

page. In this whole page of writing we venture to assert that there are not more than three ideas; and indeed these three are so closely connected that we might call them one. In the first place there is this idea—that we all have an unjust partiality for the great minds of former ages. He next proves this by a more general fact—that we all have an unjust partiality for those to whom we are indebted. Nothing then remains but to shew that we are indebted to the great minds of former ages. These are the three ideas. Now if the use of a paragraph were merely to catalogue a list of thoughts, all the thoughts in this paragraph might be written in three sentences. Indeed, to make more than three sentences of them would be not only extravagant but impossible. But such is not the object of rhetorical writing.

The first of these ideas is expressed at the opening of the paragraph. "There is scarcely any delusion which has a better claim to be indulgently treated than that under the influence of which a man ascribes every moral excellence to those who have left imperishable monuments of their genius." We then proceed to the second. "The causes of this error lie deep in the inmost recesses of human nature. We are all inclined to judge of others as we find them. Our estimate of a character always depends much on the manner in which that character affects our interests and passions. We find it difficult to think well of those by whom we are thwarted or depressed; and we are ready to admit every excuse for the vices of those who are useful or agreeable to us." Now are there not here three statements of one fact? How much difference is there between saying that we judge of others as we find them, and that we estimate others by the manner in which they treat us? Or between saying that we estimate

others by the manner in which they treat us, and saying that we do not think well of those who thwart us, but make excuses for those who are useful to us? The second is indeed more definite than the first, and the third than the second. But is not the idea which is behind the words essentially the same in all the three statements? Having thus dwelt upon the second idea, we return to the first. "Hence it is that the moral character of a man eminent in letters or in the fine arts is treated, often by contemporaries, almost always by posterity, with extraordinary tenderness." We then take up the third. "The world derives pleasure and advantage from the performances of such a man." And what is the next sentence but a repetition of it? "The number of those who suffer by his personal vices, is small, even in his own time, when compared with the number of those to whom his talents are a source of gratification." And the next but a repetition? "In a few years all those whom he has injured disappear. But his works remain, and are a source of delight to millions." This fact is illustrated by the examples of Sallust, Clarendon, Shakspeare, and Fielding. We then come back, for the second time, to the original idea. "A great writer is the friend and benefactor of his readers; and they cannot but judge of him under the deluding influence of friendship and gratitude." And then once more to the second. "We all know how unwilling we are to admit the truth of any disgraceful story about a person whose society we like and from whom we have received favours." And then once more to the first. "Just such is the feeling which a man of liberal education naturally entertains towards the great minds of former ages." And finally state the third again with the most detailed and brilliant elaboration.

The whole paragraph as it stands is