalies, of Watt on Steam, and of Franklin on electricity. The younger Herschel, in his excellent “ Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy,” has recently completed a survey of modern science, and of the methods by which, enlightened by past experience, inquirers are now conducting their researches ; and his work, though not an intentional, is still the most instructive commentary on the *Novum Organon*. If the historical survey were extended a little farther, if one should examine the failures of scientific effort, the false theories and exploded hypotheses, of the last two centuries, and thus ascertain the causes of error, he would complete the illustration of another branch of the Baconian philosophy.

It is this forecast of mind, this comprehensive and clear view of science, not as it was, but in the state which it was destined to attain, that gives the most vivid idea of the commanding genius of Bacon. He did not deduce rules from practice, as the Greek critics founded a theory of Epic poetry on the examples of Homer in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The history of the past displayed a warning, but offered no guidance, and he looked to the future only for a satisfactory trial of his method. He aimed to effect a complete survey of the field of human knowledge, and by comparing the work to be done with man's capacity for investigation, to determine what efforts were to be prosecuted, and what relinquished from the impracticability of the end proposed. To adopt his own illustration, he wished no longer to wander darkling on the plain, but to mount the watchtower of a higher science, — *speculam altioris scientiæ*, — whence the whole field could be seen in one view, and the bearings and relations of all its parts be clearly defined. He had full confidence in the future, and the gloomy lessons of experience could not shake his trust. "As for the possibility," he observes, "they are ill discoverers, who think there is no land, when they can see nothing but sea." From his elevated position, not only did his eye catch the first beams of the rising sun, long before it was visible from the plain below, but he beheld the vast region on which it shone. Its high mountains, and pleasant valleys, and broad fields, rich with the promise of harvest, were all extended before him, and he viewed the country and mapped it out for the benefit of coming generations, who were to enter in and take possession. It seems, therefore, that Cowley, in his quaint fashion, has aptly enough expressed the nature of the service, which the great Improver of Learning rendered to his fellow-men.

"Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last;  
The barren wilderness he passed,  
Did on the very border stand  
Of the blest promised land;  
And, from the mountain-top of his exalted wit,  
Saw it himself, and showed us it."

One quality, which has added to the popularity and consequently to the influence of Bacon's writings, is the impressive character of his style. His imagination was often misled by the false taste of the age, but its power and grandeur



could not be entirely perverted or hidden. It sometimes flashes with the greatest brilliancy, when the subject appears to afford the least scope for its appearance, and it is always at hand to minister to his intellect, or to lend force and authority to his teachings. His philosophy is constantly enveloped in the most splendid imagery, which hangs round it like the drapery round the limbs of an ancient statue, only giving higher ideas of the strength and symmetry of the form, which it partially conceals. His wit often degenerates into conceit, and his fancy is discursive and lawless ; but these qualities lend vivacity and point to the aphorisms, in which his most striking thoughts are conveyed, and give them a stronger hold on the attention and memory of the reader. On the whole, the style of Bacon is unique, and it certainly cannot be recommended as a model for philosophical writings ; but it gives a vivid idea of the strength and comprehensiveness of his genius, and it has aided and widened the influence of his speculations. Mr. Hallam appears to be little sensible of its power, for his remarks upon it are confined to a censure of the strange and rather fantastic nomenclature, which Bacon attempted to introduce into science. We may admit the awkwardness of the terms thus invented, without losing our admiration of the general qualities of the master's style.

We have said, that it is impossible to sum up the Baconian philosophy in a single proposition. No one word offers the key-note of the whole system. No single theory is presented with a show of sweeping generalization, aided by which we can resolve the errors of former inquirers, and be guided in future by a safe path to a certain result. Mr. Hallam justly observes, that Bacon obtained "a triumph over arrogant usurpation without seeking to substitute another ; and he may be compared with those liberators of nations, who have given them laws by which they might govern themselves, and retained no homage but their gratitude." In consequence, his name is not specially connected with any one speculation or method, and his philosophy cannot be brought at once to any simple and decisive test. It must be studied as a whole, in the same comprehensive spirit in which it was conceived. Its theme is as broad as the whole field of human knowledge, and its parts are elaborated with equal care, without being forced into unnatural connexion, or arbitrarily included under a single principle. Every one knows

that induction, as a method of study, is at least as old as Aristotle. But Bacon first perceived its full importance as a means of scientific inquiry, analyzed it, and determined the proper rules of its application. We are familiar enough with the modes of its present use ; but how many instances can be found of its successful application as an implement of science in the ages before the time of Galileo and Bacon ? It was easy to hit upon, for it was in common use by the vulgar, after a rude fashion, in their ordinary concerns. But it was not in favor with philosophers and men of science. They were ambitious of a higher *organon* of investigation. Fanciful hypotheses, hasty anticipations of the truth, long-drawn deductions from principles arbitrarily assumed, endless commentaries and explanations of the writings of men, who were supposed to have mastered all science only because they lived nearer to the infancy of the human race, — every thing, in short, but patient observation and methodical study, was used as a means of increasing the stores of human knowledge. Bacon showed the way to success by reversing their methods, and teaching humility as the first lesson. He was humble in the choice of means, for he recommended beginning with particulars, and rising by degrees to general propositions, — a course which had hitherto been viewed with contempt. But he inculcated self-dependence, by repudiating the authorities which had long reigned paramount in the schools. He did not wholly reject the Aristotelian logic, but he limited its use to verbal disputes, and proved that it was inapplicable to discovery and invention. He claimed no superiority for physics over speculative science, but he divided their respective territories by a broad line of distinction, and restricted each to the employment of its own proper means of investigation. He discouraged mere speculation in natural science, because it was fruitless ; but he also showed the absurdity of merely accumulating particular facts without any principle of order or selection, as from such no useful inference could be drawn. This distinction is best illustrated by himself, though we are again obliged to paraphrase rather than translate the quotation. “ Those who have hitherto treated the sciences, have been either empyrics or dogmatists. The empyrics, like ants, only heap up their stores, and use them for food. The speculatists, like spiders, spin their webs out of themselves.

The middle course is that of the bee, which gathers materials from the flowers of the garden and the field, but works them over and digests them by its own faculties. Not unlike this process is the true business of philosophy, which does not depend either wholly or chiefly on the original power of mind, nor yet does it gather materials from natural history and mechanical experiments to be stored away entire in the memory, but to be refashioned and digested by the intellect." \*

The philosophy of Bacon is not exclusively utilitarian in its aim or tendency. He did not restrict the ends or uses of science to the physical well-being of mankind. But he rebuked the arrogance and vanity of the Stoical school, who confined themselves to frothy declamations concerning virtue and the true nature of happiness, and neglected the real improvement of the race. It is undoubtedly true, that the inductive method properly so called, as explained in the *Novum Organon*, has a primary reference to physical science, and, through that, to the increase of human power, and the multiplication of bodily comforts. How highly Bacon estimated such results is apparent from the way in which he speaks of the three great inventions of modern times, — the art of printing, gunpowder, and the mariner's compass. These three, he observes, have changed the appearance and condition of things over the whole earth, — the first in literature, the second in war, the third in navigation. Innumerable changes have followed these inventions, — "so that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exercised so great power and influence over human affairs, as these mechanical contrivances." † But the inductive method is but one part of the Baconian philosophy, and the *Novum Organon*, very incomplete in itself, when perfected, was destined to fill up only a portion of the scheme described in the *Instauratio Magna*, which was meant to include all the objects of human knowledge. Ethical science occupies one division of the treatise on the "Advancement of Learning," and the whole spirit of this work is opposed to any narrow views of the objects to be studied, or the ends to be gained, by the scientific inquirer. Mere practical utility is nowhere held up as the only purpose to be answered by the advancement of knowledge. Not unworthy in itself, it was not broad

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\* *Novum Organon*. Lib. I. Aphorism. xcv.† *Ibid.* Aph. cxxix.

and dignified enough to be considered by Bacon as the proper limit of endeavour. It is everywhere taken for granted, that knowledge is a sufficient good in itself, and, the desire to attain it being presupposed, the writer's chief care is to guide the student into the proper path, and to direct his efforts. This high appreciation of learning for its own sake cannot be better exhibited than in his own solemn and weighty words.

“Lastly; leaving the vulgar arguments, that by learning man excelleth man in that wherein man excelleth beasts; that by learning man ascendeth to the heavens and their motions, where in body he cannot come, and the like; let us conclude with the dignity and excellency of knowledge and learning in that whereunto man's nature doth most aspire, which is immortality or continuance; for to this tendeth generation, and raising of houses and families; to this buildings, foundations, and monuments; to this tendeth the desire of memory, fame, and celebration, and in effect the strength of all other human desires. We see then how far the monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power, or of the hands. For have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years, or more, without the loss of a syllable or letter; during which time, infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished? It is not possible to have the true pictures or statues of Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar; no, nor of the kings or great personages of much later years; for the originals cannot last, and the copies cannot but lose of the life and truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledges remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time, and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages; so that, if the invention of the ship was thought so noble, which carrieth riches and commodities from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits; how much more are letters to be magnified, which, as ships, pass through the vast seas of time, and make ages so distant to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, and inventions, the one of the other.” — *Advancement of Learning*, pp. 100 – 102.

This is not the language of one who held that inventions and improvements in the arts, the gain of power and the increase of leisure and enjoyment by means of steam-engines, spinning-jennies, rail-roads, and the like, were the highest good to be obtained, and the noblest achievement of knowledge.

Ships and commerce have made large additions to our dominion over the material universe, and to our physical comforts. But Bacon certainly did not consider the power and happiness thus obtained, as the greatest contribution of science to the well-being of mankind.

The question, which has excited some controversy, whether the philosophy of mind falls within the scope of Bacon's inquiry, and is to be prosecuted by his method, can be easily answered, when we have fairly determined what that philosophy is, and what forms its proper object. The first branch of it is Mental Science, or the Philosophy of the Mind, properly so called. Psychology is the latest term in common use, and is perhaps the most convenient one. Here we are concerned with the human mind, as a subject of observation and experiment, as the supposed seat or origin of various phenomena, that admit of number, arrangement, and classification. These phenomena, again, are not produced fortuitously, or at random, but are subject to fixed laws, more or less obvious, that may be definitely expressed. The phenomena are often complex, also, and need to be analyzed and reduced to their simplest elements. We speak of the science as confined entirely to the mind, without forgetting that one important point in it is the question, whether there be any such separate existence as the mind, distinct from matter. If this question be determined in the negative, it would appear, at first sight, that no division can be made, — that there is no room for any science separate from that, which treats of the laws and properties of bodies. Yet the subject is not really affected by the determination of this doubt. Every one is conscious of thinking, reasoning, willing; of pleasure, love, and hatred; and these qualities or phenomena are wholly unlike bulk, figure, extension, and other qualities usually attributed to matter. Now, we do not need to assume in the outset, that there is a separate existence or entity, in which the first class of these attributes inhere. There is no doubt that the two sets of phenomena are perfectly distinct from each other. There is no danger of confounding *them*. Avoiding all hypotheses, therefore, it may be said that psychology treats of those properties which we learn from consciousness; physical science of those that we know through the senses.

If this view is correct, if psychology is a science founded

on the observation of facts, and proceeding by successive generalizations, then the Baconian method is as applicable to it as to any other. It was so considered by Bacon himself, as appears from his very explicit language. "For human knowledge which concerns the mind has two parts ; the one that inquireth of the substance or nature of the soul or mind ; the other that inquireth of the faculties or functions thereof." And again ; "For we as much collect a history, and form tables, concerning anger, fear, shame, and the like, and also concerning examples from civil life, and as much concerning the intellectual operations of memory, combination and partition, judgment and the others, as concerning heat and cold, or light, or vegetation, or such things." If further proof were wanting, we might refer to the writings of Berkeley, Hartley, Reid, and others, as affording many happy instances of the successful application of the inductive method to this part of the philosophy of mind.

The other branch of mental philosophy is far more comprehensive, and embraces all that is usually denominated *Metaphysics*. All science proceeds from one generalization to another ; and must end therefore at a point, — in a science that surveys the bases of all the others, determines their proper relations, and binds the whole into one orderly system of knowledge. It is true, that the word is commonly used in a more loose and popular sense than the one here indicated ; but the definition is sufficiently broad to include all the questions usually discussed by metaphysical writers, and it coincides exactly with Bacon's division of the science. "Of Natural Philosophy the basis is Natural History, the stage next the basis is *Physic*, the stage next the vertical point is *Metaphysic*." This last is concerned only with first principles ; it deals with a class of questions lying at the roots of other sciences, but usually passed over by the inquirer on the main subject, either from a fear that the discussion will lead too far from his proper track, or that the problems are insoluble, or that the solution may be taken for granted without affecting the remainder of the inquiry. Thus the psychologist studies the phenomena of mind, and the law of their arrangement, succession, and mutual dependence, putting aside, as we have done above, the question respecting the real nature of the thinking principle, and the efficient cause of the changes which it exhibits. So the student of

physical science investigates the properties of bodies, and their mode of acting on each other, leaving quite out of view the problem respecting the essence of matter, and the *formal causes*, or internal constitution, of particular bodies, by virtue of which they exhibit their appropriate qualities, and are what they are. The latter portion of this problem, indeed, Lord Bacon seems to consider as forming the chief, if not the only, business of the metaphysician, though his province is now commonly understood to include the whole of the inquiries thus waved by the psychologist and the man of science, together with some others, that we proceed to notice. The ancients, it may be remarked in passing, unwisely confounded the two branches of investigation, and fancied that they were studying nature, when they were only cavilling about abstruse questions of the kind above mentioned. Their physics were all metaphysics.

Ethical philosophy treats of the rights and duties of moral beings. It considers man as a responsible agent, the subject of moral laws as absolute and imperative as those of an organic nature, which govern his material existence. But every question respecting duty and merit presupposes the free agency of man. Laws relating to conduct imply obligation and responsibility, and neither of these can exist without the power of determining our own actions. The dark problem of the freedom of the will, therefore, lies at the gate-way of all ethical inquiries, and most writers on the subject are content to hurry by it as an ugly phantom, with which, they thank their stars, no one but a metaphysician has any thing to do. Even the mathematician, in the axioms which form the basis of his science, and especially in the infinitesimal quantities, which he finds so useful at every stage of his progress, leaves behind him curious and subtle problems for the metaphysical inquirer to solve. The theologian, so far as he is concerned with natural religion, refers a portion of his difficulties, and those which lie the nearest to the starting-point of his inquiry, for the same person to consider and resolve.

Lastly, at the root of all science lies the question respecting the nature, origin, and certainty of knowledge itself. All study and research proceed from certain postulates, the truth of which is implied at the outset, and at every step of our progress. We rely on the fidelity of the senses, on the in-



formation afforded by consciousness, memory, and the organs of observation. No inquirer thinks it necessary to examine the foundations of belief in general, for his own science is not more concerned than any other with the common basis of investigation. He is content to rest upon the common ground, leaving it to others to ascertain what the nature of belief is, and why it is granted in some cases and withheld in others. But this fundamental inquiry is a problem that we cannot wholly wink out of sight. The answer to it must deeply affect our views of the dignity of human nature, and the certainty of human knowledge. It is possible to indulge a comprehensive skepticism, that affects not merely our trust in one proposition or one science, however important, but undermines the whole fabric of belief, and creates doubts respecting our capacity for progress of any kind. The broad problem respecting the origin of knowledge has been agitated again and again by a class of inquirers reluctant to abandon the attempt altogether, yet half conscious that it transcends the farthest reach of their faculties. How is experience possible? — is the question, according to Kant, that lies at the threshold of every system of metaphysics, which pretends to be called a science. His own solution is a mere evasion of the difficulty, and the problem remains, as before, a proof; that philosophers do not always succeed in dispelling the doubts, which their own speculations have raised.

If this view of the province of metaphysics be correct, it follows, that, far from being excluded from Bacon's inquiry, it covers the very position which he hoped to attain. It coincides very nearly with his *philosophia prima*, wherein he hoped to find the vantage-ground, from which to complete his survey and trial of all systems and all knowledge. It is the science of first principles, and of the highest generalization, being, to adopt his own metaphor, the stage next to the vertical point of the pyramid of truth. It underlies all the other sciences, constitutes a point of departure for them, and, if any important discoveries within its province are ever effected, it must materially affect their principles and mutual relations. But, in this particular, it is hardly wise to entertain any sanguine expectations. The problems of which it consists have been constantly agitated from the infancy of the human race down to the present time; but it would be hard to point out one difficulty that has been removed, or

one point that has been finally determined. Fortunately, they lie out of the path of the common inquirer, or they may be avoided by him without detriment to his further researches. If they are removed from this independent position, and mingled with common investigations in science, they invariably perplex and mislead the student. Standing by themselves, they may task the ingenuity of the disputant, and exercise the faculties of the lover of hardy speculation. If the attempt to solve them ends only in disappointment, the inquirer may console himself with the equal failure of those who have gone before, and with the indirect gain to his own powers of investigation, while engaged in the trial. We assent entirely to the remark of a writer, who was certainly not prejudiced in favor of this abstruse science, that "the chief value of such speculations will be found to consist in the exercise which they afford to the faculties, and the delight which is produced by the consciousness of intellectual exertion."

The question respecting the actual influence of Bacon's genius on the progress of science since his time, is a curious one, and is discussed with ability and learning by Mr. Hallam. But we must pass over this portion of his remarks, and come to the account of the writings and philosophical merits of Descartes. Dugald Stewart has given to this celebrated man the proud title of "Father of the experimental philosophy of the human mind." We can hardly admit that he deserves such a lofty appellation, though his services were great, and his influence on the course of speculation in Europe was conspicuous, and, for the most part, beneficial for more than a century, and can hardly be said to have ceased at the present day. Literary history presents few more instructive examples of the reciprocal workings of thought and action, than that which is found in the life and writings of René Descartes. His active life, — a busy and eventful one, — was designed, as he affirms, to be a preparation for his philosophical labors, and these last, in their turn, modified and directed his conduct and fortunes. His vocation was a peculiar one, and was selected very early in life ; and he educated himself for it with great care, not only in the academy and the closet, by books and lectures, but also in the crowded camp, on the battle-field, in the amusements of a great metropolis and the dissipation of a court, and,

finally, in entire seclusion from the world. He gave an account of his life, and the progress of his studies, in the "Discourse upon Method," the first of his philosophical publications. The narrative is a curious one, and we may rely in the main on its candor and truth, though it is doubtful whether his early career was governed exclusively by a single principle, and directed with such unity of purpose, as he represents, and as it probably appeared to him, when reflecting upon it in the latter part of his life.

He was born in 1596, of a noble, though not a wealthy family in Touraine. At an early age, he was sent to school at La Flèche, to profit by the instruction of the Jesuits in the scholastic philosophy, which was then in vogue. The weakness of his health, particularly a complaint in his chest, procured for him a dispensation from the regular exercises of the seminary, and a permission to employ his leisure as he saw fit. This liberty he eagerly improved by reading every book that came in his way, whether good, bad, or indifferent. The result was unfortunate. He discovered such a conflict of opinions in science, so much disputation and uncertainty in philosophy, and such imperfect aids to investigation in the systems of logic which were then in use, that the pursuit of truth under the guidance of former inquirers seemed a hopeless task. Mathematics afforded him some relief, and he studied this science with ardor and success. But the field here was too narrow for his ambitious and grasping intellect, and he sought in vain for demonstrative evidence in the other sciences.

He resolved, therefore, to give up his books, and to seek for the elements of a better philosophy in active life, — to study henceforth only the great volume of the world. He thought that men must regulate their daily conduct on more correct data and by sounder principles, than could be found in books, or they could not succeed so well. By mingling in their pursuits, and quitting the beaten paths of study, he might ascertain their rules of conduct, and apply them for his own guidance in erecting a new system of knowledge. If we may trust his own account, these were the meditations of a boy of sixteen.

At this age, he quitted La Flèche and went to Paris, where he remained for four years. A portion of this time he spent in study, devoting himself chiefly to mathematics,

and laying the foundation of those discoveries in geometry, which are among his most important contributions to science. The remainder of the period he gave up freely to the amusements and dissipation of the metropolis. At the age of twenty he entered the army as a volunteer, and in the employ of Prince Maurice of Nassau, and, subsequently, of the Duke of Bavaria and the Emperor Ferdinand the Second, he saw much service and became fully acquainted with the military profession. He was present at the great battle of Prague, and on that and other occasions is said to have distinguished himself in arms. Yet he disliked the employment, and had a particular aversion to tumult and bloodshed. This dislike enabled him the better to keep his original purpose constantly in view, and to make all his experience subservient to the great object of constructing a new system of inquiry and belief. Becoming weary of military life, he resigned his commission, and spent several years in travelling. He visited Denmark, Hungary, and Italy, and spent a year or two at Paris, and as much at his birthplace. With a temperament naturally sanguine and enthusiastic, constant meditation on his magnificent plans so heated his brain, that he was in danger of becoming insane. He had remarkable dreams for three nights in succession, in which it seemed that the great road to truth, the object of his constant search, was pointed out to him by divine aid, and a method indicated for establishing all science on an immovable basis. When he waked, of course, he could remember nothing distinctly, but he vowed that he would make a pilgrimage to Loretto, if he should ever be so happy as to recover these mysterious revelations. The same feverish turn of mind was perceptible in his devotion for a time to the doctrines of the Rosicrucians, a sect of mystifying quacks, who first came into notice about this period. But he soon detected the emptiness of their professions, and quitted them in disgust. At the age of thirty-three he went to Holland, intending to fix his abode there, and prepare for the world the fruits of his meditations and varied researches.

And what had he gained from his extended travels, his renunciation of books, his military service, his twenty years' observation of men and things? At first view, it appeared that all had profited him little or nothing. He had found that common men engaged in active life were no wiser than

books and philosophers ; that opinions differed as widely in the mass, and fluctuated as rapidly in the individual ; that all persons relied on probabilities, because they could not attain to demonstration ; and that they did not arrive at a knowledge of the truth, because they were drawn away from its pursuit by the alluring chase after authority and pleasure. Still, it seemed that he had derived from his experience some advantage in the discipline of his faculties, and the perception of the causes of the errors committed by others ; and he now wished to live in perfect retirement, that he might have leisure to mature his thoughts, and to prosecute his researches. He confided the secret of his retreat to one friend only, that his necessary correspondence by letters might be kept up, and changed his habitation frequently, that he might avoid the search of others, and any interruption from visitors, whom he detested. He was naturally timid, and the persecutions that Galileo was undergoing, deterred him for a long time from publishing any of his speculations. Overcome at last by the solicitations of friends, who knew the importance of his researches, he gave to the world his treatise "upon Method," first published in 1637.

The character of Descartes appears with as much distinctness in this short treatise, as in the preceding sketch of his early career. He was a bold and independent thinker, with a mind exercised by the severe discipline of mathematical study, and freed through his long intercourse with the world from the prejudices of the closet and the narrowing influences of exclusively scholastic pursuits. His boldness inclined even to arrogance, and he was not always willing to allow to others the same freedom of inquiry which he claimed for himself. He easily detected the fallacies and assumptions of the philosophical systems which were then current, and he aspired to erect one in their place, which should stand on as firm a basis, and be secured with as much method and strength, as the science of the geometer. The structure was to be entirely his own, and to include none of the forms or the materials of the theories which it was intended to displace. He had observed, he says, that works executed by one hand were more regular, and the parts more harmonious and better fitted to each other, than those which united the contributions of different minds and successive ages. The political constitution of Lacedæmon excelled that of the

other states of Greece, because it was the work of one mind, and came perfect from the conception of a single artificer. "I had remarked, also, that, in forming opinions on obscure subjects, it was unsafe to be influenced by the example of the greatest number, for one was often more likely to find the truth than many. Instead of choosing, therefore, among the judgments of others, I thought it right to form an opinion for myself. But as those who walk by night proceed with slow and cautious steps, I resolved to look carefully around, so that if I did not advance fast, there might at least be no danger of falling." He determined, therefore, to admit nothing except upon clear and certain evidence, to avoid precipitation in forming his judgments, to divide difficult questions into several parts and examine each in succession, and to treat all subjects of investigation in a certain order, beginning with the simplest, and rising by degrees to the more difficult and abstruse.

These rules are sufficiently simple and obvious ; but it would be difficult to find any speculative writer, before the time of Bacon and Descartes, who successfully reduced them to practice. There was no great merit in the mere enunciation of them even at that period ; but to adhere to them with great closeness and fidelity in the exposition of a new theory of knowledge, affords proof of no ordinary strength and discipline of mind. The methodical and cautious manner in which he conducted his researches, and his strict adherence to the principles which he had established, had a happy influence on the formation of his style, which is a model of correctness, perspicuity, and good taste. He was rather imperious in disputation, and he certainly showed no lack of confidence in his own powers when he proposed his scheme for a thorough reform in philosophy. But his language at the commencement of his work was sufficiently subdued and modest. "I may be deceived," he says, "and these may be nothing more than glass and pebbles, which I am here offering for gold and precious stones. I know how subject we are to errors, and how doubtful is the favorable testimony of friends. I do not intend, therefore, to point out a universal method of seeking after truth, but to describe the road on which I have travelled. The narration will at least serve the purpose of a history or a fable ; among some things which it will be well to imitate, others may be found, which ought carefully to be avoided."

The philosophy of Descartes deserves attention and respect, not more from the mixture of important truths with the errors which it contains, than from the excellent spirit in which it was conceived, and the uniformity and careful adherence to principle, with which it was carried out. If we except the writings of Bacon, which were published but a few years before the "Discourse upon Method," and which Descartes probably had not seen, it was the first steady assertion of the right of free inquiry in speculative science, after the bondage of thought for ages. It was the first distinct repudiation on the Continent of the infallibility of the ancients, the superiority of their modes of inquiry, and the authority of the established schools, — the first attempt to found a theory of science on independent research and the dictates of common sense. It differed from the philosophy of Bacon, in that its own principles were reduced to practice, and an attempt was made to execute the work, for which the former proposed only to show the way. Bacon invented a method, while Descartes erected a system. Viewed as a whole, this system was defective and unsound, though it contained the germs of many truths. It had the inherent vice of an entire theory, which Bacon himself exposed in the most pregnant and forcible terms.

"Another error, of a diverse nature from all the former, is the over early and peremptory reduction of knowledge into arts and methods; from which time commonly sciences receive small or no augmentation. But as young men, when they knit and shape perfectly, do seldom grow to a farther stature; so knowledge, while it is in aphorisms and observations, it is in growth; but, when it once is comprehended in exact methods, it may perchance be farther polished and illustrated, and accommodated for use and practice; but it increaseth no more in bulk and substance." — *Advancement of Learning*, p. 55.

Misled by the example of the geometer, Descartes selected what may be termed the *a priori* method in speculation, — adopting a principle or a fact as the basis of the inquiry, and reasoning down from that to inferior truths. The chain of his philosophy begins with his own existence, and proceeds to the reality of a First Cause, the being of a God, on whose veracity the whole strength of the subsequent convictions is made to depend. He began by doubting every thing, by refusing to admit the validity of mathematical evi-



dence, the existence of outward things, of his own body, or even of himself. Universal skepticism, he maintains, is the true point of departure in philosophy, for this alone can save us from the admission of error, though it does not carry us forward a step on the road to truth. How can I rise from this abyss of unbelief? I doubt every thing; but to doubt is to think, and thought implies existence. *I think; therefore I am.* Hence, it appears that my own existence may be taken as a sure basis, on which to build a system of belief. I will begin with this, resolved to admit nothing as a philosophical truth, which may not be deduced from it by strict and accurate reasoning. But I have already supposed the non-existence of the outward world and of my own body, and it is evident that my own being is not affected by the want of them. The essence of my being, therefore, consists in thought, and is wholly independent of place, body, or any material thing. This being or entity, then, of which thought is the essence, is more easily known than the body, and may be conceived to exist, though the body were destroyed. What is it? A thinking being, — that is, an existence capable of knowing, doubting, affirming, denying, and susceptible of pleasure and pain. But I may have experienced all these states without knowing any thing of the qualities or laws of matter, and therefore the study of matter can avail me nothing in the study of my mental constitution. Whatever is admissible by the senses, whatever can be pictured by the imagination as an outward thing, cannot be subservient to the knowledge of mind.

The next step in the theory, the proof of the being of a God, we had occasion to examine at length in a recent number of this Journal, and therefore we pass over it at present.\* Having established the fact, that a perfect being exists, Descartes immediately deduces from it a ground of belief in the reality of the external world and in the legitimate inferences of the understanding. For a perfect being cannot wilfully deceive his creatures, and therefore the faculties with which he has endowed us, when exercised within their established limits and confined to their proper objects, are worthy of trust. In other words, we are not liable to any errors but those which arise from the imperfect or unguarded use of the

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\* See *North American Review*, Vol. LIV. pp. 120 *et seq.*, 362 *et seq.*

senses and the understanding, and which may be ascertained and corrected by due care and diligence. According to this system, it is obvious, that even the intuitive convictions of the reason, — the axioms of geometry, for instance, — do not merit confidence for their own sake, or because they are absolute and universal, but we rely upon them through our trust in the wisdom and goodness of God. The fallacy of this method is very apparent ; for the credibility of intuition is made to depend upon a preceding argument ; and, whether demonstrative or not, this argument owes its only efficacy to the intuitive convictions on which it is built. More briefly, intuition is admitted on demonstrative evidence, though the demonstration itself is founded upon an intuition.

The great merit of the Cartesian theory consists in the distinct recognition of personal existence, as implied in every act of the understanding, and in the admirable argument for the immateriality of the thinking principle. These are the great services which the author rendered to the philosophy of mind, and they certainly go far to justify the praise, which is awarded to him by the historians of the science. The distinct enunciation of these truths by Descartes, and the publication of the works of Bacon, make the commencement of the seventeenth century an era of great importance in the history of opinions. Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes himself had already commenced the brilliant career of modern discovery in physical science. The two whose character and writings we have briefly noticed, accomplished as much for the philosophy of mind. Differing widely from each other in doctrine and in the systems of knowledge which they respectively advocated, we find a similar spirit pervading the works of both, the same contempt for the puerilities of the scholastic philosophy, the same freedom and originality of thought, and equally broad and generous views respecting the scope of human endeavour and the future progress of truth. Their labors have been partially superseded by that happy law of progress, which causes the mediocrity of one age to surpass the greater originality and power of its immediate predecessor. But their works will continue to be studied, as occupying a prominent place in the history of philosophy, and as curious monuments of the power and fertility of human genius.

Mr. Hallam's work is so rich in topics of interest, that we

have already gone beyond the proper limits of an article, in rather desultory remarks suggested by only a small portion of his labors. We close with the expression of gratitude to him for undertaking an important and difficult task, and of respect for the ability, learning, and taste, with which it is executed.

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ART. IV. — *Journal and Letters of the late Samuel Curwen, Judge of Admiralty, &c.; an American Refugee in England from 1775 to 1784, comprising Remarks on the Prominent Men and Measures of that Period. To which are added Biographical Notices of many American Loyalists and other Eminent Persons.* By GEORGE ATKINSON WARD. New York. 1842. 8vo. pp. 580.

BUT a few months ago, we did our best to introduce to public notice a very modest biography of one of the most respectable of the American loyalists during the Revolution.\* Believing that the time was past when the topic could not be touched without giving rise to angry passions, we undertook to treat it, as we should any question of mere historical interest, with mildness and impartiality. The idea of harbouring vindictive feelings against individuals long since deceased, who were sufficiently punished during their lives for whatsoever offences they may have committed, is ridiculous. If we understand ourselves in the least, our disposition is to do to the unfortunate class of whom we speak, nothing less than strict justice; to weigh with deliberation every argument that may be urged in their favor, and to censure, if this be necessary, only where censure appears to be a duty. In such a spirit we took up the life of Mr. Van Schaack. In the same we now take up the book before us. And if, in the treatment of the two, there should be any difference perceptible, the cause must be found not so much in us, as in the works themselves. Of the individuals concerned, we knew equally little before these attempts were made to bring them forward to the public observation.

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\* See *North American Review*, Vol. LV. pp. 97 et seq.