

LIFE OF SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

The life of Sir Thomas Browne has been written by Dr. Johnson, as the best introduction to his *Moral Essays*. All the readers of the *Saturday Evening Magazine* may not, perhaps, be aware that Sir Thomas Browne was a physician, and that he died at his native city Norwich, in 1682. The most renowned of Sir Thomas' writings is, the "Religio Medici"—and from another of his works, "The Vulgar Errors," we copy the following passages, as a specimen of the pure & nervous English of this author. The commencement of his treatise on "Um Burial," is equal to any thing in Hooker, or in the prose of Milton:

"I hope it is not true, and some indeed have strongly denied, what is recorded of the monks that poisoned Henry the Emperour, in a draught of the holy eucharist. 'Twas a scandalous wound unto Christian religion, and I hope all pagans will forgive it, when they shall reade that a Christian was poisoned in a cup of Christ, and received his bane in a draught of his salvator. Had I believed transubstantiation I should have doubted the effect: and surely the sinne it selfe received an aggravation in that opinion. It much commendeth the innocency of our forefathers, and the simplicity of those times, whose laws could never dreame so high a crime as parricide: whereas this at least may seeme to outreach that fact, and to exceed the regular distinctions of murder. I will not say what sinne it was to act it; yet may it seeme a kinde of martyrdom to suffer by it: for, although unknowingly, he dyed for Christ his sake, and lost his life in the ordained testimony of his death. Certainly, had they knowne it, some zeales would scarcely have refused it, rather adventuring their owne death, then refusing the memoriall of his.

Many other accounts like these we meet sometimes in history, scandalous unto Christianity, and even unto humanity; whose verities not onely, but whose relations honest minds doe deprecate. For of sinnes heteroclitical, and such as want either name or precedent, there is oft times a sinne even in their histories. We desire no records of such enormities; sinnes should be accounted new, that so they may be esteemed monstrous. They omit of monstrosity as they fall from their rarity; for, men count it veniall to erie with their forefathers, and foolishly conceive they divide a sinne in society. The pens of men may sufficiently expatiate without these singularities of Villany; for, as they increase the hatred of vice in some, so doe they enlarge the theory of wickednesse in all. And this is one that may make latter ages worse then were the former; for, the vicious examples of ages past, poison the curiosity of these present, affording a hint of sin unto seduceable spirits, and soliciting those unto the imitation of them, whose hearts were never so perversely principled as to invent them. In this kinde we commend the wisdom and goodnesse of Galen, who would not leave unto the world too subtle a theory of poysons; unarming thereby the malice of venomous spirits, whose ignorance must be contented with sublimate and arsenick. For, surely there are subtler venenations, such as will invisibly destroy, and like the Basilisks of heaven. In things of this nature silence condemneth history; 'tis the venial part of things lost; wherein there must never rise a Pan-cirollus,* nor remaine any Register but that of hell.

STANZAS ON THE NEW YEAR.

I stood between the meeting years,
The coming and the past,
And I ask'd of the future one,
Wilt thou be like the last?

The same in many a sleepless night,
In many an anxious day?

*Who writ *de Antiquis deperditis*, or inventions lost.

Thank Heaven! I have no prophet's eye
To look upon the way!

For Sorrow like a phantom sits
Upon the last Year's close.
How much of grief, how much of ill,
In its dark breast repose!

Shadows of faded Hopes fit by,
And ghosts of Pleasure fled:
How have they chang'd from what they were!
Cold, colourless, and dead.

I think on many a wasted hour,
And sicken o'er the void;
And many darker are behind,
On worse than nought employ'd.

Oh Vanity! alas, my heart!
How widely hast thou stray'd
And misused every golden gift
For better purpose made!

I think on many a once-loved friend
As nothing to me now;
And what can mark the lapse of time
As does an aiter'd brow?

Perhaps 'twas but a careless word
That sever'd Friendship's shrine;
And angry Pride stands by each gap,
Lest they unite again.

Less sad, albeit more terrible,
To think upon the dead,
Who quiet in the lonely grave
Lay down their weary head.

For faith and hope, and peace, and trust,
Are with their happier lot:
Though broken is the bond of love,
At least we broke it not.—

Thus thinking of the meeting years,
The coming and the past,
I needs must ask the future one,
Wilt thou be like the last?

There came a sound, but not of speech,
That to my thought replied,
"Misery is the marriage-gift
That waits a mortal bride:

"But lift thine hopes from this base earth,
This waste of worldly care,
And wed thy faith to yon bright sky,
For Happiness dwells there!"

THE RIDDLE OF THE YEAR.

By *Cleobulus*.

There is a father with twice six sons; these sons have thirty daughters a-piece, party-coloured, having one cheek white and the other black, who never see each other's face, nor live above twenty-four hours.

Cleobulus, to whom this riddle is attributed, was one of the seven wise men of Greece, who lived about 570 years before the birth of Christ.

Riddles are of the highest antiquity; the oldest on record is in the book of Judges xiv. 14—18. We are told by Plutarch, that the girls of his times worked at netting or sewing, and the most ingenious "made riddles."

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