

one of Macaulay's greatest achievements with English words. The passage in the history in which he describes with poetic elevation the magnificent foreign policy of Oliver, that terror which hung over the dock-yards of Amsterdam, and crept into the ante-chambers of Paris, those English guns which, it had been threatened, might yet resound within hearing of the castle of St. Angelo in Rome; the passage in the history in which he reflects with poetic pathos on the deep humiliation of the Irish at the Revolution, on their long-continued wrongs and slow restitution; the passage in the Essays in which he describes the opening scene of the trial of Warren Hastings, the marshalling of the peers, the culprit's bending his knee—these passages may perhaps have greater claims to being considered the best products of his pen. But in none of those cases is it a theory that he has for his subject, and in none of those cases, perhaps, does he build his edifice so completely from materials furnished by his own mind. The workmanship, we cannot but be persuaded, consists in elaborate and bold repetition. He hammers his nail with many loud and distinct reverberations. His blows are all made upon one object, and aimed in one direction. And at the end, proud of the fastness of his workmanship, he continues to lift his arm and causes it to descend, spell-bound by the mere pleasure of striking, and listening to the sounds he makes.

We have so far been chiefly considering the most mechanical part of our subject. The highest merit of Lord Macaulay's writing is that singular vividness with which he brings distant and obscure objects near. His descriptive power is founded on a habit of rejecting all general expressions in favour of enumerations of definite objects. Whatever the reason of it may be, it is an undoubted

fact that our minds are affected by a general expression in a manner altogether different from that in which they are affected by a statement of details. In the one case, indeed, we are presented with the whole amount of knowledge; but in the other that knowledge sinks in more deeply. In the one case we become fully aware of the fact; but in the other the scene is brought before our very eyes, the sound to our very ears. Thus, if we wish to shew the growth of London since the seventeenth century, we may say that Chelsea was then a rural village, and that that part of the city between Chelsea and Westminster was mere open country. To say that it was mere open country means quite as much as to say that it was covered with corn-fields and hedges, that it had few houses, and was frequented only by people of rural occupations. To say that it was open country would be as full and exact a statement of the fact as could possibly be invented. Yet Macaulay does not say that it was open country, but that sportsmen and milkmaids wandered over it. In the same manner, when he wished to inform us that *Herculaneum* and *Pompeii* were unknown in the time of Addison, he could not have told us that fact more accurately than by simply saying that they were unknown. Yet he does not say that they were unknown, but that a farm-house stood on the theatre of *Herculaneum*, and rows of vines grew over the streets of *Pompeii*. We thus get a most vivid idea of those undiscovered relics of antiquity, lying underground, buried many feet deep, the peasants above unconscious of their existence.

When again he wishes to tell us that a volume has long ago ceased to be read, he does not say that it has ceased to be read, or that it is out of date, or obsolete, or forgotten, or that it has followed its predecessors