

REVIEWS REVIEWED;

INCLUDING

AN ENQUIRY

INTO THE MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL EFFECTS

OF

HABITS OF CRITICISM,

AND THEIR INFLUENCE

ON THE GENERAL INTERESTS OF LITERATURE,

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED

A BRIEF HISTORY

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BY

JN<sup>o</sup>. CHA<sup>s</sup>. O'REID, ESQ.

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*Ne scutica dignum horribili sectere flagello.*

HORACE.

*Nihil est tam volucre quam maledictum; nihil facilius emittitur;  
nihil citius excipitur; nihil latius dissipatur.*

CICERO.

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AN  
ENQUIRY

*Into the moral, intellectual, and literary Effects  
of Habits of Criticism, &c.*

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“To fame whate'er was due he gave—to fame,  
“And what he could not praise, forgot to name.”

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I HAVE selected these lines as a motto to the following remarks, on account of the striking contrast which they present to the spirit of Criticism. They form part of FENTON'S Panegyric on Waller; and had they been penned by any later bard, they might, probably, have been construed into a covert satire on the “age we live in.” Perhaps in the estimation of many they contain no very high eulogium; or, at least, the praise which they convey may appear only suitable to the character of a poet. Some persons may be conscious that it is not exactly what they cannot *praise*, that they “forget to

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"name." In fact, the age of panegyric is past; Fame has forsaken Poetry for the loftier mansion of Criticism, and has found very different employment. This ill wedded pair now fill the throne of letters, and a most ill-natured progeny have sprung from their union.

It must be obvious to every attentive observer, that the number and character of critical Reviews is a striking peculiarity of the age. The fearful ascendancy they have gained in the literary world, their extensive and powerful effects on individual character and public opinion, and their consequent importance as a moral and political engine, must awaken the jealous attention of the statesman as well as the philosopher: Criticism has of late years been gradually assuming a new character. It is no longer the study or the pastime of a few. Its dominion is no longer confined to the speculative regions of taste, and scholastic learning: but a new power has sprung up under this name, whose pretensions embrace all the various subjects of human opinion, and whose influence is felt in a greater or less degree through all the orders of society.

The legitimate and original design of Criticism, was to illustrate the productions of genius, and by carefully collating them with the universal dictates of nature, to deduce from both a settled and defined code, to which all

matters of taste might be referred. It formed no distinct object of the Critic to discover and display the defects which alloyed their excellence: far less did these occupy his chief attention. Taste may indeed be *corrected* by examining imperfection, but it can only be *formed* by conversing with those attributes and qualities which are the sources of delight. When, however, the works of living authors were selected for discussion, it was not long that Criticism preserved that impartiality and candour, which distinguish the lover of truth. Soon she found this service a dull and unprofitable employment, and growing proud of the attention which she had gained, she assumed the robes of Knowledge, whose handmaid she had been, and courted the incense of the public. She discovered how the evil bias of the mind displayed itself in a malevolent preference for satire and detraction, and this preference she resolved to consult and nourish. She succeeded: the passion spread: the wise and the good caught the infection, and laughed with the Critic whom their hearts condemned. The talents of a Critic soon came to be estimated by his severity, and the popularity of a Review to depend on its shameless virulence. Month after month the priests of Criticism amused the enlightened public with their Mexican sacrifices. Piety and worthlessness, dullness and ge-

nus were alike attacked; and nobody enquired who it was that they were hurrying away to premature oblivion. The public laughed, and purchased; and the Reviewer enjoyed his triumph and his gains.

The objects which the writer of these pages has in view, are to excite attention to the moral consequences of the ascendancy and extended influence of the Reviews of the day—to trace the effects of habits of Criticism on individual character—and lastly, to enquire into their operations upon the general interests of literature. The two first considerations are so intimately connected, that they must be blended together in the discussion; which, however inadequately conducted, claims at least that attention which is due to an evil of no chimerical existence.

In the use which is made of the words Criticism and Critic, it is necessary to begin by premising, that they are here applied, in a familiar sense, to that class of writers exclusively, who are called Reviewers; and to those periodical bulls of literature, which are issued with the mysterious sanction of anonymous power. That the habits of thought which are induced by such a direction of intellectual exertions, must have a real and considerable influence on the mental character, is obvious. The intellectual distinctions which exist in society, either

from original constitution, or from artificial causes, apart from moral character, form an interesting object of enquiry and observation. In the mind of the poet, as an instance of the former, we trace the usual characteristics, a delicacy of mental perception in relation to a particular class of attributes and qualities, as beauty, goodness, &c. and united to this, a peculiar vividness and activity of the faculties of conception and association. Perhaps we may characterize the Critic, as one who, by habits of abstraction and minute attention, has acquired the power of suspending at will the operation of those objects which are addressed to his imagination and passions, and of judging of such objects according to certain ideas of propriety and fitness existing in his own mind. These ideas, from whatever source originally derived, have been systematized and modified by his own particular judgment and feelings, and receive therefore a shape and colour from his disposition and character. The Critic is a literary anatomist, on whom the natural impressions produced by beauty are likely to be faint, as he rather considers the muscular conformation and proportion of the parts. The most powerful pleasure he receives is of an artificial nature, and is caused not so much by the objects themselves, as by the exercise of his own faculties in a particular way upon those

objects, in reference to their hidden or secondary properties, or certain associations accidentally connected with them. By a habit of such exertions, the mental susceptibility is gradually weakened: and when a person has once learnt to resist the *natural* influence of one class of external impressions, the next step is easy to a callousness of the moral sense, which is soon taught to submit itself to the fallible control of the judgment. Such at least appears to be the tendency of these critical speculations. Generally, too, the perverseness common to human nature will co-operate with that melancholic turn which is the usual result or attendant of study, in producing a morbid sensibility towards all that is defective, and an acuteness of perception towards the ridiculous.

If this be in fact the character which habits of Criticism have a tendency to form, and not an ideal portrait, and if this character exist, not only in the shape of a Johnson, or a Smollett, but in the numerous petty *Rhadamanthi* of the day, this part of our enquiry will not appear unimportant to those who consider the active influence which such men exert in producing, to a certain extent, their own likeness. For not only is such a habit occasionally induced in an individual; it is a character which more or less pervades the whole of society. Every body is not indeed a Critic in any sense, nor

pretends to be so; but every body is now a reader of Criticism. Almost every one that reads at all is enlisted under the banners of some particular Review, and very few have wholly escaped the taint of this spirit. The demand for this kind of writing must indeed be astonishing to those who are not aware, that with a fearful majority, Reviews are a substitute for all other kinds of reading—a new and royal road to knowledge, of which the indolent and the superficial are glad to avail themselves. The general thirst for amusement has been stimulated to such a degree, that it eagerly seizes whatever is proffered, no matter how impure the source. It is really laughable to witness the impatience with which the public wait for the pompous annunciation of the new number, which is to afford the materials of the next month's conversation and laughter. Our good fathers, when smoking their tranquil pipe over the Monthly Review, little imagined how their old friend was destined to be cast into the back ground by the number and talents of rival hosts, of every dimension and character, pouring from the press; how their children were destined to outstrip their fathers in every thing but diffidence of opinion; and with what easy decision they would learn to pronounce upon the rival claims of genius, and the pretensions of philosophy herself.

The first consequence resulting from this, is an encreasing passion for novelty. It is not meant to be affirmed, that the influence of Reviews has any thing more than an auxiliary effect in fomenting this inherent passion. But certainly it has a considerable tendency to divert public attention from every thing but the topic of the day. By this means, those treasures of wisdom which our ancestors laid up for us, but which by their excellence, or their date, are elevated above the notice or power of modern Criticism, are no longer known, or at best are treated with a cold and incurious homage: unless indeed some fortunate accident draws them forth from their dust, to run the short round of popularity. Books are rather topics than objects of attention. They are rather considered as mistresses, than companions and instructors: and hence it is upon their novelty, their external attractions, and transient fame, that they must rest their hope of gaining the regards of this dissipated age. No knowledge is valued which cannot be turned to some account in society; and therefore, "what nobody reads now," as "one has not time to read every thing," is read by nobody.

"The most beloved, (*when new*)

"Not long survives to day;

"So Music past is obsolete;

"And yet 'twas sweet, 'twas passing sweet,

"But now 'tis gone away."

The singular rage, which is now prevalent, for *complete* editions of old authors, appears to furnish some evidence that these complete works are but little read. The cumbrous trash, which this general whim has been the means of perpetuating, would soon weigh down the shadowy respect which is paid to the author, were the purchasers compelled to wade through the volumes with which they fill their libraries. But rarely is Criticism just, either as to the living or the dead. The former it depreciates, and it dishonours the latter: while the public too often rail at what they read, and praise only what they know nothing of.

Closely connected with the love of novelty, is that superficialness which so strongly characterizes even the circles of the well informed. Never was there, perhaps, so much of the parade of science, and the display of reading. At a time like the present, when some tolerable acquaintance with the various productions, which are perpetually appearing on every kind of subject, is a necessary passport in society, it is more difficult but more necessary than ever to make those sacrifices which must attend the sincere pursuit of useful knowledge. "Nothing (says Professor Stewart) has such a tendency to weaken not only the powers of invention, but the intellectual powers in general, as a habit of extensive and various

“reading, without reflection. It requires courage indeed, as Helvetius has remarked, to remain ignorant of those useless subjects which are generally valued ; but it is a courage necessary to men who either love the truth, or who aspire to establish a permanent reputation.” I fear it will be found, in spite of that more universal diffusion of curiosity and taste to which Reviews have essentially contributed, that the tone of conversation and style of thought, even in polite circles, has experienced no considerable elevation. Reviews have doubtless created and nourished a spirit of enquiry ; and they are well calculated, under proper management, to disseminate useful knowledge : but whether their average effects have been of a beneficial nature, may well admit of a question, unless all other avenues to knowledge had been closed to the uninstructed. Certainly the spirit of Criticism is of a superficial nature, and the fashion of the times is most unfavourable to habits of deep thought and candid enquiry.

A further illustration of the prejudicial tendency of the spirit of Criticism, may be drawn from considering what is the proper object of reading. Is it a means, or is it an end ? If a means, to what is it designed to lead ? Surely the attainment of wisdom, and the formation of the intellectual character, are the prime ob-

jects of pursuit : in order to secure which, there is a candour, a simplicity of feeling, which is as essential as any mental qualifications. But of this disposition the spirit of the Critic appears to be almost the opposite. It cannot be supposed, that, even as to those works which are immediately addressed to the imagination and passions, there is no occasion for the exercise of our moral and reasoning faculties, in selecting, distinguishing, and approving : but this is not to be made the object of reading. There are two classes into which books may be divided, according to their leading design ; that of the one being to inform the understanding ; of the other, to impress the heart. Now as to the former, the works which principally appeal to the judgment, the state of mind in which a person opens them, who is accustomed to regard every thing with the suspicious feeling of Criticism, is surely very unfavourable to the author's design. The person who is habituated to handle, with irreverent and prying examination, the productions of genius, imbibes also a feeling of equality, which accords but ill with the modest spirit of the disciple or of the humble enquirer after truth. He is to be ranked with the connoisseur and virtuoso : and who of this description was ever alive to the claims of uncanonized merit ? It is to be feared, that too much of this spirit is diffusing itself through so-



ciety. Persons accustom themselves to read a work for the purpose of forming an opinion of its merits, not to imbibe its instructive efficacy. Opinion indeed, paradoxical as it may sound, is the refuge to which the natural indolence of men induces them to fall back, in order to escape "the insupportable fatigue of thought." It is the fashion to have opinions, and how very different this is from having clear apprehensions, or just sentiments, is obvious. Laborious as reading may be to some, it is less irksome than thinking; and of all sorts of reading, as the ready-made wisdom of Reviews is that which is obtained at the least expense of intellect, it is of course preferred. If, however, the process through which the mind is made to pass in receiving the written ideas of another be of any importance; if the efficacy of a work consist not less in the ideas which it generates, and the impulse which it gives to the activity of the intellect, than in the thoughts which it immediately presents, it would seem to follow, that such writings must have a dangerous tendency. The object, however, of reading is certainly not much regarded, unless amusement be its name.

But is the acquisition of knowledge, the mere addition to the furniture of the understanding, the only object of reading? I conceive that no less importance is to be attached to the

manner in which we acquire this knowledge. Could learning of any kind be intuitively imbibed, or the wealth of science be instantaneously conferred, its value to that person would be much diminished, and its tendency be dangerous. There is a salutary efficacy in every step of the intermediate progress, by which we are educated and trained, as it were, for the reception of truth. There is a power in every book we read to have some effect on the character, independent of the notions which it contains. Books are the society of the mind, to which it has an insensible inclination to conform its habits and its manners. On a person accustomed to reflection, reading superinduces a series of active impressions, no less than a train of ideas; impressions determining the bent and shape of the character. The very action of the mind in reading is beneficial, as well as pleasurable. It is action which invigorates the faculties; and the efficacy of reading consists not less in its *empowering*, than in its *enriching* the mind; in its teaching us to think, no less than in its imparting to us the thoughts of others. There are few, perhaps, who pay any attention to the subjects of their consciousness, but may recollect some particular work, which produced a perceptible change in their habits of thought, and formed a distinct æra in their mental history. From associating with a su-

perior intellect, we catch some portion of its spirit, and for a while retain the reflection of the genius which we have been contemplating. I do not suppose that the generality of works possess this power, or that the minds of all are alike susceptible of these impressions. The majority of readers, perhaps, are inattentive to the operations which are going forward within. Instead of actively seizing what is excellent, and receiving the full force of its assimilating energy, they submit with indolent passiveness to every successive influence; and thus one great object of reading is defeated. For the impressions which are made by desultory and indiscriminate reading are so feeble, and often of so opposite a nature, that they efface one another, while, by this means, the activity and the susceptibility of the faculties become in time materially impaired. However, some effect will be produced on the most inert and superficial readers; and a succession of slight and varied impulses, conspiring in one tendency, will give a decided bias to the habits. According to the faculty which is called into action, however imperfectly it be exercised, will be the nature of this result. It is in this view, that novels and works of the same nature appear to me most injurious: and, tried by this standard, works of Criticism will, I think, be found hardly less pernicious to the generality of readers;

especially when they form the principal, if not exclusive, objects of attention. For, hence it is that the understanding, unacquainted with the grammar rules of common sense, the first principles of intellect, catches the jargon of the day, learns to talk by rote, but is unable to form any new combinations, or to exert itself with any independence or precision of thought.

It has been remarked, that in epistolary correspondence we unconsciously adapt our style to that of the person to whom we are writing; so that our letters frequently partake of a resemblance to our friend. Lavater contends that the very features are influenced by the countenance which we are accustomed to regard: is it then to be wondered at that something analagous to this takes place in the internal constitution? It is not the effort of imitation; it is a gradual insensible accommodation to external circumstances. We are the creatures of influences: and were we but alive to what is passing within, we should perceive that a constant mysterious process is perpetually going forward, by which our intellectual and moral characters are determined. Books are capable of contributing essentially to this process: they do contribute much; and while we are thinking only of pastime, or merely seeking to slake curiosity, our taste, our judgment, our imagination, our hearts, are receiving that

which shall leave the most important and permanent effects. Habits will grow up within us; it rests with us to determine the direction and form which they shall assume.

But, to return, Criticism has a still more striking tendency to vitiate the taste. There is a class of compositions which seems to take certain truths for granted, and certain principles as established, and to found on these an appeal to the more impressible powers of the mind—the imagination, the affections, and what has been termed the moral sense. Constituted as man is, governed by impulse more than by reason, these works are by no means of inferior importance. Their primary object, though not their principal end, is to please; to attain this end, too, in conformity to certain established laws of our nature, by which the sublime, the beautiful, the tender, are sources of delight. The beautiful in particular, however it may be defined, or to whatever standard it be referred, is connected with pleasure and love, as cause and effect. ‘What you love is beauty,’ said a lively Frenchman; and doubtless it is for wise ends that we are thus constituted. Surely the mere pleasure excited by beauty is not the only nor the ultimate design for which certain objects were thus adapted to our senses. The contemplation of the beautiful in nature has a moral influence; at least, in a well ordered mind,

these impressions are of a salutary nature. Independent of the suasive influence by which works of taste may be rendered subservient to the cause of truth, the sensations which they awaken are in themselves calculated to refine and soften the character. This, however, is not the place to analyze the nature and effects of these sensations: the point to which these remarks tend, is the influence of critical speculations, not only on Critics themselves, but on their readers, in weakening the sensibility, and in perverting the taste. We have before noticed their tendency to divert the attention from the native and immediate sources of pleasure, and to produce a morbid sensibility towards all that is defective. There are other circumstances which expose the Reviewer to peculiar danger. The power which he feels to be in his possession is in itself a source of temptation; for there is always a danger lest power should generate wantonness and selfishness. It is natural, too, that he should feel a regard for his own reputation paramount to the interest of the subject on which his anatomical skill is to be displayed. He is, in fact, an interested person. He stands in the situation of Attorney General to the public, and he feels it his interest to be severe on the party arraigned at their tribunal. To discover faults presupposes a knowledge of rules and abstract propriety, while beau-

ties are, through a vulgar prejudice, considered as more obvious to readers at large. Further, to a person whose business it is to read, and that for this particular end, the very drudgery must operate unfavourably to right impressions, and to that disposition in which an author would wish to find his readers. Every person accustomed to review will own, how very different are the feelings with which he runs through a volume for that purpose, from those with which he sits down to enjoy an author. From all these causes, especially if there exist any latent principle of malignity in the disposition, the common and natural result may easily be foreseen. And as to the general herd of Critics, we must leave them to grow into their own antidotes.

But a similar effect takes place in degree in all those minds upon which these Criticisms operate. A taste for Criticism insensibly supplants a relish for natural beauties: and though the judgment may be trained to strength and correctness by such pursuits, real taste, as before observed, is formed by a very different process. The decisions of taste are, in fact, the operations of judgment; but it is some such exercise of the faculty, as that which is included in the decisions of that complex apparatus, the human eye. The instinctive process by which the man of taste separates

and abstracts that which is beautiful, and avoids the mixture of defect, is of a very different kind from the keen attention which the Critic directs towards the failures and deformities of genius. "Where men of little discernment," observes Professor Stewart, "attend only to general effects, confounding beauties and blemishes, flowers and weeds, in one gross and undistinguishing perception, a man of quick sensibility and cultivated judgment, detaches in a moment the one from the other, and enjoys without alloy what is fitted to please."

I wish every disciple of Criticism would attentively read the whole of the admirable Essay on Taste, from which the above extract is made. The following sentiments bear so strongly on the present subject, that I cannot resist the pleasure of transcribing them. "While this cultivated sensibility enlarges so widely to the man who possesses it the pleasures of taste, it has a tendency, wherever it is gratified and delighted in a high degree, to avert his critical eye from blemishes and imperfections; not because he is unable to remark them, but because he can appreciate the merits by which they are redeemed, and loves to enjoy the beauties in which they are lost. A taste thus awake to the beautiful, seizes eagerly on every touch of genius. with

“ the sympathy of kindred affection ; and in the  
 “ secret consciousness of a congenial inspiration,  
 “ shares, in some measure, the triumph of the  
 “ artist. The faults which have escaped him,  
 “ it views with the partiality of friendship ; and  
 “ willingly abandons the censorial office to those  
 “ who exult in the errors of superior minds as  
 “ their appropriate and easy prey”—to those  
 Critics who may “ learn how to censure, but  
 “ who are incapable of being taught how to  
 “ admire.” (Philosophical Essays, by Dugald  
 Stewart, Esq. p. 485.) It was in the same spi-  
 rit that a gentleman of some literary eminence  
 once said, in my hearing, after expressing him-  
 self pleased with a recent volume of poems,  
 ‘ Perhaps I am more easily pleased than most  
 ‘ persons. I take up a work, especially a volume  
 ‘ of poetry, with the determination to be pleased  
 ‘ with the author, if I can ; and to receive the  
 ‘ impressions which he intended to excite. If I  
 ‘ find the faults so obtrusive, as to overpower  
 ‘ this pleasure, I lay it down—I have no delight  
 ‘ in criticising.’

This difference of taste must affect the cha-  
 racter of the mind, which,ameleon like, re-  
 ceives its colour from what it feeds upon. And  
 if our intercourse with ideas of beauty, loveli-  
 ness, and excellence, have any efficacy to har-  
 monize the passions, to sweeten the temper,  
 and to kindle within us a moral enthusiasm, it

is natural to conclude, that a morbid percep-  
 tion of opposite qualities must be attended  
 with a correspondent moral effect. We do well  
 to recollect that every posture tends towards a  
 shape, and every internal act to the formation  
 of an intellectual habit. It is not with impuni-  
 ty that we can neglect to observe the influence  
 of those casual associations, and those operations  
 of thought, by which a bias is insensibly given,  
 not only to our taste, but even to our moral  
 principles. It is with great pleasure I transcribe  
 from a Critical Journal, the following just and  
 sensible remarks on the influence of satire,  
 which may be extended to Criticism in general.  
 “ Considering satire most favourably, not as the  
 “ effusion of personal animosity, but as an at-  
 “ tempt to expose vice and folly to indignation  
 “ and contempt, we are of opinion that it is  
 “ rarely innocent. The exercise of ridicule im-  
 “ plies in the satirist, and excites in his reader,  
 “ a contemptuous feeling, composed of pride  
 “ and mirth ; that of invective, implies and ex-  
 “ cites an indignant feeling, composed of pride  
 “ and malice ; and however faint and harmless  
 “ these feelings may appear in single instances,  
 “ and on just occasions, the character which  
 “ they induce on the mind by frequent recur-  
 “ rence, is neither dubious nor amiable.” Ec-  
 lectic Review, Vol. IV. Part i. p. 513.

It has been said, that females are the best Cri-

tics, and the poet has often found much truth in the observation. What the case would be, were they to turn Reviewers, who can tell? for of all things a female connoisseur is the most disgusting: but perhaps the taste of a cultivated woman is in general more true to nature than the judgment of men; more under the influence of a refined sensibility, and of that amiableness of feeling, which is no less essential. They frequently possess that quick and unclouded perception, which receives by an intuitive glance the whole and just impression of whatever is presented to it. "There is a kind of instinct in genius," to use the language of a friend, "less fallible than reason. An architect may mistake, but a bird never does." This may with equal propriety be applied to that delicacy of taste, which is the most graceful attribute of the female intellect: and, where it exists, with regard to most subjects of taste and feeling, if we may not say that women are the best Critics, they are often worth all the Critics in the world; and furnish the best thermometer for all experiments upon the noblest affections of our nature.

To return from this digression, which, I hope, will not be judged wholly irrelevant—the last instance which I shall notice of the pernicious operation of the spirit of Criticism on moral character, respects that malignant and satirical

spirit which it fosters and promotes. The very name of "Satirist," must of itself present a forcible illustration of the remark. That the work which assumed that name should meet with any encouragement, is a circumstance which must grieve, as well as astonish, the benevolent and the thoughtful. Yet, in spite of the base scurrility, the indecency, and the profanity, in which it was pre-eminent, *it sold*; and it found purchasers among those who should have despised the low desire of "seeing what the Satirist says," because it was laughable, as well as impudent. We do not, however, hold out this publication as a specimen of Reviews, though the lengths which some of them have gone, in personality and impious levity, have been exceeded by that work alone. The secret history of Reviews involves a disgusting account of party malice, commercial rivalry, personal spleen, and unprovoked malignity. But it is the present purpose to remark the fondness which their readers discover for these *public games*. 'Only make us laugh,' is the tacit compact which is made with the Critic; 'we will not then oppose your decisions, we will wink at your principles, and credit your assertions.'

I have spoken of the Satirist, but may it not be added, that the Edinburgh Review is not more indebted for its ascendancy to the un-

doubted talent with which it is conducted, than to the boldness and bitterness of its satire, and its broad and coarse humour? The envious and malevolent passions of man need no such incentives. Whether Reviews only imbibe the spirit of the day, or are the source of its malignity, the effect is much the same, and the reflection the subject suggests, alike humiliating to human nature.

I shall now proceed to enquire into the operation of the Reviews upon the general interests of literature; in which respect they have been usually considered as upon the whole beneficial. It is a question of some importance, and well deserves investigation; but when we have to speak of their actual effects, rather than their tendency, the discussion becomes more difficult, inasmuch as it is often impossible to assign to a particular cause, its exact share of the effects which it has concurred with other circumstances in producing. Among these effects, however, must be ranked the different light in which literature itself, and men of learning, are regarded, from that in which they appear formerly to have been viewed. No doubt, the envious, the ignorant, and the superficial, have existed in all ages as the foes of genius and learning. It is obvious, on the other hand, that the wider diffusion of intellectual light may be assigned as a powerful and more pleas-

ing cause of the diminished reverence, with which the public look up to men of literary eminence. But is it not the fact that a certain class of studies, and indeed all those pursuits which demand patient and laborious research, have of late been sinking into disrepute; and the man of learning and genius, as such, enjoys no more that grateful homage which seems due to distinguished acquirements. Literature itself *interests* but few, though it *employs* so many more. Its honours are degraded; its pleasures are but little understood; it has assumed a commercial character, and is esteemed in this light. It has fallen a prey to Criticism.

It is surely not charging too much on Reviews to say, that they have been instrumental in encouraging a frivolous taste and a superficial character. Literature and science, seen through the medium of a Review, appear objects of a light and amusing nature; and this association with amusement, in the minds of numbers, is so close, that the latter soon comes to be considered as the only end of intellectual pursuits. It is but a slight transition to regard authors themselves, as musicians, or actors, exhibiting for the entertainment of all who pay their pence and their plaudits. The character of the poet or philosopher sinks in comparison with the Critic, by whom they are both kept in awe, in the estimation of the vulgar. In fact,

that *power*, the power of influence, of authority, and popularity, which once resided in men of letters and genius, and to which they owed much of the reverence of little minds, is no longer vested in their hands. It is transferred to the Reviewer: to him public opinion looks for the signal of applause or censure; and the power of a *name* fades before the spell of a mysterious anonymous agency. The Reviewers are demagogues, who are striving to raise their own importance, by levelling the distinctions of literary merit. The authors whose works a former age would have received with gratitude, and inspected with reverence, are brow-beaten, cross-examined, and held up to ridicule by the anonymous Critic, with cold professional arrogance. In the same confident and contemptuous tone, the literary fop retails the anathemas of his critical leader; and even those who love and duly appreciate excellence, stoop to a disgraceful compromise with the spirit of the times, and yield timid and qualified approbation. This change is certainly for the worse.

If men were indeed beginning to be more of thinking beings, instead of imitative animals, and were laying aside the leading-strings of prejudice and the shackles of opinion, in order to engage for themselves in the free pursuit of virtue and truth, it would be a cause of much less regret that the aristocracy of intellect, the

nobility of letters, were losing their hold on the public mind: but if they are only giving way to a new *legion of honour*, the offspring of a republican ambition; if a new power is to start up in the chair of Addison and Johnson, the plebeian mimic of their majesty, with only the power of the one, and the moroseness of the other; is not the change much for the worse? It has been considered as one symptom of a declining state, when men come to be distinguished less by their principles than their leaders. It appears to me that this is, though not ostensibly, yet in reality, the case with the republic of taste and letters. It is divided, not into parties, but factions; numerous little sects, not indeed the independents of old,—hostile to each other, without the magnanimity of ambition, or the firmness of principle; and only according in a vague impatience of old establishments and superior power. If any are disposed to think this sketch too highly coloured, it is enough if they admit the truth of the outline.

It would be a curious, but not uninteresting task, to trace the external history of science and literature through the successive dynasties, under which they have passed:—to develop the changeful operation of fashion, prejudice, and chance, in the rise and fall of names, and opinions, and pursuits. Leaving behind the ancient and universal empire of philosophy,



and beginning in our own little province, with Chaucer the Conqueror, we should be led through the peaceful succession of the Bardic Kings, who, with little interruption, long swayed the sceptre of letters in those twilight ages: then Bacon appeared, the greatest of intellectual monarchs. His mantle, however, falling on no successor, the empire devolved upon the school-men and pedants, and troublous times succeeded, till the sun of Milton rose. The Wits next enjoyed an unmo- lested reign. The Essayists followed; during whose mild and patriotic government, Philo- sophy awoke to renovated youth. Under Pope and Johnson, the state of letters may be con- sidered as a limited monarchy. The mighty Critic died, and has divided his empire among the Reviewers.

The next point of view in which I shall en- quire into the operation of Reviews, is, their effects upon authors themselves. But on a subject of such delicacy, the appeal must rest on arguments drawn from human nature, rather than on those facts which might be adduced. Upon some characters, the influence of Reviews must be of a discouraging nature. And if any are discouraged, it probably will be those very writers who most require, and would best re- pay, the fostering regard of their contempora- ries. Many such men, through timidity, disgust,

or disappointment, have been driven back into themselves; have remained satisfied with the solitary enjoyment, and the proud consciousness, of their intellectual powers, when they might have shone, "the Pleiades of earth." It is modest genius, and timid worth, on whom the dread of Criticism is most likely to operate. But is it only an idle dread, which they have to suffer? Was this all which the gentle mind of Cowper had to encounter, or which stung the aspiring soul of Henry Kirke White? And, if I might venture to press a living author into my cause, what name could be fixed upon, as a more striking illustration of what the diffident and feeling mind of genius is exposed to, from the baseness of an unprincipled Reviewer, than MONTGOMERY? a name which, long after his Critics are forgotten, will blossom in the fields of immortality. Nor must we omit to mention among those who suffer under this harsh disci- pline, those "industrious husbandmen," (to quote a Pamphlet of which I shall have fre- quent occasion to avail myself,) "who are not "impelled by want, or the lure of high wages, "but who *love their work*; and who think they "cannot better or more honestly employ the "time which God has given them than in this "task. These men, if treated with plain, homely "fare, are well satisfied; but they turn with dis-

"gust, and shrink back with fear, from a self-  
 "vice which exposes them to the headstrong  
 "and boisterous humours of some insolent  
 "task-master: and rather than endure his rail-  
 "ings and impertinence, they will eat their  
 "bread in private, and shun all communion,  
 "except with their nearest neighbours. Why  
 "(continues this sensible writer,) should we  
 "permit a few forward and loud talkers to con-  
 "found and silence such men as these? Why  
 "should we scare from the face of day that  
 "useful and laborious mediocrity, which is not  
 "ambitious of fame, although it may be tender  
 "of its reputation. This, surely, is neither  
 "consistent with justice, nor humanity, nor  
 "sound policy."

There are other characters, on whom the as-  
 cendency of Criticism operates in a different  
 way, tending to vitiate their taste, and repress  
 their ambition; men who might have attained  
 to excellence, but who have been content with  
 correctness—who might have deserved ad-  
 miration, but have taken up with popularity.  
 Some, perhaps, of an indolent habit, who have  
 been the more easily led to resign the study of  
 Nature's page, and a patient attention to her  
 laws, for the plausible speculations and conve-  
 nient rules of art; others in whom, from pecu-  
 liar circumstances, a fastidiousness of taste has

so far prevailed over their original sensibility,  
 that they at length grow confused and uncertain  
 in their own decisions, and surrender their  
 judgments more readily to the claims of the  
 Critic; and, perhaps, at length turn Reviewers  
 themselves.

But various are the descriptions of minds,  
 over which, in different ways and in different  
 degrees, the power of the Critic extends. It is  
 difficult for an author to avoid writing without  
 a reference to the tribunal, at which his works  
 must appear; a tribunal, be it remembered,  
 where not taste and learning preside, but an  
 arbitrary and self-erected censor. There is a  
 third class of characters, which is affected by the  
 Reviews of the day; and this comprises men,  
 whose luxuriance of genius, and ardour of soul,  
 call for the salutary check of well directed Cri-  
 ticism; but who, resenting the indignities  
 which they receive, and contemning the igno-  
 rance and prejudice of the Reviewer, spring  
 forward with aggravated impetuosity in their  
 eccentric career, full of the confidence of in-  
 ward might, and exulting in the enjoyment of  
 their freedom.

But it will be said, that periodical Criticism  
 must at least be useful in detecting and casti-  
 gating the effusions of dulness and error; of re-  
 pressing their circulation, if not of deterring

their authors from venturing into public. Is this, however, countenanced by matter of fact? Have the offences against good taste, and virtuous principles, been less frequent and flagrant during this reign of Terror? On the contrary, the notice of a Review is one of the smaller prizes in the lottery of Fame, which tempt the needy and the frivolous to stake their little all of reputation upon a peradventure. It may be questioned, whether Reviews have not been the means of *increasing* the numbers of worthless publications. They have at once disseminated the *cacoëthes scribendi* more extensively, while they have rendered the road to distinction more easy of access. In other ways they have indirectly had the same tendency. The manner in which they exhibit the imperfections and failures of the most eminent talents, has the effect of lowering them (as it were) to the same level of faultiness, on which lesser minds may take their stand. By destroying that feeling of deference which is due to mental superiority, they have removed a wholesome check on the presumption of literary pretenders.

If fewer productions of incorrigible but harmless dulness now employ the press, there is but little gained by the sparkling emptiness, and polished trifling of the day. But as to the castigative efficiency of Reviews, even if it were always

well directed and justly proportioned, it would be more for the public benefit if such works as deserve the censor's lash were suffered to sink, by their own specific gravity, into contempt and forgetfulness. The laws of attraction extend to the world of intellect: so soon as the first impulse which upholds it in motion is spent, the powerless body will be precipitated; while the spirit of genius, though his pinions be maimed, waits only for the aid of time, to soar up far above the clouds which envy or misfortune have collected. But when it is notorious how partial are the decisions, how interested or capricious the praise and the censure of the Reviewer, these publications appear in a character more decidedly evil. When neither the motive, nor the object, nor the means are good, what but evil can be the result? Nor, as they at present exist, are they entitled to much consideration, as the means of promoting the circulation of works of merit; for their usefulness in this respect, must equally depend on the fairness and judgment with which they are administered. It is quite foreign from the subject, to examine what benefit would accrue from a Review, conducted as it might be. It is only here contended for, that, as things now are, the average of their effects is most decidedly evil, and most extensively mischievous.

What has been before observed of the ten-

dency of habits of Criticism, to pervert the taste, to encourage a superficial character, and to stimulate the thirst for novelty, may be adduced as a further proof of their unfavourable effects upon literature itself. They must necessarily divert the attention from the remembrance, much more the study, of those chaste models, which are not only the best standards of taste, but the best lecturers too. Their effects upon moral character have also an aspect upon taste, the connection of which with moral feelings is not generally regarded. By teaching persons to suspect the native impulse of their own hearts, and to ask leave before they dare to commit themselves by admiration, they undermine the best sentiments of our nature. Add to this the positive error and false taste, which, originating in the incompetence or prejudice of the Critic, are made to pass current in the circle of his influence. Something might be said, too, on their effects in exciting a spirit hostile to literature, the spirit of dogmatism, and restless self-sufficiency; and in weakening those bonds of union, by which the common-wealth of literature is held together in prosperity and power. Is not a spirit of distrust and mutual jealousy among literary characters, much more prevalent than formerly; and may not this partly arise from the fears and suspicions awakened by anonymous Criticism? Few writers of eminence

but occasionally mask themselves in a Review, and thus every one learns to suspect a dagger under his rival's cloak.

Reviews form the origin and centre of parties; and all the petty feelings of party are by this means introduced into the world of letters. To his own circle each individual confines in measure his co-operative efforts and his generous praise: and thus, instead of those liberal and splendid associations which boasted of Jones, and Reynolds, and Percy, and Burke, we have the Edinburgh Reviewers and the Quarterly Reviewers. It is believed, that there exists little of that literary fellowship which was so common fifty years ago; and, with some distinguished exceptions, there are few of those general rendezvous, which were at once the focus of talent, and the nursery of genius. But one more consideration remains, which, though of secondary moment, must not be overlooked; namely, the influence of Reviews on *style* and *composition*. I do not intend to pursue this enquiry here, but merely to suggest, that the flippant and declamatory style which is adopted by most of the Reviewers—the sacrifice which is generally made in their writings, of correctness, purity, and elegance, to effect—the grossness which distinguishes certain grinning Critics, the puerile smartness of others, and the arrogance which is common to almost all—that all

these conspire in operating most prejudicially to sound taste, as well as to right principles.

In the enquiry which I have been attempting to conduct, with respect to the moral, intellectual, and literary influence of the Reviews, they have necessarily been treated indiscriminately, without particular reference to their individual character. I have dwelt upon their tendency as works of Criticism, rather than as organs of opinion, and vehicles for sentiment. Viewed in this light, they assume a new and terrific importance. The extent of the sale of the more popular is astonishing, and their very number renders them a formidable body. It would be too much for the most sanguine observer of human nature to hope, that even a majority of these should be actuated by pure motives, or directed to virtuous ends. But whatever hope he had indulged, would diminish as he drew nearer to the source from which they originate. What could he expect the stream would be, when the fountain itself is corruption? In fact, under this anonymous mask, the foes of religion and truth are unblushingly walking abroad in the face of day, and deliberately aiming at the best interests of society. This, happily, is not the character of all; and it will be best to take a slight review of the periodical censors of the year 1811.

The Monthly Review claims the precedence of seniority, having nearly completed its sixty-second year. In its better days, this publication sustained a character highly respectable, on the whole, for the talent which it displayed, and the dignified deportment which it observed. Though it has always, I believe, been under the influence of that political and theological bias, by which it is now so strongly marked, it was generally considered moderate and pretty impartial in its critical decisions. But in Dr. Griffiths, the late proprietor and editor, the work sustained a loss, which is not likely to be easily supplied. In proportion as it has appeared to decline in merit, it has increased in the boldness of its decisions, and the virulence of its censure. The hostility to religious truth, which has long been hinted in sly inuendoes, and doubts, and half-drawn inferences, has been of late more openly avowed; and the Monthly Reviewers have not scrupled to identify themselves with the enlightened and patriotic "Bar-rister," and to join in the old war-whoop of "No Methodism." It is melancholy to trace in this work, a resemblance to what is not unfrequently the progress of human character, where in youth the ardent spirit of enquiry has not been restrained by a conviction of human weakness, and a humble love of truth. An air of candour and moderation is for some time

preserved, resulting not more from native good sense, than from those early associations, by which the impressions and principles of our childhood are attached to the mind; and the effects of which are frequently perceptible, long after they have ceased immediately to operate. As the vigour of intelligence decays, the mind becomes more pertinacious of the ideas which it has cherished, and is blindly impelled forward, by the very force of habit, in that tract of thought to which it has been accustomed. The very doubts which cross that path urge it still onward, and give birth to a defensive hardihood, till at last it finds itself on the brink of age, amid those cold and speculative regions of scepticism, which once it shuddered at as "the frigid zone of Christianity." Will the reader forgive this digression, and remember, that as the progress of a Review is not unfrequently the actual counterpart to the progress of an individual mind, it is not so wholly irrelevant to the subject, as may at first sight appear. I do not mean to apply this to any individual in the present instance, but the analogy presented by the work now under consideration, will, it is hoped, be thought sufficiently striking to justify the general remark.

The Monthly Review was, perhaps, never distinguished by much delicacy of taste. Its forte was rather accuracy of information, and

solidity of judgment. Mr. Southey, however, in his beautiful Memoir of the late Henry Kirke White, has bestowed on this work an unenviable immortality, for its ungenerous treatment of a genius, which the Reviewer appears to have been incompetent to appreciate. I know not by what characteristic of excellence this Review is principally distinguished at present; but I cannot omit to notice its original and peculiar talent for Biblical Criticism. We need no better illustration of this than the following specimen: "Elijah's ascent to heaven in a fiery chariot seems to be an orientalism, expressive of his having been destroyed by a tremendous storm of thunder and lightning!" (See Review of Graves's Lectures on the Pentateuch, in the Number for January last, where the reader will find much more in the same strain of enlightened Criticism.) After what has been stated, it will be almost unnecessary to add, that the sale of this work has been of late declining, though numbers continue to purchase it for the sake of completing their sets. The present proprietor is the son of the late Dr. Griffiths, but the principal contributor, if he may not be called the editor, is said to be the Rev. Dr. Moody, of Turnham Green. Mr. Woodhouse, of Caius College, Cambridge, has long been, I believe, the principal mathematical writer in this Review.

The next in order is the Critical Review, which was established by the celebrated Dr. Smollett, in the year 1755. I shall take the liberty of transcribing from an admirable article on the word *Criticism*, in the *Pantologia*, the following brief character of the work. "It was conducted by himself (Dr. Smollett) with some ability, but with violent ill-temper, extreme insolence, and sometimes with glaring partiality, till he went abroad in 1763. This work has been unfortunate, the stock having at one time been consumed by a fire at the printer's, and the property having several times changed hands. It has consequently been marked with great inequality of talent, and the grossest violations of consistency. Till very lately, however, it has been respectable in point of execution; and is still purchased by those who have sets of the work, by the friends of those who are personally concerned in it, and by those partisans of Socinianism, who have the most zeal and the least delicacy." Its present editor is generally supposed to be Rev. R. Fellowes, whose "reputation," we are informed in this very work, "has been established in the literary world by various publications upon various subjects: they shew the extent of his researches, the elegance of his taste, and those habits of exact and profound reflection, which qualify him for giving new

"interest to common topics, and throwing new light upon the uncommon!" It would be ungenerous to attribute this eulogium to any thing but the gratitude of some poor hireling. We fear it cannot be justified even by the partiality of the fondest friendship. Mr. Woodhouse, of Cambridge, is said to be an occasional contributor to this Review, as well as to the Monthly. Mr. Friend, too, and Mr. Mawman, the publisher, have both, I believe, been occasional writers in this work. If we may attach credit to an intimation in a rival publication, Mr. Francis Hodgson, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and a translator of Juvenal, is entitled also to honourable mention. In reviewing that work, the *Eclectic Critic* exclaims, after quoting one of the notes, "Have we then at last discovered the being, who in a *critical* shape has annoyed intelligent and feeling minds, with his periodical brayings of dullness and malice over the sacred grave of Cowper?" We may presume the Reviewer would not have proclaimed such a discovery, had he not sufficient reason to justify his suspicion.

The *British Critic* was commenced June 1, 1793, "for the purpose of counteracting the principles of these two Reviews, both religious and political;" and has been principally conducted by some distinguished Clergymen. The names of Rev. Dr. Beloe, Mr.

Nares, Dr. Glegg, and Dr. Abram Robertson, of this University, of Dr. Wollaston and Professor Vince of Cambridge, and of Dr. Rennell, are a sufficient security for its being conducted with learning and integrity. It must be confessed, however, that it is very unequal in the talent which it displays, and that the style and temper in which it is written very much vary. It is to be regretted, that the liberality and candour to which it often rises, should not universally prevail; and that it should seem to require the Attic salt or *Scotch pepper* to give a relish to some of its unflavoured pages. The worst of it is, that Reviewers must needs be Encyclopedias. The Edinburgh Review must be meddling with divinity, the Eclectic Review with politics, and the British Critic with works of taste: and then they discover the weakness of their cabinet. To supply the deficiency of their meagre orchestra, the oboe and the violoncello are compelled to exert themselves, to sustain the part of the trumpet; and the soft breathings of the flute are attempted by the violin. However, it is well to have a man of respectable talent, as leader of the band, to keep time and to select the pieces.

There is, I believe, still in existence a Review called the Antijacobin, the immediate descendant of a newspaper of that name, which would

once have deserved considerable attention among the periodicals of the day. Perhaps Mr. Bowles, and Mr. John Gifford, may still be attempting to assert its claims; but I apprehend their most strenuous exertions will be insufficient to prolong its date much farther. It has for some time been in a declining state, and the symptoms betray internal complaints which must prove fatal. They have lately put on a very inflammatory appearance, and thrown out a humour of the most malignant kind, though, happily, not of a very infectious nature. In fact, its encreasing weakness and complicated disorders render its life no longer desirable.

The Gentleman's Magazine, the European Magazine, and the Literary Panorama, comprise in their plan a brief notice of new publications; and it would be easy to extract from each some delightful morceaux of Criticism, written in the true imperial style of Paternoster Row literati. Indeed we are under the necessity of believing, that the Editors themselves consider this portion of their labours as a mere *job*, by knowing the very respectable characters which they bear as individuals for learning or talent. Now had they considered a County History, a Biographical Dictionary, or an edition of Calmet, in the same light as a *job*, and had they



expended no more thought or diligence upon such works, it is very probable that the contrast between these and their anonymous labours would have been less striking. But a periodical work must now-a-days contain a Review, to give it a chance of *taking*; and this Review must be *done*; and must fill so many pages; and must be in the hands of the pressman by a certain period. The public want to be enlightened or amused, and poor authors are impatient to be reviewed; and nothing is more easy, with the help of a pair of scissars and an Encyclopedia. Thus, perhaps, in a careless hour, or a clouded mood, the drowsy or fretful Critic takes up his pen to trifle with the feelings, the character, or the interest, of a man who has done his best to serve the public; and to impose on that public, whose oracles they are, the random responses of a hurried mind. Secure in their concealment, they forget their moral responsibility, and think they have done their part, when the last proof is revised. Besides these, there is a department allotted to a 'Review of new Publications,' in the Universal Magazine, the Political Review, and the Satirist; besides the Christian Guardian, the Evangelical Magazine, the Baptist Magazine, the Gospel Magazine, the Monthly Repository, and the Christian Instructor; which confine their at-

ention, for the most part, to theological works. The Monthly Mirror, which belonged to the list, has just closed its literary labours, after repeated endeavours to obtain the patronage of an *ungrateful* public. This work, however, has had to boast of a few respectable contributors, and was conducted for some time with ability; but the last change in its administration left it nothing to deserve attention, but its portraits. The Review was flippant, and paltry, and ill-natured in the extreme. It is scarcely worth while to notice the Cabinet, a ridiculous work, which ran through a number or two, and in which, if I am not much mistaken, the celebrated *Barrister* has tried his pen.

Among the Reviews recently extinct, the Annual, the Imperial, and the Oxford, deserve notice. The public are pretty well acquainted with the secret history of the last of these speculations, for which neither the industry of the indefatigable Dr. Mavor, nor the enterprising spirit of the renowned Sir Richard Phillips, could obtain success. The following extract is from a respectable French Journal: "Les Archives Littéraires de l'Europe, ou Mélanges de Littérature, d'Histoire, et de Philosophie;" and apologizes for having erroneously charged the members of this University with the pompous prospectus of that work:

"Notre dernière feuille contient une annonce

“ erronée que nous empressons de rectifier.  
 “ Nous y avons parles d’un nouveau journal  
 “ littéraire, que devoit publier l’Université  
 “ d’Oxford; et nous nous sommes permis de  
 “ censurer le ton emphatique qui régnoit dans  
 “ le prospectus. Ce ton étoit en effet ridicule,  
 “ et ce n’est point en cela que nous nous  
 “ sommes trompés; mais nous l’avons été  
 “ comme tout le monde, même en Angleterre,  
 “ sur l’authenticité de cette pièce. Nous ne  
 “ pouvions soupçonner que ce fût tout simple-  
 “ ment une espièglerie d’un libraire de Londres,  
 “ qui, fâché de voir censurer dans les feuilles  
 “ littéraires existantes les livres qui sortoient  
 “ de son magasin, s’étoit imaginé d’imprimer  
 “ lui-même une nouvelle Revue, et de l’an-  
 “ noncer comme une entreprise de l’Université  
 “ d’Oxford, destinée a arrêter le jacobinisme  
 “ scandaleux des autres critiques. La ruse eut  
 “ d’abord du succes. Les recommandations,  
 “ les complimens arrivoient en foule a l’Univer-  
 “ sité, qui alloit prendre en main la cause des  
 “ vrais principes, et du bon goût. Mais il se  
 “ trouva bientôt, qu’aucun des savans, qui la  
 “ composent ne voulut convenir, qu’il eût des  
 “ relations avec le nouveau journal. On pré-  
 “ tendit d’abord que c’étoit un jeu de leur part,  
 “ et qu’ils vouloient garder l’anonyme pour  
 “ mieux mettre à couvert l’indépendance de  
 “ leurs jugemens. C’étoit un heureux subter-

“ fuge, mais la chose avoit fait tant de bruit  
 “ qu’il fallut bien que la verité percât; et tout  
 “ le monde apprit enfin qu’aucun savant vivant  
 “ à Oxford n’avoit promis de travailler a cette  
 “ Revue si pompeusement annoncée. Nous  
 “ ignorons encore si, après cette decouverte, le  
 “ libraire a renoncé a sa speculation. Quant a  
 “ nous, nous tâcherons a l’avenir d’être le moins  
 “ que nous pourrons dupes des espiègleries de  
 “ libraire.”

The Imperial Review was of short duration. The Annual Review was distinguished by bearing on its title page the name of its responsible editor, Arthur Aikin. It extended to seven volumes, and exhibited a most curious patchwork of genius and pedantry, learning and ignorance, religious principle and unprincipled scepticism: an affected and pompous style, with an abundant display of bad taste and bad temper, and an open avowal of revolutionary notions, must be confessed to have been the pervading characteristics of the work.

We have reserved this place for the separate consideration of two works, which in point of talent are, to say the least, inferior to none which have passed before us, and which stand forward as the representatives of the religious world; we allude to the Eclectic Review, and the Christian Observer.

“ The Eclectic Review, which commenced

“ with the Year 1805, was instituted as an antidote and substitute for such of the existing publications, as its conductors deemed of pernicious tendency.” It rested its claims on its “ upright, benevolent, and disinterested motives,” on its “ selective plan,” and on its “ freedom from all party bias.” The conductors of it were a committee of Gentlemen, to whose liberality it owed its support, and who, though for the most part Dissenters, were desirous of obtaining the concurrence of the members of the Establishment in their undertaking. The merits, however, of its early numbers, were not sufficient to obtain for the work that rank in public estimation, which was so desirable; and though there were some excellent articles, it was certainly not adapted for a wide circulation. By the accession of a new Editor, of considerable abilities, it was gradually raised into respectability, and some distinguished writers having come forward, it has had latterly to boast of articles displaying learning, genius, and taste, far superior to most of its rivals. The names of Rev. Robert Hall, (of Leicester,) Dr. Olinthus Gregory, Mr. Montgomery, Drs. Adam Clarke and J. Pye Smith, Rev. J. W. Cunningham, and Rev. John Foster, are, I believe, among those whose contributions have rendered its numbers highly interesting and valuable.

It must still be confessed, that it is very unequal in its execution. Besides the disadvantages it labours under in common with all monthly works of Criticism, it has suffered much from the peculiar circumstances of its institution. It has been crippled and persecuted, and almost weighed down by its friends. The jealous and officious interference of its supporters, and the undue control of its patrons, have operated in various ways to its injury. Articles have been admitted, because they might not be refused; others suppressed, because their justice would offend: Criticisms have been capriciously mangled after they have left the author's hand—these have been the impediments which it has had to surmount, in attaining any degree of eminence or impartiality.

But, however excellent the motive from which this publication originated, and however capable it may be of being rendered extensively useful, it is very questionable, whether it be at present more beneficial in its tendency than most of the other Reviews: for if its pages be unsullied by the impiety and error which are to be found in them, there are other reasons for which this work must be esteemed prejudicial. Its pretensions are high; it stands forward as the representative of the religious world, as a defender of the faith; and while, on the one hand, its decisions obtain a currency

and authority in an extensive class of society, to which other Reviews have little access, it is no less important to remark, on the other hand, that the character of religion itself, so far as religion is connected with that body of Christians which supports the Eclectic, is involved in the conduct of the Review. A peculiar responsibility is thus attached to its writers. Those high interests which its conductors aim to promote, become entrusted to the opinion of an individual, whose bigotry, or partiality, or incompetence, may thus be the means of affixing a stigma on his friends and his cause, and of giving unnecessary offence to a jealous and captious public.

It is not proposed to enter into the discussion, how this responsibility has been sustained. It is no grateful task to point out those cases, where the peculiar character which a Christian Review should sustain, has been lost sight of. But I cannot forbear respectfully to remonstrate with the conductors of this work, on the vehemence and bitterness which distinguish the pen of at least *one* of its writers. Were I to appeal to that writer himself, it is not probable that he would condescend to listen to a voice so feeble; or I would remind him, that to be original it is not necessary to be affected; that flippancy is not wit; that there is a "meekness" connected with true "wis-

dom," and a mildness essential to real dignity. Why must Criticism be excluded from the benevolent control of Christianity? Why may not the golden maxim be enrolled among its canons? Is the spirit of Criticism so essentially evil, and so injurious to the social feelings, that even religion is found incapable of neutralizing its acidity? A great deal has been said about literary justice, but if this be incompatible with Christian mercy, with a candid construction of the motives, and a tender regard to the feelings and interests, of others, let us then be unjust.

It was the observation of a great man, "He that publishes a book in which he has done his best to serve the public, provided there be no evil in it, is entitled to their gratitude." And especially when genius and science enlist themselves on the side of virtue and religion, the friends of religion and virtue should not be the most eager and severe in pointing out their deficiencies, even though the world accuse them of partiality, or suspect their taste and discernment. If there be really no alternative between being dull and being ill-natured, no other way of conciliating the public opinion and regard than by dogmatism and severity, then let the design of establishing a Christian Review be at once abandoned.

There are writers, who have lent this publi-

eration the support of their talents, of a very different spirit; writers, whose genius and acquirements would render them valuable contributors to any work. The Critic to whom I have more particularly alluded, may be easily distinguished from his fellow-reviewers. His papers bear the evident marks of a powerful and enquiring mind; and evince not unfrequently depth of thought, and warmth of feeling, but with a great deficiency of taste and candour. His periods are excessively diffuse and inflated; and there is throughout his pieces an eagerness of *display*, and an affectation, which extend to his style both of thought and language. Should these pages attract his notice, I entreat him to believe the writer to be impressed with unfeigned respect for his talents and his character, while he regrets the misapplication of the one, and these inconsistencies in the other.

The CHRISTIAN OBSERVER is entitled to the respect and gratitude of all classes of the religious community, for its general consistency, moderation, and various excellence. Many of the contributions with which it is enriched, especially those on practical subjects, are alike above Criticism or praise. It is a work worthy of the motives from which it sprang, and the cause to which it is devoted. It is, then, with reluctance that I except from this high but just eulogium, that part of it which

forms almost its only vulnerable point, the Review. The spirit of Criticism—the splenetic, uncandid, and, we must say, unchristian, spirit of Criticism—is suffered to mingle at times with the better principles which breathe through their pages. There is too much of the appearance, especially in some younger Critics, of stooping to a disgraceful compromise with the fastidious spirit of the times; as if their reputation for acumen could only be supported by an eagle-eyed severity, or as if true dignity consisted in a frown. There is a sort of timid deference, with which the opinions of the Edinburgh Review are opposed or referred to, which ill accords with the independent, and even dictatorial strain, sometimes assumed towards works equal in talent and far superior in integrity. The Reviewer is sometimes apparently solicitous to qualify and defend the faint praise he administers, and to atone for the tribute exacted from his feelings, by admissions the most satisfactory to those who, from dulness of perception, or obtuseness of nerve, might not be able to sympathize in his admiration: at other times there appears a disposition to indulge in a cold and bitter censoriousness, which has drawn forth the remonstrances of its own friends. With all these deductions, however, the Review may safely challenge comparison with any of its competitors. The reported editor of the Christian Observer, is

Zachary Macauley, Esq. the acting Secretary to the African Institution, *of whom the Edinburgh Review makes such honourable mention*, in the article on the 4th Report of the Directors, (No. 30.) I understand he is ably supported by some very respectable clergymen and other gentlemen; among whom the Vice-principal of St. Edmund Hall, the Rev. Josiah Pratt, John W. Cunningham, John Bean, H. Venn, and John Owen, Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Henry Thornton, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Grant, and Mrs. H. More, may be, I believe, safely mentioned as occasional contributors.

It only remains to notice the Quarterly Reviews, which form a distinct class by themselves, equal, or more than equal, in power and influence, to the combined hosts of Monthly Critics.

The EDINBURGH REVIEW, which stands first in point of order, and which long domineered without a rival over the reading world, is formidable for its eloquence, its boldness, and the extensive influence of its opinions. When it appeared at the close of the year 1802, it was a novelty in literature, and its great superiority to any existing critical work soon gained it an unusual degree of attention. The masterly disquisitions on subjects of Political Economy, which have enriched its numbers, constitute its principal claim to the high estimation in which its opinions have been held; but its popularity

has been no less promoted by the originality of its plan, and by certain "peculiarities" in the style in which it has been conducted. Of these, the author of an article in the *Pantologia* before referred to, assigns the passion for fame as the probable cause; "since (he adds) it would be ungenerous to attribute them to a more dishonourable motive." "It is this, no doubt, which has induced them to point their wit with malignity, to be brilliant at the expence of justice, ingenious to the neglect of truth, and insolent to the violation of decency."

"After having installed themselves," says the Author of the Reply to the calumnies against Oxford, "with a little harmless pageantry, in a court degraded by the corruption of its former magistrates, and having displayed to the gaping multitude, with some decent ceremony, though with some vanity, their new robes of office, they soon began to make them feel the full rigour of their jurisdiction. It was a rigour which fell indiscriminately on flagrant and on venial offences, on young and timid culprits, as well as on the most practised and incorrigible offenders; till at length the exercise of severity seemed to have blunted, and in some instances brutalized, the feelings of the judges. The punishments themselves were accompanied by new and exquisite tortures, deserved indeed in some cases, but frequently em-

“ ployed only because the subject was likely  
 “ to feel more tenderly, not because his crime  
 “ was greater, or his audacity more offensive :  
 “ and over too many of spotless life and charac-  
 “ ter, they wielded in wanton defiance of all our  
 “ feelings, the sceptre of tyranny instead of the  
 “ sword of justice.” Introduction, p. 5, 6.

This Review is said to have originated with two or three young men, fellow-members of a debating society at Edinburgh. At the publication of the first number, it is believed that the age of neither of them exceeded seven and twenty ; and their names were as yet little known. The honour of being its projector, is generally given to the Rev. Sydney Smith. Mr. Francis Jeffray, the present editor, and Henry Brougham, Esquire, were the first who agreed to unite with his their voluntary labours, and to try the experiment for a year. Their success surpassed their expectations. The work *took* with the public, and it soon became a most profitable adventure. They obtained the active concurrence of Professors Playfair and Leslie ; and though all their applications, I well know, were by no means successful, several names of great respectability were added to their muster roll ; among others, those of Mr. Malthus and Mr. Horner. The celebrated Dr. Walcot is said to have furnished an article relating to the fine arts, and Mr. Blomefield and Mr. Walpole,

of Cambridge, and Mr. R. P. Knight, have been enlisted, to supply the deficiency of classical writers on the north side of the Tweed, and to assist in abusing their countrymen. The last of these three gentlemen is the Reviewer of the Oxford Strabo. Such is their poverty in this respect, that some most curious anecdotes might be here introduced, to prove the shifts to which they have been reduced. A Scotch nobleman actually begged for Mr. Jeffray an article on Dr. Clarke's Greek Marbles, which was written for the Quarterly Review, and rejected by Mr. Gifford, the editor, even after it was printed, as unworthy of that publication. The identical paper appeared in the 30th Number of the Edinburgh Review. Their Criticism on some Greek verses, which, when too late, were discovered to be Pindar's, has been often mentioned : and Professor Copplestone, in his “ Replies to the Calumnies against Oxford,” has exhibited sundry proofs of their qualifications to enter the lists with an University on the subject of Greek and Latin literature. Indeed, his “ Second Reply to the Edinburgh Review,” is such a display of the disgusting prevarication, incompetence, and effrontery of his opponents, that I should think no degree of confidence in their assertions, and but a moderate idea of their logical and classical abilities, could survive the perusal of that pamphlet in any unprejudiced mind. The reader will find at

p. 492. of No. 34. of the Edinburgh Review, in a little note consisting of "corrections," a satisfactory admission, that "the printer is perfectly innocent of several of these errors." It is a pity that they were not equally candid with regard to their former blunders. In the department of Intellectual Philosophy they are more fortunate. Their numbers contain some very valuable articles under this head; though, as might be suspected, the strong national prejudices, which most of their writers manifest, give a bias to these disquisitions. It is, however, with regard to subjects of political economy, that the Edinburgh Review displays the greatest talents. The encouragement and support which the work is understood to receive, from two noblemen high in the estimation of the country, have contributed much to extend its circulation, and to raise its importance; while the violence and boldness of some of their speculations, have awakened considerable jealousy.

It would be well if this were all that we have to bring against the Edinburgh Reviewers. But the gross misrepresentation and falsehood which have stained their pages, the coarse scurrility and personality to which they have descended, and some most disgraceful articles on religious questions, have rendered this Journal an object of fear or suspicion to all who are concerned for the best interests of society.

"It is one of the ablest of our literary Journals," observes Mr. Copplestone, "and with the power of doing much good, seems to delight (shall I say it?) in doing evil. It glories in abusing the privilege which public admiration at one time, and public fear since, has conferred upon it. But it is time to raise the voice of injured freedom and insulted honour. It is time to convince the world that bitter invective and loud reproach do not always flow from the abhorrence of what is wrong, but often from the dislike only of what is different, or the envy of what is prosperous."

To substantiate such a serious allegation, it is only necessary to refer to their calumnies respecting this University; to their controversy with Dr. Olinthus Gregory, whose reply in the Monthly Magazine contains charges which they have been unable to repel; to their unjust treatment of Dr. Thompson (the chemical philosopher), Dr. Jackson, Dr. Thomas Young, and Mr. Pinkerton\*; to their Review of Hoyle's Exodus, "an article," to use the words of the Christian Observer, "which contains as broad faced and vulgar an attack upon the sanctity of the inspired records, as we can remember to have read in any language;"

\* This latter gentleman they first praised, and then, as soon as they had quarrelled with his booksellers, wrote a new article to censure and run down the very same book!



to their articles on the subject of Missions; their Review of Styles's Pamphlet; a Review of Montgomery's Poems before alluded to; and, not to multiply references, their Review of Ingram on Methodism. It is a melancholy spectacle to see genius thus wedded to buffoonery, eloquence debased by malignity, and talents which might purchase the blessing of posterity, prostituted to worse than ignoble ends. That a Clergyman should be found to deserve such a reprehension, is a consideration doubly painful. The annals of biography do not present a more awful or pitiable character, than a man invested with the sacred office of an ambassador of Heaven, treating with infidel levity the most sacred interests of man; persecuting with unprovoked rancour, men of better principles and purer aims than himself; and, to supply an indiscriminate passion for ridicule, hunting through the filthiest tracks of imagination, and overleaping the bounds of honour and truth. Such a character was Swift, whom the "Mr. Merryman" of the Edinburgh Reviewers appears to have taken for his model, and to whom alone, perhaps, he is inferior in original and coarse humour: both wore the cassock: both were great political pamphleteers: both were witty and profane, clever and scurrilous, brilliant and filthy.

With respect to the qualifications of Mr. Leslie as a literary censor, the public may be

enabled to judge, by consulting the Quarterly Review, No. 6. pp. 470—480: and for a display of his mathematical talents, article 2d in the 7th No. of the same work. To those who do not read the Eclectic, the following extract relative to his more illustrious compeer, Professor Playfair, may appear worthy of insertion in this place. I shall present it without comment, as a curious anecdote in the annals of reviewing. "Mr. Professor Vince, of Cambridge, published in 1807. an ingenious and remarkably *dispassionate* pamphlet, on the hypotheses which have been assumed to account for the cause of gravitation, from mechanical principles; at the end of which he infers, with perfect fairness from his premises (as we conceive) that the Deity in his government of the world, acts so 'that the whole is conducted by his more immediate agency, without the intervention of material causes.' Mr. Playfair, stimulated, as it would seem, by the prejudices of a Scotch mathematician against an English mathematician, of an Edinburgh Professor against a Cambridge Professor, of an infidel against a believer, of a presbyterian clergyman *converted* into a layman against an episcopalian clergyman converted into an archdeacon, became so 'exceedingly mad' as to loose his judgment; for, in criticising Mr. Vince's pamphlet (Edinburgh Review,

“ No. 25.) he not only throws out the most illi-  
 “ beral insinuations against the English Univer-  
 “ sities, and represents Mr. Vince’s most tem-  
 “ perate pamphlet as an ebullition of bigotry,  
 “ but actually makes, either intentionally or  
 “ accidentally, a blunder that would disgrace a  
 “ student in the lowest Edinburgh class ; a  
 “ blunder on which he grounds a charge of er-  
 “ ror against Mr. Vince. If we did not refer all  
 “ competent judges of the subject to p. 107. Vol.  
 “ xiii. of the Edinburgh Review, in proof of  
 “ our affirmation, we should scarcely expect to  
 “ be believed, when we assert, that Professor  
 “ Playfair *confounds two things so perfectly dis-*  
 “ *tinct as the motive and the accelerative force,*  
 “ *and rests on his own misconception a positive*  
 “ *contradiction of Professor Vince’s important*  
 “ *inference!* Either, then, Mr. Playfair’s unwil-  
 “ liness to admit that God superintends the  
 “ universe he formed, blinds his judgment, and  
 “ precipitates him into error ; or his determina-  
 “ tion to controvert Mr. Vince’s positions is  
 “ such, as induces him to make wilful falsehood  
 “ subservient to misrepresentation. We confess  
 “ we like neither horn of this dilemma : but  
 “ we do not see how the Northern Professor  
 “ can disentangle himself from one or other of  
 “ them. Our respect for his talents, however,  
 “ induces us to hope he will relinquish all con-  
 “ nection with the Edinburgh Review ; and we

“ shall close this digression from the work be-  
 “ fore us, by begging to remind Mr. P. that  
 “ while nearly all the other Edinburgh Review-  
 “ ers have characters to gain, he has an exalted  
 “ one to lose ; and that if he continue to write  
 “ as in the critique upon Vince, and with the  
 “ same sort of fatality to boast of the produc-  
 “ tion, his reputation must inevitably sink.”  
 Vide Eclectic Review, Vol. v. p. 1050.

It is from the *editor*, however, that the cha-  
 racter of this Journal must principally be  
 taken : and were I to select the distinguishing  
 feature of the articles attributed to his pen, it  
 would be in a word, eloquence. It is by the  
 powerful magic of words, into which the breath  
 of genius has infused mysterious life and ener-  
 gy, that the reader is impelled to yield up his  
 opinions and his feelings ; and for a while to  
 identify himself with another mind by submis-  
 sive sympathy. It is this, which has conferred  
 plausibility on the most sophistical reasoning,  
 which has given currency to the most unjust  
 censures, authority to empty declamation, and  
 speciousness to bad taste ; for no charge could  
 be brought against the author of some articles,  
 which would involve a more disgraceful impli-  
 cation than that of possessing either real taste, or  
 sensibility. The exquisite art which the Critic  
 has displayed in preparing the reader to receive

his opinions, evinces both a knowledge of the human mind, and ability quite adequate to improve that knowledge to any proposed end. If it be his aim to obtain the reader's admiration for his favourite poet, he surrounds him with the most beautiful and seductive scenery, calls up all the tenderest associations of the heart, and throws over the magic landscape the brightest sunshine of fancy; and when he has thus wrought up the feelings, and tuned every nerve to harmony, he introduces the object of his admiration, clad in her bridal splendour. Whoever has read the Edinburgh Review of Gertrude of Wyoming, will recognise the truth of this statement; while he has only to turn to the Criticism on Southey's 'Madoc' for a most striking contrast, in the vile ingenuity which is exerted in pre-occupying the reader with sentiments the most unfavourable to the author, and impressions the most opposite to those on which the poet's success must depend. It is difficult to reconcile, as the production of the same person, the delicacy of taste, the warmth of feeling, and the glowing imagination, displayed in some articles, with the cold deliberate malignity, the unfeeling and flippant air, with which other works are treated. The comparison must lead to conclusions implicating the moral rather than the intellectual character of the

Reviewer, and fully justify the remarks which have been made, on the pernicious tendency of habits of Criticism.

In estimating the extent of the influence which the decisions of the Critic possess, there is one consideration which must not be wholly omitted. Some may at first suppose, that those alone can be considered as influenced by them, who actually side with the Reviewer, and embrace his opinions. At least they may not be aware, how their own sentiments are sometimes insensibly biassed by a Review which they consider as unjust, or absurd. It is certain, that we may be pleased and inflated with flattery so obvious and gross, that we despise the person who offers it. The secret persuasion that, fulsome as it is, there may be some truth for its foundation, the idea that we are worth being flattered, and a momentary belief which still floats in the fancy when expelled from the judgment, co-operate in rendering adulation agreeable. It is in a similar manner that we are influenced by opinions from which we dissent, or assertions which we disbelieve. We are apt to imagine there must be some reason to justify our opponent, of which perhaps we are ignorant: we suspect some truth has given direction to his falsehood. Besides which, the objections which he has raised haunt us long after they have been fairly slain; and those

editor is understood to be the well known author of the *Baviad* and *Mæviad*; and among its first contributors are to be ranked Robert Southey, and Walter Scott. To these, public report or conjecture has added the names of the Right Honourable G. Canning, Sir William Drummond, Dr. Ireland, Dr. Olinthus Gregory, Mr. Mason Good, Dr. Thomas Young, Mr. Barrow, Mr. Heber, Mr. Ellis, and Mr. D'Oyley of Cambridge. From such men the country has a right to expect, at last, a work combining enlightened and impartial Criticism with independent principles, liberal sentiments, and orthodox opinions.

With respect to the conduct of the work hitherto, it is such as fully justifies the hopes of its friends, though it may not entirely have satisfied them. The *Christian Observer* indeed has taken upon itself to arraign some of the writers in the *Quarterly Review*, on charges which, if fully substantiated, would certainly demand strong reprobation. They involve "erroneous theology," "daring lightness of spirit on sacred subjects," and "a wanton and unjust attack" upon an individual. Though the accusations appear to me to rest partly on misconception, and to be backed by something like misrepresentation, though doubtless innocently employed, the *Quarterly Reviewer* ought not wholly to condemn the charge. He will

feel that there is some ground for reprehension, and he will therefore candidly forgive the Censor. He will do more. He will be cautious in future, on the one hand, to avoid being misunderstood, and on the other, not to give unnecessary offence to those, whose sentiments and principles are for the most part accordant with his own.

The *Quarterly Reviewers*, it is hoped, will not resemble their Northern rivals in treating with equal disdain the advice, the remonstrances, and the opinions of their friends and the public. They will not avail themselves of the privilege of being anonymous, in order to circulate that which would disgrace their names. They will not employ "that imposing plural style which overawes the solitary reader," in order to give "the weight and efficacy of a legal sentence" to hasty speculations, unfounded charges, and false Criticism. They will not feel less responsible because unknown, but will rather consider the office they have assumed as requiring the full exertion of their faculties, as well as a freedom from all party or personal prejudices. They will not be content with "saying what they have to say after their own manner, neither knowing nor caring for the sentiments of others." In short, they will not appear to think, that the character of the scholar, the critic, or

the philosopher, precludes or supersedes that of the christian and the gentleman.

The Quarterly Reviewers may promote the real interests of literature by discountenancing that flippant, dashing, and arrogant style, which forms the *manner* of the Edinburgh school. It has often appeared to me, that some of the Essays issuing from that school resemble the brilliant prattle of an accomplished woman, much more than the sober and dignified disquisitions of a moralist. There are some writers who are gifted with a considerable portion of cleverness, but whose minds, if I may so express it, want the semitones, and can therefore only perform in one particular key. Every thing, therefore, they touch, must be transposed, must be raised or depressed to a certain pitch, to suit this their peculiar conformation. They have but one manner, "their own manner," in which they treat alike a poem and a sermon; the follies of the age, and the finest feelings of the heart; the turn of a period, and the fate of a nation. Such persons are usually characterized by a sparkling and affected sort of levity, which, however amusing, is rarely the concomitant of a sound intellect or a good heart. But as a true gentleman will, with ease and readiness, adapt himself to the company into which he has been introduced, so a man of sound taste and understanding will conform his

style to the subject he is investigating: he will assume "the grave, the gay, the lively, or severe," according to the theme which employs his pen; and will not let the wit mingle with the divine, nor the *petit maitre* glitter through the philosopher. In reading the works of such men as Bacon, Locke, and Newton, there is no trait which is more strikingly predominant, than the unaffected modesty and simplicity with which they conduct their enquiries, and the candour which they exhibit towards their opponents. It was the natural result of an acquaintance with the imperfection of human knowledge, and of a consciousness of human weakness. But perhaps it is more apposite to the present subject, to remark the dignified elegance which was the distinguishing attribute of Addison and several of his school, and which is alike visible in their sportive and their serious pieces. That it is possible to combine the most exquisite wit and raillery with gracefulness and good humour, the author of the critiques on Sir John Sinclair, in the Quarterly Review, has evinced; and the Review of Crabbe's Borough, in the same work, may be brought forward as a fine specimen of all that Criticism ought to be, tasteful, feeling, erudite, candid, and philosophically just. From such critiques the most favourable auguries may be drawn. And I take the liberty of adding as my earnest hope, that the

Quarterly Review will not be so much occupied with the perplexities and angry disputations of a political or polemical nature, as to have little space left for the more delightful pursuits of literature and taste.

The present season has added one more to the host of Reviewers, under the title of "The British Review." It professes to oppose the principles of the Edinburgh Review, and to condemn "the whole system of modern reviewing," as "a gross libel upon the sound understandings and good dispositions of the well educated part of the people of England." A first number scarcely furnishes foundation for an opinion. Let us hope, that the conduct of the work will leave little room to regret this new addition to the corps de critiques, which at present appears unnecessary, and must be viewed with jealousy and suspicion.

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When I first took up the pen to express my conviction of the evils resulting from the ascendancy of the Reviews, I did not anticipate the length to which the subject would extend, nor the fatiguing route through which it would lead me. I feel no inclination to apologize for what I have done, conscious, as I am, that no unworthy motive has prompted me, nor any per-

sonal feeling influenced me, in the undertaking. I will venture to adopt the words of an old American sage, and while I "own that my subject is worthy to be much better treated, freely tell my readers that I have written what is, nevertheless, not unworthy of their perusal." In the strictures I have presumed to pass upon the different Reviews, it was my chief object to give the public that information which might enable them to form their own decisions, and I have only furnished so much of the private history as appeared necessary for that purpose. It will excite my deepest regret, if it be judged that I have taken any unwarrantable liberty with the names of individuals; but it is for the general welfare that these self-constituted censors should not remain anonymous. I have only repeated what was already known to a few, but conjectured by many; I have betrayed no one's confidence, nor aimed at any one's character.

It is not probable that the Reviewers themselves will condescend to notice me; or if they do, they will affect to consider me as some disappointed author, or some college pedagogue, ambitious of a contest with the great. But it is not for them I write. My design is to awaken the attention of the parent, of the man of taste, of all who feel for the interests of literature, to a subject in which they are deeply interested; and to warn those who seek the im-

provement of their minds, and who are susceptible of the refined pleasures of intellect, how they sacrifice the native sensibility and the simplicity of their taste for vain and artificial habits, and the cant of Criticism. Truth, in its most extensive sense, is the only proper object of pursuit, and wisdom the only end worthy of attainment. If literature be merely an employment, a pastime, or a trade, it is only not useless. If books be merely resorted to as topics of conversation, or subjects for the display of ingenuity, then novelty is their highest excellence. But let us remember, that, in all the exertions of our faculties, our leading object ought to be, to “render ourselves  
“ happy as individuals, and agreeable, respectable, and useful members of society.”

To conclude with a passage which can never be too often quoted, from our truly Christian poet, *Cooper*,

“ Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,  
“ Have oft times no connection. Knowledge dwells  
“ In heads replete with thoughts of other men,  
“ Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.  
“ Knowledge a rude unprofitable mass,  
“ The mere materials with which wisdom builds,  
“ Till smooth’d and squar’d and fitted to its place,  
“ Does but encumber whom it seems t’enrich.  
“ Knowledge is proud that he has learn’d so much ;  
“ Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.”

FINIS.