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For the GAZETTE.

JOHN DRYDEN, 1631-1700.

This illustrious poet may be considered as a satirist, lyric poet, dramatist and translator, and a prose writer. As a satirist he is best known, especially by his memorable poem Absalom and Achitophel, which was written against the Whig party or the faction then opposed to King Charles II, whose side Dryden himself, being a Tory would naturally favour. In this satire Dryden has united history with politics, so that a good knowledge, as the name shows, would be required of Bible history also to thoroughly understand it. It was no more than natural that D. should turn satirist by reason of the contentions among the different sects of church parties, state and society. This poem was first printed without his name, yet it was received with enthusiasm on account of being related to political matters. The principal characters are those of the Earl of Shaftesbury, Duke of Buckingham, Sir Titus Oates, Elkanah Settle and Shadwell, who are satirized under the respective names of Achitophel, Timri, Corah, Doeg and Og. "Of these the false Achitophel's first, a name to all succeeding ages curst; in friendship false, implacable in hate, resolved to rule or ruin the state."

The portraits of these men as drawn by D., are severe and sharp; and as Ach. was the leader or chief of the Whig party, so here D. has favoured him with the first place among these portraits. With regard to the character of Absalom, some think it is too favourably drawn, and such is my opinion when I reflect on that of Ach., and some of the following, among whom in first rank did Timri stand, a man (says he) so various that he seemed to be, "Not one but all mankind's epitome."

Here D. throws out a dart that cannot otherwise than strike the mark. Titus Oates is here duly satirized by D. when he says of him: "Yet Corah thou shalt from oblivion pass, erect thyself thou monument of brass." And again, "Whoever asked the witnesses high grace, whose oath with mar-

tyrdom did Stephen grace." These portraits are drawn by D. in his first part of Ab. and Ach. but in the second part, which was written by Tait, with the exception of a few hundred lines wherein D. himself satirizes his enemies to a greater degree than in the first part. Here he rails at Settle and Shadwell, and at the portrait of Settle under the pseudonym of Doeg. D. thinks that he had done his best when he thus speaks of him: "Doeg, without knowing how or why, made a blundering kind of melody, free from all meaning, whether good or bad, and in one word heroically mad," which is very "stingy" to one who is a poet himself. Again, "Shall he be hanged who never could rebel?" Though D. had satirized many, and in various ways, still he was fresh and vigorous for more that might come in his way, and it seems to me that the further on he goes the better adapted he gets for producing the desired effect, viz., poignancy. In his portrait of Shadwell he paints it with all the colors that the picture necessarily required, as when he says of him, "Every inch that is not fool is rogue." And "The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull, with this prophetic blessing, be thou Dull." Thus we see the poem comprises, as Dr. Johnson says, acrimony of censure and artful delineation of character. As the chief feature of Milton's writings was sublimity, so in Dryden's that of vigor is most common. It was not till Dryden was fifty years of age that he discovered wherein his strength lay, viz.: in criticism and this satire Abs. and Ach. He has been called the father of English Criticism. Another of D.'s peculiar powers was to reason in verse. Although many lines of this poem are inelegant and improper, yet still the licentiousness with which they are written must not be attributed to the man himself, but the age in which he lived.

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MATHEMATICS.

Different studies have different uses; some, as mathematics, strengthen the reasoning powers; some, as classics, cultivate the taste; while others, as science, strengthen the observing powers. This may be seen to be the case from the following fact, that those who study mathematics must use their reasoning powers to the utmost, while those who study science, on the other hand, must not so much use their reasoning powers as their observing ones.