OBSERVATIONS

ON THE WRITINGS

AND

ON THE CHARACTER

OF

MR. GRAY

ORIGINALLY
SUBJOINED TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE COMPLETE EDITION IN 1814 OF ALL HIS WORKS IN TWO VOLUMES IN QUARTO

BY THOMAS JAMES MATHIAS

" Pel gran mar del sapere
Qual è sì vago o sì riposto lido,
Che di sua mente l'instancabil volo
Corso non l'abbia?"

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Editor of the last complete Edition, in 1814, of all Mr. Gray's Works, in two volumes in quarto, having been requested by some friends to the memory of Mr. Gray to print, separately, the observations on the writings and character of the Poet, which he inserted as a Postscript to the Work; it has been thought proper to offer them in a small volume to such readers as, from various causes, have not had an opportunity of access to the original publication.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

WRITINGS AND CHARACTER

OF

MR. GRAY;

ORIGINALLY SUBJOINED

(AS A POSTSCRIPT)

TO

THE COMPLETE EDITION OF HIS WORKS

IN TWO VOLUMES QUARTO,

Published in 1814.

HAVING brought the volumes of Mr. Gray's Works to their conclusion in the manner which the editor proposed to himself, he may perhaps, without impropriety, be allowed to subjoin a few observations. The intention of their publication was to hold forth to the learned and to the philosophick world

the literary and moral portraiture of Mr. Gray, in his own dimensions, as he was. It is presumed also that the selections from his manuscripts, now offered to the reader, will give additional dignity and stability to his fame and to his works, which can only perish with the language which they adorn.

It never was the opinion of the editor that the remains, or the fragments, of departed genius should be gathered up in such a manner as that nothing should be lost. The splendour of many an illustrious name has been obscured, and the reputation of established excellence has been lessened by the indiscriminate and unthinking, though amiable, zeal of posthumous kindness. When indeed, with an unequalled and an unaffected modesty, Virgil directed his unfinished Æneid to be consigned to oblivion and to the flames, all mankind at that period (and it is still the

united voice of every succeeding age and nation) joined in that impassioned remonstrance, which a fond credulity has ascribed to the pen of Augustus;

> Supremis potuit vox improba verbis
> Tam dirum mandare nefas? ergo ibit in ignes,
> Magnaque doctiloqui morietur Musa Maronis?

That universal voice and that remonstrance were heard with the desired effect, and the laurel on the tomb of Maro quickened into everlasting verdure.

In our own country, who is there, that loves the language of the heart and simplicity of diction, who has not felt an unavailing regret that the familiar letters of Cowley were kept from the world, by the timid caution of misjudging friendship? His Essays and Discourses in prose loudly declare what we have lost. Such examples

indeed are rare. Surely, whatever writings can in any manner sustain or amplify the character of great departed writers either as men of virtue, or of ability, or of learning, in their specifick or in their varied modes of excellence, may be offered to the world with propriety and with mutual advantage. The selections which are now presented to the reader, in the judgment of the editor, not only sustain but amplify the character and the fame of Mr. Gray; and therefore he consented to the labour of the selection and of the publication.

These manuscript volumes were the deliberate, solemn, and final bequest of Mr. Gray to his accomplished and learned friend, Mr. Mason, "to preserve or to destroy at his own discretion." Perhaps in Mr. Gray's discerning mind there might have been a secret consciousness of the value and of the

consequence of the donation; and he might have remembered what Dryden once expressed of a celebrated character;

" E'en they, whose Muses have the highest flown,
Add not to his immortal memory,
But do an act of friendship to their own."

In this instance, however, the author of *Caractacus* was happily destined, by his talents and by his affection, to unite them both.

A few years after Mr. Gray's decease, Mr. Mason gratified an anxious publick with his letters, and with such original compositions as he deemed most appropriated to the plan which he laid down for the volume which he printed. With these he contented himself; but he preserved the volumes of the original manuscripts, and bequeathed them to Mr. Gray's intimate and highly respected friend, Mr. Stonhewer, who afterwards left them by will to the

Master and Fellows of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge. When they came into the possession of Mr. Stonhewer, the present editor repeatedly hinted to that gentleman the propriety of making a selection of them for publication; and, had a longer life been granted to Mr. Stonhewer, it is not very improbable that he might have acceded to the proposal. After having presented to the world the private letters of Mr. Gray to his intimate friends, (and who is there who has not approved Mr. Mason's determination, and admired the volume?) surely, whatever related merely to criticism, to philosophy, or to general literature, might be communicated without the least breach of that *delicacy of friendship*, the discussion of which once so much amused the leisure, and piqued the curiosity, of the learned world. The present editor, indeed, very often reminded Mr. Stonhewer of the necessity,

as well as of the propriety, of such an undertaking by some person who felt an unfeigned veneration for the great name of their author. He added, (for he then thought that it was Mr. S.'s intention to bequeath them, not to Mr. Gray's own College, but to a very publick repository in the metropolis) that it should be done before the papers were left accessible to every eye, and open to every prying copyist. He feared, that such valuable manuscripts might be garbled, or mutilated, or *de*tailed, or *re*tailed in separate uninteresting scraps, in ephemeral or monthly publications, with an eager inconsiderate haste, to no other purpose but that of indulging an idle and fruitless inquisitiveness. He wished not for partial, transitory, interrupted glances upon such writings, but for their full effect. He wished indeed, that *the whole* of Mr. Gray's works, all which had been already communicated,

and those compositions which remained unknown but to the few, might appear TOGETHER in a manner worthy of their illustrious author and of his country; that they might form one dignified portraiture and representation of his genius and of his erudition; and which, as from the junction or apposition of so many bright and superiour luminaries, might present to the eye of the mind their collected, steady, and united splendour. The present editor thought that, in this manner, kindness to the remains, and honour to the memory, of Mr. Gray, would be best shewn, by so worthy a discharge of the noble confidence which he had reposed in the discretion of his respected friends.

On the mention of the remains and of *the memory of Mr. Gray*, if a short apostrophe may be heard and forgiven, it is hoped that indulgence may be shewn to that which follows:

Lord of the various lyre! devout we turn
Our pilgrim steps to thy supreme abode,
And tread with awe the solitary road
To deck with votive wreaths thy hallowed urn!
Yet, as we wander through this dark sojourn,
No more the notes we hear that all abroad
Thy fancy wafted, as the inspiring God
Prompted the *thoughts that breathe,* the *words that burn.*
But hark: a voice, in solemn accents clear,
Bursts from heaven's vault that glows with temperate fire;
"Cease, mortal, cease to drop the fruitless tear,
Mute though the raptures of his full-strung lyre:
E'en his own warblings, *lessened on his ear,*
Lost in seraphick harmony expire."

But to return.—In whatever manner Mr. Mason judged most proper to dispose of the manuscripts, he was at full liberty to adopt it; and either to select and to publish a portion of them, or to withhold them altogether; and gratitude is due to him for what he gave to the world. It is, however, a matter of some surprise, that Mr. Mason restricted

himself in limits so circumscribed, when the whole was before him, and when many a composition seemed, as it were, eagerly to demand an admission;

Non *sola hæc carmina* suasit
Delius, aut *solis* jussit requiescere Apollo;
Quærendæ *nobis* sedes: ne linque laborem.

But when at last, by a most appropriate and happy destiny, the writings of Mr. Gray were re-conducted to the spot which gave them birth; to those very groves where the poet describes his Camus as lingering with delight; where Science had so eminently marked him for her own; where he had sojourned so long with freedom by his side (so he assures us), and wrapped in the arms of that quiet, which a kindred poet*

* Cowley. See his beautiful paraphrase of Seneca's

"Stet quicunque volet potens
Aulæ culmine lubrico,
Me dulcis saturet quies! &c. &c.

indeed declares to be "the companion of obscurity," but which is the best possession of poets and of philosophers; (for never yet was poet or philosopher worthy of the name, who felt not at his heart the power of those words, "*me dulcis* SATURET *quies!*")—when, as it may be expressed, the literary remains of Mr. Gray arrived within the *precincts* where they would be, their wonted fires might be expected again to live in them, and their light might be relumined under the influence of their own sun and of their own constellations;

Atque iterum solemque suum, sua sidera, noscant.

Language and allusions of this kind may perhaps be allowed on so favourite a theme: and in this place the editor cannot but acknowledge with pleasure the ready and flattering willingness with which the learned and reverend Joseph Turner, D. D. Dean of Norwich, the

Master, and the Fellows, of Pembroke Hall in Cambridge, consigned the manuscripts to his *sole* care and discretion, to select or to withhold whatever he judged most proper. The editor hopes that he has performed that office under the guidance of a regulated zeal, and of an affectionate reverence for the memory of their great author: though unhappily for himself, he cannot even say, "Virgilium vidi."

The volumes which contain the manuscripts are three in number, in small folio: they form, what is strictly called *a common-place book*, and of course the heads of the articles have no connexion with each other from the manner of their being disposed, but are taken ad libitum. Whatever parts Mr. Mason selected, he has marked them in the respective volumes, as having been published in his Memoirs of the life of Gray.

When they came into the hands of the present editor, he deemed it proper to form some arrangement of them as to the subjects, and to place them in such a manner as was best adapted to produce the effect which he wished, and to exhibit the various, accurate, and profound erudition of their author. He conceived that the best mode would be to divide them into Sections, admitting only those compositions, remarks, or fragments, which were original; as there are many articles which are only compilations from different authors, or abridgments from works of eminence or of curiosity, which, though drawn up with great ability, can never be styled, or considered, as part of an author's works. He thought that the best method would be the following one. 1. To select all the disquisitions or remarks relating to the earlier English poetry, which were composed at the time when Mr. Gray

conceived the idea of writing its history, in conjunction with Mr. Mason. 2. To choose a few poetical translations of great merit (as unfortunately no original unpublished poetry was to be found among the MSS.), with some curious miscellaneous articles on subjects of antiquity and of classical learning; to which he thought it proper to add some notes on Aristophanes, from a separate MS. presented to him by Mr. Stonhewer. 3. The remarks on the geography of some parts of India and of Persia claimed a minute attention, and formed of themselves an entire section, worthy of every commendation which a felicity of inquiry with extensive, varied, and learned researches, aided by sagacity of conjecture, and by apposite illustrations from authors ancient and modern, can demand. And, 4. Mr. Gray's account of most of the Dialogues and Epistles of Plato, with his notes upon them.

By this arrangement and disposition, it is easy, without blending one subject with another, to consider all that has been selected; which, with Mr. Gray's poems, letters, compositions, occasional observations and fragments, given before to the world by Mr. Mason, form together the complete picture of his mighty mind, and of the stores of erudition with which it was enriched and adorned. As an appendix, the editor was happy to be enabled to present a specimen of Mr. Gray's Illustrations of the "Systema Naturæ" of Linnæus, from the original interleaved edition in his own handwriting, and which by many persons will be considered as of no common merit and curiosity. They may possibly excite a wish for more ample communications of the contents of those volumes; but in this respect the editor thinks that he has offered all which

could be required of him as a specimen:

Cætera jam extremo prudens sub fine laborum
Præterit, atque aliis post se memoranda relinquit.

With regard to the disquisitions on the rhyme and metre of our earlier poetry, it should always be recollected, that Mr. Gray's investigations and deep researches were made and committed to writing long antecedent to the learned, ingenious, and interesting publications of Dr. Percy, Mr. Warton, Mr. Tyrwhitt, and of other criticks of eminence on the same subjects.

It is conceived, that Mr. Gray's very finished versification of the passages from the Latin and Italian poets, at a very early period of his life, may be now read with delight and with advantage. Mr. Gray's consummate taste and unerring judgment directed him (as they *must* direct all who wish to excel) to the great

master of the original native strength of the English language, and to the fountain of harmonious expression, Dryden. It was indeed under those mighty masters, Spenser and Dryden, that Mr. Gray was enabled to produce and to perfect his own unequalled compositions, and by them (to use language worthy of the subject) he became

Mirè opifex numeris veterum primordia vocum
Atque marem strepitum fidis intendisse *Britannæ*.

As to Mr. Gray's geographical disquisitions, particularly with respect to that part of Asia which comprehends India and Persia, (concerning the ancient and modern names of which extensive countries his notes are very copious) Mr. Mason has observed, that "he had been told that, early in life, Mr. Gray had an intention of publishing an edition of STRABO." From the inspection of his papers the present editor must confess that he cannot discover

any such intention; for Mr. Gray's application to the authors who have treated on these subjects was so varied, so curious, and so extensive, that the invaluable and original work of Strabo seems only to have been a single object, though a principal one, among the number.

The diligence, the accuracy, the unwearied researches, the diversified illustrations from every writer who was *then* known, and Mr. Gray's own happy conjectures, when their assistance failed him, or when the text of their works was incorrect, must be as surprising as they must be gratifying to persons who are interested (and what scholar will not be interested?) in disquisitions or notes on topicks like these. It might be thought indeed that the whole attention of his life had been directed to this department of literature. There is one consideration, however, peculiarly wor-

thy of notice. Above fifty years have passed since these observations were written, when the countries of India or of Persia had few peculiar national attractions, from their relation to Great Britain. They were indeed composed at a time, when the classical distinctions of Indian geography were only sought for on the disinterested principles of liberal investigation, not on those of policy, nor of the regulation of trade, nor of the extension of empire, nor of permanent establishments, but simply and solely on the grand view of *what is*, and of what is past. They were the researches of a solitary scholar in academical retirement, probably without any assistance (for from whom could *he* receive it?) but that of books. The Latin dissertations of the very learned Dodwell, at the close of the last century, had perhaps been regarded only

by the few; and it remained for those consummate geographers, so highly deserving of their own country, Major James Rennell and the Rev. Dr. Vincent, Dean of Westminster, to present to the classical and to the political reader, at a period when India and Persia were more than ever interesting and important to us, their valuable, solid, and satisfactory illustrations of the subjects before us. Even to those persons, who are *now* well acquainted with the labours of Major Rennell and of Dr. Vincent, it may neither be unpleasing nor uninstructive to peruse the pages, which the editor has selected, as a specimen of the curious felicity which Mr. Gray exerted to digest, to compare, and to combine the information of antiquity with the extended knowledge of modern times.

Mr. Gray translated a considerable

portion of the Periplûs* of Arrian, the whole of which was afterwards translated by Dr. Vincent; and it would be pleasing to compare the translation and the notes of two great scholars, engaged on the same subject at different times, and without even the possibility of communication. Mr. Gray surely would have been gratified, could he have witnessed the co-operation of two such consummate geographers, as Major James Rennell and the Rev. Dr. Vincent, in the same oriental investigations, with the aid and furtherance of valuable and interesting conferences, and with many peculiar and local advantages, of which THE BARD could not avail himself in his solitary retirement within the precincts of an university,

Scripsit ubi tacitus, contentusque auspice Musâ.

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* See Gray's Works, vol. ii. p. 194, &c. 4to. edit. 1814.

These researches of Mr. Gray should be considered simply in a classical point of view, as a part only of that unmeasured erudition, and of that intense study which, like Milton, (with whose learning alone it is no injury to compare that of Mr. Gray) "he might take to be his portion in this life." Mr. Gray, indeed, while he was composing them, might have adapted to himself the sentiments and the expressions of that poet, who (whenever his subject would allow him) gave to geography the simplicity, the harmony, and the dignity of the Homerick diction, and which the learned reader will recollect with pleasure:

Ῥεια δε τοι και τηνδε καταγραψαιμι θαλασσαν,
Ου μεν ιδων απανευθε πορης, ου νηϊ περησας·
Ου γαρ μοι βιος εστι μελαιναων επι νηων,
Ουδε μοι εμποριη πατρωϊος, ηδ' επι Γαγγην
Ερχομαι δια τε πολλοι Ερυθραιϛ δια ποντϛ,
Ψυχης ϰη αλεγοντες, ἱν' ασπετον ολβον ἑλωνται·

Αλλα με Μϋσαων φορεει νοος ἁι τε δυνανται,
Νοσφιν αλημοσυνης, πολλην ἁλα μετρησασθαι,
Ουρεα τ᾽, ηπειροντε, και αιθεριην ὁδον αστρων.*

When the editor first heard that the works of Plato had been the subject of Mr. Gray's serious and critical attention, and that he had illustrated them by an analysis and by ample annotations, his curiosity was raised to no ordinary height. When the names of Plato and of Gray, of the philosopher and of the poet, were *thus* united, it was difficult to set bounds to his, or indeed to any, expectation. But when the volume, containing these important remarks, was *first* delivered into his hands, his sensation at the time reminded him of that which was experienced by an eminent scholar, at his discovery of the darker and more sublime hymns which antiquity has ascribed

* Dionysii Perieges: v. 707. p. 63. Edit. Oxon. 1697.

to Orpheus. His words on that occasion are as pleasing and as interesting, as the enthusiasm was noble which inspired them: "*In abyssum quendam mysteriorum venerandæ antiquitatis descendere videbar, quum silente mundo, solis vigilantibus astris et lunâ,* μελανηφατας *istos hymnos in manus sumpsi.*"* Many a learned man will acknowledge, as his own, the feelings of this animated scholar.

It might indeed be conceived that, from intense contemplation on the subjects offered to him by Plato, so full of dignity and so pregnant with the materials of thought, Mr. Gray might have indulged himself in a continuation of the discussions, by expanding still wider the exalted and diversified ideas of his sublime original. He had a

* See the Preface of Eschenbachius to the Argonauticks, the Hymns, &c. of Orpheus. Edit. 1689.

spirit equal and adapted to such an exertion, and congenial with that of the philosopher; but it seems as if he had, on purpose, restrained his own powers and tempered their ardour. What he chiefly sought and aimed at, and what he effected, was to exhibit the sobriety of truth, the importance of the doctrines, and the great practical effects of true philosophy on life, on manners, and on policy;

Ψυχης ομμα φαεινον ὑπερ βιοτοιο τιταινων.

He never for a moment deviated from his original; as he was desirous only to lay before himself and his reader the sum and substance of the Dialogues as they are, when divested of the peculiar attractions which so powerfully recommend these conversations on the banks of the Ilyssus. As a scholar, and as a reflecting man, he sat down to give an account to himself of what he had read and studied; and he gave it: and it was

delivered in words of his own, without addition, without amplification, and without the admixture of any ideas with those of Plato. He made large and valuable remarks and annotations, drawn from the stores of his own unbounded erudition, with a felicity and with an elegance which never lost sight of utility and of solid information, without the display of reading, or the incumbrance of pedantick research. He never pretended to have consulted manuscripts, but, whenever he thought that an alteration of the text was necessary, or when a passage appeared to him to be obscure or corrupted, he proposed his own conjectural emendation. Yet it is pleasing to know, that Mr. Gray neither despised, nor depreciated, the advantages which may be derived from minuter and more subtle verbal criticism, and from the rectifying, or from the restoration, of the text of any author

by that steady light which shone full on Bentley, and which, in after times, descended upon Porson. What he proposed to himself, that he effected; and through the whole of these writings there is such a perspicuity of expression, an eloquence so temperate, a philosophick energy so calm and unaffected, and the train of the specifick arguments in each composition is presented so entire and unbroken, that his spirit may be said to shine through them; and, in this point of view, the words of Alcinous to Ulysses have a peculiar force, when applied to Mr. Gray:

> Σοι ενι μεν μορφη επεων, ενι δε φρενες εσθλαι,
> Μυθον δ', ὡς ὁ τ' αοιδος, επισταμενως κατελεξας.*

His illustrations from antiquity and from history are as accurate as they

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* Odyss. L. II. v. 366.

are various and extensive. When, for instance, we peruse many of his notes drawn from those sources, we have often, as it were, the memoirs of the time and the politicks of Syracuse; and scarcely could a modern writer feel himself more at home in the reign of Charles the Second, than Mr. Gray in the court of Dionysius. Or, if we turn to subjects of a different nature, where shall we find a nobler specimen of judicious analysis, and of manly, eloquent, interesting, and animated composition, than in his account of the *Protagoras?* But it would be useless, or invidious, to specify particulars where all is excellent. It is a proud consideration for Englishmen, that Mr. Gray composed all his remarks in his own native tongue, and with words of power *unsphered the spirit of Plato.*

In an age like this, it would be superfluous to speak of the merits and of the

character of the great philosopher, who has found *such* a commentator. We all know, that when Cicero looked for the master and for the example of eloquence and of finished composition, he found that master and that example in Plato; and all succeeding times have confirmed his judgment.

Plato has certainly ever been, and ever will be, the favourite philosopher of great orators and of great poets. He was himself familiar with the father of all poetry. The language of Plato, his spirit, his animated reasoning, his copiousness, his invention, the rhythm and the cadence of his prose, the hallowed dignity and the amplitude of his conceptions, and that splendour of imagination with which he illuminated every subject of science, and threw into the gloom of futurity the rays of hope and the expectations of a better life, have always endeared and recommended him to the

good and to the wise of every age and of every nation. From the legitimate study of *his* works, from that liberal delight which they afford, and from the expanded views which they present, surely it cannot be apprehended that any reader should be "spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit." Far otherwise: the mind, when rightly instituted, may *hence* be taught and led to reverence and to feel, with a grateful and a deep humility, the necessity and the blessings of THAT REVELATION, in which TRUTH, without any mixture of errour, can alone be found, and in which "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge."

Mr. Mason has made several observations on Mr. Gray's attention to the subjects of natural history. The specimens which the editor has selected of his illustrations of the "Systema Naturæ" of Linnæus, will be considered

as valuable as they are curious, by every enlightened votary of the illustrious Swede: they are all composed in the Latin language.

If any person should hereafter peruse this interleaved edition of the Systema Naturæ, and regard it with the eye, with the mind, and with the skill of a naturalist, it would probably excite in him a wish that the whole of these remarks* should be printed.

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* Mr. Gray, in one of the volumes of his miscellaneous MSS. in which he had begun to translate into English a few parts of Linnæus, makes the following observation on the language of his "Systema Naturæ." "As the ideas and arrangement of Linnæus's system are entirely new, and as he chose to write in the Latin tongue, (being the most universal), he was obliged to give names taken from that language to his Classes and their subdivisions, but in a sense often very different from their ancient meaning. Thus the terms, *Fera, Bellua, Brutum,* and *Bestia,* were of old applied to one and the same thing, but are *here* applied to four quite distinct ideas;

In aid of his admirable descriptions, Mr. Gray has often in these volumes delineated (*with his pen*) the forms of various birds and insects, with a minute elegance and with all the accuracy of a professed artist. If Tacitus, in his incomparable tract on Germany, had indulged himself in describing the subjects of natural history, we might almost have supposed that some new passages had been fortunately discovered, and might now be restored to their place in that composition. In the style and in the latinity, Mr. Gray has rather emulated than imitated the luminous brevity of that distinguished historian. When, for instance, Tacitus, describing a particular nation, says of them, "Victui herba, vestitui pelles, cubili humus; sola in sagittis spes, quas, inopiâ ferri,

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and, to understand them, we must retain the annexed characteristicks, which form a definition of them."

ossibus asperant: &c." and when he proceeds in this mode and style, it is pleasing and curious to compare *the manner* in which (the subject being changed) Mr. Gray, with the united powers of a poet, of a naturalist, and of a finished scholar, has described the properties and the characters of different animals.

So various, so interesting, so judicious, so animated, and so curiously happy was Mr. Gray, in whatever subject he undertook to describe, to detail, or to recommend, that we may justly adapt to him the emphatick words of the Roman critick: "Brevitate mirabilis, lætus et pressus, jucundus et gravis, nec poeticâ modò sed oratoriâ virtute insignis, nemo illum in magnis sublimitate, in parvis proprietate superavit."

The general tenour of Mr. Gray's life, and of his occupations, is best col-

lected from his own letters, and from the connecting narrative by Mr. Mason; nor is there any very material information to be obtained in addition to it. There are, however, a few not unpleasing recollections, which were communicated to the present editor by his intimate friend, the Rev. Norton Nicholls, of which some notice may be taken.

The predominant bias of Mr. Gray's mind was a strong attachment to virtue, to "the exercise of right reason," as he used frequently to call it in the words of Plato: and if any person were mentioned to him as a man of ability, of genius, or of science, he always inquired, "Is he good for any thing?" No admiration of genius, no deference to learning could subdue, or even soften, his aversion to the vicious, to the profligate, and to the unprincipled. The great object of his detestation was Voltaire: he said almost prophetically,

(considering *the time* when he said it) that no one could even conjecture the extent of *the publick mischief* (that was his term) which Voltaire would occasion. His aversion to him indeed was constant and unmitigated, yet the pleasantry and wit of some of his writings amused him; and he seemed to agree in opinion with the late Dr. Robertson* on the Essay on Universal History, as the refusal of Voltaire to subjoin the authorities for his facts, to which he was fully competent, and of which he was well informed, was and continues to be the real cause of the neglect of that singular work. His tragedies Mr. Gray esteemed next in rank to those of Shakspeare, and he often said, that his literary fame would have been higher if he had never published any other compositions.

* See Robertson's Introduction to his History of Charles the Fifth, at the end, Vol. I. p. 472. ed. 8vo. 1772.

He once made it his particular request to a friend of his, who was going to the continent, that he would not pay a visit to Voltaire; and when his friend replied, "What can a visit from a person like me to him signify?" he rejoined with peculiar earnestness, "Sir, every *tribute* to *such* a man signifies." It is to be wished, that all reflecting minds would consider the spirit, the virtue, and the love of mankind, which dictated this answer by Mr. Gray; and that they would not only consider, but apply it with judgment on proper occasions; for it is interesting in its consequences to society and to government. Such was Mr. Gray's opinion, and such was his salutary apprehension of Voltaire's power or influence under any semblance, whether of determined hostility, or of simulated friendship, or of pacifick deportment;

Seu torvam assumat faciem et furialia membra,
Seu frontem obscœnam rugis aret, induat albos
Seu vittâ crines et ramum innectat olivæ;

and in all and under every form he regarded him as an object to be personally avoided upon publick principles. It would indeed seem, as if the Alecto of the poet were present to the mind of Mr. Gray, whenever he contemplated the *mischief* to be apprehended; for he knew that Voltaire could in a moment fling aside the weeds of peace, and that war and death were in his hand. Let the wounds and the desolation of France and of Europe speak the rest. The influence of bad examples is indeed more fatal than that of crimes; and it should never be forgotten, that more empires have perished from a contempt or from a neglect of religion, and from a continued systematick violation of morality, than from any violation of the civil laws.

Mr. Gray had a similar aversion to Mr. Hume, and for the same reasons: nor could he ever be reconciled to any deliberate enemy of religion; as he always asserted that, added to other publick considerations, such men, whether in writing or in libertine conversation, took away the best consolation of man, without even pretending to substitute any consideration of value in its place.

It has been expressed, without due reflection, that Mr. Gray "had a contempt or a disdain of his inferiours in science." He despised none but pretenders to science, or those who abused their knowledge or their talents. To the few who sought him he was mild, affable, and communicative; and on any subject, on which he was consulted, would throw even a prodigality of light and of information. He had, indeed, a certain dignity of deportment, and he was a man so well bred, that if he ever

felt contempt or bitterness rising in his breast, you might be sure his equal had awaked them.

Some little misunderstanding having taken place between a common friend of Mr. Gray and of Mr. Nicholls and a third person, Mr. Gray (in a private letter to Mr. Nicholls on the subject of it now in the possession of the editor) made some remarks which are worthy of remembrance, as they are an honour to the affections of his heart, to the delicacy of his feeling, and to the acuteness of his penetration. "Remind him," (says Mr. Gray to Mr. Nicholls) "Remind him *eloquently* (that is, from your heart, and in such expressions as that will furnish) how many idle suspicions a sensible mind, naturally disposed to melancholy and depressed by misfortunes, is capable of entertaining, especially if it meets with but a shadow of neglect, or of contempt, from the very

(perhaps the only) person, in whose kindness it had taken refuge. Remind him of his former goodness, frankly and generously shewn to ——, and beg him not to destroy the natural effects of it by any appearance of pique or of resentment; for that even the fancies and the chimæras of a worthy heart deserve a little management, and even respect. Assure him, as I believe you safely may, that a few kind words, the slightest testimony of his esteem, will brush away all ———'s suspicions and gloomy thoughts, and that, after this, there will need no constraint on his own behaviour, no not so much as in the most trifling matter; for when one is secure of a person's *intentions*, all the rest passes for nothing." Observations like these might have a most beneficial and extensive influence, if they were carried into private life, with Mr. Gray's benevolent, affecting, and gentleman-like spirit.

Mr. Nicholls once asked Mr. Gray if he recollected, when he first felt in himself the strong predilection to poetry, and he replied, "I believe it was when I began at Eton to read Virgil for my own amusement, and not in school hours as a task."

The author of the Fairy Queen was one of his most favourite poets; and it is a notice worthy of all acceptation among the higher votaries of the divine art, when they are assured, that Mr. Gray never sate down to compose any poetry without previously, and for a considerable time, reading the verses of Spenser.

Dryden was so high an object of his admiration, that he could not very patiently hear his works criticised. Absalom and Achitophel, and Theodore and Honoria stood in the first rank of poems in his estimation, and he admired his plays as poetry, though not as dramatick compositions: and he thought

the prose of Dryden almost equal to his poetry.

Far above all poets, of all ages and of all countries, he placed Shakspeare. He said, that the justest idea even of the historical characters which he exhibited might be taken from his plays. He shewed Mr. Nicholls a manuscript, which he had copied from the original in the British Museum, containing the Report of the Commissioners appointed and sent by king Henry the eighth to endeavour to prevail with queen Katharine to lay aside the title of Queen, and to assume that of Princess of Wales; which agrees not only with the sentiments, but sometimes with the very words, of Shakspeare in his play of Henry the Eighth.

He loved the poetry of Pope, and he peculiarly admired his art of condensing thoughts, as it fixed them in the mind. Of his letters he observed, that

they were not good letters, but better things. His translation of Homer's Iliad he esteemed highly, and when he heard it criticised as wanting the simplicity of the original, and as not giving a just idea of Homer's style and manner, and other similar objections made to the work, he always said, that, however just some of those observations might be, there would never be another translation of the Iliad equal to it.

Speaking of Dr. Middleton's style, the elegance of which he admired, he mentioned it as a matter of consideration, whether style in one language can be acquired by being conversant with authors of a polished style in another language; as whether, for example, Dr. Middleton could have acquired his flowing diction from the great attention which he paid to the writings of Cicero. It may here be noticed, that Mr. Gray considered many of the sermons of

bishop Sherlock as specimens of pulpit eloquence never exceeded.

Lord Clarendon was, in his estimation, the first of our historians, and indeed of almost all modern historians. Of the History of Florence by Machiavelli he always said (and surely with truth), that it was written with the simplicity of a Greek history. He considered Rapin's as the only valuable general History of England; and he hinted, that if an abler writer, with a brilliant and animated style, were to consult his copious and excellent marginal references, and would have recourse to the original and contemporary authors, and to the memoirs and state papers, and to all the curious documents so well pointed out by Rapin, a General History of England might be planned and composed, worthy of the subject and of the national attention.

The poem called The Spleen, written by Matthew Green, attracted his notice;

he admired the originality of the thoughts and of the expression, the propriety of the allusions, and the sprightliness of the wit. He was pleased with the sermons of Sterne, whose principal merit, as he thought, consisted in his pathetick powers, in which he never failed, though he was very often unsuccessful in his attempts at humour.

Among modern poets he thought most favourably of Goldsmith. Mr. Nicholls was with him one summer at Malvern, when he received the Deserted Village, which Mr. Gray desired him to read aloud; he listened to it with fixed attention from the beginning to the end, and then exclaimed, "That man is a poet."

One day Mr. Nicholls calling at his apartments, found him absorbed in reading a newspaper with particular earnestness; and as soon as he was seated, Mr. Gray said to him, in an animated

tone, "Take this: here is such writing as I never before saw in a newspaper." This was the *very first* letter which appeared under the signature of *Junius*.

In offering information of this nature, it cannot be expected that the present editor should observe any particular method in communicating it; but he hopes that it will be kindly received in the form of recollections, living as they rise, either in his memory or from writing, and expressed in a manner which he considers as best adapted to the end which he proposes, from their interest or from their variety.

Mr. Nicholls being once in company with the illustrious author of the Analysis of Ancient Mythology, asked his opinion of Mr. Gray's scholarship when at Eton school. Mr. Bryant said in answer, "Gray was an excellent scholar; I was next boy to him in the school; and at this minute I happen to recollect

a line of one of his school exercises, which, if you please, I will repeat, as the expressions are happy; it is on the subject of the freezing and thawing of words in the Spectator:

"Pluviæque loquaces
Descendêre jugis, et garrulus ingruit imber."

One fine morning in the spring, Mr. Nicholls was walking in the neighbourhood of Cambridge with Mr. Gray, who feeling the influence of the season, and cheered with the melody of birds on every bough, turned round to his friend, and expressed himself extempore in these beautiful lines:

"There pipes the wood-lark, and the song-thrush there
Scatters his loose notes in the waste of air."

These verses may remind us of an exquisite stanza, which it is singular that he *omitted* in his *Elegy*, as, to the ac-

count of his morning-walk and of his noontide repose, it completed that of the whole day, by adding his evening saunter:

" Him have we seen the greenwood side along,
As homeward oft he hied, his labour done,
What time the woodlark piped her farewell song,
With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun."

It is impossible, in this and in the preceding stanzas, not to hear the stream of Dorick harmony flowing through the lines:

Ἱερὸν ὕδωρ
Νυμφᾶν ἐξ ἀντροιο κατειβομενον κελαρυζει.

Among the writers of his time Mr. Gray was particularly struck with Rousseau. His Emile, as a system of education, he regarded as ridiculous and impracticable, and always said, that, before it could be adopted, men must begin by creating a new world. But then, (how could it be otherwise?)

what Shakspeare terms, "the flashes and outbreaks of a fiery mind," the glowing eloquence, and the wild originality of thought, so often and so vigorously displayed in that singular work, attracted and arrested his attention as a man of genius. His opinion of Rousseau's Nouvelle Eloise he has himself expressed and given in one of his letters. He thought the story ill-composed, the incidents improbable, the characters unnatural and vicious, and the tendency of it immoral and mischievous; which latter defect, in his mind, nothing could redeem. Very different indeed was his judgment of the Clarissa of Richardson. He said, that he knew no instance of a story so well told; and he spoke with high commendation of the strictly dramatick propriety and consistency of the characters, perfectly preserved and supported from the beginning to the end, in all situa-

tions and circumstances, in every word, and action, and look. In the delineation of Lovelace alone he thought that the author had failed; for, as he had not lived among persons of that rank, it was not possible for him to give, from the life, the portrait of a profligate man of fashion. Mr. Gray was much pleased with an answer which Dr. Samuel Johnson once gave to a person on the different and comparative merits of Fielding and of Richardson: "Why, sir, Fielding could tell you what o'clock it was; but, as for Richardson, he could make a clock, or a watch."

Mr. Gray always considered, that the Encyclopædias and *universal* Dictionaries of various kinds, with which the world now abounds so much, afforded a very unfavourable symptom of the age in regard to its literature; as no real or profound learning can be obtained but at the fountain-head. Dictionaries like

these, as he thought, only served to supply a fund for the vanity or for the affectation of general knowledge, or for the demands of company and of conversation; to satisfy which, he said, such dictionaries were fully competent.

Speaking of a modern writer, whose poetry was sometimes too languid, Mr. Gray said, it was not a matter of wonder, for he never gave himself time to think; but he imagined that he should succeed best by writing hastily in the first fervour of his imagination: and therefore he never waited for epithets, if they did not occur at the time readily, but left spaces for them and put them in afterwards. This enervated his poetry, and will do so universally, if that method is adopted; for nothing is done so well as at the first concoction: and he added, "We think in words: poetry consists in *expression*, if that term be properly understood."

When Mr. Nicholls once asked Mr. Gray, why he never finished that incomparable Fragment on "The Alliance between good Government and good Education, in order to produce the happiness of mankind," he said, *he could not;* and then explained himself in words of this kind, or to this effect: "I have been used to write chiefly lyrick poetry, in which, the poems being short, I have accustomed myself to polish every part of them with care; and as this has become a habit, I can scarcely write in any other manner: the labour of this in a *long* poem would hardly be tolerable; and, if accomplished, it might possibly be deficient in effect, by wanting the chiaro-oscuro." Whether Mr. Gray's admirers will acquiesce in that opinion, may admit of a doubt; for a greater desideratum in poetry, in literature, and in political philosophy cannot be named. It was however one of Mr.

Gray's opinions, that in a *long* poem, in order to produce effect, it was even necessary to have weak parts, and he instanced in Homer, and particularly in Milton, who (he said) now and then, at intervals, rolls on in sounding words, which perhaps have little meaning. But it must here be considered, that Mr. Gray is speaking of Homer and of Milton, and of poets of the *highest* ranks.

The editor is inclined in this place to insert the very appropriate and well expressed eulogy on the cenotaph of Mr. Gray in Westminster Abbey, written by Mr. Mason:

"No more the Grecian Muse unrivalled reigns;
To Britain let the nations homage pay:
She felt a Homer's fire in Milton's strains,
A Pindar's rapture in the lyre of Gray."

When the late Duke of Grafton was elected Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, it is known that Mr. Gray,

from an impulse of what he looked on as a species of duty, spontaneously offered to write the Ode for his Grace's Installation. He considered it nevertheless as a sort of task, as a set composition; and a considerable time passed before he could prevail upon himself, or rather before he actually felt the power, to begin it. But one morning after breakfast, Mr. Nicholls called on him, and knocking at his chamber door, Mr. Gray got up hastily, and threw it open himself, and running up to him, in a hurried voice and tone, exclaimed, "Hence, avaunt; 'tis holy ground!"—Mr. Nicholls was so astonished, that he thought his senses were deranged; but Mr. Gray in a moment after resumed his usual pleasant manner, and repeating several verses at the beginning of that inimitable composition, said,—"Well: I have begun the Ode, and now I shall finish it." It would seem,

by this interesting anecdote, that the genius of Gray sometimes resembled the armed apparition in Shakspear's master-tragedy; "He would not be commanded."

Mr. Gray often amused himself in making compilations from works of eminence in different departments of literature, from travels, from antiquities, and, in general, from all subjects which are covered by the indefinite, yet not inexpressive, term of *Belles Lettres*. He has left short but curious notices of all the cathedrals* of England, with his ac-

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* It may not be displeasing to present the reader with a part of the result of these notices.

"THE SEVERAL PARTS OF THE CATHEDRALS RANGED ACCORDING TO THE TIME IN WHICH THEY WERE BUILT.

The latter half of the *Eleventh* Century.

Exeter: the Lady Chapel. Wells: the east end of the nave. Chester: the north transept and the chapter house. Durham: the nave and choir.

customed ability and interesting manner. The materials he collected from

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Carlisle: the nave and transept. Hereford: the east end and the upper nave. Worcester: the greatest part of the church. Gloucester: the old chapter-house, the east nave, part of the choir, and long workhouse. Winchester: the transept and choir. Norwich: the nave.

The first half of the *Twelfth* Century.

Christ Church, Oxford. Durham: the west part of the nave, and the chapter-house. Lichfield: the nave and choir. Hereford: the west end of the nave. Wells: part of the palace and the Lady chapel. Exeter: the choir. Landaff: the church and the palace. Lincoln: the nave.

The latter half of the *Twelfth* Century.

Ely: the nave, transept, and front tower up to the battlements. Peterborough: the choir, transept, and nave. Durham: the galilee. Chichester: the church and palace. Canterbury: the choir and undercroft. St. David's: the church. Lincoln: the east part, chapter-house, and palace.

The first half of the *Thirteenth* Century.

Ely: the galilee. York: the south transept. Durham: the vaulting. Hereford: the west front and tower. Wells: the choir, transept, and nave.

various sources, but chiefly from Bishop Godwin and Browne Willis: he consulted also Leland, Somner, Wren's Parentalia, Lowth's Life of Wykeham, and other writers. He composed with great care a description of all the monuments* of the royal family of England,

Salisbury: the east end, choir, and transept. Winchester: the tower. Rochester: the choir. Canterbury: Trinity chapel and crown. Westminster: St. Edward's chapel, the transept, choir, and its aisles, four east arches of the nave, and part of the cloister.

* THE following is the list of the "Sepulchra Regia," which Mr. Gray described with incidental illustrations and notes:

"THE MONUMENTS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF ENGLAND, WHICH REMAIN UNDESTROYED FROM THE CONQUEST, A. D. 1066, RANGED ACCORDING TO THE TIME IN WHICH THEY WERE ERECTED.

WILLIAM the 1st, A. D. 1066.

1. Richard Duke of Bernay; his epitaph at Winchester.

HENRY the 1st, 1100.

2. William Rufus: ibid.

which remained to the middle of the eighteenth century (and which indeed re-

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3. William, Earl of Flanders.
4. Robert, Duke of Normandy; his figure at Gloucester.

HENRY the 2d, 1154.

5. Gervis, abbot of Westminster: in the Abbey there.

RICHARD the 1st, 1189.

6. Henry the 2d: his figure at Fontevraud.

JOHN, 1199.

7. Richard the 1st: ibid.
8. Queen Eleanor, his mother: ibid.

HENRY the 3d, 1226.

9. King John: at Worcester.
10. William, Earl of Salisbury: at Salisbury.
11. Queen Isabel: at Fontevraud.
12. Avelina, Countess of Lancaster: at Westminster.

EDWARD the 1st, 1272.

13. Henry the 3d: at Westminster.
14. Queen Eleanor of Castille: ibid.
15. Edmund, Earl of Lancaster: ibid.

EDWARD the 2d, 1307.

16. Edward the 1st: at Westminster.

main to this day) undestroyed from the Conquest, A. D. 1066. The subject was,

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EDWARD the 3d, 1326.

16.*Edward the 2d: at Gloucester.
17. John, Earl of Cornwall: at Westminster.
18. Queen Philippa: ibid.
19. William of Windsor and Blanch: ibid.
20. William of Hatfield: at York.
21. Edward, Prince of Wales: at Canterbury.

RICHARD the 2d, 1377.

22. Edward the 3d: at Westminster.

HENRY the 4th, 1399.

22.*Thomas, Duke of Gloucester: at Westminster.
23. Elianor, his duchess: ibid.
24. Edward, Duke of York: Langley.
25. Katharine, Duchess of Lancaster: at Lincoln.

HENRY the 5th, 1412.

26. Richard the 2d, and his queen: at Westminster.

HENRY the 6th, 1422.

27. Henry the 5th: his tomb at Westminster.
28. Elizabeth, Duchess of Exeter: at Burford.
29. Anne, Duchess of Bedford: at Paris.
30. Philippa, Duchess of York: at Westminster.
31. John, Duke of Bedford: at Paris.
32. Henry the 4th and his queen: at Canterbury.

perhaps, never before treated in a separate form: it is compiled chiefly from

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33. Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, and her two husbands: at Canterbury.
34. Joan, Countess of Westmoreland: at Lincoln.
35. John, Duke of Exeter: at St. Katharine's.
36. John, Duke of Somerset and his duchess: at Wimborne-Minster.
37. Cardinal Beaufort: at Winchester.
38. Humphrey Duke of Gloucester: at St. Alban's.

EDWARD the 4th, 1460.

39. Anne, Duchess of Exeter: at Windsor.

RICHARD the 3d, 1483.

40. Edward the 4th: at Windsor.
41. Isabel, Countess of Essex and her lord: at Easton.

HENRY the 7th, 1485.

42. Elizabeth Tudor: at Westminster.
43. Prince Arthur: at Worcester.
44. Henry the 5th: his Chauntry: at Westminster.

HENRY the 8th, 1509.

45. Margaret, Countess of Richmond: at Westminster.
46. Henry the 7th and his queen: ibid.
47. Anne, Lady Roos: at Windsor.

Sandford, with references to Leland and to Montfaucon's Monumens de la Monarchie Française, with some few notes of his own. As these writings cannot properly be considered as original, they could not, to the *regret* of the editor, make a part of the selection from his manuscripts.

Mr. Gray's knowledge and love of the Gothick architecture are well known: he not only felt the superiority of its effect in sacred edifices, but he admired the elegance and the good taste of many

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MARY, 1553.

48. Queen Anne, of Cleves: at Westminster.

ELIZABETH, 1559.

49. Margaret, Countess of Lennox: at Westminster.
50. Frances, Duchess of Suffolk: ibid.

JAMES the 1st, 1603.

51. Mary, Queen of Scots: at Westminster.
52. Queen Elizabeth: ibid.
53. and 54. Lady Mary and Lady Sophia Stuart: ibid."

of its ornaments. He never made the distinction, which it is now not uncommon to hear, between Saxon and *Norman;* nor did he ever make use of the latter term. He said, that he knew no instance of *a pointed arch* before the reign of king John. All round arches, since the age of Roman architecture, he called Saxon, with their zig-zag and other appropriate ornaments, and these he attributed to a period not more recent than the reign of king John. It may be here observed, that he was at first much pleased with Strawberry Hill, but when Mr. Horace Walpole added the gallery with its gilding and glass, he said, that "he had degenerated into finery."

Mr. Gray's notices relating to the cathedrals and royal monuments of England, which have been just mentioned, are pleasing instances of his indefatigable industry, of the variety of his re-

searches, and of his strong attachment to the antiquities of his own country. His attention to subjects of heraldry and of genealogy was very great; and the papers on these topicks are not inconsiderable. They are not merely confined to English subjects, nor even to those of Europe, for he frequently wandered into Asia with the curiosity of a traveller and of an antiquary; and he marked and delineated the genealogies of some of the higher oriental dynasties; in which it is rather surprising that he should have found so many attractions and inducements to such minute and laborious attention.

If we regard the classical amusements of Mr. Gray, we shall find them always marked with the peculiar cast of his genius, and with the same accuracy and propriety with which he illustrated more important subjects. For instance; his continued annotations on the Anthologia Græca, with all the

parallel and apposite passages from different authors which he produced and adapted, with the supplemental collection of Epigrams in his own hand writing which he added to his copy, and with the elegant and finished translations in Latin verse of some of them, (of which a specimen has been* given) evince a diligence and a pleasing variety of reading. These annotations, however, are rarely accompanied by that emendatory criticism which, since his day, has been the favourite, and not inglorious, pursuit of modern scholars of eminence in England. His predilection for the Anthologia Græca was such, that he actually arranged all the epigrams under their different authors, and gave seriatim, the subject of each distinct epigram in English, in a manner which probably was never before attempted. In such a scholar, engaged,

* Vol. ii. p. 94. edit. 4to. 1814.

as he was, in so many grave, dignified, and sublime speculations, "admiranda quidem *levium* hæc spectacula rerum." They are indeed only noticed as such; but it proves the very high estimation in which he, in common with every scholar of taste, held those brief compositions, in which true simplicity of diction and native force of sentiment are so frequently and so pleasingly united. If a new edition of the Anthologia were at any future period to be undertaken, access to this interleaved edition would be desirable; but any selection of the notes, if unaccompanied by the Greek text, would be without effect.

Mr. Gray was very conversant (and it is not surprising that he was) with the French* Mémoires de l'Académie des

* It is not very gratifying to be continually told that, of all modern languages, the French is most peculiarly adapted to prose-writing, from its perspicuity and from its unambiguous arrangement of

Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres, from which he abridged a variety of curious

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words and of phrases. Perspicuity is not *necessarily* and exclusively peculiar to the French language. Whoever attends to *this* subject must be convinced, that in modern languages like the French, the Italian, and the English, all their clearness of construction depends, simply and solely, upon the position of the governing articles, prepositions, and connectives, and on the judicious use of the auxiliary verbs. In all these particulars the French are eminently careful. But *we* should be *reminded,* that if *English* writers would bestow the same care and the same consideration on these particulars which the French do, the very same perspicuity would be universally attained: for perspicuity does not consist in, nor depend upon, the mere words or phrases in any language, but on the construction and on the position of the *governing* parts of speech. There need no examples of this to the intelligent. There is only one language, among those which are called *transpositive,* which, by the mere inflexion and varying termination of cases, without the necessary assistance or the incumbrance of articles and of prepositions, obtains equal strength and equal perspicuity: that language is the Latin.

papers; nor indeed does any collection of the kind, in any language, abound with so much amusing, diversified, interesting, and often profound learning and information as these valuable Mémoires.

In regard to study in general as pursued by Mr. Gray, we may call to mind, that, when a friend once inquired of Michael Angelo, why he led so solitary a life: "Art (he replied) is a jealous thing; it requires the whole and entire man." Mr. Gray was accustomed to say, that he well knew, from experience, how much might be done by a person who would have recourse to great original writers only, who would read with a method, and would never fling away his time on middling or on inferiour authors. In this particular, indeed, no man ever gave more power, fully the precept and the example. Mr. Gray knew, that, by this unremitted culture of the mind conducted with

judgment, it is not uncommon to find persons, when their understandings are matured, become members of society intrinsically more excellent, and publickly more distinguished, than those who were originally their superiours by nature, but who trusted to their parts alone, and were content with desultory application. Remarks, or even hints, of this kind, from a man like Mr. Gray, should receive such attention and observation, "as fits a scholar's remembrance;" and therefore they have found a place in these recollections.

Mr. Gray much regretted that he had never applied his mind to the study of the mathematicks, and once, rather late in life, he hinted to his friend an intention to undertake it. No one was ever more convinced of its dignity and of its importance. He wished however to appreciate it with discreet approbation, not considering it as the *only* mode by

which the understanding *could* be matured; as he conceived that a fixed attention to any works of close and of deep reasoning might produce the same accurate precision of thought. But he felt (and he owned it too) the commanding power of those speculations, to which the mathematician alone can conduct the patient inquirers into nature; and he could not but admire the strong and animated expressions of Halley,

Nubem pellente Mathesi
Claustra patent cœli, rerumque immobilis ordo,

while he contemplated with reverence the laws and the system of the universe fixed by a sublime geometry.

The language of modern Italy, in prose and in poetry, made a very favourite part of Mr. Gray's study. He was accurately and intimately conversant with the higher Tuscan poets, whom *he* might be allowed to call *his* great progenitors or precursors. His

genius was eminently formed and disposed to accompany that traveller,* who returned from the nethermost abyss, from the abodes of terrour, of sorrow, and of despair, who, having read the record on the portal of the Inferno, dared also to make, what a kindred poet in after ages styled, "*the eternal blazon.*" Nor were the steps of Gray to be found less frequently, nor less honourably, in the bowers of Valclusa or on the shores of Parthenope. From every mountain and from every stream, in that favoured and illustrious country, "inspiration breathed around him;" and from a dignified familiarity with the works of the poets, who had consecrated those chosen retreats as their own, he imparted a lyrical strength and a harmony, hitherto unknown, to his native language.

He was indeed the inventor (it may

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* Dante.

be strictly said so) of a new lyrical metre in his own tongue. The peculiar formation of *his* strophe, antistrophe, and epode was unknown before him; and it could only have been planned and perfected by a master genius, who was equally skilled by long and repeated study, and by transfusion into his own mind, of the lyrical compositions of ancient Greece, and of the higher *canzoni* of the Tuscan poets "*di maggior carme e suono;*" as it is termed in the commanding energy of *their* language.* Antecedent to "The Progress of Poetry" and to "The Bard," no such lyricks had appeared. There is not an ode in the English language which is constructed, like *these two* compositions, with such power, such majesty, and

* The most dignified stanza among the Latins, the Alcaick, consists but of four lines.

such sweetness, with such proportioned pauses and just cadences, with such regulated measures of the verse, with such master principles of lyrical art displayed and exemplified, and, at the same time, with such a concealment of the difficulty, which is lost in the softness and uninterrupted flowing of the lines in each stanza with such a musical magick, that every verse in it in succession dwells on the ear, and harmonizes with that which has gone before. If indeed the veil of classical reverence and of pardonable prejudice can be awhile removed, and if with honest unshrinking criticism we consider the subject as exemplified in Greece, and in Italy ancient and modern, and if we then weigh the merits of *any single* composition of Pindar, of Horace, of Dante, of Petrarch, or of any of their successors, it will fade before that excellence which encom-

passes, with an incommunicable brightness, THE BARD of GRAY.*

* It cannot be imagined, that Dryden's Ode for St. Cecilia's Day is forgotten for a moment. Mr. Gray, in a note on "The Progress of Poetry," justly pronounced it to be the only ode of the sublime kind in our language, antecedent to one of Mason's in his Caractacus. It is however an ode of the irregular kind as to its metre, differing in its principle and in its structure from Mr. Gray's; and, (if the reader will excuse a conjecture) when properly considered as to its principle, it appears to be of the nature of the shorter ancient Greek dithyrambick. Very little indeed is known of the ancient dithyrambick; but the learned reader will recollect a passage in the third book of the Republick of Plato, where he is speaking of the different species of poetical imitation, one of which, he says, is by the narration of the poet; and it is this, which prevails in the dithyrambick; Δι' απαγγελιας αυτε τε Ποιητε· ἑυροις δ' αν αυτην μαλιστα εν Διθυραμβοις. (Plato de Repub. l. 3. p. 394. edit. Serrani.) This sublime and original ode, called Alexander's Feast, may be considered as an animated narration; the subject of it is *one*, the destruction of Persepolis; and it is related as having been effected by the succession

An attentive and competent judge will be inclined to attribute this not only to Gray's genius, which was second to none, but to the peculiar turn of his poetical studies. Before him, with the exception of Milton, no English poet had taken *equal* draughts from the Ilyssus and from the Arno; "impiger hausit spumantem pateram:" or, to drop that allusion, no one had read with equal discernment the odes of Pindar, the choral harmonies of the Greek tragedians, and the higher *canzoni* of Dante and of Petrarch, and of their illustrious successors. It was from his ear, so exquisitely fine and so musically

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of passions, raised in the mind of the conqueror by the lyre and by the strains of Timotheus. The ode is here properly concluded: it is disfigured and disgraced by the conclusion; "Thus long ago, ere heaving *bellows* learned to blow, &c. &c. &c." which should always be omitted, when the ode is read to produce the great effect.

formed; it was from the contemplation of the legitimate structure of a lyrical stanza, of the necessity of its regularity, and of the labour and of the polish which are required not only to perfect every verse, but every single expression in every verse; it was indeed from all these views combined, that Mr. Gray revolted from the vapid, vague, and unmeaning effusions of writers who, refusing to submit to the indispensable laws of lyrical poetry, or from ignorance of them, called their own wildness, genius, and their contempt of rules, originality. He fixed his attention on all the most finished models of Greece and of modern Italy, he seized and appropriated their specifick and their diversified merits, united their spirit, improved upon their metre, and then, in conformity with his great preconceived idea, he gave at once in lyrick poetry to every succeeding age the law, the precept, and the ex-

ample. The lovers of the languages of Greece, of modern Italy, and of England, may appeal with confidence to the lyre of Gray, when they are inclined to hail the poetical union of the Ilyssus, of the Arno, and of the Thames; and they may *adapt* on that occasion a few animated lines from a Tuscan* poet of the Greek school:

Di *sua* cetra invaghito,
Il gran *Toscano* fiume
Alla superba *Tamigina* sponda
Corse a mischiar la sua volubil onda,
Reale incontro! cento vati e cento
Da' fonti e fiumi *Argivi*
Uscir' dagli antri vivi,
E ricchi di non solito ornamento!

It is highly gratifying to observe the very marked attention which Mr. Gray certainly gave to the language of modern Italy, to its origin and to its progress, to a language indeed which alone

* Menzini.

seems to have been at once created, as it were, and perfected. If a remark or two on this subject may be allowed, it must be said, that we do not find the same satisfaction, when we would trace the origin of the Greek tongue. Our means of investigation are here wholly inadequate. When, for instance, we have recourse to Homer, as to the *first* writer in the Greek language, we are lost in the abyss of antiquity: whatever can be advanced, however ingenious, is little more than conjecture. Neither manuscripts, nor inscriptions, nor contemporary authors, can be called to our assistance; and, when all our sagacity and all our industry have been baffled and deluded, we are at last fain to amuse ourselves with endeavours to ascertain the primary forms of the original Greek characters; and then, with some legitimate rites of classical incantation, from the depths of *Elis* we summon up the

buried majesty of THE DIGAMMA. These are the pleasing unreproved speculations of learned leisure, though we are sometimes, rather hastily, induced to regard them as a *knowledge* of the subject. At other times, we turn for imaginary recreation to the "old Bard eloquent," and with German dexterity attempt to divide what is indivisible; we separate the portions of his poems; we take his best parts, his affecting episodes, his battles, his shield, or his games, we distribute them liberally among the ancient rhapsodists and forgotten troubadours of the Archipelago, and put, as it were, the very genius of Homer into commission.

But when we approach modern Italy with the same earnestness, the view is as different as it is satisfactory. In the close of the twelfth century (the best Italian criticks will tell us so) we have history and matter of fact for every step

we take in the investigation. After some feeble momentary gleams from Guittone of Arezzo, Cino of Pistoja, and a very few others of less note in that age, Dante, with Petrarch not far from his side, burst forth and, with an originality of genius and of conception, created and exhibited at once the full power of his language in force, in softness, and in dignity.

The interest, which Mr. Gray felt on the subject of Italian literature, induces the editor of these volumes to add a few more observations upon it. To persons who are accurately versed in the language, in the literature, and in the poetry of modern Italy, it cannot but be surprising, that it should be peremptorily and ignorantly degraded as the language of *conceit* and of *false thought;* and that its votaries should be marked as admirers of tinsel and not of gold. Of what authors, and of what poets, do

these objectors speak? In charity to their knowledge and to their judgment it must be supposed, that they speak not of Dante, of Petrarch, of Poliziano, of Lorenzo, of Bembo, of Ariosto, of Tasso, of Chiabrera, of Filicaja, of Redi, of Menzini, of Guidi, and of all the consecrated bards,

> Dextrâ lævâque *per Arni*
> *Convalles,* lætumque choro pæana canentes,
> Inter odoratum lauri nemus—

it cannot, cannot be. The poetical hosts of the Arno and of the Sorga have never wanted living leaders and living defenders, and it is sufficient for their champion to come forth with a sling and a stone against the hardiest opposer.

But can we so forget the common vicissitudes of taste, of words, and of style in every age of every language? Is modern Italy alone, for a few extravagant and erring spirits, to be called to so severe an account? If we are ex-

treme to mark *every* impropriety of forced thought, or of expression, where will Shakspeare, or Milton, and other poets of eminence, appear? Had the language of ancient Latium no decline, no fall? Are all the writers of Greece indiscriminately blameless and perfect? Were there no variations in their taste and judgment? If Greece had her age of Pericles, and Rome the age of her Augustus; does not modern Italy demand and fix our attention and our admiration on that of her tenth Leo? Are all her poets to be confounded with the wild genius and licentious spirit of Marino and of his school? No nation was ever more sensible of its errours under the influence of *that* poet; none was ever more ready to acknowledge them. Did not all the learned in Rome, at the close of the seventeenth century, rise, as one man, to correct the depra-

vation of their language? At that period good taste returned, under the auspices of the original *Arcadia* and of all the lesser Academies, or *Colonies*, throughout Italy dependent on that parent institution. Before the criticks of the *Arcadia*, (the *Pastori*, as they modestly styled themselves,) with Crescimbeni for their conductor and with the *adorato Albano** for their patron, all that was depraved in language and in sentiment, vicious metaphors, immoderate hyperboles, false thoughts, conceits, and capricious imagery, with all the barbarous and corrupted phraseology which had so long deformed their speech, fled and disappeared. No nation was ever more ardent to vindicate itself and to wipe away such stains; no nation ever maintained with a more be-

* Pope Clement XI.

coming jealousy the high prerogative of its ancient dignity; no nation ever rose with such an exterminating zeal to depose the usurpers of the legitimate rights of literature and of poetry, and to fix their sovereignty on the lawful basis of sound learning and of correct taste.

Yet here in England we are still, in our earlier years, almost insensibly trained to neglect or to despise the language of modern Italy, by the artful insinuations scattered throughout our most popular moral miscellany by that polished sage, from whose hand the wound might have been least expected, by the virtuous and accomplished Addison. From disingenuous hints, from attempts to resolve the character and the merits of the language of Italy into opera airs and silly madrigals, and from the perpetual ridicule with which the ENGLISH SPECTATOR so unworthily, and

indeed so ignorantly, abounds on this subject, an effect has been produced which has hitherto been fatal to its credit and to its cultivation in Great Britain. But it must be remembered, that, at that period the star of French literature was lord of the ascendant, and that all the bolder and more invigorating influences, which had descended on Spenser and on Milton from the luminaries of Italy, were felt no longer. We are *now* once more called upon, as in the name of an august triumvirate, by Spenser, by Milton, and by Gray, to turn from the unpoetical genius of France; and, after we have paid our primal homage to the bards of Greece and of ancient Latium, we are invited to contemplate, with a studious admiration, the literary and poetical dignity of modern Italy. If the influence of *their* persuasion and of *their* example should prevail, a strong

and steady light may be relumined and diffused among us; a light, which may once again conduct the powers of our rising poets from wild whirling words, from crude, rapid, and uncorrected productions, from an overweening presumption, and from the delusive conceit of a pre-established reputation, to the labour of thought, to patient and to repeated revision of what they write, to a reverence for themselves and for an enlightened publick, and to the fixed unbending principles of legitimate composition.

To return.—In addition to the valuable manuscripts of Mr. Gray, whence these volumes have been formed, there is reason to think that there were some other papers, folia Sibyllæ, in the possession of Mr. Mason; but, though a very diligent and anxious inquiry has been made after them, they cannot be discovered since his death. There was

however one Fragment, by Mr. Mason's own description of it, of very great value, namely, "The Plan of an intended Speech in Latin on his appointment as Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge." Mr. Mason says, "Immediately on his appointment, Mr. Gray sketched out an admirable plan *for his inauguration speech;* in which, after enumerating the preparatory and auxiliary studies requisite, such as ancient history, geography, chronology, &c. he descended to the authentick sources of the science, such as publick treaties, state-records, private correspondence of ambassadors, &c. He also wrote the exordium of this thesis, not indeed so correct as to be given by way of fragment, but so spirited, in point of sentiment, as leaves it much to be regretted that he did not proceed to its conclusion." This fragment cannot now be found, and, after so very inte-

resting a description of its value and of its importance, it is the more to be regretted, that the delicacy of Mr. Mason would not allow him to print it, merely because it was not quite correct in his opinion, or that the latinity perhaps might not have received the last touches of Mr. Gray's hand. It is difficult to conceive how Mr. Mason could prevail upon himself to withhold it. There was surely, even from his own account, every reason and every inducement to publish it. We all knew the power of Mr. Gray's pen in the Latin and in his own Language, and we needed no conviction of his ability to have polished and to have completed it. If there be a subject on which, more perhaps than on any other, it would have been peculiarly desirable to know and to follow the train of his ideas, it is that of modern history, in which no man was more intimately, more minutely, or more exten-

sively conversant than Mr. Gray. We are told, that this fragment was "*so spirited in point of sentiment*, as leaves it much to be regretted that it was not concluded." These were motives, as one would think, strong for the deed of publication.

It was not the lyre only which Mr. Gray could strike with the hand of a master and with the fire of a prophet; he foresaw and he felt (and sometimes too he would describe) the symptoms of the approaching decline or ruin of dignified literature and of established governments, from fashionable philosophers, historians, poetasters, and sciolists, who composed and disseminated their works throughout Europe in the French language. He knew that history was the most effectual political philosophy, as it teaches by examples. It may well be conceived, that a sketch or plan from his hand on the subjects of

history, and on those which belonged to it, might have taught succeeding ages how to conduct these important researches with national advantage, and, like some wand of divination, it might have

Pointed to beds where sovereign gold doth grow.*

If indeed Mr. Gray had lived to fill the chair of the historical professor (never before so dignified in any age) in the bosom of a learned and illustrious university, (in which the very life-springs of all publick action and of all publick political conduct must primarily receive their original strength and their future direction,) he might, from the soundness of uncontaminated principles, and from the depth, the extent, and the solidity of his knowledge, have taught the rising youth of this country, the hope of England, not only to imitate but to emulate

* Dryden.

the glory of it, its ancient statesmen. Then indeed — Visa potens; *propria* hæc si dona fuissent.

If the Fragment, the loss of which is so much regretted, could have been* discovered, the present editor would have deliberately presented it to the reader, with any slight imperfection it might have had. The ideas, the plan, and the manner of conducting the mind, independent of the language and of the style, would have ensured publick attention; and it may be presumed, (such was Mr. Gray's habit of accurate composition) that neither the language nor the style would have been found to be very materially deficient;

> Such prompt eloquence
> Flowed from *his* lips, in prose or numerous verse,
> More tuneable than needed lute or harp
> To add more sweetness.

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* If it should at any time hereafter be found, it is hoped that it may be communicated to the publick.

It must however be repeated, that Mr. Mason's right to use his own discretion was unquestionable; and the preceding observations are offered with respect and with deference to the character and to the judgment of so elegant a poet, of so cautious a critick, and of a friend so affectionate.

But if omissions of this nature be sometimes reprehensible, there is an evil far more fatal and more prejudicial, in its consequences, to the fame of the wise and great who, after a life of utility and of dignity, have sunk to rest with the gratitude and with the admiration of their country. The allusion is here made to a custom much too prevalent, perhaps in every country, of searching or *ransacking* the private papers of deceased authors of merit, and of printing every trifle which can be found, any little song or epigram, or any short effusion of temporary satire or of local plea-

santry, which it was never the design of the writers to preserve: trifles indeed which they would willingly have suppressed at once, or would have recalled from any friend to whom they might have given them *in confidence*. It is well known, that many of Mr. Gray's *jeux d'esprit* of this description were handed about in his life time, which occasioned him great uneasiness, accompanied with a suitable eagerness to recal them, which proved to be in vain: for it should be remembered, that even the words of any man of genius, like Gray, are no longer his own than while he keeps them unspoken. Affectionate veneration for his memory and a friendly attention even to his peculiarities, or to any supposed wish of his, plead strongly for their exclusion.

There were however a few stanzas, written under the impulse of a virtuous indignation at some reports, mixed up

with all the bitterness of the political prejudice of the time, on the view of Kingsgate, in the Isle of Thanet in Kent, in which he describes the situation chosen, about the year 1764, by the first Lord Holland, for his mansion, and the artificial ruins erected on the cliffs contiguous to it. As he seldom *vented* his powers in strains of a higher mood, with all the enthusiasm, and (it must be added) with some of the *invention* of a poet, and with the magick wildness of a painter, it is desirable to preserve the following animated *descriptive* stanzas, all political and personal reflections being set aside and forgotten:

" On this congenial spot he fixed his choice;
Earl Goodwin trembled for his neighbouring sand:
Here sea-mews scream and cormorants rejoice,
The mariner, though shipwrecked, fears to land.

Here reign the blustering North and blighting
East;
No tree is heard to whisper, bird to sing:
Yet Nature cannot furnish out the feast,
Art he invokes new horrours still to bring.

Now mouldering fanes and battlements arise,
Arches and turrets nodding to their fall;
Unpeopled palaces delude his eyes,
And mimick desolation covers all."*

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* Several years ago, the present editor, with this poem by Mr. Gray full in his memory, visited Lord Holland's seat at Kingsgate, in the Isle of Thanet, but with other views and with other thoughts. He looked abroad from the cliffs and eminences, and, without the chilling damp of political retrospect on his spirits, he felt himself alive to all the local beauties and scenery of the spot, enlightened by a summer sun and refreshed with airs from the ocean. From the ideas, which were then present to his mind, he afterwards composed a Latin ode; and he hopes that the judgment of some friends, who requested its insertion in this place, will sanction the liberty which he takes in presenting it to the reader.

The variety and the extent of Mr. Gray's reading often (and perhaps invo-

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VILLA FORMIANA

APUD PORTAM REGIAM IN INSULA THANETI

IN ORA MARITIMA CANTIANA

SUB AUSPICIIS HENRICI BARONIS DE HOLLAND

OLIM EXTRUCTA.*

Non fonte parco Castaliæ leves
Haustus requirunt, non juga deviæ
Frondosa perlustrant, potentes
Imperio graviore Musæ.
Ecquæ, marini conscia numinis,
Non vel Sabinæ mollitiem volens
Fastidit umbræ, seu fluenta
Thessala, purpureosve colles?
Illisa fractis æquora rupibus
(Audin'?) reclamant Oceano patri
Nymphisque præsentem Camænam,
Et stimulo propiore versant.
Quanti ingravescunt pectoris impetus!
Per regna venti seu fragor intonat
Undosa, seu sternit tumentes,
Halcyonis memor, aura fluctus.

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* Kingsgate, Isle of Thanet; Extruct. A. D. circ. 1764.

luntarily) occasioned his adoption of many phrases and expressions from distinguished writers, which, from his manner of subjoining short references to his

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Scenis-ne raptum talibus advenam
Admovit oris *Parthenope* suis?
Quis laudis antiquæ recessus,
Insolitâ novitate solers,
Mirè reclusit? cernis, ut undique
Musco columnæ densiùs obsitæ,
Arcesque præruptæ minantur,
(Imperii simulacra fracti!)
Quà, non silendis fumeribus, frequens
Expertus olim Danus inhorruit
Quid marte nativo valerent
Indomitæ Britonum phalanges.
At dum residit clangor, et æthere
Vibrata belli fulgura concidunt
Pacata, ne desit trementi
Perfugium populo salutis,
Juxta, labanti culmine, sub piâ
Manu resurgit deciduæ domûs
Incana majestas, aviti
Relliquiæ columenque cultûs.*

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* Monasterium.

poems in the form of notes, it appears that he was very solicitous to acknowledge whenever they occurred. The

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Jam fabulosas divitis ingenî
Formas refingit dædalus artifex,
  Sceptrisque Neptuni satelles
    Cœrulêa spatiatur aulâ.*
Frustra severus, carmine quis notet
Injurioso delicias soli?
  Ah parce, Lucili,† precamur,
    Fulmineâ metuende linguâ.‡
Non hìc nefandis criminibus minax,
Surdove pectus verbere concutit
  Erynnis ultrix: eruditi
    Fusa vides monumenta luxûs,
Honestiori sub specie; tenet
Imago mentem lætior, et modis
  Vix ante quæsitis voluptas
    Augurio meliore ridet.
Me, lenioris per sapientiæ
Secreta ductum, littoribus sacris
  Natura mulcet, nec caduci
    Temporis immemorem per omnes

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* Aula Neptuni. † Gray.
‡ Poema ined. in Villam Baronis de Holland.

memory of many a scholar has often increased the number of these references, and it is pleasing to observe their propriety, as they can never detract from the originality of such an author. The greatest poets of modern Italy in every age, Ariosto, Tasso, and their successors, have in their works adopted and incorporated phrases (and even entire

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Curasque et umbras ire levem sinit;
Celsisque honorem frontibus admonet
Lugere decussum, et profani
Ludibrium diadema vulgi.
Nomen sed altum est, sed vigor igneus,
Rerum superstes fama, nec imperî
Frangenda compages Britannis,
Et procerum bene junctus ordo;
Nobis marino spes Capitolio;
Nobis relucens, auspicibus sacris
Innixa, Libertas potenti
Jam populo pia jura firmat.

Ab Insulâ Thaneti
Horis Septembribus.
1795.

T. M.

lines) from the fathers of their verse, the primal glory of the Tuscan literature, Dante and Petrarch: nor was this imputed to imitation. In mere language, what was once *well* expressed by *the two Florentines* with energy, with softness, or with majesty, was considered and deemed, by the higher poets and criticks of that illustrious nation, as fixed, and as common to all who had sense, and spirit, and judgment to use them; and they regarded the casual, or the deliberate, adoption of such phrases or of such lines, not as servile imitation, not as poverty of invention, but as an homage to the great creators of their language, and to the authors* and finishers

* In the Latin writers we may observe the same. If we peruse the Saturnalia of Macrobius from the third to the end of the sixth book, we find that in borrowing or in accommodating expressions, and sometimes entire lines, from the more ancient poets, Ennius and others his predecessors, Virgil was by

of their harmonious expression. Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton, were to Gray, and should be so to his successors,

choice unsparing; nor do we discover any thing recorded by his contemporaries to his disadvantage or to his dishonour from the practice: such is the power of judgment. These books of the Saturnalia, to which an allusion is made, are particularly interesting. Macrobius was a man of illustrious rank in the imperial court of Theodosius; and the emperor was very sensible of the merits of this accomplished scholar, as he makes the most honourable mention of him in his celebrated code.* Macrobius improved the intervals of business with the refinements of polite literature, and with the investigations of criticism and of the philosophy of *his* age. The inaccuracies in the latinity of his work were partially excused in the writings of a foreigner, and there is something inexpressibly pleasing in the manner and in the urbanity of his discussions; they bespeak his birth and the high breeding of a gentleman. His work is addressed to his son Eustathius, and his words to him are full of the affection, the interest, and the predilection of a father;

* Cod. Theodos. lib. 6. tit. 8.

what Dante and Petrarch were to Ariosto and to Tasso. It will be no injury to true criticism to adopt the liberal spirit of Italy in this matter; and poetry in England may again send forth, what Milton would call, "mellifluous streams," when drawn from the original fountains of the Ilyssus and of the Arno.

After these incidental remarks, the present editor should perhaps apologise

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"Invenies* plurima, quæ sunt aut voluptati legere, aut cultui legisse, aut usui meminisse: nihil huic operi insertum puto aut cognitu inutile, aut difficile perceptu; sed omnia inserta invenies quibus sit ingenium tuum vegetius, memoria *adminiculatior*, ratio solertior, aut sermo incorruptior, nisi sicubi *nos sub alio cælo ortos* Latinæ linguæ vena non adjuvat." This incidental mention of Macrobius, it is hoped, may be excused, as a gentleman of birth, of rank, and of fortune in any age, who is at once a patron and an example of literature and of the liberal arts, is a character interesting and honourable.

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* Macrob. Saturnal. l. 1. in Proœmio.

for himself, as he also is inclined to mark a very few singular coincidences, where the expressions might seem peculiar, and originating with Mr. Gray. When, for instance, he tells us, that, at the frown of adversity, laughter and thoughtless joy disappear, "and leave us *leisure to be good;*" it is singular to find those curious and happy expressions in the poems of a writer, whom Dryden once dignified, and hailed after death, as the Marcellus of our tongue, *Oldham,* where he says, "I have not yet the *leisure to be good.*" When we read of "the *ruddy drops* that warm *the heart,*" Gray informs us, that the phrase is from Shakspeare; yet it is to be remarked, that the idea and the words, whether of Shakspeare or of Gray, are to be found in the Agamemnon* of the

* Æschyl. Agam. v. 1130.

primal tragedian of Athens, "Επι καρδιαν εδραμε κροκοβαφης σταγων:" but, in bold and terrifick conceptions, who were more congenial with Æschylus than Shakspeare and Gray? Even in the dark, but often sublime, poet of Chalcis, we discover expressions not dissimilar to those of Gray. "The unfathomed caves of ocean" may remind a scholar of the "Αφαντα κευθμωνος βαθη"* of Lycophron; and when Gray writes,

> "Iron sleet of arrowy shower
> Hurtles in the darkened air,"

he refers us to a passage in Milton's Paradise Regained, and to another in the Julius Cæsar of Shakspeare. It is, however, not without some surprise, that we find, in the same tragick Monodia, "the arrows and their hurtling in the air" united in one lofty passage:

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* Lycophr. v. 1277.

Κυφελλα[a] δ' ιων τηλοθεν ροιζημενων
Υπερ καρα στησασι κιμμερος[b] θ' οπως,
Σκια καλυψει[c] πεῤῥαν.[d]

In the celebrated and sublime eulogy on the author of Paradise Lost, when

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[a] Κυφελλα, i. e. τα νεφη. V. Suidam in voce.

[b] Κιμμερος, i. e. ζοφος—αχλυς.

[c] The word Περραν, which means *the Sun*, is to be found only in Lycophron; and it is most probably a corruption, and an easy one, for Πετραν, which undoubtedly was an ancient term for that luminary; and the learned reader will recollect, that, in a fragment of Euripides, cited by the Scholiast on the 97th line of the seventh olympick ode of Pindar, *the Sun* is styled, "Ταν ϑρανϑ μεσον και χθονος τεταμεναν αιωρημασι Πετραν αλυσεσι χρυσεαισι."[e]

[d] Lycophr. v. 1424.

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[e] Consult Bryant's Analysis of Ancient Mythology. The acute conjectures and the deep researches of that consummate and illustrious scholar will receive additional confirmation in every succeeding age, from the wise and the learned: indeed, before Bryant appeared, it might be said,

Vulgata per orbem
Fabula pro verâ decepit sæcula causâ.

an allusion is made to those visions of glory which were present to Milton, after he had passed the "flammantia mœnia," the flaming bounds of place, and of time, and of the mortal creation, Gray turns to that inspired prophet who, "by the river of Chebar, when the heavens were opened, saw visions of God." The poet calls forth and adapts the expressions of that prophet, and with more than mortal rapture, exclaims,

> "The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
> Where angels tremble while they gaze,
> He saw: but, *blasted with excess of light,*
> *Closed his eyes in endless night.*"

Surely the simple allusion to the loss of sight in Homer (the οφθαλμων μεν αμερσε) by Gray himself, or the mere dry political reference by Mr. Mason to Milton's sonnet to Cyriack Skinner, or the idle mode of resolving it into a *conceit*, are, all of them, remarks either feeble, or inadequate, or unjust. Passages, like this,

of a sublimity almost "past utterance," are scarcely matter of reasoning, but of strong sensation. To feel them is to explain them: or, like the subjects which they celebrate, it should only be said, that they "*appear dark, with excessive bright.*"

It may however be observed, that Milton in his most eloquent oration, entitled "Defensio Secunda pro Populo Anglicano," descants on his own blindness, and he attributes it to his laborious unremitted exertions in a cause, which (unjustifiable as that cause was and ever must be) he himself unhappily esteemed, *ex animo* DEO *teste* (they are his own words), to be his bounden duty and service to his country. In this apologetick oration is found a passage not very dissimilar in thought and in manner, and not inferiour in sublimity, to that of the poet; and it is conceived in that devout prostration of the intellect

before the throne of God, and with that grateful, profound, and unreserved submission to the divine will, which was the commanding attribute of Milton's mind. Some criticks may perhaps call this passage also a *conceit;* be it so: let them call it poetical, call it lyrical, if they choose, (and surely, even in numerous prose, *the harp* of Milton was *ever tuned*), but let us hear the words; they are as follow: "*Sanè haud ultimâ Dei curâ* CŒCI *sumus, qui nos, quo minùs quicquam aliud* PRÆTER IPSUM *cernere valemus, eò clementiùs atque benigniùs respicere dignatur.* Væ, qui illudit nos; væ, qui lædit. Nos ab injuriis hominum non modo incolumes, sed pene sacros divina lex reddidit, divinus favor: *nec tam hebetudine oculorum, quàm cælestium alarum umbrâ,* DEUS *has nobis fecisse tenebras videtur.*" Now read the orator; bend before the prophet; catch

the spirit of the poet; and while your heart is dilating with the majesty and with the pathos of the conceptions, you will feel all *minute* criticism sinking and lost in the mingled unresisted emotions of poetry, of eloquence, of devotion, and of genius.

In all the variety of Mr. Gray's extensive reading, it has been seen how large a portion of his attention was given to Plato. No man was ever more enchanted with "Socratick sounds" than he was: yet in his poetry, and it is rather singular, none of those allusions are to be discovered, which Milton (whose fond and lingering steps are always to be traced in the grove of the philosopher) delighted to adopt in his earlier and more captivating compositions. Whence is this peculiarity? The sublimity of Gray was strictly lyrical; and the pathos of his poetry

was drawn (eminently so in his* Elegy) from the feelings of our common nature, from the trembling hopes of a suffering humanity, and from what he termed "the grateful earnest of eternal peace;" and, whether in the sacred calm or in the fervour of his genius, Mr. Gray generally avoided all that could in any sense be called metaphysical.

When he turned to the fathers and to the masters of the *ethnick* philosophy, it was with other views and with other intentions: he approached and conversed with them, and he learned how far unassisted reason could aspire or

* The test of supreme excellence, so well expressed by Longinus, was, perhaps, never so signally exemplified, as in the approbation given to Gray's Elegy, without one dissenting opinion. Ὁταν τοις απο διαφορων επιτηδευματων, βιων, ζηλων, ἡλικιων, λογων, ἑν τι και ταυτον ἁμα περι των αυτων δοκῃ, τοθ' ἡ ἐξ ασυμφωνων ὡς κρισις και συγκαταθεσις την επι τω θαυμαζομενω πιστιν ισχυραν λαμβανει και αναμφιλεκτον. Longin. de Sublim. Sect. 7.

could reach, and no man marked better, than he did, the fading of those intellectual stars,

When day's bright lord ascends the hemisphere.

What Mr. Gray sought, and what he learned, from the higher philosophers of Greece and of Rome was, to contemplate and to feel practically, within himself, what in their language they termed *the ethick harmonies*;* and he was thence led to perceive and to acknowledge that adorable symmetry which is found in all the relations, and the proportions, and the aptitudes of created things in the expanded system of the universe, displayed by Plato and by Cicero with such magick of imagery, such magnificence of diction, and with such sublimity of conception. He traced the ideas on which these philosophers raised their imaginary republicks in all the

* Ηθικαι ἁρμονιαι.

solemn plausibilities of civilized society; he sought not only delight, but instruction, from their works; and he often wondered that so many, even among the learned, would turn aside, either with an affected disdain or with an idle neglect, from these original fountains of genius and of science. He bowed before the Author of all order, the Governour of the world, *who never left* HIMSELF *without witness;* and he saw that all the foundations of legitimate human polity were rooted and grounded in the will of the all-wise Creator. He saw accurately how far philosophy could be perfected as to its effect on human affairs, and where it was deficient: and he found that the greatest statesmen and the greatest theologians, in the best ages, began and conducted their studies under these guides, who imparted sobriety to their thoughts and stamped discretion upon their actions. Such statesmen

and such theologians, with minds so highly cultivated, knew how to distinguish between philosophy and *inspired* theology, and they felt all the superiority and the authoritative pre-eminence of the latter. Yet, when Socrates, and Plato, and Cicero, and Antoninus, and the philosophers who sate in fellowship with them, were the theme, such minds would join in the sublime judgment which was once given of them, by an eloquent Divine, in words of power and of an indelible impression: "*They* were full of GOD: all their wisdom and deep contemplations tended only to deliver men from the vanity of the world and from the slavery of bodily passions, that they might act as spirits which came forth from God, and were soon to return unto HIM." In such a judgment, and in thoughts like these, it may be presumed, that Mr. Gray joined and acquiesced: and with them the subject may be best concluded, and dismissed with dignity.

Nearly one hundred years have now passed, since the birth* of Gray. As a poet and as an author, may we not consider him as holding a distinguished station among the legitimate ancients? So various and extensive was his command in every region of literature, and the application of his knowledge so just and accurate; so solid and unerring was his judgment; so rapid, yet so regulated, was the torrent of his imagination; so versatile was every faculty within him, whether to science, to poetry, to painting, or to musick; and so richly and so regally was he endowed with every liberal and kindred art and accomplishment, that a scholar, when he reflects, can scarcely refrain from exclaiming with the philosophick bard,

Ηνι ΔΕΜΑΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΝ, εν ᾧ ταδε παντα κυκλειται!†

* He was born on the 16th of December, 1716.

† One of the Orphick verses preserved by Proclus

We may however, for a moment, standing on the vantage ground and with views unbroken, contemplate what is *the power* of a mind, like Gray's, and what is *the place* which it claims and takes by sovereignty of nature. *Such a mind* respects the important distinctions of rank, of wealth, and of fortune; it understands their use, their necessity, and their specifick dignities, and it neither despises nor disdains them; but calmly, and without a murmur, *leaves* them all to the world and to its votaries:

> *Higher than their tops*
> The verdurous wall of Paradise upsprings,
> And to *that* mind's bright ken gives prospect large
> Over man's *nether* empire.

There are persons indeed, whose judgment and whose experience incline

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in his Commentary on the Timæus of Plato, L. 2. p. 95. edit. Basil. 1534.

them to think, that worldly elevation tends only to lessen *such* a mind; and that the retirement of *private* life is the true scene in which *such* transcendent abilities can alone appear in their proper dimensions: and this they assert, without a wish to close up the avenues to wealth, to dignity, and to high offices, or to suppress the *generally* honourable and justifiable desire of obtaining them. "THE WORLD KNOWETH ITS OWN." Such persons, when thoughts like these predominate, will call to mind what has been performed *in the depths of privacy*. They will recollect the retirement and the labours of THE MANTUAN on the shores of his beloved Parthenope; they will remember the work planned and perfected by the great FLORENTINE in his banishment; nor will THAT POET pass unnoticed, who from the recesses of Valclusa commanded the admiration

of his own and of succeeding ages. Such persons will not suffer themselves to forget, that neither "heaven nor the deep tracts below" could conceal aught from the mighty mind of MILTON, when compassed round with darkness and with solitude: and they too will follow the venerable HOOKER, and will behold him in peace and in *privacy*, without disturbance, meditating and effecting the consummation of his unrivalled work, the everlasting possession and the impregnable bulwark of all that this nation holds most dear; in which, when he had first laid the deep foundations of law, of order, and of temporal polity, he assembled, as it were, within himself all the sanctities of heaven; and with the united energies of language, of reason, and of truth, he finally vindicated and displayed triumphantly, before our christian country, the gradations, the

dignities, and the majesty of her balanced state and of her temperate hierarchy. Such persons will also call to mind, that when, in our own days, the learned and accomplished friend of the author of "The Divine Legation" had surveyed and considered maturely, with his accustomed precision, the life of Warburton and the extended literary labours of his gigantick, unwearied, and unbending mind, and had then contemplated his promotion to the prelacy, and the *pressure* of its duties and the *time* which they required, he could not forbear to express himself in the following memorable words: "I have sometimes doubted with myself, (said the illustrious and venerable biographer of Warburton) whether the proper scene of abilities LIKE HIS, BE NOT A PRIVATE STATION; WHERE, ONLY, GREAT WRITERS HAVE LEISURE TO DO GREAT

THINGS."* With this dignified opinion, thus applied to A GENIUS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER, the editor of these volumes finally consigns to the world and to posterity the character, the fame, and the works of THOMAS GRAY.

THOMAS JAMES MATHIAS.

London, March, 1814.

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* See the Life of Bishop Warburton by the Right Reverend Richard Hurd, D. D. Bishop of Worcester. Warburton's Works. Ed. 8vo. 1811. vol. i. p. 70.

APPENDIX.

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. NORTON NICHOLLS,

LL.B. &c.

It is hoped, that the insertion of the following short tribute, by the Editor, to the Memory of the Rev. NORTON NICHOLLS,* the accomplished and intimate Friend of Mr. GRAY, *will either be approved or excused by those persons, who know what it is to feel and to appreciate departed excellence in the sincerity of Friendship.*

A COPY OF A LETTER,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

THE REV. NORTON NICHOLLS, LL.B.

&c.

WRITTEN PRIVATELY TO A FRIEND.

London, Dec. 10, 1809.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is my melancholy office to inform you of the death of our friend, the Reverend NORTON NICHOLLS, LL.B. Rector of Lound and Bradwell, in the county of Suffolk, who died at his

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* See Gray's Works, 4to edit. vol. ii. p. 431.

house at Blundeston, near Lowestoft, in that county, on Wednesday the 22d of November, 1809, in the 68th year of his age. As you well knew the genius, the accomplishments, the learning, and the virtues of this rare and gifted man, your generous nature must think it proper, that some little memorial of him should be recorded, however frail and perishable in my delineation.

To be born and to die did not make up all the history of our friend. Many of the chief ends of our being, which he fulfilled during the placid and even tenour of a long and exemplary life, proved that he had been; and they fully evinced that he had deserved well of all who had enjoyed the intercourse of his society. Many were enlivened by the cheerfulness of his disposition, and all partook of his benevolence. His chosen companions were delighted and improved by his readiness to communicate the rich treasures of his cultivated mind, in all the bright diversities of erudition and of taste. Indeed those studies,

which can alone be the aliment of youth and the consolation of our declining days, engaged his attention from his earliest years. "Amplissimam illam omnium artium bene vivendi disciplinam non vita magis quam litteris feliciter persecutus."

Even when a school-boy, he was never desultory in his application; and he was distinguished for those exercises which mark strength of understanding and solidity of judgment. He wandered not in vain among those fields and hills, so justly styled "happy," by our greatest lyrick poet; and he left Eton for the University of Cambridge, with a mind prepared for greater attainments, and capable of that excellence which is the reward of ability when fostered by application. In addition to the attentions which he experienced from the celebrated Dr. Barnard, then master of the school, I have heard him frequently express his grateful sense of the assistance he received at Eton from the voluntary private instruction of Dr. Sumner, whose classical erudition was deep and extensive.

By such men he was formed for the intercourse of those highly cultivated minds, educated in the groves of our Academe, which were destined to be the future ornaments and the supports of literature, of the church, and of the state.

At the time when Mr. Nicholls became a student in Trinity Hall, the University of Cambridge was the chosen residence of Mr. Gray:

A sì gran nome sorga
Tutto il coro à inchinarsi del Parnaso!

It was natural to feel a gratification in being a member of the same learned society with him; and it was natural also to aspire (if possible) even to a distant intercourse with such a man.

To see Mr. Gray was desirable; to speak to him was honourable; but to be admitted to his acquaintance or to his familiarity, was the height of youthful, or indeed of *any*, ambition. By the intervention of a common friend, Mr. Nicholls, when between eighteen and nineteen years of age, was introduced to Mr. Gray. I remember he

told me, what an awe he felt at the time, at the lightning of his eye, at that "*folgorante sguardo*," as the Tuscans term it; but Mr. Gray's courtesy and encouraging affability soon dispersed every uneasy sensation, and gave him confidence.

Shortly after this Mr. N. was in a select company of which Mr. Gray was one; and, as it became his youth, he did not enter into the conversation, but listened with attention. The subject, however, being general and classical, and as Mr. Nicholls, even at that early period, was acquainted not only with the Greek and Latin, but with many of the best Italian poets, he ventured with great diffidence to offer a short remark, and happened to illustrate what he said by an apposite citation from Dante. At the name of Dante, Mr. Gray (and I wish that every young man of genius might hear and consider the value of a word spoken in due season, with modesty and propriety, in the highest, I mean in the most learned and virtuous, company) Mr. Gray suddenly turned round to

him and said, "Right: but have you read Dante, Sir?" "I have endeavoured to understand him," replied Mr. Nicholls. Mr. Gray, being much pleased with the illustration and with the taste which it evinced, addressed the chief of his discourse to him for the remainder of the evening, and invited him to his rooms in Pembroke Hall.

Mr. Gray found in his young acquaintance a ready and a docile disposition, and he became attached to him. He then gave him instruction for the course of his studies, which he directed *entirely*, even to the recommendation of *every* author, and to the very order in which they should be read, which happily continued till the time of Mr. Gray's death. Mr. N. might well say to the Poet, in the words of his favourite Florentine, "*Tu sei lo mio maestro.*"* To an incident so rare, and so honourable to Mr. Nicholls, and to the improvement which was the conse-

* Dante. Inf. C. 1.

quence of it, I attribute not only the extent and value of his knowledge, but the peculiar accuracy and correct taste which distinguished him throughout his life, and which I have seldom observed in any man in a more eminent degree.

The letters of Mr. Gray to Mr. Nicholls, preserved by Mr. Mason in his Memoirs of the Poet, sufficiently prove the intimacy between them: and it is my opinion that, with the single exception of his earliest and most accomplished friend the Hon. Richard West, Mr. Gray was more affectionately attached to him than to any other person.

By the advice of Mr. Gray, Mr. Nicholls visited France, Swisserland, and Italy. He there found scenes and persons congenial to his taste and to his faculties. In Swisserland he looked abroad through nature, from every "ice-built mountain" and rugged cliff; and, by the lakes and vallies of that once envied country, he felt the truth of Rousseau's inimitable remark, "*Qu'il y*

a des moments où il suffit du sentiment de son existence." In Italy he found all which could captivate and enchain his attention among the most finished works of art; and under the soft but animating influence of climate, of scenery, and of classick imagery, he improved his talents; and by his conversation and knowledge of the language, he was peculiarly acceptable in the most select assemblies. When Italy is the theme, it is difficult to restrain our sensations: but in this place I would only add, that Mr. Nicholls, in an elegant and interesting narrative of his travels (which he never intended to make publick), has privately recorded whatever fixed his mind, exalted his imagination, and refined his judgment. The celebrated and learned Count Firmian, the Austrian minister at Milan, to whom he was introduced, noticed him, and became his intimate friend. From Count Firmian's powerful recommendation Mr. Nicholls had access to every circle of distinction in every foreign country which he

visited; and no man ever profited more from the advantages which were so singularly and so happily offered to him.

On his return from the continent, he found that he had sustained a loss which was irreparable. Mr. Gray was no more. His friend, his companion, and his enlightened guide was no longer to contribute to his happiness, and to animate his studies. To this irreversible, inevitable, doom he submitted, quiet, though sad.

Upon the best motives he retired from London, and resided constantly with his mother in the cheerless depth, and *then* uncultivated solitude, of his Suffolk livings, where he passed his time in continued study, and in the exercise of his professional duties. But I must observe that, since his residence there, the country and the neighbourhood have assumed another aspect. As there was no rectorial house upon either of his livings, he fixed upon a place, which I could wish that future travellers might visit and

speak of it, as we do of the Leasowes, I mean his villa at *Blundeston*, which (if barbarous taste should not *improve* it, or some more barbarous land-surveyor level with the soil its beauties and its glories), will remain as one of the most finished scenes of cultivated sylvan delight which this island can offer to our view. It was his own and his appropriate work; for scarcely a trace of its uncouth original features can be found or pointed out to the visitant. But to the eye of a mind, like Mr. Nicholls's, the possible excellencies of a place, yet unadorned, were visible; and even as it then was, there were to be found in it walks and recesses, in which Mr. Gray observed, in his sublime conciseness, "that a man, who *could think*, might think." By perseverance and skill he at last surmounted every difficulty which was opposed to him through a long series of years, and he formed and left the scene *as it now is*.*

* December, 1809.

Throughout the whole, and in every part of it, the marks of a judgment which cannot be questioned, and of an unerring taste, which was regulated by discreet expense, are so eminently conspicuous, as to proclaim Mr. Nicholls to have been, what a kindred poet so happily terms,

Un artiste qui pense,
Prodigue de génie et non pas de dépense.*

To be a visitor and an inmate guest to Mr. Nicholls at *Blundeston* in the gay season, when his lake was illuminated by summer suns and rippled by the breeze; when every tree and shrub, in its chosen position, seemed to wave in homage to its possessor and cultivator; when a happy and youthful company of either sex, distinguished by their talents and accomplishments, was enlivened by the good humour and spirit which presided over the whole; with the charm of musick, and with every well-tempered recreation which the

* Delille, Les Jardins, L. 1.

season could present, and with all the elegance of the domestick internal arrangements; it was difficult, indeed, I say, to be a visitor and a guest at Blundeston in that gay season, and not to be reminded of Spenser's imagination;

" For all that pleasing is to eye or ear,
Was there consorted in one harmony;
Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree!"

Whoever have been witnesses of the scene will know that I speak of it as they have seen it, and that I have set down nothing in fiction. I had fondly hoped that I should have revisited this favourite spot, and its beloved and accomplished master, for many a year with increasing pleasure. But what are the prospects of man! The mind which presided over it is fled; and the scene is solitary:

Secca è la vena dell usato ingegno:
Vedove l'erbe, e torbide son l'acque!

If Mr. Nicholls indeed had devoted his time and talents exclusively to the ornamental laying out of grounds, and had originally made it his

profession, it might be said with truth, in the diction of poetry, that Pactolus might have rolled through his own domains. But to embellish the form of rural nature was only his amusement. In his own neighbourhood there could be no emulation nor vanity; for where could he discover a competitor? His villa at Blundeston was an Oásis. Even the severe but dignified moralist,* to whom nature had denied an ear for harmony and an eye for painting or for rural scenery, even he has declared, that "some praise must be allowed to him who does *best*, what such multitudes are contending to do well." To say this, is something, yet it is to be a niggard of our speech to say no more, when such liberal delight is the object of communication.

In every department of elegant literature Mr. Nicholls displayed the same correct taste. His knowledge of history was copious but chosen; in

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* Dr. S. Johnson, in his Life of Shenstone.

ancient and in modern writers he was accurately versed, and in all subjects he had recourse to the original springs of knowledge. In the French and Italian languages, as well as in the particular modes of the life and manners of those countries, he was eminently instructed; and the merits of every author and poet of distinction were familiar to him. In the most polished society of un-revolutionized France, and in the Tuscan conversations, he was received as a native. He seemed, indeed to have transfused into his habits and manners such a portion of their spirit, that many persons were inclined to think, that either the Seine or the Arno might have claimed him for their own. In Italy, during his short sojourn among the unrivalled remains of genius and of art, he accurately studied and comprehended the works of the greatest masters of the pencil. He did this, not with the idle spirit of a loitering traveller, but with the unremitting application of a man who knew the value of his time and of his talents.

He felt and prosecuted the dèsire of improving them by an honourable familiarity with the designs of great painters and sculptors, and of fixing in his own mind those forms of excellence by which his judgment might be guided, and his recollection gratified, in the future course of his life, among its choicest and most liberal amusements.

Mr. Nicholls was by nature communicative, "and his spirit was not finely touched, but to fine issues." His younger friends will be gratefully alive to my words, when I allude to his willingness, and even his eagerness, to impart information and to diffuse rational pleasure. Such indeed were his good manners, his benevolence, and his hospitality, that his spirits might be said to shine through him: and in the reception of friends, of acquaintances, and of strangers under his roof, were shewn that readiness and urbanity which announced the gentleman of birth and the man of breeding. I am indeed convinced that there is

not a scholar, nor a man of fashion with the attainments of a scholar, who knew Mr. Nicholls intimately, who would not willingly have adopted the words of the poet of Syracuse, and hailed him as the

Τον Μωσαις φιλον ανδρα, τον ϑ Χαριτεσσιν απεχθη.*

He was passionately, perhaps rather too much, devoted to musick. He had studied it accurately as a science, under some of the greatest masters; and in the pursuit and cultivation of it he was untired and indeed indefatigable. But he generously communicated his knowledge and his taste to congenial, and particularly to young, minds, in which he saw and marked the promise of genius and the ardour of application.

His manners, his habits, and his inclinations, naturally led him to frequent the most polished society; but study and letters rendered the intervals of solitude useful and agreeable. In his

* "Friend of each Muse, and favourite of each Grace."

sphere of life and action, by his instruction, by his influence and by his example, he diffused over an extensive district an elegance and a refinement unknown before he resided in it. As a county magistrate (one of the most important offices which a private gentleman can undertake) he was diligent and regular in his attendance; and in the discharge of his duty in that function, which is indeed the unbought defence of civilized society and unknown to other countries, he was useful, discerning, temperate, and impartial.

To those friends who visited Mr. Nicholls, and partook of his refined hospitality and of his entertainments at *Blundeston*, it may possibly have appeared that his mode of life required a large command of fortune, and that an ample patrimony could alone supply the display of such generosity. Yet his inheritance, which was inconsiderable, and his professional income, which was not large, defrayed the whole. He had indeed the most discerning œconomy which I ever observed in any

man; an œconomy, which neither precluded liberality to his equals nor, what is far more important, charity to his inferiours. The fidelity, the attachment, and the conscientious services of his valuable domesticks, some of whom had grown old under his roof, made them rather humble friends than servants; and, by the faithful discharge of their several duties, they relieved him from attentions which otherwise must have been required. But his eye, his mind, and his heart pervaded all his concerns. In no private duty was he deficient; nor was any thing considered as too minute for his own inspection, if he thought it necessary; and he was aware of the wisdom which dictated this important aphorism, that "he who despiseth little things shall fall by little and little." In the direction of his house, in the embellishment of the rural scenery, in his library, in his studies, and in all things which produced that integrity, order, and harmony, which proved that all was well within, and that every end, which he

wished, was accomplished; in all these, I would repeat it with earnestness, he relied invariably on that "*magnum vectìgal,*" that possession in reserve, that subsidiary strength, the parent of peace, the guardian of private life, and the support of all publick government, DISCREET ŒCONOMY.

In that sacred and bounden duty, which is owing from a son to a parent, he was eminently exemplary. Having lost his father, so very early in life as scarcely to have seen him, his attention and reverential attachment to his mother, to her extremest age, was singularly affectionate, unremitting, and unvaried: and, with the pious choice of his illustrious friend Mr. Gray, "in death he was not divided." He always expressed his intention, and he directed it by his will, that one grave should enclose their remains; and it does enclose them. I myself, in company with another friend, solemnly attended them through the church-way path, with christian resignation and with quiet

obsequies, to the house appointed for all living. Yes; it is finished:

Nihil oh tibi, amice, relictum:
Omnia solvuntur jam Matri, et funeris umbris!

If such a desire be indeed a weakness, it is at least honourable to our common nature, and I envy not the heart of him who is disposed to censure it.

Of his higher and important professional duties Mr. Nicholls was neither unmindful nor neglectful. He was regular in the discharge of his sacred offices as a clergyman in his parishes, in which he generally resided between nine and ten months every year, and during his residence he read prayers and preached twice every Sunday. There was a peculiar propriety and decorum in his manner of reading, and though his mode of preaching was not peculiarly eloquent, it was impressive and often affecting. The matter of his sermons tended more to the discussion and en-

forcement of the moral duties of the Gospel, than to the consideration of the subtle points of theology. His compositions for the pulpit were, as I think, formed chiefly on the model of Massillon and Flechier, in whose writings he was conversant. He conscientiously adhered to the Church of England from principle, and had an aversion to all dispute and controversy. He maintained and recommended, publickly and privately, every doctrine which upholds legitimate government, and prevents confusion political and theological. He loved his country, he loved her laws, her ordinances, her institutions, her religion, and her government, for he knew that they have made, and still make, England to be WHAT IT IS. He abhorred every troubler of the state, the specious reformer, the obstreperous tyrannical demagogue, and the disorganizing sophist. He dreaded also the influence and the principles of the Romish church, and, however they may be softened or explained away by modern statesmen, he depre-

cated their encouragement, or their revival, among us; but he loved that toleration and freedom which the church and constitution of England, steering between opposite extremes, grant with evangelical discretion to every sect of Christianity, however distinguished. Indeed it may be said to his honour as a clergyman, a scholar, and a man of uncommon attainments, that he was moderate, enlightened, indulgent, and liberal. "Nullius obscuravit gloriam, nullius obstitit commodis, nullius obstrepuit studiis; dignitates non ambivit; quæstum non venatus est."

When he was a child, his constitution was delicate; but as years advanced, by care, by exercise, and afterwards by foreign travel and change of scene and of climate, by a scrupulous attention to his person, and to a neatness never exceeded, and by an even placid temper, his frame acquired a strength, an alacrity, and a springy activity which, I think, accompanied him to the last, and gave a zest to his pursuits and vigour to his faculties.

But on all the labours, the troubles, and the enjoyments of our nature the night, in which no man can work, advances fast; and, however unwilling, we must all hear

> "The due beat
> Of time's slow-sweeping pendulum, that marks
> The momentary march of death on man."

The hour was now approaching rapidly when his sun was also to set: for an unperceived decay was undermining his constitution, and many a flaw hinted mortality. Yet it must be confessed that, with all his cheerfulness of temper, with every internal assurance of a well-spent life, and with every assistance from philosophy and from religion, Mr. Nicholls, like many other good and blameless men, could never sustain in thought the shock of final separation from the world, without a visible reluctant emotion when he spoke of death. But ere we make any remark, surely we may ask, who is sufficient for these thoughts? Can we answer, one of a thousand? However,

if there were any weaknesses about him (and who is exempt?) I think one of them was that of flattering himself with an extended prospect of long continued health and strength beyond what is permitted to man:

Quæ facili sperabat mente futura
Arripuit voto levis, et præsentia finxit.

His appearance, indeed, never bespoke his age: and in the best sense of the word, I think, he was always young.

In the spring and summer of the year 1809, Mr. Nicholls was attacked by a species of cough, the nature or the cause of which he could not ascertain. His countenance, during that period, sometimes bore marks of great indisposition and of a tendency to, what is called, a breaking up of the constitution. But still he continued his accustomed occupations; he enjoyed, as usual, the company of his friends, and he promoted their happiness. But his infirmity evidently increased, yet without any alarm or apprehension of its fatal

tendency. I think indeed that he had by no means a distinct view or expectation of his dissolution, either in the beginning or in the progress of his malady.

A very few days before that termination, which was so soon to take place, he returned home, much indisposed, to Blundeston, where he received every assistance from his faithful and afflicted domesticks, and experienced every affectionate attention and relief from a physician* for whom, I know, he uniformly and constantly expressed his esteem, and in whose care and skill he placed a confidence unlimited and unvaried. But his complaint, which was bilious, increased beyond the reach of art; a dissolution of strength, without a pang which tortured or a pain which exhausted him, succeeded; and from the sudden bursting of a blood-vessel, he breathed out

* Dr. Girdlestone of Yarmouth in Norfolk.

his virtuous spirit by an instant and quiet expiration.

I now, my dear Sir, close my letter. Much I have omitted, and many an incident have I suppressed which your recollection will supply. I am unwilling to lessen general interest by minute amplification; nor would I by too eager a zeal frustrate the labour of love. I have never, in the whole course of my life, offered praise to any man when living, or flung incense on his tomb, from the unqualified consideration of his rank, of his connections, or of his wealth; but to genius, to learning, and to virtue, in what station soever united, I have always paid, (and however unworthy I may be to do so) I hope I always shall pay, my most deliberate homage. I feel that this tribute was due to my deceased friend; and I know that my pen has been guided by a pious and disinterested affection. I hope also that you, or any of our friends into whose hands it may

fall, will either approve or excuse this little memorial of a most valuable and accomplished man, whom I loved and esteemed when living, and whose departure I most sincerely and most deeply regret.

Your's, &c.

T. J. Mathias.

P. S.

In compliance with your suggestion and with your wish I annex, as a supplement to this letter, the Italian Ode, or Tuscan Canzone, which I prefixed to a publication of mine in three volumes, entitled "Aggiunta ai Componimenti Lirici de' più illustri Poeti d'Italia," and addressed to Mr. Nicholls, *when he was living*, as a mark of my regard and of my friendship for him, and of the very high sense which I entertained of his virtues, his genius, his learning, and of his accomplishments. Perhaps it may not be displeasing to such of his friends as are versed in the Italian language.

It was composed at his villa at *Blundeston;* and, as you may probably revisit that beautiful scene sooner than I shall, I will subjoin the pathetick words of Tasso, a little varied, as they are not wholly inapplicable on this occasion.

" *Ivi pende mia cetra ad un cipresso:*
Salutala in mio nome, e dalle avviso,
Ch' or del CARISIO estinto al marmo i' piango!"

ALL' ERUDITO

E NELL' AMENA LETTERATURA VERSATISSIMO

NORTON NICHOLLS

PRESENTANDOGLI

L'AGGIUNTA AI COMPONIMENTI LIRICI SCELTI

DE' PIÙ ILLUSTRI POETI D' ITALIA.

CANZONE.

Qual per le vie dell' etra
Sul Tamigi armonía, sovrana e nuova,
Par che raccenda e muova
All' Arno, fida sì, straniera cetra!
Qual par ristauro porga
Molle spirando invano aura di Sorga!
Sento fremendo i sanguinosi campi[a]
Tra fólgori, tra lampi;
E vedrai tu nel bel soggiorno, eletto
Delle Grazie ricetto,
Di fausta luce aspersi, e in mezzo all' armi,
Avventurosi entrar dovuti carmi?

---

[a] 1807.

Te chiamo in suon più grato,
Te nato ai vezzi delle colte Muse,
Cui già raccolse e infuse
Suoi dolci spirti Italia in grembo amato;
Or che Febo ti dona
D'ogni almo fior natío gentil corona,
E ride al vago e singolar lavoro[b]
De' numi agresti il coro,
Tra quei d'alto riposo alberghi queti,
Ove bramosi e lieti
(Già spenti, oimè!) pasceva un tempo i sguardi
Quel Grande che cantò le tombe e i Bardi.[c]

---

[b] La Villa del Sig. Nicholls, detta *Blundeston*, alla spiaggia orientale della Contea di *Suffolk*, due miglia lontan dal mare, disposta ed ornata da lui con singolare fantasia e con giudizio squisito. Il Sig. GRAY, de' Lirici Britanni sovrano, la vide già con ammirazione, e molto ancora attendea dal genio del disegnatore.

[c] GRAY.

Dive sante, v'ascolto!
Care, solinghe, dilettose guide,
Lusinghiere, ma fide,
Eccomi all opra vostra accinto e vólto!
Ecco, dal fonte ameno,
Divoto pur, vengo a versarvi in seno
La pellegrina ambrosia, che in su' labbri
Del bel parlare ai fabbri
Larga spargeste! or che al mio patrio tempio,
Con memorando esempio,
Con raro affetto al sordo volgo ignoto,
Tosche cetre i' sospendo, e sciolgo il voto.

Ma del Signor di Delo
Vedo al facondo fiume i noti cigni,[d]
Con augúrj benigni
Piume spiegando eterne al puro cielo;

[d] SPENSER, MILTON, e GRAY;

Ecco la bella scuola
De' maggior Toschi, al *nostro* Camo in riva.
Chi la sente, la segua.

Odo i lor santi gridi;
E impresse miro ne' Britanni lidi
L' orme novelle, in non comun sentieri,
De' maggior Toschi alteri:
E quei, che abbandonar' la Chiusa Valle
Per l'alto Argivo[e] calle,
Veggio leggiadri almo-beanti spirti
Festosi errar tra lauri estrani e mirti.

Della sognata corte
L'armonico Cantore[f] aurea immortale
Toccò l'arpa reale,
Dolce, sublime, variata, e forte;
Di Ferrara sull' acque
All' estro in preda il Cigno[g] udilla, e tacque:

---

[e] La scuola Greca de' Lirici Italiani sotto il Chiabrera, le cui tracce seguirono il Menzini, il Filicaja, il Testi, il Guidi, ed altri valenti poeti.

[f] SPENSER, Autore del poema intitolato "The Fairy Queen."

[g] ARIOSTO.

Poi l'un ver l'altro in suoni or non dispersi,
Ma per amor conversi,
Temprar' lor note in dilettevol modi;
E con più vaghi nodi
Unir' tra loro, in ben diviso impero,
Del finto i vezzi e lo splendor del vero.

Ve' chi dall' alto regno [h]
Scese, abbassando il suo parlar profondo
Giù per lo bujo mondo,
E s'inchinò, di riverenza in segno,
Al grand' esul di Flora [i];
Ma, risentendo poi la divina ôra,
Le rose colse all' immortal confine
Senza terrestri spine;
E, aprendo strane e non usate vene,
Alle Muse Tirrene
Sciolse labbro facondo in maggior vanto,
E rise l' Arno, e riconobbe il canto.

---

[h] MILTON. [i] DANTE, esiliato dalla sua patria.

Flora è l' antico nome di Firenze.

Ma quai suonan parole!
Qual su le nubi appar forma[k] celeste,
Nella purpurea veste
Accesa ai raggi del Tebano sole,
E di splendor sì cinta
Che lascia dietro a sè l'aria dipinta!
Alza l' Eolia cetra, e scopre un quadro,
U' si vede il leggiadro
Colle di Delfo, e la frondosa chiostra,
E in amichevol mostra
L' Arno e l' Ilisso, ne' color più vivi,
Col Tamigi mischiar non strani rivi.

" Non è ancor (l'Ombra grida)
" Spenta ancora non è la bella luce:
" Nuovo destin l' adduce,
" E man Febea (la vedo) a noi la guida.

---

[k] GRAY.

" Chi con tanta fidanza
" Sveglia d' antico amor la gran possanza,
" E spegne ai fonti ancor la nobil sete?
" E, oltre ai gorghi di Lete
" Le vele alzando dell' ardita nave
" Di dotta merce grave,
" Altero passa; e al Pindo intorno desta
" D'alto-spiranti carmi aurea tempesta?

" Felice lui! se spieghi
" Il santo ulivo, e al Lidio plettro chiami
" I turbati reami,
" E con soave forza inclini e pieghi,
" E alle Pierie leggi
" Fermi d' impero i vacillanti seggi,
" Possente d' acquetar con cetre e canti
" Le procelle sonanti!
" Ma il sento: s' apre d' armonía la strada;
" E alla Tosca contrada
" Voce più d' una par che dolce s' oda,
" Che ogni aspro cuore intenerisce e snoda."

Qui tacque: ma dappoi
Fissando in me quel folgorante sguardo,
Che ancor ne tremo ed ardo,
Riprese: " E chi sei tu? dimmi, se puoi,
" Qual fido e dolce raggio,
" Balenando in tuo volto, al bel viaggio
" Guidotti a trar d' inni tesor nascosti
" Da luoghi alti e riposti?"
" Vero è, rispos' io: non tanto puote
" La natural mia dote:
" Di Pindo il sacro Dio per sè mi volse;
" Dal frale ingegno mio vergogna ei tolse."

Indi, con occhio molle
Di lagrima segreta, e il cuore afflitto,
Agitato, trafitto,
Dissi: " Con voglie ardenti, e non satolle,
" Nè mai con santo orgoglio
" Orma impressi bramata al Campidoglio,
" Nè alle ampie moli, avanzi gloriosi
" Su quei colli famosi;

" Nè mai sull' Arno, al ventilar del lauro,
" Sentii dolce ristauro;
" Amor mi mosse, e forse il tuo volume,
" A spander largamente il Tosco fiume.

" Ed or dovuti serti
" Porto al CARISIO[1] tuo ...." Con voci tai
I sovrumani rai
Levò l' Ombra, gridando: " E *a me* suoi merti,
" E l' ingegno non stanco
" Tra cetre e carmi e studj, e il cuor sì franco,
" Costumi ornati, e il viver dolce e cheto,
" Anche fur noti; e lieto
" D' un' amistà sì rara i frutti ei colse,
" Nè morte la disciolse;
" Tutto in esso mi piacque, e ancor mi piace;
" Salutalo in *mio* nome: io parto in pace."

---

[1] CARISIO—Sig. Nicholls; era egli l' amico intimo del Sig. Gray. Vedi le Memorie e Lettere del Gray pubblicate dal Mason.

CANZON, va sovra l'onde,
Di Tebro no, ma del lucente *Lago* [m]
Che bagna, ameno e vago,
Le sue fiorite e verdeggianti sponde;
Là, dove in ogni parte
Sta pensosa Natura, e tace l'Arte.

---

[m] Alla graziosa villa di *Blundeston* del Sig. Nicholls. (Vedi sopra not. p. 150) Quivi si scuoprono da per tutto i mobili cristalli d'un limpidissimo *Lago*, coll' *Isoletta* sua, che vagheggia intorno una ridente prateria, amenissime collinette e boschetti folti d' alberi, ora bizzarri ora maestosi, i quali offrono allo spettatore le più belle e variate vedute anzi quadri, degni del più dotto pennello.

T. J. MATHIAS.

Agosto 1807.

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