

ART. XI.—*Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh.* Edited by his Son, ROBERT JAMES MACKINTOSH, Esq. 2 vols. 8vo. London. 1835.

THERE cannot, we think, be a more delightful book than this : whether we consider the attraction of the Character it brings so pleasingly before us—or the infinite variety of original thoughts and fine observations with which it abounds. As a mere narrative there is not so much to be said for it. There are but few incidents ; and the account which we have of them is neither very luminous nor very complete. If it be true, therefore, that the only legitimate business of biography is with incidents and narrative, it will not be easy to deny that there is something amiss, either in the title or the substance of this work. But we are humbly of opinion that there is no good ground for so severe a limitation.

Biographies, it appears to us, are naturally of three kinds—and please or instruct us in at least as many different ways. One sort seeks to interest us by an account of what the individual in question actually did or suffered in his own person : another by an account of what he saw done or suffered by others—and a third by an account of what he himself thought, judged, or imagined—for these too, we apprehend, are acts of a rational being—and acts frequently quite as memorable, and as fruitful of consequences, as any others he can either witness or perform.

Different readers will put a different value on each of these sorts of biography. But at all events they will be in no danger of confounding them. The character and position of the individual will generally settle, with sufficient precision, to which class his memoirs should be referred ; and no man of common sense will expect to meet in one with the kind of interest which properly belongs to another. To complain that the life of a warrior is but barren in literary speculation, or that of a man of letters in surprising personal adventures, is about as reasonable as it could be to complain that a song is not a sermon, or that there is but little pathos in a treatise on geometry.

The first class, in its higher or public department, should deal chiefly with the lives of leaders in great and momentous transactions—men who, by their force of character, or the advantage of their position, have been enabled to leave their mark on the age and country to which they belonged, and to impress more than one generation with the traces of their transitory existence. Of this kind are many of the lives in Plutarch ; and of this kind, still more eminently, should be the lives of such men as Mahomet, Alfred, Washington, Napoleon. There is an inferior and

more private department under this head, in which the interest, though less elevated, is often quite as intense, and rests on the same general basis, of sympathy with personal feats and endowments—we mean the history of individuals whom the ardour of their temperament, or the caprices of fortune have involved in strange adventures, or conducted through a series of extraordinary and complicated perils. The memoirs of Benvenuto Cellini, or of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, are good examples of this romantic sort of biography; and many more might be added, from the chronicles of ancient paladins, or the confessions of modern malefactors.

The second class is chiefly for the compilers of diaries and journals—autobiographers who, without having themselves done any thing memorable, have yet had the good luck to live through long and interesting periods; and who, in chronicling the events of their own unimportant lives, have incidentally preserved invaluable memorials of contemporary manners and events. The Memoirs of Evelyn and Pepys are the most obvious instances of works which derive their chief value from this source; and which are read, not for any great interest we take in the fortunes of the writers, but for the sake of the anecdotes and notices of far more important personages and transactions with which they so lavishly present us; and there are many others, written with far inferior talent, and where the design is more palpably egotistical, which are perused with an eager curiosity, on the strength of the same recommendation.

The last class is for Philosophers and men of Genius and speculation—men, in short, who were, or ought to have been, authors; and whose biographies are truly to be regarded either as *supplements* to the works they have given to the world, or *substitutes* for those which they might have given. These are histories, not of men, but of minds; and their value must of course depend on the reach and capacity of the mind they serve to develope, and in the relative magnitude of their contributions to its history. When the individual has already poured himself out in a long series of publications, on which all the moods and aspects of his mind have been engraven (as in the cases of Voltaire or Sir Walter Scott), there may be less occasion for such a biographical supplement. But when an author (as in the case of Gray) has been more chary in his communications with the public, and it is yet possible to recover the precious, though immature, fruits of his genius or his studies,—thoughts, and speculations, which no intelligent posterity would willingly let die,—it is due both to his fame and to the best interests of mankind, that they should be preserved, and reverently presented to after times in such a posthumous portraiture as it is the business of biography to supply.

The best and most satisfactory memorials of this sort are those which are substantially made up of private letters, journals, or written fragments of any kind, by the party himself; as these, however scanty or imperfect, are at all events genuine relics of the individual, and generally bearing, even more authentically than his publications, the stamp of his intellectual and personal character. We cannot refer to better examples than the lives of Gray and of Cowper, as these have been finally completed. Next to these, if not upon the same level, we should place such admirable records of particular conversations, and memorable sayings gathered from the lips of the wise, as we find in the inimitable pages of Boswell,—a work which, by the general consent of this generation, has not only made us a thousand times better acquainted with Johnson than all his publications put together, but has raised the standard of his intellectual character, and actually made discovery of large provinces in his understanding, of which scarcely an indication was to be found in his writings. In the last and lowest place—in so far, at least, as relates to the proper business of this branch of biography, the enlargement of our knowledge of the genius and character of individuals—we must reckon that most common form of the memoirs of literary men, which consists of little more than the biographer's own (generally most partial) description and estimate of his author's merits, or of elucidations and critical summaries of his most remarkable productions. In this division, though in other respects of great value, must be ranked those admirable dissertations which Mr Stewart has given to the world under the title of the *Lives of Reid, Smith and Robertson*,—the real interest of which consists almost entirely in the luminous exposition we there meet with of the leading speculations of those eminent writers, and in the candid and acute investigation of their originality or truth.

We know it has been said, that after a man has himself given to the public all that he thought worthy of its acceptance, it is not fair for a posthumous biographer to endanger his reputation by bringing forward what he had withheld as unworthy,—either by exhibiting the mere dregs and refuse of his lucubrations, or by exposing to the general gaze those crude conceptions, or rash and careless opinions, which he may have noted down in the privacy of his study, or thrown out in the confidence of private conversation. And no doubt there may be (as there have been) cases of such abuse. Confidence is in no case to be violated; nor are mere trifles, which bear no mark of the writer's intellect, to be recorded to his prejudice. But wherever there is power and native genius, we cannot but grudge the suppression of the least of its revelations; and are persuaded, that with those who can judge of such intellects, they will never lose any thing by the most lavish and indiscriminate disclosures. Which of *Swift's*

most elaborate productions is at this day half so interesting as that most confidential Journal to Stella? Or which of them, with all its utter carelessness of expression, its manifold contradictions, its infantine fondness, and all its quick-shifting moods, of kindness, selfishness, anger, and ambition, give us half so strong an impression either of his amiableness or his vigour? How much, in like manner, is Johnson raised in our estimation, not only as to intellect but personal character, by the industrious eavesdroppings of Boswell, setting down, day by day, in his note-book, the fragments of his most loose and unweighed conversations? Or what, in fact, is there so precious in the works, or the histories, of eminent men, from Cicero to Horace Walpole, as collections of their private and familiar letters? What would we not give for such a journal—such notes of conversations, or such letters, of Shakspeare, Chaucer, or Spenser? The mere drudges or coxcombs of literature, may indeed suffer by such disclosures—as made up beauties might do by being caught in undress: But all who are really worth knowing about, will, on the whole, be gainers; and we should be well contented to have no biographies but of those who would profit, as well as their readers, by being shown in new or in nearer lights.

The value of the insight which may thus be obtained into the mind and the meaning of truly great authors, can scarcely be overrated by any one who knows how to turn such communications to account; and we do not think we exaggerate when we say, that in many cases more light may be gained from the private letters, notes, or recorded talk of such persons, than from the most finished of their publications; and not only upon the many new topics which are sure to be started in such memorials, but as to the true character, and the merits and defects, of such publications themselves. It is from such sources alone that we can learn with certainty by what road the author arrived at the conclusions which we see established in his works, against what perplexities he had to struggle, and after what failures he was at last enabled to succeed. It is thus only that we are often enabled to detect the prejudice or hostility which may be skilfully and mischievously disguised in the published book—to find out the doubts ultimately entertained by the author himself, of what may appear to most readers to be most triumphantly established,—or to gain glimpses of those grand ulterior speculations, to which what seemed to common eyes a complete and finished system, was, in truth, to serve only as a vestibule or introduction. Where such documents are in abundance, and the mind which has produced them is truly of the highest order, we do not hesitate to say, that more will generally be found in them, in the way at least of hints to kindred minds, and as scattering the seeds of grand and original conceptions, than in any finished works which the indolence, the

modesty, or the avocations of such persons will have generally permitted them to give to the world. So far, therefore, from thinking the biography of men of genius barren or unprofitable, because presenting few events or personal adventures, we cannot but regard it, when constructed in substance of such materials as we have now mentioned, as the most instructive and interesting of all writing,—embodying truth and wisdom in the vivid distinctness of a personal presentment,—enabling us to look on genius in its first elementary stirrings, and in its weakness as well as its strength,—and teaching us at the same time great moral lessons, both as to the value of labour and industry, and the necessity of *virtues*, as well as intellectual endowments, for the attainment of lasting excellence.

In these general remarks our readers will easily perceive that we mean to shadow forth our conceptions of the character and peculiar merits of the work before us. It is the history not of a man of action, but of a student, a philosopher, and a statesman; and its value consists not in the slight and imperfect account of what was done by, or happened to, the individual, but in the vestiges it has fortunately preserved of the thoughts, sentiments, and opinions of one of the most powerful thinkers, most conscientious enquirers, and most learned reasoners, that the world has ever seen. It is almost entirely made up of journals and letters of the author himself; and impresses us quite as strongly as any of his publications with a sense of the richness of his knowledge and the fineness of his understanding—and with a far stronger sense of his promptitude, versatility, and vigour. Before presenting our readers with some specimens of these most interesting relics, we should scarcely have thought it necessary to give even a summary of the simple but most honourable personal history of the individual: But, besides our consideration for the natural curiosity which most people have to know something of the private life and habits of those who have attained eminence, there are certain traits of character, by the knowledge of which they will be enabled both to relish more highly, and to understand better, the views and speculations of the individual. We shall venture, therefore, to premise a very slight and hasty sketch of his history.

Sir James Mackintosh, born in 1765, was descended of an ancient but not opulent family in Inverness-shire. He went first to College in Aberdeen, where he distinguished himself above all his contemporaries, less by his diligence or extent of attainment, than by the singular vivacity of his parts, the uniform suavity of his temper and manners, and the intrepidity and vigour of his speculations. Having fixed on the profession of

medicine, he afterwards went to finish his academical studies at Edinburgh; where he maintained the same unenvied eminence, in a larger and more advanced circle of competitors. He took his degree with credit in 1788; and soon after went to London with the view of following out his profession. Politics and letters, however, soon engrossed his ardent and ambitious mind; and though he seems at one time to have dreamed of trying his fortune as a physician in Russia, he speedily found the attraction of the distinguished society to which he had made his way in the metropolis, too strong to be resisted; and, giving himself up to the natural bent of his genius, resolved to study the law, and yield without farther struggle to that impulse which directed the rest of his life to literature, politics, and social distinction and enjoyment. He went through the usual apprenticeship of writing in newspapers and speaking in debating societies; but made his first bold step into public life by the publication of the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, in answer to Mr Burke's celebrated Reflections, in 1791. The consequence of this was his immediate admission into the intimate society of the leaders of Opposition, and the establishment of a reputation which at once threw open to him all the avenues to distinction. He was called to the bar in 1795; and in the end of the following year had the happiness of being introduced to an acquaintance with Mr Burke, which nothing but the speedy death of that illustrious man could have prevented from ripening into friendship. The atrocities which blasted the first fair promise of the French Revolution had by this time painfully abated the enthusiasm with which it had been regarded by Mackintosh and other sanguine philanthropists in this country; and in 1799 he delivered, in Lincoln's-Inn Hall, a series of lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations, in which, with singular eloquence, learning, and power of reasoning, he attempted to settle the rule of public and private duty, and to assign their just limits to the rights of a people and the authority of a government. The introductory lecture was published, and remains to this day the best summary and defence which has ever been made, of the noble science of which it professes to treat.

He had married soon after his arrival in London in 1788, and was thrown into the deepest affliction by the death of his excellent wife in 1797. In the following year he married a second time (Miss Allen of Cresselly, in Pembrokeshire), and continued to extend his society and reputation, and gradually to rise in his profession, till his celebrated speech, on the trial of Peltier for a libel on Bonaparte in 1803, seemed to place its highest honours within the fair range of his expectations. It was at this period, however, and when his professional income had risen to upwards of

L.1200 a-year, that his anxiety to realize an earlier and less laborious independence, and to secure more leisure for the execution of his literary projects, induced him to solicit the appointment of Recorder of Bombay, which he accordingly obtained in the close of the same year, and took his departure for India early in 1804. The experiment was not successful. Though we now know that his mind was in a state of great vigour and activity during the whole of his residence, he was not enabled to accomplish, and scarcely to begin, any of the great works he had contemplated; while his habitual inattention to economy prevented any great improvement in the state of his worldly affairs; and he returned to England in 1812, with broken health and spirits, uncertain prospects, and vast materials for works which were never to be completed.

Mr Percival was now at the head of the Government; and almost immediately on his arrival endeavoured to secure the support of Sir James, by offering him a seat in Parliament, and an early promotion to the head of the Board of Control. These tempting offers, however, he instantly declined, as 'inconsistent with those principles of liberty which were then,' as he has himself recorded, 'higher in his mind than they had been twenty years before.' But he was almost immediately returned, on the Whig interest, as member for the county of Nairn. His life after this scarcely admits of any detailed abstract. He continued in Parliament, and true to liberal principles, for the remainder of his days. He was appointed law professor at Haylebury, in 1818, and resigned that situation in 1827. He contributed articles of great value to this Journal. He furnished, in a preliminary discourse to the Encyclopædia Britannica, by far the best history of ethical philosophy which has ever been given to the world. He gave the most efficient support to Sir S. Romilly's exertions for the improvement of the criminal law;—and after the death of that admirable person, became the leader in that most necessary and unexceptionable branch of reform; and after printing several volumes of a popular and abridged History of England, which contains more thought and more lessons of wisdom than any other history with which we are acquainted, he left, at his death, that invaluable fragment of the History of the Revolution of 1688, of which we have endeavoured to give some account in our last Number. He was appointed to a seat at the Board of Control under Lord Grey's Administration in 1830, and cordially and effectually co-operated in all the great measures of Reform which were then brought forward. He died in 1832; regretted with more sincerity, and admired with less envy, than any man of the age.

His intellectual character cannot be unknown to any one ac-

quainted with his works, or who has even read many pages of the *Memoirs* now before us; and it is needless, therefore, to speak here of his great knowledge, the singular union of ingenuity and soundness in his speculations—his perfect candour and temper in discussion—the pure and lofty morality to which he strove to elevate the minds of others, and in his own conduct to conform, or the wise and humane allowance which he was ready, in every case but his own, to make for the infirmities which must always draw down so many from the higher paths of their duty. These merits, we believe, will no longer be denied by any who have heard of his name, or looked at his writings. But there were other traits of his intellect which could only be known to those who were of his acquaintance, and which it is still desirable that the readers of these *Memoirs* should bear in mind. One of these was, that ready and prodigious memory, by which all that he learned seemed to be at once engraved on the proper compartment of his mind, and to present itself at the moment it was required; another, still more remarkable, was the singular maturity and completeness of all his views and opinions, even upon the most abstruse and complicated questions, though raised, without design or preparation, in the casual course of conversation. In this way it happened that the sentiments he delivered had generally the air of recollections—and that few of those with whom he most associated in mature life, could recollect of ever catching him in the act of making up his mind in the course of the discussions in which it was his delight to engage them. His conclusions, and the grounds of them, seemed always to have been previously considered and digested; and though he willingly developed his reasons, to secure the assent of his hearers, he uniformly seemed to have been perfectly ready, before the cause was called on, to have delivered the opinion of the court, with a full summary of the arguments and evidence on both sides. In the work before us, we have more peeps into the preparatory deliberations of his great intellect—that scrupulous estimate of the grounds of decision, and that jealous questioning of first impressions, which necessarily precede the formation of all firm and wise opinions,—than could probably be collected from the recollections of all those who had most familiar access to him in society. It was owing perhaps to this vigour and rapidity of intellectual digestion that, though all his life a great talker, there never was a man that talked half so much, who said so little that was either foolish or frivolous; nor any one perhaps who knew so well how to give as much liveliness and poignancy to the most just and even profound observations, as others could ever impart to startling extravagance and ludicrous exaggeration. The vast extent of his information, and the natural gaiety of his temper, made him independent of

such devices for producing effect; and, joined to the inherent kindness and gentleness of his disposition, made his conversation at once the most instructive and the most generally pleasing that could be imagined.

Of his intellectual endowments we shall say no more. Nor do we mean to attempt any delineation of his moral or personal character. Yet there are two or three points on which we do not think that justice can be done without some observations. These are his political consistency and independence, the depth and tenderness of his domestic affections, and the extraordinary modesty, or humility rather, of his estimate of himself. On the first point he has been exposed to some paltry, and some malignant misrepresentations. On the other two, the greater part, even of his familiar associates, have not hitherto had such means of judging as the authentic revelations of these volumes have at last supplied.

On the first and most momentous of these chapters, we have fortunately anticipated all that we could now have been called upon to say; and those who will do us the honour of looking back to what is stated at p. 274, &c. of our last Number, will probably require no farther vindication of Sir James Mackintosh's honour and consistency in all that concerns his public life; nor indeed should we have at all recurred to the subject, but for the temptation of laying before our readers the following touching and high-minded explanation, addressed by Sir James himself, in a confidential letter to his friend Mr Sharp, written from Bombay in the end of 1804. After briefly noticing the calumnies to which he had been exposed, he proceeds:—

“ My fortune has been in some respects very singular. I have lately read the lives, and private correspondence of some of the most memorable men in different countries of Europe, who are lately dead. Klopstock, Kant, Lavater, Alfieri—they were all filled with joy and hope by the French Revolution—they clung to it for a longer or shorter time—they were all compelled to relinquish their illusions. I do not speak of the genius of the persons I have named, all pretension to which it would be arrogance in me even to disclaim. I speak merely of their enviable privilege, as private men of letters, to listen to the dictates of experience, and to change their opinions without any other penalty, than the disappointment of their own too sanguine hopes. This privilege was not mine.

“ Filled with enthusiasm; in very early youth, by the promise of a better order of society, I most unwarily ventured on publication, when my judgment and taste were equally immature. It is the nature of a political publication, in a free country, to associate the author, however obscurely and humbly, with practical politics. He will generally be more sure to feel the restraints than the advantages of the connexion.

“ At the same time warm personal attachments, I might almost call them affections, which I had felt from my youth, which I thought, and still think, upon strict principles of reason to be necessary parts of all practical politics in a free state, blended themselves with mine. Those only who had irrevocably attached their early hopes, their little reputation, which they might be pardoned for exaggerating, and even, as they conceived, their moral character, to the success or failure of the French Revolution, can conceive the succession of feelings, most of them very painful, which agitated my mind during its progress. They alone knew my feelings from whom no sentiments of mine could be concealed. The witnesses of my emotion on the murder of General Dillon—on the 10th of August—on the massacre of the prisons—on the death of the king, are now no more. But the memory of what it is no hyperbole to call my sufferings, is at this instant fresh. As often as I call to mind these proofs of deep and most unaffected interest in the fortunes of mankind, the indignation, the grief, the shame, which were not on my lips, but at the bottom of my heart, I feel an assured confidence of my own honesty of which no calumniator shall ever rob me.

“ The Revolution continued so much to occupy my thoughts, that I could not help constantly exercising my judgment on it. I could not forget it, nor shut my eyes on its events. It had grown to such a size, in my conception, that I could not quite consider it in that subordination to domestic politics which was natural to those who had great objects of domestic ambition. My mind was so fixed on it, that I could not but be most distinctly conscious of every modification that my opinions respecting it underwent. My changes were slow, and were still more slowly avowed. But they were not insensible; and I could not hope to persuade myself that I remained unchanged.

“ My lectures gave me an opportunity of speaking my opinion. I have examined myself pretty severely with respect to the manner in which I availed myself of that opportunity. As the adherent of a party (for such I professed myself to be, and as such, therefore, my conduct may doubtless be tried), I cannot, on the most rigorous scrutiny, find the least reason for blame. Personal attachment, as well as general (though not undistinguishing) preference of the same party to whom I had from childhood been attached, secured me perfectly from any intentional, and from any considerable deviation.

“ As a political philosopher I will not say that I now entirely approve the very shades and tones of political doctrine which distinguished these lectures. I can easily see that I rebounded from my original opinions too far towards the opposite extreme. I was carried too far by anxiety to atone for my former errors. In opposing revolutionary principles, the natural heat of controversy led to excess. It was very difficult to preserve the calm scientific temper of academical lectures, for a person agitated by so many feelings, in the year of the conquest of Switzerland, in the heart of London, to an audience, the very appearance of many among whom was sufficient to suggest trains of thought unfavourable to perfect impartiality, and, indeed, to rekindle many of the passions of active political contest. I will not affect to say that I preserved it.

“ But is this confession very important? Have I stated any thing more than a part of those inevitable frailties for which allowance is always made by rational men, and which are always understood whether they be enumerated or not? At this moment, it is true, I suppose myself in a better position for impartiality. I therefore take it upon me to rejudge my past judgments. But can I be quite certain that the establishment of monarchical despotism in France, and the horrible effects of tyranny and imposture around me in this country, may not have driven my understanding once more to a point a little on the democratic side of the centre? I own I rather suspect myself of this; and though I labour to correct the deviation, and am convinced that it is much less than ever it was before, yet I am so sensible of the difficulty of discerning the middle point in politics, and of the still greater difficulty of resting near it, in the midst of so many disturbing powers, that I cannot but feel some distrust of my present judgment, and some disposition not to refuse to my own past errors that toleration, which I never withheld from those of other men.”—(Vol. i. p. 129–134.)

On looking back to what we have now transcribed, we feel more strongly than before that the citation was unnecessary; and we only let it stand, as our first specimen of the dignity and candour with which the writer was used to think and to speak of himself and others, even under circumstances of great provocation. For a still better example of the same magnanimous forbearance, we shall merely refer to his remarkable letter to Dr Parr, at p. 329 of the same volume.

But though this general charge of inconsistency, or desertion of old principles, may now be considered as finally put down, we have observed with pain that another, and a more insidious accusation, has been brought forward since his death, to which it may therefore be proper to advert. The scope of this is, that Sir James Mackintosh was truly and in his heart a Conservative, ever after the time when he first despaired of the regeneration of the world by means of the French Revolution—that he was only restrained from avowing this by a weak fear of offending his original associates—and that he was induced by this, or a still baser motive, to give a reluctant, and consequently a dishonest, support, to the reform measures of Lord Grey’s Government, of which, in his conscience, he entirely disapproved; and, it is added, with appropriate liberality, that it was the knowledge of this disapprobation which prevented him from having a seat in the Cabinet under that Government. That the Conservatives should wish to grace their cause with such a name as that of Sir James Mackintosh we can easily understand; but we do not imagine that they will find many to credit this legend of his conversion. We have his own word at least, and the tenor of his whole life, to the contrary; nor indeed is there a shadow of evidence to give colour to the imputation. In the first place, it is plain from the letter we have just cited, that the change in his opinion, which to

place about 1797, was not such as implied the slightest departure from the principles of the party to which he had all along been attached, and amounted to no more than an increased sense of the value of old institutions, and the danger of all violent revolutions : And we find, accordingly, that it was so viewed by the illustrious man to whom it seems to have been first avowed, and who, of all others, must have been the most disposed rather to exaggerate than to undervalue its amount. In a letter of Mr Burke to Dr Lawrence (cited in a note to page 90, vol. i.), he speaks of Mackintosh's 'supposed conversion,' as 'no conversion at all'—and says, that though taking a different view of the interior politics of this island, he 'suspects that as to France and many 'other countries, he remains *as frank a Jacobin as ever.*' The matter, however, does not rest there : If Sir James Mackintosh had truly drawn a new light from the Tory star, then in its ascendant, by what should he have been restrained from following the example of Mr Windham, the Duke of Portland, and many other eminent men, who, without imputation of dishonour, had left their former connexions, and ranged themselves under the banner of Mr Pitt ? If love of place or emolument had any influence (as seems now to be insinuated) on his conduct, it is plain that he needed not then to have sought them on the opposite side of the globe. But the whole of his letters demonstrate that he never for an instant verged towards the principles or politics of the Tories ; or abated a jot of his zeal for reform, though impressed, no doubt, with a stronger conviction of the caution with which it should be pursued. In one of his earliest letters from India, he says—(in February, 1805)—'I am convinced that Pitt 'has done more harm by going into place with his creatures, and 'surrendering the country to the King, or his advisers, than King 'William did good—or at least as much.' And in another confidential letter, written soon after hearing of the dissolution of the Whig Ministry of 1806, he says (p. 375)—'I consider the late 'Ministers as the most deserving in the reign of George III., 'and the worst used in the history of England. All above and 'below them conspired against them, and betrayed them. Circumstances compelled them to be too democratical for the permanence of their power, and *yet not democratical enough—I will 'not say for the demands of sanguine men,—but for what I think the 'only chance of safety for the country.*' It is needless to multiply quotations to this effect. We have already seen, that on his return to England he at once declined taking office under Mr Perceval, as 'inconsistent with those principles of liberty which 'were then (1812) higher in his estimation than they had been 'twenty years before.' And the whole course of his social and parliamentary life, from that time downwards, attested the sincerity of this profession. As to the Reform Bill of 1831, it will proba-

bly be thought a sufficient refutation of the injurious assertion, that he gave it his public support against his private conviction, to cite from a most confidential letter to his sister-in-law, the following words:—‘ At all events, *I am proud* that we have produced a measure which nobody can deny to be disinterested, ‘ honest, and brave.’ This, too, was written in March 1831, before the freemen were perpetuated, the tenants at will admitted, or the number of the members restored to its original amount. But Sir James’s own speech on that bill is fortunately on record; and no candid reader can dispute that it displays as full and hearty a conviction of the necessity and safety of the measure, as it is possible for a thinking man to express. That a cautious and balancing understanding like his should foresee possible hazards from so great an alteration—or rather from the ulterior progress of that movement which made this alteration necessary as well as just—and from *the unreasonable opposition* which might be made to that movement, is probably true—as well as that he may have occasionally expressed such apprehensions: But that he ever hesitated as to the justice of the measure itself, or ever considered the dangers of granting it as in any way to be compared with those of its rejection, we not only do not believe to be true, but may say we know to be false. To endeavour to bring this into question, and to throw a doubt on the sincerity of professions thus sealed by the whole tenor of an honourable life, on some supposed inconsistency between them and certain general doctrines maintained in the lectures of 1799 (and not long after disavowed), or on certain propositions in a review by another person, to which he had given a passing word of commendation in 1809, appears to us to be as flagrantly unfair, and as ludicrously absurd, as it is to extract an admission of his being in the habit of voting against his conscience, from a brief note in his journal, in which it is set down without any special protest or remark, that ‘ Castlereagh said to me * * * * is an excellent politician, but, like you, he thinks right and votes wrong!’ But we have done with those paltry cavils—the result of which must be rather embarrassing, we think, for the enemies of reform. The best argument *against* reform, they assure us, is to be found in Sir James Mackintosh’s lectures in 1799; but if Sir James was sincere, as no one will now seriously question, in supporting reform in 1831, then he must have been convinced, with his matured intellect and longer experience, of the fallacy of that argument: and his whole authority passes therefore at once to the other side of the question.

We have said that the tenderness of his domestic affections, and the deep humility of his character, were not sufficiently known, even among his friends, till the publication of those private

records: For his manners, though gentle, were cold; and, though uniformly courteous and candid in society, it was natural to suppose that he was not unconscious of his superiority. It is, therefore, but justice to bring into view some of the proofs that are now before us of both these endearing traits of character. The beautiful letter which he addressed to Dr Parr on the death of his first wife, in 1797, breathes the full spirit of both. We regret that we can only afford room for a part of it.

‘ Allow me, in justice to her memory, to tell you what she was, and what I owed her. I was guided in my choice only by the blind affection of my youth. I found an intelligent companion, and a tender friend, a prudent mistress, the most faithful of wives, and a mother as tender as children ever had the misfortune to lose. I met a woman who, by the tender management of my weaknesses, gradually corrected the most pernicious of them. She became prudent from affection; and though of the most generous nature, she was taught economy and frugality by her love for me. During the most critical period of my life, she preserved order in my affairs, from the care of which she relieved me. She gently reclaimed me from dissipation; she propped my weak and irresolute nature; she urged my indolence to all the exertions that have been useful or creditable to me, and she was perpetually at hand to admonish my heedlessness and improvidence. To her I owe whatever I am; to her whatever I shall be. In her solicitude for my interest, she never for a moment forgot my feelings, or my character. Even in her occasional resentment, for which I but too often gave her cause (would to God I could recall those moments!) she had no sullenness or acrimony. Her feelings were warm and impetuous, but she was placable, tender, and constant. Such was she whom I have lost; and I have lost her when her excellent natural sense was rapidly improving, after eight years of struggle and distress had bound us fast together, and moulded our tempers to each other,—when a knowledge of her worth had refined my youthful love into friendship, before age had deprived it of much of its original ardour,—I lost her, alas! (the choice of my youth, and the partner of my misfortunes) at a moment when I had the prospect of her sharing my better days.

‘ The philosophy which I have learnt only teaches me that virtue and friendship are the greatest of human blessings, and that their loss is irreparable. It aggravates my calamity, instead of consoling me under it. My wounded heart seeks another consolation. Governed by these feelings, which have in every age and region of the world actuated the human mind, I seek relief, and I find it, in the soothing hope and consolatory opinion, that a Benevolent Wisdom inflicts the chastisement, as well as bestows the enjoyments of human life; that Superintending Goodness will one day enlighten the darkness which surrounds our nature, and hangs over our prospects; that this dreary and wretched life is not the whole of man; that an animal so sagacious and provident, and capable of such proficiency in science and virtue is not like the beasts that perish; that there is a dwelling-place prepared for the spirits of the just, and that the ways of God will yet be vindicated to man. The sen-

timents of Religion which were implanted in my mind in my early youth, and which were revived by the awful scenes which I have seen passing before my eyes in the world, are, I trust, deeply rooted in my heart by this great calamity.

We may add part of a very kind letter, written in 1808, in a more cheerful mood, to his son-in-law Mr Rich, then on a mission to Babylon, and whose early death so soon blasted the hopes not only of his afflicted family, but of the whole literary world.

‘ And now, my dear Rich, allow me, with the liberty of warm affection, earnestly to exhort you to exert every power of your mind in the duties of your station. There is something in the seriousness, both of business and of science, of which your vivacity is impatient. The brilliant variety of your attainments and accomplishments do, I fear, flatter you into the conceit that you may indulge your genius, and pass your life in amusement; while you smile at those who think, and at those who act. But this would be weak and ignoble. The success of your past studies ought to show you how much you may yet do, instead of soothing you with the reflection, how much you have done.

‘ Habits of seriousness of thought and action are necessary to the duties, to the importance, and to the dignity of human life. What is amiable gaiety at twenty-four, might run the risk, if it was unaccompanied by other things, of being thought frivolous and puerile at forty-four. I am so near forty four, that I can give you pretty exact news of that dull country; which, though it be almost as bad as “Yankee land,” yet ought to interest you, as you are travelling towards it, and must pass through it.

‘ I hope you will profit by my errors. I was once ambitious to have made you a much improved edition of myself. If you had stayed here, I should have laboured to do so in spite of your impatience; as it is, I heartily pray that you may make yourself something much better. You have excellent materials; and, with all your love of the fine arts, you will, I am sure, acknowledge, that the noblest of them all is the art of forming a vigorous, healthy, and beautiful mind. It is a work of unwearied care; which must be constantly retouched through every part of life. But the toil becomes every day more pleasant, and the success more sure. I have much too good an opinion of you, and too warm a solicitude for your happiness, to make any apology for moralizing. I do not think I ever can write to you without a little preaching. “*Il est permis d’enuyer en morale, d’ici jusqu’à Constantinople.*”

‘ You came here so early as to have made few sacrifices of friendship and society at home. You can afford a good many years for making a handsome fortune, and still return *home* young. You do not feel the force of the word quite so much as I could wish; but for the present let me hope that the prospect of coming to one who has such an affection for you as I have, will give your country some of the attractions of home. If you can be allured to it by the generous hope of increasing the enjoyments of my old age, you will soon discover in it sufficient excellences to love and admire; and it will become to you, in the full force of the term, a home.’

We are not sure whether the frequent aspirations which we find in his private letters, after the quiet and repose of an academical situation, ought to be taken as proofs of his humility, though they are generally expressed in language bearing that character. But there are other indications enough, and of the most unequivocal description—for example, this entry in 1818. ‘ — has, I think, ‘ a distaste for me. I think the worse of nobody for such a feeling. ‘ Indeed I often feel a distaste for myself; and I am sure I should ‘ not esteem my own character in another person. It is more ‘ likely that I should have disrespectable or disagreeable qualities, ‘ than that — should have an unreasonable antipathy.’— (P. 344, Vol. II.)

And again, ‘ Very much saddened, I reflected on my lot, or ‘ *rather my faults*, and bitterly felt that the business of life was ‘ but begun, while I am already beset with infirmities which mark ‘ the commencement of decline towards that state when man is

“ Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans ears, sans every thing ;”

‘ and how few now remain of those who were kind to my child- ‘ hood, or whom my boyish promise filled with hope and pride.’

In the same sad but gentle spirit, we have this entry in 1822. ‘ Walked a little up the quiet valley, which on this cheerful ‘ morning looked pretty. While sitting on the stone under the ‘ tree, my mind was soothed by reading some passages of — in ‘ the Quarterly Review. With no painful humility I felt that ‘ an enemy of mine is a man of genius and virtue, and that all ‘ who think slightly of me may be right!’ If the ensuing pas- ‘ sage refers, as we suspect, to the same individual, we greatly fear ‘ that he would not, in similar circumstances, have felt or acted ‘ with the same generosity.

‘ I seldom go to the Royal Society of Literature, but as soon ‘ as I saw —’s name in my circular letter, I determined to go ‘ to support him by my vote, and by all my little influence. The ‘ public duty is so evident, that I need not, though I sincerely ‘ might, speak of personal good-will. His claims as a man of ‘ genius are so transcendently superior to those of all those who ‘ have been, or who can be chosen, that I hope there can be no ‘ doubt of the Society being desirous of justifying their Institu- ‘ tion by such a choice. I was one of his earliest, I have been ‘ one of his most constant, and I believe that I am now one of ‘ his greatest, admirers. If I were to listen to feeling instead of ‘ worldly prudence, I should rather propose a deputation to re- ‘ quest his acceptance of the place, than a canvass to secure his ‘ appointment to it. On looking back for thirty years, I see too ‘ many faults in my own life, to be mindful of the faults against ‘ me!’

But the strongest and most painful expression of this profound humility is to be found in a note to his Dissertation on Ethical Philosophy; in which, after a beautiful eulogium on his deceased friends, Mr George Wilson and Mr Serjeant Lens, he adds—
 ‘The present writer hopes that the good-natured reader will
 ‘excuse him for having thus, perhaps unseasonably, bestowed
 ‘heartfelt commendation on those who were above the pursuit
 ‘of praise, and the remembrance of whose good opinion and
 ‘good-will helps to support him, under a deep sense of faults and
 ‘vices.’

After this, it is rather a relief to find the following devout aspirations, on occasion of a delighted perusal of Jeremy Taylor on the Beatitudes, 1811.

‘For a moment, O Teacher blessed! I taste the unspeakable
 ‘delight of feeling myself to be better. I feel, as in the days of
 ‘my youth, that “hunger and thirst after righteousness,” which
 ‘long habits of infirmity, and the concerns of the world have con-
 ‘tributed to extinguish!’—(P. 124, Vol. II.)

The reader now knows enough of Sir James’s personal character, to enter readily into the spirit of any extracts we may lay before him. The most valuable of these are supplied by his letters, journals, and occasional writings, while enjoying the comparative leisure of his Indian residence, or the complete leisure of his voyages to and from that country: and, with all due deference to opposite opinions, this is exactly what we should have expected. It has been objected, we see, to these most interesting volumes, that they give us only the *no life* of an empty house at Bombay, or the incidents on board the good ship Caroline, while they tell us next to nothing of the intense vitality of a London and parliamentary existence. If the design of the work had been to record *incidents*, the objection would be unanswerable; but we have already explained that such could not have been its design:—and if the thoughts, judgments, and reasonings of such a man are of value, it is plain that we must look, for the best records of them, to those periods of leisure, and it may be of ennuï, when the want of suitable society or fitting occupation threw him back most completely on his own resources, and drove him to take refuge in the strengths of his own great mind. Sir James Mackintosh, it is well known, had a great relish for society; and had not constitutional vigour (after his return from India) to go through much business without exhaustion and fatigue. In London and in Parliament, therefore, his powerful intellect was at once too much dissipated, and too much oppressed; and the traces it has left of its exertions on those scenes are comparatively few and inadequate. In conversation, no doubt, much that was delightful and instructive was thrown out; and,

for want of a Boswell, has perished. But, according to his own estimate at least, the scantiness of his *political* notices is not much to be wondered at, or regretted. ‘How exclusive and ‘uniform,’ says he, in his first session, ‘is the life of a politician! ‘A tailor might as soon make a lively journal by an account of ‘the number of coats he had made.’ And, at all events, though it may be true that, from the imperfection of the memorials of his London life, we have in a great measure lost the light and graceful flowers of anecdote and conversation, we would fain console ourselves with the belief that we have secured the more precious and mature fruits of those studies and meditations which can only be pursued to advantage, when the cessation of more importunate calls has ‘left us leisure to be wise.’

With reference to these views, nothing has struck us more than the singular vigour and alertness of his understanding during the dull progress of his home voyage. Shut up in a small cabin, in a tropical climate, in a state of languid health, and subject to every sort of annoyance, he not only reads with an industry which would not disgrace an ardent Academic studying for honours, but plunges eagerly into original speculations, and finishes off some of the most beautiful compositions in the language, in a shorter time than would be allowed, for such subjects, to a contractor for leading paragraphs to a daily paper. In less than a fortnight, during this voyage, he seems to have thrown off nearly twenty elaborate characters of eminent authors or statesmen in English story—conceived with a justness, and executed with a delicacy which would seem unattainable without long meditation and patient revisal. We cannot do better than present our readers with one of them; and we begin with that of Lord Somers—which, along with another of Swift, appears to have been the work of a Sunday morning, the 29th December, 1811. It is more of the nature of a panegyric than most of the others; but full of fine observation, and deep as well as acute, reflection.

‘To delineate the character of one who was ‘as solicitous for the concealment as for the performance of illustrious actions,’ at the distance of a century, and amidst a singular penury of original authorities, must be acknowledged to be an undertaking surrounded by more than common difficulties. He seemed to have very nearly realized the perfect model of a wise statesman in a free community. His end was public liberty; he employed every talent and resource which were necessary for his end, and not prohibited by the rules of morality. He was neither unfitted by scruples for the practical service of mankind, nor lowered by the use of immoral means to the level of vulgar politicians. The only term of intellectual praise which necessarily includes virtue is Wisdom, or that calm and comprehensive reason which chiefly fixes its eye on human happiness, after having embraced in its wide survey both the worlds of speculation and action, and from the contemplation of both

discovered the most effectual means of attaining the worthiest ends : This exalted quality is characteristic of that serenity and order which prevailed in the vast understanding of Lord Somers, as well as the disinterested principles which regulated its exertion. He may be eminently called wise, who, without the aid of enthusiasm, persevered for thirty years in combining human characters and passions, and in employing them in the service of liberty, with the same systematic consistency and undisturbed tranquillity, as if he were engaged in the cultivation of the most abstract science. His regulating principle was usefulness. He employed as much labour for his country as the selfish and ambitious exert for their own aggrandisement. To be useful, he submitted to compromise with the evil which he could not extirpate ; and did not reject the smallest attainable good from a vain pursuit of that which could not be attained. To be useful, he endured unpopularity : he endured even the reproaches of inexperienced virtue, which clamoured for what was impossible, and disdained the small acquisition within the reach of human wisdom. He practised every art of moral policy. His life proved that virtue is not a vision, that prudence may be employed to render justice triumphant, and that as sound a moral constitution may be displayed in employing the arts of discretion under the restraints of conscience, as by those whose feelings recoil from the use of any means but such as would be sufficient among a race of beings as wise and virtuous as themselves. He did not disdain to conciliate Queen Anne, a weak and prejudiced woman, but on the preservation of whose favour the liberty of Europe partly depended. In his great labour to remedy abuses in the law, he was content with extorting from selfishness and prejudice far less than he sought. To disarm jealousy against himself, to make every public measure originate where it was most likely to be acceptable and successful, as well as to gratify his own modesty, he often suggested measures to others which he had himself conceived. He thought it enough that his means were lawful, and he considered the nobleness of the end as giving them sufficient dignity.

“ All the subordinate qualities of his mind were well fitted to be parts of such a whole. During the long period of violent change in which he acted, neither inconsistency, nor lukewarmness, nor revenge, has been laid to his charge. His quiet and refined mind rather shrunk from popular applause. He preserved the most intrepid steadiness, with a disposition so mild, that his friends thought its mildness excessive, and his enemies supposed that it could be scarcely natural. He seems to have been raised by the simplicity, which the love of usefulness inspires, above all the moral qualities which tend towards boasting or violence, and to have been conscious that he could be an active statesman without ceasing to be a man of virtue. He united a masculine understanding with the most elegant genius ; he was a most learned lawyer, an accomplished orator, and a writer both in prose and verse, at least of sufficient excellence to prove the variety of his attainments, and the elegance of his pursuits. In the midst of the most arduous duties, he found leisure to keep pace with the progress of literature and of science, and his society was courted by the most finished wits, as the most delightful com-

panion of their leisure, and the most competent judge of their works. The purest morality added its finish, and the urbanity of his manners corresponded with the elegance of his taste, as well as with the gentle benevolence of his disposition.

“ Our knowledge of the infirmity of human nature forbids us to suppose that this all-accomplished person should have been without some defects. One of his contemporaries observes, ‘ that Lord Somers had few faults, such only as seem inseparable from human nature, and from which no mortal was ever exempt ;’ and Swift himself can only discover that he was not of noble origin, and that the gentleness of his manners arose from a constraint upon the original violence of his passions. His enemies ascribed all the wise measures of his party to his advice, and all their errors to its rejection. The Jacobites represent the punishments inflicted after the rebellion as condemned by him ; and no opponent seems to have thought that he could have convicted a public measure of injustice and inhumanity, unless he could first show that it was disapproved by Lord Somers. Two great writers have delineated his character. The first was Addison, in a paper on his death in the ‘ Freeholder,’ written with due tenderness and reverence, and with that exquisite and consummate elegance peculiar to his beautiful genius. The scrupulous veracity of Addison, and the access to the best information, which he derived from long friendship with Lord Somers, and from intimate and equal connexions with his colleagues, render his testimony respecting facts of the greatest weight. The other was Swift, who has written both as the friend and the enemy of Lord Somers. His dedication of the ‘ Tale of a Tub’ is, in an ironical disguise, the most polite and lively panegyric in our language. In the ‘ History of the Four Last Years of Queen Anne,’ he has vainly laboured to an opposite purpose ; but the impotence of his invective is a nobler homage to Lord Somers than the ingenuity of his panegyric.”

Samuel Johnson is given with equal power ; and affords opportunity for more nice and strong discrimination. It is much longer, however, and we can venture on but a part of it.

“ He was distinguished by vigorous understanding and inflexible integrity. His imagination was not more lively than was necessary to illustrate his maxims ; his attainments in science were inconsiderable, and in learning, far from the first class ; they chiefly consisted in that sort of knowledge which a powerful mind collects from miscellaneous reading and various intercourse with mankind.

“ In early youth he had resisted the most severe tests of probity. Neither the extreme poverty nor the uncertain income to which the virtue of so many men of letters has yielded, even in the slightest degree weakened his integrity, or lowered the dignity of his independence. His moral principles (if the language may be allowed) partook of the vigour of his knowledge. He was conscientious, sincere, determined ; and his pride was no more than a steady consciousness of superiority in the most valuable qualities of human nature ; his friendships were not only firm, but generous, and tender beneath a rugged exterior ; he

wounded none of those feelings which the habits of his life enabled him to estimate ; but he had become too hardened by serious distress not to contract some disregard for those minor delicacies which become so keenly susceptible in a calm and prosperous fortune. He was a Tory, not without some propensities towards Jacobitism ; and a High Churchman, with more attachment to ecclesiastical authority and a splendid worship than is quite consistent with the spirit of Protestantism. On these subjects he neither permitted himself to doubt, nor tolerated difference of opinion in others. The vigour of his understanding is no more to be estimated by his opinions on subjects where it was bound by his prejudices, than the strength of a man's body by the efforts of a limb in fetters. His conversation, which was one of the most powerful instruments of his extensive influence, was artificial, dogmatical, sententious, and poignant, adapted, with the most admirable versatility, to every subject as it arose, and distinguished by an almost unparalleled power of serious repartee. He seems to have considered himself as a sort of colloquial magistrate, who inflicted severe punishment from just policy. His course of life led him to treat those sensibilities, which such severity wounds, as fantastic and effeminate, and he entered society too late to acquire those habits of politeness which are a substitute for natural delicacy.

“ In the progress of English style, three periods may be easily distinguished. The first period extended from Sir Thomas More to Lord Clarendon. During great part of this period, the style partook of the rudeness and fluctuation of an unformed language, in which use had not yet determined the words that were to be English. Writers had not yet discovered the combination of words which best suits the original structure and immutable constitution of our language. Where the terms were English, the arrangement was Latin—the exclusive language of learning, and that in which every truth in science, and every model of elegance, was contemplated by youth. For a century and a half, ineffectual attempts were made to bend our vulgar tongue to the genius of the language supposed to be superior ; and the whole of this period, though not without a capricious mixture of coarse idiom, may be called the Latin, or pedantic age, of our style.

“ In the second period, which extended from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century, a series of writers appeared, of less genius indeed than their predecessors, but more successful in their experiments to discover the mode of writing most adapted to the genius of the language. About the same period that a similar change was effected in France by Pascal, they began to banish from style learned as well as vulgar phraseology ; and to confine themselves to the part of the language naturally used in general conversation by well-educated men. That middle region, which lies between vulgarity and pedantry, remains commonly unchanged, while both extremes are equally condemned to perpetual revolution. Those who select words from that permanent part of a language, and who arrange them according to its natural order, have discovered the true secret of rendering their writings permanent, and of

preserving that rank among the classical writers of their country, which men of greater intellectual power have failed to attain. Of these writers, whose language has not yet been slightly superannuated, Cowley was probably the earliest, as Dryden and Addison were assuredly the greatest.

“The third period may be called the Rhetorical, and is distinguished by the prevalence of a school of writers, of which Johnson was the founder. The fundamental character of the Rhetorical style is, that it employs undisguised art, where classical writers appear only to obey the impulse of a cultivated and adorned nature, &c.

“As the mind of Johnson was robust, but neither nimble nor graceful, so his style, though sometimes significant, nervous, and even majestic, was void of all grace and ease, and being the most unlike of all styles to the natural effusion of a cultivated mind, had the least pretensions to the praise of eloquence. During the period, now near a close, in which he was a favourite model, a stiff symmetry and tedious monotony succeeded to that various music with which the taste of Addison diversified his periods, and to that natural imagery which the latter's beautiful genius seemed with graceful negligence to scatter over his composition.”

We stop here to remark, that, though concurring in the substance of this masterly classification of our writers, we should yet be disposed to except to that part of it which represents the first introduction of soft, graceful, and idiomatic English as not earlier than the period of the Restoration. In our opinion it is at least as old as Chaucer. The English Bible is full of it; and it is the most common, as well as the most beautiful, of the many languages spoken by Shakspeare. Laying his verse aside, there are in his longer passages of prose—and in the serious as well as the humorous parts—in Hamlet, and Brutus, and Shylock, and Henry V., as well as in Falstaff, and Touchstone, Rosalind, and Benedick, a staple of sweet, mellow, and natural English, altogether as free and elegant as that of Addison, and for the most part, more vigorous and more richly coloured. The same may be said, with some exceptions, of the other dramatists of that age. Sir James is right perhaps as to the grave and authoritative writers of prose; but few of the wits of Queen Anne's time were of that description. Though our quotation from this character is already very long, we must add that part of the sequel which contains the author's general account of the Lives of the Poets.

“Whenever understanding alone is sufficient for poetical criticism, the decisions of Johnson are generally right. But the beauties of poetry must be felt before their causes are investigated. There is a poetical sensibility which in the progress of the mind becomes as distinct a power as a musical ear or a picturesque eye. Without a considerable degree of this sensibility, it is as vain for a man of the greatest understanding to

speak of the higher beauties of poetry, as it is for a blind man to speak of colours. But to cultivate such a talent was wholly foreign from the worldly sagacity and stern shrewdness of Johnson. As in his judgment of life and character, so in his criticism on poetry, he was a sort of free-thinker. He suspected the refined of affectation, he rejected the enthusiastic as absurd, and he took it for granted that the mysterious was unintelligible. He came into the world when the school of Dryden and Pope gave the law to English poetry. In that school he had himself learned to be a lofty and vigorous declaimer in harmonious verse; beyond that school his unforced admiration perhaps scarcely soared; and his highest effort of criticism was accordingly the noble panegyric on Dryden. His criticism owed its popularity as much to its defects as to its excellences. It was on a level with the majority of readers—persons of good sense and information, but of no exquisite sensibility; and to their minds it derived a false appearance of solidity, from that very narrowness which excluded those grander efforts of imagination to which Aristotle and Bacon confined the name of poetry.”

This admirable and original delineation appears to have been the task of one disturbed and sickly day. We have in these volumes characters of Hume, Swift, Lord Mansfield, Wilkes, Goldsmith, Gray, Franklin, Sheridan, Fletcher of Saltoun, Louis XIV., and some others, all finished with the same exquisite taste, and conceived in the same vigorous and candid spirit; besides which, it appears from the Journal, that, in the same incredibly short period of fourteen or fifteen days, he had made similar delineations of Lord North, Paley, George Grenville, C. Townshend, Turgot, Malesherbes, Young, Thomson, Aikenside, Lord Bolingbroke, and Lord Oxford; though (we know not from what cause) none of these last mentioned appear in the present publication.

During the same voyage, the perusal of Madame de Sevigné's Letters engages him (at intervals) for about a fortnight; in the course of which he has noted down in his journal more just and delicate remarks on her character, and that of her age, than we think are any where else to be met with. The following may be more interesting than most of them, to a reader of English history:—

“ Her testimony agrees with that of Madame de la Fayette, with respect to the poverty of spirit and understanding shown by James II. on his arrival at Paris. They were both exquisite observers, and zealously devoted to the cause of James; there cannot, therefore, be more weighty evidence against him. She praises his queen. In the midst of all the rage felt at Paris against King William, the admirable good-sense and natural moderation of Madame de Sevigné catches a glimpse of his real character, through the mists of Rome and Versailles. ‘ Le prince n’a pas songé à faire perir son beau-père. Il est dans Londres, à la place du Roi, sans en prendre le nom, ne voulant que rétablir une religion qu’il croit bonne,

et maintenir les loix du pays sans qu'il en couste une goutte de sang—voilà l'envers, tout juste, de ce que nous pensons de lui ; ce sont des points de vue bien différens. Pour le Roi d'Angleterre il y [St Germain] parroit content,—et c'est pour cela qu'il est là.' Observe the perfect good-sense of the last remark, and the ease and liveliness with which it is made. Tacitus and Machiavel could have said nothing better ; but a superficial reader will think no more of it than the writer herself seems to do."

We do not know any thing in the whole compass of English literature more finely thought, or more finely expressed, than the following remarks on the true tone of polite conversation and familiar letters,—suggested by the same fascinating collection :—

“ When a woman of feeling, fancy, and accomplishment has learned to converse with ease and grace, from long intercourse with the most polished society, and when she writes as she speaks, she must write letters as they ought to be written ; if she has acquired just as much habitual correctness as is reconcilable with the air of negligence. A moment of enthusiasm, a burst of feeling, a flash of eloquence may be allowed ; but the intercourse of society, either in conversation or in letters, allows no more. Though interdicted from the long-continued use of elevated language, they are not without a resource. There is a part of language which is disdained by the pedant or the declaimer, and which both, if they knew its difficulty, would dread ; it is formed of the most familiar phrases and turns, in daily use by the generality of men, and is full of energy and vivacity, bearing upon it the mark of those keen feelings and strong passions from which it springs. It is the employment of such phrases which produces what may be called colloquial eloquence. Conversation and letters may be thus raised to any degree of animation, without departing from their character. Any thing may be said, if it be spoken in the tone of society ; the highest guests are welcome, if they come in the easy undress of the club ; the strongest metaphor appears without violence, if it is familiarly expressed ; and we the more easily catch the warmest feeling, if we perceive that it is intentionally lowered in expression, out of condescension to our calmer temper. It is thus that harangues and declamations, the last proof of bad taste and bad manners in conversation, are avoided, while the fancy and the heart find the means of pouring forth all their stores. To meet this despised part of language in a polished dress, and producing all the effects of wit and eloquence, is a constant source of agreeable surprise. This is increased when a few bolder and higher words are happily wrought into the texture of this familiar eloquence. To find what seems so unlike author-craft in a book, raises the pleasing astonishment to its highest degree. I once thought of illustrating my notions by numerous examples from ‘*La Seigné*.’ I must, some day or other, do so, though I think it the resource of a bungler, who is not enough master of language to convey his conceptions into the minds of others. The style of Madame de Seigné is evidently copied, not only by her worshipper, Walpole, but even by Gray ; who, notwithstanding the extraordinary merits of his matter, has the double stiffness of an imitator, and of a college recluse.

“ Letters must not be on a subject. Lady Mary Wortley’s letters on her Journey to Constantinople, are an admirable book of travels ; but they are not letters. A meeting to discuss a question of science is not conversation ; nor are papers written to another, to inform or discuss, letters. Conversation is relaxation, not business, and must never appear to be occupation ; nor must letters. Judging from my own mind, I am satisfied of the falsehood of the common notion, that these letters owe their principal interest to the anecdotes of the court of Louis XIV. A very small part of the letters consist of such anecdotes. Those who read them with this idea, must complain of too much Grignan. I may now own that I was a little tired during the two first volumes : I was not quite charmed and bewitched till the middle of the collection, where there are fewer anecdotes of the great and famous. I felt that the fascination grew as I became a member of the Sevigné family ; it arose from the history of the immortal mother and the adored daughter, and it increased as I knew them in more minute detail ; just as my tears in the dying chamber of Clarissa depend on my having so often drank tea with her in those early volumes, which are so audaciously called dull by the profane vulgar. I do not pretend to say that they do not owe some secondary interest to the illustrious age in which they were written ; but this depends merely on its tendency to heighten the dignity of the heroine, and to make us take a warmer concern in persons who were the friends of those celebrated men and women, who are familiar to us from our childhood.”

Hardly any thing can be more characteristic of the indulgent, though perfectly sound and pure views of Sir James, on the relative importance of different moral duties, than what he has stated in the same journal, after reading the passionate letters of Mademoiselle de l’Espinasse.

“ I am the last man in the world to wish it otherwise ; if I were to value myself upon any thing, it would be upon having showed the immense importance of female purity, and its tendency to produce every other virtue ; I only wish our moral sentiments to be silenced, that I may gain a hearing for one or two sober reflections. However justly we may reprobate the Parisian morals, every individual at Paris must be tried with reference to that standard. Mademoiselle de l’Espinasse preserved every other virtue, partly, because the immorality which she had committed, was not, in her society, attended by the forfeiture of honour. Looking over the whole world, insensibility, or malignant passions, seem almost the only causes of great evil. The evils of excessive and ill-regulated sensibility offend us ; but they are almost confined to the smaller and more refined part of the more civilized communities. Wherever I see perfect disinterestedness and heroic affection, I cannot but recognise the presence of the highest virtues, though I lament that they have not taken the form and direction most conducive to the happiness of society. Mademoiselle de l’Espinasse had all the virtues of a generous and honourable man. With a full knowledge of all the circumstances, she retained the tender friendship of Turgot, perhaps the most virtuous man at that time existing in the world. By the great refinement of manners, the inter-

course of the sexes became more unfettered in France than in other countries; and, by an unfortunate inversion of the progress of education, women were rendered more alluring before they were made more rational. The gallantry of the court during the first part of the reign of Louis XIV., grew out of this state, and reacted upon it. The bigotry of Madame de Maintenon exasperated that disease, till it broke out in full violence under the regent.

“One word more on Mademoiselle de l’Espinasse—she was an illegitimate child. Illegitimacy rouses the understanding to struggle against unjust depression; it naturally inspires a dissatisfaction with the order of society which degrades the innocent. A child who is led to hate his father as a betrayer, his mother as dishonoured, must experience that general disturbance of feeling which must arise from the disordered state of those primary sentiments out of which all human affections spring. This theory is much supported by my observation.”

Somewhat akin to this, though in a higher strain, is the following:—

“It is impossible, I think, to look into the interior of any religious sect, without thinking better of it. I ought, indeed, to confine myself to those of Christian Europe; but, with that limitation, it seems to me that the remark is true; whether I look at the Jansenists of Port Royal, or the Quakers in Clarkson, or the Methodists in these journals. All these sects, which appear dangerous or ridiculous at a distance, assume a much more amiable character on nearer inspection. They all inculcate pure virtue, and practise mutual kindness; and they exert great force of reason in rescuing their doctrines from the absurd or pernicious consequences which naturally flow from them. Much of this arises from the general nature of religious principle; much, also, from the genius of the Gospel morality,—so meek and affectionate, that it can soften barbarians, and warm even sophists themselves. Something, doubtless, depends on the civilisation of Europe; for the character of Christian sects in Asia is not so distinguished.”

In 1808, he remarks on that visible return towards religious sentiments among the educated and literary classes, which we are happy to think has ever since been progressive:—

“How general is the tendency of these times towards religious sentiment! Madame de Staël may not, perhaps, ever be able calmly to believe the dogmas of any sect: But she seems prepared by turns to adopt the feelings of all sects. Twenty years ago the state of opinion seemed to indicate an almost total destruction of religion in Europe. Ten years ago the state of political events appeared to show a more advanced stage in the progress towards such a destruction. The reaction has begun every where. A mystical philosophy prevails in Germany; a poetical religion is patronised by men of genius in France. It is adopted in some measure by Madame de Staël, who finds it even by the help of her reason in the nature of man, if she cannot so deeply perceive it in the nature of things. In England no traces of this tendency are discoverable among

the men of letters ; perhaps because they never went so near the opposite extreme ; perhaps, also, because they have not suffered the same misfortunes.”

How many debateable points are fairly settled by the following short and vigorous remarks, in the *Journal* for 1811 :—

“ —Finished George Rose’s ‘ Observations on Fox’s History,’ which are tedious and inefficient. That James was more influenced by a passion for arbitrary power than by Popish bigotry, is an idle refinement in Fox ; he liked both Popery and tyranny ; and I am persuaded he did not himself know which he liked best. The English people, at the Revolution, dreaded his love of Popery more than his love of tyranny. This was in them Protestant bigotry, not reason : But the instinct of their bigotry pointed right ; Popery was then the name for the faction which supported civil and religious tyranny in Europe : to be a Papist was to be a partisan of the ambition of Louis XIV.”

There is, in the *Bombay Journal* of the same year, a beautiful essay on novels, and the *moral* effect of fiction in general, the whole of which we should like to extract ; but it is far too long. It proceeds on the assumption, that as all fiction must seek to interest by representing admired qualities in an exaggerated form, and in striking aspects, it must tend to raise the standard, and increase the admiration of excellence. In answer to an obvious objection, he proceeds—

“ A man who should feel all the various sentiments of morality, in the proportions in which they are inspired by the *Iliad*, would certainly be far from a perfectly good man. But it does not follow that the *Iliad* did not produce great moral benefit. To determine that point, we must ascertain whether a man, formed by the *Iliad*, would be better than the ordinary man of the country at the time in which it appeared. It is true that it too much inspires an admiration for ferocious courage. That admiration was then prevalent, and every circumstance served to strengthen it. But the *Iliad* breathes many other sentiments less prevalent, less favoured by the state of society, and calculated gradually to mitigate the predominant passion. The friendship and sorrow of Achilles for Patroclus, the patriotic valour of Hector, the paternal affliction of Priam, would slowly introduce more humane affections. If they had not been combined with the admiration of barbarous courage they would not have been popular, and consequently they would have found no entry into those savage hearts which they were destined (I do not say *intended*) to soften. It is therefore clear, from the very nature of poetry, that the poet must inspire somewhat better morals than those around him, though, to be effectual and useful, his morals must not be totally unlike those of his contemporaries. If the *Iliad* should, in a long course of ages, have inflamed the ambition and ferocity of a few individuals, even that evil, great as it is, will be far from balancing all the generous sentiments which, for three thousand years, it has been pouring into the hearts of youth, and which it now continues to infuse, aided by the dignity of antiquity, and

by all the fire and splendour of poetry. Every succeeding generation, as it refines, requires the standard to be proportionably raised.

“Apply these remarks, with the necessary modifications, to those fictions copied from common life, called novels, which are not above a century old, and of which the multiplication and the importance, as well literary as moral, are characteristic features of England. There may be persons now alive who may recollect the publication of ‘Tom Jones,’ at least, if not of ‘Clarissa.’ In that time, probably twelve novels have appeared, of the first rank—a prodigious number, of such a kind, in any department of literature; (by the help of Sir Walter Scott and Miss Edgeworth we may now at least double the number)—and the whole class of novels must have had more influence on the public, than all other sorts of books combined. Nothing popular can be frivolous; whatever influences multitudes, must be of proportionable importance. Bacon and Turgot would have contemplated with inquisitive admiration this literary revolution.”

And soon after, while admitting that Tom Jones (for example) is so far from being a moral book, as to be deserving of the severest reprobation, he adds—

“Yet even in this extreme case I must observe that the same book inspires the greatest abhorrence of the duplicity of Blifil, of the hypocrisy of Thwackum and Square; that Jones himself is interesting by his frankness, spirit, kindness, and fidelity—all virtues of the first class. The objection is the same in its principle with that to the Iliad. The ancient epic exclusively presents war—the modern novel love; the one what was most interesting in public life, and the other what is most brilliant in private—and both with an unfortunate disregard of moral restraint.”

He makes a still better answer to Mr Stewart’s more refined and formidable objection, that novels blunt our natural sympathies by the too-frequent exhibition of aggravated distress, and at the same time dissociate them from the active habit of beneficence, for the exercise of which they of course afford no occasion. To this the main answer is, that fictitious suffering is never exhibited but for the purpose of exciting Pity (while the misery of real life frequently appears under very different relations), and that this association, which is the true root of compassion, is strengthened and not weakened by repetition; at the same time that pity necessarily implies so much of an effort towards actual relief, as to follow the law of active habits in general, and to give force to the beneficent propensity. ‘If this were not so,’ he concludes, ‘what would be the case of those good men who see misery often, and seldom, or perhaps never, may have the means of relieving it? Mr Stewart will not suppose that their hearts will be hardened, or that their pity will not be in many respects more lively and eager than that of those who have relieved themselves by beneficence. On the contrary, he will acknowledge that the facility of relieving the coarser distresses is one of the circum-

‘stances which corrupt and harden the rich, and fills them with the insolent conceit, that all the wounds of the human heart can be healed by their wealth.’

There is a very curious entry in the Journal for August 1811. On Sunday the 18th, he attends the funeral of Governor Duncan, and hears a very poor discourse on the immortality of the soul. ‘Contemplations,’ he adds, ‘passed in my mind which I should be almost afraid to communicate to any creature!’ On the day following, however, he seems to have taken courage to set down at least a part of them, in one of the most subtle and fine drawn speculations that have any where been produced on the subject. The object is to show how near the sentiments of a speculative atheist may approach to those of a true believer, on the two great points of the being of a God, and the immortality of his rational creatures. As to the first, he observes that such a person may very well have the warmest love and reverence for perfect virtue, and if so, can scarcely avoid personifying this conception, in the course of his lofty meditations—and then ‘How small is the difference between the evanescent individuality to which the reasonings of the philosophical theist reduce or exalt the divinity, and the mental reality into which the imagination of him who is called an atheist may brighten his personification of virtue!’ As to immortality, again, the process is as summary; and the assumptions still bolder. He holds it to be clear, that the only sound foundation for this belief (independent of revelation), is the feeling that beings capable of an indefinite progress in virtue and happiness, should not be cut short in that progress by such an accident as death, but that fear of punishment or hope of reward, in its future stages, are altogether unworthy of being taken into consideration. But

“When the mind is purified from these gross notions, it is evident that the belief of a future state can no longer rest on the merely selfish idea of preserving its own individuality. When we make a farther progress, it becomes indifferent whether *the same individuals* who now inhabit the universe, or *others* who do not yet exist, are to reach that superior degree of virtue and happiness of which human nature seems to be capable. The object of desire is the quantity of virtue and happiness—not the identical beings who are to act and to enjoy. Even those who distinctly believe in the continued existence of their fellow-men, are unable to pursue their opinion through any considerable part of its consequences. The dissimilarity between Socrates at his death, and Socrates in a future state, ten thousand years after death, and ten thousand times wiser and better, is so very great, that to call these two beings by the same name, is rather a consequence of the imperfection of language, than of exact views in philosophy. There is no practical identity. The Socrates of Elysium can feel no interest in recollecting what befel the Socrates of Athens, He is infinitely more re-

moved from his former state than Newton was in this world from his infancy.

“ Now the philosopher, who for his doubts is called an Atheist, may desire *and believe* the future progress of intelligent beings, though he may doubt whether the progress being made by the same individuals, be either proved or very important. His feelings will scarcely differ at all, and his opinions very little, from him who is called a Theist.”

Ingenious as this is, we do not hesitate to say that it is unsound : the obvious defect being, that this refined atheistical creed entirely excludes any belief in *the moral government* of the world—and though founded on a supposed enthusiasm for moral excellence, necessarily denies all moral agency, and refuses all moral influence to its poetical personification. It seems to us also, that without the feeling of *identity*, there can be no proper conception either of a progress or of immortality, and, in truth, no equivalent conception. The whole speculation, indeed, appears to us to be curious, principally as affording one of the few examples which his life ever afforded, of notions thrown out merely as exertations of the intellect and materials for farther reflection, without much belief in their truth, or much concern for their tendency. It is but justice, however, to the author to observe, that he concludes by a strong statement of the practical advantages of the theistic scheme ; and assigns a very amiable and characteristic reason for looking with some favour upon these very questionable suggestions. ‘ I am pleased,’ he says, ‘ with these ‘ contemplations, as showing that good men have not been able ‘ to differ so much from each other as they imagine ; and that ‘ amidst all the deviations of the understanding, the beneficent ‘ necessity of their nature keeps alive the same sacred feelings.’

To the theological decision which occurs in the succeeding page, we give, however, our unqualified concurrence.

“ Read this morning a sermon by Atterbury, which gave rise to one of his controversies with Hoadley. It is on 1 Corinthians, xv. 19: ‘ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.’ To seek precise propositions in the ardent phrases of a writer like Paul, full of uncultivated eloquence, and destitute of exactness and order, is a very vain attempt ; but the general sense of this text seems to me to depend on the words ‘ in Christ ;’ and to be, If you, Converts, hope for temporal and outward advantages from your conversion to Christianity, your disappointment will be complete. Atterbury, on the contrary, gives it a construction which *tends* to persuade the reader that, without a future state, the practice of morality would lead to misery,—a doctrine more immoral than any thing in Mandeville ; and of which the destructive tendency would justify the interference of the magistrate more than most other principles published among men, if the danger were not prevented by its monstrous absurdity.”

But we must now turn to matters of secular interest. How

masterly and honest is this short summary of the Regency question of 1789 :—

“ On calmly reviewing the subject, the difference between both parties becomes so small as to be scarcely perceptible. Those who contended for the right of Parliament, allowed the Prince of Wales to have an irresistible claim. Why? Not surely, for his superior personal merits, as if it had been an elective office; but because there was a parity of expediency, and an analogy of law, in his favour; because recourse to the next heir, as a regent, prevented contest, as hereditary succession to the crown does. The dispute is, therefore, reduced to this very nice and subtle question of legal metaphysics—whether the parity of reason was such as amounted to a ground for the judgment of a court, or only such as irresistibly determined the conscience of a body on whom necessity had conferred a right of election? A right of election irresistibly confined by conscience to one individual, differs very little from a mere power of recognition. This is such an evanescent question, that it would be difficult for a legal Aquinas or Windham to determine; yet how wide does the difference appear, when it is looked at with the eyes of faction, and displayed with all the exaggerations of eloquence! ”

There are some excellent remarks on Rulhière's *History of Poland*. We can only give the summary, which is sufficiently decided.

“ This is a book which will not let a reader stop, and which it requires considerable powers of oblivion to forget. The facts are not only new, but they are unlike those with which we are familiar; they supply a chapter in the history of manners and national character. The Slavonic race appears in action with its two chief nations, the Russians and Poles; the first under a single tyrant; the second under a tumultuary assembly of a hundred thousand gentlemen. Probity and courage give some interest to the falling Turks, and the great name of Greece sheds somewhat of the lustre of heroism on the wild adventure of such a ruffian as Alexis Orloff in favour of those wretched Greeks (but Greeks still!) whom he seduced to revolt, and abandoned to their fate. These very singular nations are not merely described, but exhibited with lively and dramatic particularity, through all the varieties of war and peace. Even the bluntness of the English seamen, to whom Orloff owed his undeserved fame, though so familiar to us, becomes very striking in the new combination. Liberty—even the most imperfect and lawless liberty, produces energy and dignity in Poland. The old General Bramicki, Mohranowski, the Pulawskis, were worthy of having fought against Cæsar at Pharsalia. Universal slavery produces its usual fruits in Russia; not one native Muscovite shows a glimpse of genius or virtue; the words, ‘ slave ’ and ‘ man, ’ are, it seems, the same in the language of these wretches. There would surely be a greater destruction of understanding and virtue in the loss of one Swiss canton, or English parish, than in that of fifty planet loads of Muscovites! ”

The following short reflection on the character of Eastern art, is worth transcribing :—

“ Their superstition seems to have thought human beauty too mean an ornament for a god. Human beauty requires the human form ; but the Eastern religion and art, unable to show superior strength by Herculean muscles, recurred to the rude expedient of indicating it by gigantic size, or by many hands : and the sculptor who could not represent divine intelligence in a face, attempted to express it by four heads. There are traces of these notions in the Grecian mythology sufficient to show its descent ; but, at last, after art had been toiling in India, in Persia, and in Egypt, to produce monsters, beauty and grace were discovered in Greece.

“ It is probable that the quantity of labour employed in England on docks, canals, and other useful works during the last fifty years, is greater than that employed on all the boasted works of Asia, from the wall of China to the Pyramids. To pierce a country in all directions with canals, is, in truth, a greater work than any of them. But our public works being dispersed, unornamented, and for purposes of obvious use, want the qualities that impose on the vulgar imagination.”

The following remark could only have occurred to a man of profound thought, and large observation.

“ Talents are, in my sense, habitual powers of execution ; and they may be often very disproportioned to the understanding. Those who content themselves with the common speculations of their age, generally possess the talent of expressing them, which must have become pretty widely diffused before the speculations become common : But there are times when there is a general tendency towards something higher, and when no man has quite reached the objects, still less the subsequent and auxiliary powers of expression. In these intervals, between one mode of thinking and another, literature seems to decline, while mind is really progressive ; because no one has acquired the talent of the new manner of thinking. This observation appears to me very extensively applicable to the past history of literature, and to be likely to be more extensively applicable to its future history.”

And this also : ‘ The philosophy of this age has weakened *the prejudice* of Nationality ; but it has reached the further stage of ‘ estimating the great value of *the principle*.’

What can be more wise and true than this apparently simple remark ?—

“ A benevolent man estimates others by the degree in which he can make them happy ; a selfish man, by the degree in which he can make them subservient to his own interest. To estimate human beings merely or chiefly by their intrinsic merits, and to act towards them on that principle, is a proud pretension ; but evidently inconsistent with the condition of human nature. It would be natural in mere spectators, but not in those who are themselves engaged in the race of life. The evident effect of it is, after all, to cheat ourselves. When we suppose that we are estimating others on principles of severe justice, we may be giving judgment on them, under the influence of dislike, disgust, or anger.”

The following, not very sanguine, anticipations of the fortunes of Spanish America in 1811, have been receiving confirmation almost ever since :—

‘ “ Spanish America seems destined to wade through blood to independence—whether to liberty is another question. The mixture and mutual hostility of races, Europeans, creoles, mulattoes, Americans, and negroes ; the animosities founded on physical and sensible differences, strengthened by contempt on one side, and by envy and resentment on the other ; the struggle of the new principles that naturally follow independence, with the power of the church and the nobility ; the natural tendency of a new government towards democracy, and the peculiar unfitness of such a community as that of Spanish America for popular institutions ; the vast distance, and the barriers of mountains and deserts between the various provinces ; their long habits of being administered by governments independent of each other ;—all these causes seem to promise a long series of bloody commotions. If the issue was certainly a good government, it might seem a matter of small moment to a distant observer, whether the insignificant and insipid lives of a hundred thousand creoles were twenty years shorter or longer ; but, unhappily, there is no such certainty. On the contrary, the more blood is spilt by assassination and massacre, the less chance there is of establishing a free government. The evil is, that the survivors are trained to inhumanity and dishonesty ; and thereby rendered incapable of liberty. A civil war is better than assassination and massacre ; it has a system of discipline ; it has laws, duties, and virtues ; but it must end in military despotism. The example of Washington is solitary.” ’

The entry under 6th March, 1817, has, to the writer of this article, a melancholy interest, even at this distance of time. It refers to the motion recently made in the House of Commons for a new writ, on the death of Mr Horner. The reflections with which it closes must, we think, be interesting always.

‘ “ March 6th.—The only event which now appears interesting to me, is the scene in the House of Commons on Monday. Lord Morpeth opened it in a speech so perfect, that it might have been well placed as a passage in the most elegant English writer ; it was full of feeling ; every topic was skilfully presented, and contained, by a sort of prudence which is a part of taste, within safe limits ; he slid over the thinnest ice without cracking it. Canning filled well, what would have been the vacant place of a calm observer of Horner's public life and talents. Manners Sutton's most affecting speech was a tribute of affection from a private friend become a political enemy ; Lord Lascelles, at the head of the country gentlemen of England, closing this affecting, improving, and most memorable scene by declaring, ‘ that if the sense of the House could have been taken on this occasion, it would have been unanimous.’ I may say without exaggeration, that never were so many words uttered without the least suspicion of exaggeration ; and that never was so much honour paid in any age or nation to intrinsic claims alone. A Howard intro-

duced, and an English House of Commons adopted, the proposition of thus honouring the memory of a man of thirty-eight, the son of a shop-keeper, who never filled an office, or had the power of obliging a living creature, and whose grand title to this distinction was the belief of his virtue. How honourable to the age and to the House! A country where such sentiments prevail is not ripe for destruction.”

But we must draw to a conclusion; though the infinite variety which the book presents of profound remarks, ingenious discussions, and acute observations on so great a diversity of subjects, has made even these copious extracts but an inadequate specimen of its merits. There is a great deal about Madame de Staël, and her writings; and about Burke, and his transcendent, though often misunderstood, excellence. There are admirable characters of Fox, Windham, and Nelson—much profound discussion on European politics with Gentz and B. Constant—and a profusion of most candid, refined, and original criticism on Spenser, Pope, Richardson, Fielding, and Addison, as well as upon Kant, Schelling, and the other German philosophers with whom he is familiar. There are many lively and entertaining narratives of various tours performed by him in India, enriched with the reflections of a most vigilant and comprehensive mind on the state of Indian Society, and most interesting speculations on Indian literature and philosophy. There are journals of various excursions to Paris, with anecdotes of almost all the distinguished persons who figured upon that busy scene. There are beautiful letters, on topics of the deepest interest, between him and his gifted but unfortunate friend, the late Rev. Robert Hall; and discussions upon history and ethical philosophy, with reference to the two great works he had meditated in those departments, which have now acquired an additional interest from the imperfect state in which he was destined to leave those magnificent designs. We have not space to give more than a catalogue of these treasures; and scarcely know where to select the very few additional specimens on which we can venture. The following short sketch of Horne Tooke we give, chiefly as an example of his most rare manner—that of severity. After very high praise of his style and vigorous perspicuity, he says,—

“As to praise, he confines it to a few of his own sycophants. He praises nobody that deserves it, except Rogers. His invectives against his age, his country, and his literary contemporaries, are not worthy of a wise or good man; his temper is soured, and his character corrupted by philology and disappointed ambition. With an admirable simplicity of style, his book shows no simplicity of character; he is full of petty tricks, to entangle and surprise his reader; he prepares for every statement by exciting wonder; he never makes it plainly, but always tri-

umphs over the blindness of the whole human race, who left him the discovery.”

What he says of Hogarth is excellent; though he denies that his is the only school of painting which strengthens moral impressions. ‘Have not dying Christs,’ he asks, ‘taught fortitude to the virtuous sufferer? Have not Holy Families cherished and ennobled the domestic affections? The tender genius of the Christian morality, even in its most corrupt state, has made a mother and her child the highest object of affectionate superstition.’ This is beautiful; but the characteristic and generalizing part is what follows:—

“The same circumstances at the same time directed both the pencil and the pen to common life. Hogarth arose with Richardson and Fielding. The ‘Rake’s Progress’ is a novel on canvass. The Dutch painters had before painted familiar and low scenes; but they were without any particular moral tendency; and it was scenery, rather than the history of ordinary life, which they represented. They were masters of the mechanism of their art, in which Hogarth was totally deficient.

“Hogarth had extraordinary vigour of sense, and a quick perception of the ridiculous, with somewhat of that coarseness and prejudice against sensibility or refinement, which men of that character are apt to entertain. Horace Walpole brought him to dine with Gray; and complained that he was seated between Tragedy and Comedy. They did not talk to each other; which he ought to have foreseen. Gray must have shrunk from Hogarth, and Hogarth must have laughed at Gray. Hogarth and Johnson suited each other better. Both had most powerful and independent understandings; neither had poetical sensibility. Both endeavoured to spare themselves the pain of knowing, and the shame of owning, that they were inferior to others in sensibility to the higher productions of art, by professing a contempt for such of them, as were not too formidably guarded by ancient fame and general reverence.”

The following is just and striking; and also remarkable as the germ of one of the most instructive and touching pieces of biography that has ever been given to the world.

“Sir T. More set out as a philosopher and reformer; but the coarseness, turbulence, and bloody contests of Lutheranism having frightened him, this most upright and merciful man became a persecutor of men as innocent, though not of such great minds, as himself. He predicted that the Reformation would produce universal vice, ignorance, and barbarism. The events of a few years seemed to countenance his prophecy—but those of three centuries have belied it. His character is a most important example of the best man espousing the worst cause, and supporting it even by bad actions—which is the greatest lesson of charity that can be taught.”

We give the following as a short example of that rare talent of exhausting an argument by lucid arrangement, and compressing its whole substance into a few plain propositions. Southey, in

his specimens of English poetry, had proposed to estimate the poetical taste of each age, by *the number of bad poems* published in the course of it. But this, Sir James justly remarks, is most unfair to the more polished and literary eras, for the following plain considerations :—

“ I. The whole number of poems published in a polished age being greater, it is only *the proportion* of bad poems which ought to enter into the account. II. There are many poems written, but not published, in rude ages; in a refined period, the demand and the facility of publication cause a much larger proportion of the poems written to be published. III. There being many more readers in a lettered age, among whom are many incompetent judges, there will be a demand, and even a temporary reputation for bad poems, till it is checked by the decision of the *judging few*, which always ultimately prevails. IV. There is another cause of the temporary reputation of bad poems [in a lettered age]. A book is sooner known, and consequently sooner ceases to be a novelty. The public appetite longs for something newer, though it should be worse.”

Sir James could not but feel, in the narrow circles of Bombay, the great superiority of London society; and he has thus recorded his sense of it :—

“ In great capitals, men of different provinces, professions, and pursuits, are brought together in society, and are obliged to acquire a habit, a matter, and manner, mutually perspicuous and agreeable; hence they are raised above frivolity, and are divested of pedantry. In small societies this habit is not imposed by necessity; they have lower, but more urgent subjects, which are interesting to all, level to all capacities, and require no effort or preparation of mind.”

He might have added, that in a great capital the best of all sorts is to be met with; and that the adherents even of the most extreme or fantastic opinions are there so numerous, and generally so respectably headed, as to command a deference and regard that would scarcely be shown to them when appearing as insulated individuals; and thus it happens that real toleration, and true modesty, as well as their polite simulars, are rarely to be met with out of great cities. This, however, is true only of those who mix largely in the general society of such places. For bigots and exclusives of all sorts, they are hot-beds and seats of corruption; since, however absurd or revolting their tenets may be, such persons are sure to meet enough of their fellows to encourage each other. In the provinces, a believer in animal magnetism or German metaphysics has few listeners and no encouragement; but in a place like London they make a little coterie; who herd together, exchange flatteries, and take themselves for the apostles of a new gospel.

We fear we must stop here. In so great and miscellaneous a

collection we have been bewildered in our choice of specimens, and do not think, on looking back to them, that we have been very happy in our selection. Enough, however, has probably been shown to give those who have not seen the book a notion of the entertainment it may afford them; and this, of course, is our main object.

In such selections as we have made, the reader will not fail to observe that we have followed out the view which we ventured to take at the outset, as to the true character and interest of this publication;—regarding it rather as a repository of the author's thoughts and reasonings, than an account of his fortunes or conduct—as a supplement, in short, to his published writings, and not a record of his personal experiences. In going over it, indeed, we feel that we should have been inexcusable in taking any other view. By far the greater part of it is of Sir James's own writing; and it would perhaps have been more rightly entitled 'Journals and Letters of Sir James Mackintosh, with a short 'Account of his Life.' When his works accordingly come to be collected, we have no doubt that most of what is now before us will go into the collection; and be read with delight and admiration, long after it has become a matter of indifference where he was born and educated—what places he represented in Parliament—what offices he filled, or should have filled,—or with whom he most delighted to associate.

There are some fragments of conversation and some lively anecdotes in the London Journal. But it has evidently been kept with little diligence; and the greater part of it is, for the present, withheld—and probably for good reasons. Though a most candid and even indulgent judge of the conduct and character of other men, he had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and a sovereign contempt for baseness. We can well understand, therefore, that it may have been prudent not yet to make public his private notices of some of his contemporaries: But we earnestly hope that they will be carefully preserved; and in due time brought forward, to assist in adjusting the sentence which another generation will assuredly pronounce on the merits of that which is now passing away. If much of what has been suppressed is like the following, we cannot much wonder at the suppression. But we rather think that this little ebullition is *unique*; and are inclined to ascribe it to some small dyspeptical sequel of the dinner to which it refers:—'At dinner —, a tiresome good-natured scamp, — the most vulgar fool ever talked of in a capital, and —, just kept alive by spite, but rather more cheerful of late, and pouring himself out in hackneyed stories, at which the duke laughed, and — frowned.' For the sake of

the editor, we hope these blanks are as impenetrable in London, as in our Northern Bœotia.

The editor has incorporated with his work some letters addressed to him by friends of his father, containing either anecdotes of his earlier life, or observations on his character and merits. It was natural for a person whose age precluded him from speaking on his own authority of any but recent transactions, to seek for this assistance; and the information contributed by Lord Abinger and Mr Basil Montague (the former especially) is very interesting. The other letters present us with little more than the opinion of the writers as to his character. If these should be thought too laudatory, there is another character which has lately fallen under our eye, which certainly is not liable to that objection. In the 'Table-Talk' of the late Mr Coleridge, we find these words, 'I doubt if Mackintosh ever heartily appreciated an eminently original man. After all his fluency and brilliant erudition, you can rarely carry off any thing worth preserving. You might not improperly write upon his forehead, "Warehouse to let."' We wish to speak tenderly of a man of genius, and we believe of amiable dispositions, who has been so recently removed from his friends and admirers. But so portentous a misjudgment as this, and coming from such a quarter, cannot be passed over without notice. If Sir James Mackintosh had any talent more conspicuous and indisputable than another, it was that of appreciating the merits of eminent and original men. His great learning and singular soundness of judgment enabled him to do this truly; while his kindness of nature, his zeal for human happiness, and his perfect freedom from prejudice or vanity, prompted him, above most other men, to do it heartily. As a proof, we would merely refer our readers to his admirable character of Lord Bacon in this Journal (see No. 53, vol. xxvii.) And then, as to his being a person from whose conversation little could be carried away, why the most characteristic and remarkable thing about it, was that the whole of it might be carried away—it was so lucid, precise, and brilliantly perspicuous! The joke of the 'Warehouse to let' is not, we confess, quite level to our capacities. It can scarcely mean (though that is the most obvious sense) that the head was empty—as that is inconsistent with the rest even of this splenetic delineation. If it was intended to insinuate that it was ready for the indiscriminate reception of any thing which any one might choose to put into it, there could not be a more gross misconception; as we have no doubt Mr Coleridge must often have sufficiently experienced. And by whom is this discovery, that Mackintosh's conversation presented nothing that could be carried away, thus confidently an-

nounced? Why, by the very individual against whose own oracular and interminable talk the same complaint has been made, by friends and by foes, and with an unanimity unprecedented, for the last forty years. The admiring, or rather idolizing, nephew, who has lately put forth this hopeful specimen of his relics, has recorded in the preface, that 'his conversation at all times required attention; and that the demand on the intellect of the hearer was often very great; and that, when he got into his "huge circuit" and large illustrations, most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself.' Nay, speaking to this very point, of the ease or difficulty of carrying away any definite notions from what he said, the partial kinsman is pleased to inform us, that, with all his familiarity with the inspired style of his relative, he himself has often gone away, after listening to him for several delightful hours, with divers masses of reasoning in his head, but without being able to perceive what connexion they had with each other. 'In such cases,' he adds, 'I have mused, *sometimes even for days afterwards*, upon 'the words, till at length, spontaneously as it were, the fire would 'kindle,' &c. &c. And this is the person who is pleased to denounce Sir James Mackintosh as an ordinary man; and especially to object to his conversation, that, though brilliant and fluent, there was rarely any thing in it which could be carried away!

An attack so unjust and so arrogant leads naturally to comparisons, which it could be easy to follow out to the signal discomfiture of the party attacking. But without going beyond what is thus forced upon our notice, we shall only say, that nothing could possibly set the work before us in so favourable a point of view as a comparison between it and the volumes of 'Table Talk,' to which we have already made reference—unless, perhaps, it were the contrast of the two minds which are respectively portrayed in these publications.

In these memorials of Sir James Mackintosh we trace throughout, the workings of a powerful and unclouded intellect, nourished by wholesome learning, raised and instructed by fearless though reverent questionings of the sages of other times (which is the permitted Necromancy of the wise), exercised by free discussion with the most distinguished among the living, and made acquainted with its own strength and weakness, not only by a constant intercourse with other powerful minds, but by mixing, with energy and deliberation, in practical business and affairs; and here pouring itself out in a delightful miscellany of elegant criticism, original speculation, and profound practical suggestions on politics, religion, history, and all the greater and the lesser duties, the arts and the elegancies of life—all

expressed with a beautiful clearness and tempered dignity—breathing the purest spirit of good-will to mankind—and brightened not merely by an ardent hope, but an assured faith in their constant advancement in freedom, intelligence, and virtue.

On all these points, the 'Table Talk' of his poetical contemporary appears to us to present a most mortifying contrast; and to render back merely the image of a moody mind, incapable of mastering its own imaginings, and constantly seduced by them, or by a misdirected ambition, to attempt impracticable things—naturally attracted by dim paradoxes rather than lucid truth, and preferring, for the most part, the obscure and neglected parts of learning to those that are useful and clear—marching, in short, at all times, under the exclusive guidance of the Pillar of Smoke—and, like the body of its original followers, wandering all his days in the desert, without ever coming in sight of the promised land.

Consulting little at any time with any thing but his own prejudices and fancies, he seems, in his later days, to have withdrawn altogether from the correction of equal minds, and to have nourished the assurance of his own infallibility, by delivering mystical oracles from his cloudy shrine, all day long, to a small set of disciples, from whom neither question nor interruption was allowed. The result of this necessarily was, an exacerbation of all the morbid tendencies of the mind, a daily increasing ignorance of the course of opinions and affairs in the world, and a proportional confidence in his own dogmas and dreams, which must have been shaken, at least, if not entirely subverted, by a closer contact with the general mass of intelligence. Unfortunately this unhealthful training (peculiarly unhealthful for such a constitution) produced not merely a great eruption of ridiculous blunders and pitiable prejudices, but seems at last to have brought on a confirmed and thoroughly diseased habit of uncharitableness, and misanthropic anticipations of corruption and misery throughout the civilized world. The indiscreet revelations of the work to which we have alluded have now brought to light instances, not only of intemperate abuse of men of the highest intellect and most unquestioned purity, but such predictions of evil from what the rest of the world has been contented to receive as improvements, and such suggestions of intolerant and tyrannical remedies, as no man would believe could proceed from a cultivated intellect of the present age; if the early history of this particular intellect had not indicated an inherent aptitude for all extreme opinions, and prepared us for the usual conversion of one extreme into another.

And it is worth while to mark here also, and in respect merely of consistency and ultimate authority with mankind, the advantage which a sober and well-regulated understanding will always have over one which claims to be above ordinances; and trusting either to an unerring opinion of its own strength, or even to a true sense of it, gives itself up to its first strong impression, and sets at defiance all other reason and authority. Sir James Mackintosh had, in his youth, as much ambition and as much consciousness of power as Mr Coleridge could have; but the utmost extent of *his* early aberrations (in his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*) was an over-estimate of the probabilities of good from a revolution of violence; and a much greater under-estimate of the mischiefs with which such experiments are sure to be attended, and the value of settled institutions and long familiar forms. Yet, though in his philanthropic enthusiasm he did miscalculate the relative value of their opposite forces (and speedily admitted and rectified the error), he never for an instant disputed the existence of both elements in the equation, or affected to throw a doubt upon any of the great principles on which civil society reposes. On the contrary, in his earliest as well as his latest writings, he pointed steadily to the great institutions of Property and Marriage, and to the necessary authority of Law and Religion as essential to the being of a state, and the well-being of any human society. It followed, therefore, that when disappointed in his too-sanguine expectations from the French Revolution, he had nothing to retract in the substance and scope of his opinions; and merely tempering their announcement with the gravity and caution of maturer years, he gave them out again in his later days to the world, with the accumulated authority of a whole life of consistency and study. At no period of that life, did he fail to assert the right of the people to political and religious freedom, and to the protection of just and equal laws, enacted by representatives truly chosen by themselves; and he never uttered a syllable that could be construed into an approval or even an acquiescence in, persecution and intolerance, or in the maintenance of authority for any other purpose than to give effect to the enlightened and deliberate will of the community. To enforce these doctrines his whole life was devoted; and though not permitted to complete either of the great works he had projected, he was enabled to finish detached portions of each, sufficient not only fully to develop his principles, but to give a clear view of the whole design, and to put it in the power of any succeeding artist to proceed with the execution.

Mr Coleridge, too, was an early and most ardent admirer of the French Revolution; but the fruits of that admiration in him

were, not a reasoned and statesmanlike apology for some of its faults and excesses, but a resolution to advance the regeneration of mankind at a still quicker rate, by setting before their eyes the pattern of a yet more exquisite form of society : And accordingly, when a full grown man, he actually gave into, if he did not originate, the scheme of what he and his friends called a Pantisocracy—a form of society in which there was to be neither law nor government, neither priest, judge, nor magistrate—in which all property was to be in common, and every man left to act upon his own sense of duty and affection ! This fact is enough—and whether he afterwards passed through the stages of a Jacobin, which he seems to deny—or a hotheaded Moravian, which he seems to admit,—is really of no consequence. The character of his understanding is settled with all reasonable men ; as well as the authority that is due to the anti-reform and anti-toleration maxims which he seems to have spent his latter years in venting. Till we saw this posthumous publication, we had, to be sure, no conception of the extent to which these maxims were carried ; and we now think that few of the Conservatives (who were not originally Pantisocratists) will venture to adopt them. Not only is the Reform Bill denounced as the spawn of mere wickedness, injustice, and ignorance, and the reformed House of Commons as ‘ low, vulgar, ‘ meddling, and sneering at every thing noble and refined,’ but the wise and the good, we are assured, will, in every country, ‘ speedily become disgusted with *the representative form of government, brutalized as it is* by the predominance of democracy in ‘ England, France, and Belgium ;’ and then the remedy is, that they will recur to a new, though, we confess, not very comprehensible form of ‘ Pure Monarchy, in which the reason of the ‘ people shall become efficient in the apparent will of the King !’ Moreover, he is for a total dissolution of the union with Ireland, and its erection into a separate and independent kingdom. He is against Negro emancipation—sees no use in reducing taxation—and designates Malthus’s demonstration of a mere matter of fact by a redundant accumulation of evidence, by the polite and appropriate appellation of ‘ a lie ;’ and represents it as more disgraceful and abominable than any thing that the weakness and wickedness of man have ever before given birth to.

Such as his temperance and candour are in politics, they are also in religion ; and recommended and excused by the same flagrant contradiction to his early tenets. Whether he ever was a proper Moravian or not we care not to enquire. It is admitted, and even stated somewhat boastingly in this book, that he was a bold Dissenter from the church. He thanks heaven, indeed, that he ‘ had gone much farther than the Unitarians.’ And to make

his boldness still more engaging, he had gone these lengths, not only against the authority of our Doctors, but against the clear and admitted doctrine and teaching of the Apostles themselves. 'What care I,' I said, 'for the Platonisms of John, or the Rabbini-isms of Paul? *My conscience revolts—that was the ground of my Unitarianism.*' And by and by, this infallible and oracular person does not hesitate to declare, that others, indeed, may do as they choose, but he, for his part, can never allow that Unitarians are Christians! and, giving no credit for 'revolting consciences' to any one but himself, charges all Dissenters in the lump, with hating the Church much more than they love religion—is furious against the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the Catholic Emancipation,—and at last actually, and in good set terms, denies that any Dissenter has a *right to toleration!* and, in perfect consistence, maintains that it is the duty of the magistrate to stop heresy and schism *by persecution*—if he only has reason to think that in this way the evil may be arrested; adding, by way of example, that he would be ready 'to ship off—*any where,*' any missionaries who might attempt to disturb the undoubting Lutheranism of certain exemplary Norwegians, whom he takes under his special protection.

We are tempted to say more. But we desist; and shall pursue this parallel no farther. Perhaps we have already been betrayed into feelings and expressions that may be objected to. We should be sorry if this could be done justly. But we do not question Mr Coleridge's sincerity. We admit, too, that he was a man of much poetical sensibility, and had visions of intellectual sublimity, and glimpses of comprehensive truths, which he could neither reduce into order nor combine into system. But out of poetry and metaphysics, we think he was nothing; and eminently disqualified, not only by the defects, but by the best parts of his genius, as well as by his temper and habits, for forming any sound judgment on the business and affairs of our actual world. And yet it is for his preposterous judgments on such subjects that his memory is now held in affected reverence by those who laughed at him, all through his life, for what gave him his only claim to admiration; and who now magnify his genius for no other purpose but to give them an opportunity to quote, as of grave authority, his mere delirations, on reform, dissent, and toleration—his cheering predictions of the approaching millennium of pure monarchy—or his demonstrations of the absolute harmlessness of taxation, and the sacred duty of all sorts of *efficient* persecution. We are sure we treat Mr Coleridge with all possible respect, when we say, that *his* name can lend no more plausibility to absurdities like these, than the far greater names

of Bacon or Hobbes could do, to the belief in sympathetic medicines, or in churchyard apparitions.

We fear we have already transgressed our just limits. But before concluding, we wish to say a word on a notion which we find pretty generally entertained, that Sir James Mackintosh did not sufficiently turn to profit the talent which was committed to him; and did much less than, with his gifts and opportunities, he ought to have done. He himself seems, no doubt, to have been occasionally of that opinion; and yet we cannot but think it in a great degree erroneous. If he had not, in early life, conceived the ambitious design of executing two great works, one on the principles of Morals and Legislation, and one on English History; or had not let it be understood, for many years before his death, that he was actually employed on the latter, we do not imagine that, with all the knowledge his friends had (and all the world now has) of his qualifications, any one would have thought of visiting his memory with such a reproach. We know of no code of morality which makes it imperative on every man of extraordinary talent or learning to write a large book—and could readily point to instances where such persons have gone with unquestioned honour to their graves, without leaving any such memorial—and been judged to have acted up to the last article of their duty, merely by enlightening society by their lives and conversation, and discharging with ability and integrity the offices of magistracy or legislation, to which they may have been called. But looking even to the sort of debt which may be thought (though we can admit no such construction) to have been contracted by the announcement of these works, we cannot but think that the public has received a very respectable dividend—and, being at the best but a gratuitous creditor—ought not now to withhold a thankful discharge and acquittance. The discourse on Ethical Philosophy is full payment, we conceive, of one moiety of the first engagement,—and we are persuaded will be so received by all who can judge of its value; and though the other moiety, which relates to Legislation, has not yet been tendered in form, there is reason to believe that there are assets in the hands of the executors from which this also may soon be liquidated. That great subject was certainly fully treated of in the Lectures of 1799—and as it appears from some citations in these Memoirs, that, though for the most part delivered extempore, various notes and manuscripts relating to them have been preserved, we think it not unlikely that, with due diligence, the outline at least and main features of that interesting disquisition may still be recovered. On the bill for History, too, it cannot be denied that a large payment has been made to account—and as it was only

due for the period of the Revolution, any shortcoming that may appear upon that score, may be fairly held as compensated by the voluntary advances of value to a much greater extent, though referring to an earlier period.

But, in truth, there never was any such debt or engagement on the part of Sir James; and the public was, and continues, the only debtor on the transaction, for whatever it may have received of service or instruction at his hand. We have expressed elsewhere our estimate of the greatness of this debt; and of the value especially of the Histories he has left behind him. We have, to be sure, seen some sneering remarks on the dulness and uselessness of these works; and an attempt made to hold them up to ridicule, under the appellation of *Philosophical* histories. We are not aware that such a name was ever applied to them by their author or their admirers. If they really deserve it, we are at a loss to conceive how it should be taken for a name of reproach; and it will scarcely be pretended that their execution is such as to justify its application in the way of derision. We do not perceive, indeed, that this *is* pretended; and, strange as it may appear, the objection seems really to be, rather to the kind of writing in general, than to the defects of its execution in this particular instance—the objector having a singular notion that history should consist of narrative only; and that nothing can be so tiresome and useless as any addition of explanation or remark. We have no longer room to expose, as it deserves, the strange misconception of the objects and uses of history, which we humbly conceive to be implied in such an opinion; and shall therefore content ourselves with asking, whether any man really imagines that the modern history of any considerable state, with its complicated system of foreign relations, and the play of its domestic parties, *could* be written in the manner of Herodotus?—or be made intelligible (much less instructive) by the naked recital of transactions and occurrences? These, in fact, are but the crude materials from which history should be constructed; the mere alphabet out of which its lessons are afterwards to be spelled. If every reader had indeed the talents of an accomplished historian,—that knowledge of human nature, that large acquaintance with all collateral facts, and that force of understanding which are implied in such a name—and, at the same time, that leisure and love for the subject which would be necessary for this particular application of such gifts, the mere detail of facts, if full and impartial, might be sufficient for *his* purposes. But to every other class of readers, we will venture to say, that one half of such a history would be an insoluble enigma; and the other half a source of the most gross misconceptions. Without some explanation of the views and

motives of the prime agents in great transactions—of the origin and state of opposite interests and opinions in large bodies of the people—and of their tendencies respectively to ascendancy or decline—what intelligible account could be given, of any thing worth knowing in the history of the world for the last two hundred years? above all, what useful lessons could be learned, for people or for rulers, from a mere series of events presented in detail, without any other information as to their causes or consequences than might be inferred from the sequence in which they appeared? To us it appears that a mere record of the different places of the stars, and their successive changes of position, would be as good a system of Astronomy, as such a set of annals would be of History; and that it would be about as reasonable to sneer at Newton and La Place for seeking to supersede the honest old star-gazers, by their *philosophical histories* of the heavens, as to speak in the same tone, of what Voltaire and Montesquieu and Mackintosh have attempted to do for our lower world. We have named these three, as having attended more peculiarly, and *more impartially*, than any others, at least in modern times, to this highest part of their duty. But, in truth, all eminent historians have attended to it—from the time of Thucydides downwards—the ancients putting the necessary explanations more frequently into the shape of imaginary orations—and the moderns into that of remark and dissertation. The very first, perhaps, of Hume's many excellences consists in these *philosophical* summaries of the reasons and considerations by which he supposes parties to have been actuated in great political movements; which are fully more abstracted from the mere story, and very frequently less careful and complete than the parallel explanations of Sir James Mackintosh. For, with all his unrivalled sagacity, it is true, as Sir James has himself somewhere remarked, that Hume was too little of an antiquary to be always able to estimate the effect of motives in distant ages; and by referring too confidently to the principles of human nature, as developed in our own times, has often represented our ancestors as more reasonable, and much more argumentative, than they really were.

That there may be, and have often been, abuses of this best part of history, is a reason only for valuing more highly what is exempt from such abuses; and those who feel most veneration and gratitude for the lights afforded by a truly philosophical historian, will be sure to look with most aversion on a counterfeit. No one, we suppose, will stand up for the introduction of ignorant conjecture, shallow dogmatism, mawkish morality, or factious injustice into the pages of history—or deny that the shortest and simplest annals are greatly preferable to such a per-

version. As to political partiality, however, it is a great mistake to suppose that it could be in any degree excluded by confining history to a mere chronicle of facts—the truth being, that it is chiefly in the statement of facts that this partiality displays itself; and that it is more frequently exposed to detection than assisted, by the arguments and explanations, which are supposed to be its best resources. We shall not resume what we have said in another place as to the merit of the Histories which are now in question; but we fear not to put this on record, as our deliberate, and we think impartial, judgment—that they are the most candid, the most judicious, and the most pregnant with thought, and moral and political wisdom, of any in which our domestic story has ever yet been recorded.

But even if we should discount his Histories, and his Ethical Dissertation, we should still be of opinion, that Sir James Mackintosh had not died indebted to his country for the use he had made of his talents. In the volumes before us, he seems to us to have left them a rich legacy, and given abundant proofs of the industry with which he sought to the last to qualify himself for their instruction,—and the honourable place which his name must ever hold, as the associate of Romilly in the great and humane work of ameliorating our criminal law, might alone suffice to protect him from the imputation of having done less than was required of him, in the course of his unsettled life. But, without dwelling upon the part he took in Parliament, on these and many other important questions both of domestic and foreign policy, we must be permitted to say, that they judge ill of the relative value of men's contributions to the cause of general improvement, who make small account of the influence which one of high reputation for judgment and honesty may exercise, by his mere presence and conversation, in the higher classes of society,—and still more by such occasional publications as he may find leisure to make, in Journals of wide circulation, like this on which the reader is now looking—we trust with his accustomed indulgence.

It is now admitted, that the mature and enlightened opinion of the public must ultimately rule the country; and we really know no other way in which this opinion can be so effectually matured and enlightened. It is not by every man studying elaborate treatises and systems for himself, that the face of the world is changed, with the change of opinion, and the progress of conviction in those who must lead it. It is by the mastery which strong minds have over weak, in the daily intercourse of society, and by the gradual and almost imperceptible infusion which such minds are constantly effecting, of the practical results and manageable sum-

maries of their preceding studies, into the minds immediately below them, that this great process is carried on. The first discovery of a great truth, or practical principle, may often require great labour; but when once discovered, it is generally easy not only to convince others of its importance, but to enable them to defend and maintain it, by plain and irrefragable arguments; and this conviction, and this practical knowledge, it will generally be most easy to communicate, when men's minds are excited to enquiry, by the pursuit of some immediate interest, to which such general truths may appear to be subservient. It is at such times that important principles are familiarly started in conversation; and disquisitions eagerly pursued, in societies, where, in more tranquil periods, they would be listened to with impatience. It is at such times, too, that the intelligent part of the lower and middling classes look anxiously through such publications as treat intelligibly of the subjects to which their attention is directed; and are thus led, while seeking only for reasons to justify their previous inclinings, to imbibe principles and digest arguments which are impressed on their understandings for ever, and fructify in the end to far more important conclusions. It is, no doubt, true, that in this way, the full exposition of the truth will often be sacrificed for the sake of its temporary application; and it will not unfrequently happen that, in order to favour that application, the exposition will not be made with absolute fairness. But still the principle is brought into view; the criterion of true judgment is laid before the public; and the disputes of adverse parties will speedily settle the correct or debateable rule of its application.

For our own parts we have long been of opinion, that a man of powerful understanding and popular talents, who should, at such a season, devote himself to the task of announcing such principles, and rendering such discussions familiar, in the way and by the means we have mentioned, would probably do more to direct and accelerate the rectification of public opinion upon all practical questions, than by any other use he could possibly make of his faculties. His name, indeed, might not go down to posterity in connexion with any work of celebrity, and the greater part even of his contemporaries might be ignorant of the very existence of their benefactor. But the benefits conferred would not be the less real; nor the consciousness of conferring them less delightful; nor the gratitude of the judicious less ardent and sincere. So far, then, from regretting that Sir James Mackintosh did not forego all other occupations, and devote himself exclusively to the compilation of the two great works he had projected, or from thinking that his country has been

deprived of any services it might otherwise have received from him, by the course which he actually pursued, we firmly believe that, by constantly maintaining humane and generous opinions in the most engaging manner and with the greatest possible ability, in the highest and most influencing circles of society,—by acting as the respected adviser of many youths of great promise and ambition, and as the bosom counsellor of many practical statesmen, as well as by the timely publication of many admirable papers, in this and in other Journals, on such branches of politics, history, or philosophy as the course of events had rendered peculiarly interesting or important,—he did far more to enlighten the public mind in his own day, and to ensure its farther improvement in the days that are to follow, than could possibly have been effected by the most successful completion of the works he had undertaken. Such great works acquire for their authors a deserved reputation with the studious few; and are the treasures and armories from which the actual apostles of the truth derive the means of propagating and defending it. But, in order to be so effective, the arms and the treasures must be taken forth from their well-ordered repositories, and disseminated and applied where they are needed and required. It is by the tongue, and not by the pen, that multitudes, or the individuals composing multitudes, are ever persuaded or converted,—by conversation and not by harangues—or by such short and occasional writings as come in aid of conversation, and require little more study or continued attention than men capable of conversation are generally willing to bestow. If a man, therefore, who is capable of writing such a book, is also eminently qualified to disseminate and render popular its most important doctrines, by conversation and by such lighter publications, is he to be blamed if, when the times are urgent, he intermits the severer study, and applies himself, with caution and candour, to give an earlier popularity to that which can never be useful till it is truly popular? To us it appears, that he fulfils the higher duty; and that to act otherwise would be to act like a general who should starve his troops on the eve of battle, in order to replenish his magazines for a future campaign—or like a farmer who should cut off the rills from his parching crops, that he may have a fuller reservoir against the possible drought of another year.

But we must cut this short. If we are at all right in the views we have now taken, Sir James Mackintosh must have been wrong in the regret and self-reproach with which he certainly seems to have looked back on the unaccomplished projects of his earlier years,—and we humbly think that he was wrong. He had failed, no doubt, to perform all that he had once intended, and had been

drawn aside from the task he had set himself by other pursuits. But he had performed things as important, which were not originally intended; and been drawn aside by pursuits not less worthy than those to which he had tasked himself. In blaming himself—not for this idleness, but for this change of occupation—we think he was misled, in part at least, by one very common error—we mean that of thinking, that, because the use he actually made of his intellect was *more agreeable* than that which he had intended to make, it was therefore less meritorious. We need not say, that there cannot be a worse criterion of merit; but tender consciences are apt to fall into such an illusion. Another cause of regret may have been a little, though we really think but a little, more substantial. By the course he followed, he probably felt, that his name would be less illustrious, and his reputation less enduring, than if he had fairly taken his place as the author of some finished work of great interest and importance. If he got over the first illusion, however, and took the view we have done of the real utility of his exertions, we cannot believe that this would have weighed very heavily on a mind like Sir James Mackintosh's; and while we cannot but regret that his declining years should have been occasionally darkened by these shadows of a self-reproach for which we think there was no real foundation, we trust that he is not to be added to the many instances of men who have embittered their existence by a mistaken sense of the obligation of some rash vow made in early life, for the performance of some laborious and perhaps impracticable task. Cases of this kind we believe to be more common than is generally imagined. An ambitious young man is dazzled with the notion of filling up some blank in the literature of his country, by the execution of a great and important work—reads with a view to it, and allows himself to be referred to as engaged in its preparation. By degrees he finds it more irksome than he had expected, and is tempted by other studies altogether as suitable, and less charged with responsibility, into long fits of intermission. Then the very expectation that has been excited by this protracted incubation makes him more ashamed of having done so little, and more dissatisfied with the little he has done; and so his life is passed in a melancholy alternation of distasteful, and of course unsuccessful, attempts; and long fits of bitter, but really groundless, self-reproach, for not having made these attempts with more energy and perseverance: and at last he dies, not only without doing what he could not attempt without pain and mortification, but prevented by this imaginary engagement from doing many other things which he could have done with success and alacrity—some one of which it is probable, and all of which

it is nearly certain, would have done him more credit, and been of more service to the world, than any constrained and distressful completion he could in any case have given to the other. For our own part we have already said that we do not think that any man, whatever his gifts and attainments may be, is really bound in duty to leave an excellent book to posterity; or is liable to any reproach for not choosing to be an author. But, at all events, we are quite confident that he can be under no obligation to make himself unhappy in trying to make such a book; and that as soon as he finds the endeavour painful and depressing, he will do well, both for himself and for others, to give up the undertaking, and let his talents and sense of duty take a course more likely to promote both his own enjoyment and their ultimate reputation.

And now we conclude. When the book comes to a new edition we would recommend the suppression of part of the *Indian Tours*, and of some of the details of the early life; and should be glad to see their room occupied with the *Characters* which seem to have been written during the home voyage besides those already printed; and also with such parts of the *Lectures* in 1799 as can be restored from the notes, and are not directed to temporary objects,—unless indeed some publication of Sir James's whole works is in preparation, in which these will be included. We also hope that, on a careful review, some farther parts of the *London Journal* may be found fit for present publication.

The Editor's part of the work, we think, is very sensibly done—with a manly clearness and directness, and with the delicacy and reserve that belonged to his relation. That it is the shortest and least interesting part, only shows that he agrees with us as to what should constitute the bulk and the interest of such a publication.

ERRATUM.

In page 31, line 4, for *Oxford* read *Orford*.

No. CXXVI. will be published in January.