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CORONATION ODE FOR QUEEN VICTORIA.

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY.

The Sceptre in a maiden-hand,
The reign of Beauty and of Youth,
Awake to gladness all the land,
And Love is Loyalty and Truth.
Rule, VICTORIA, rule the Free;
Hearts and hands we offer Thee.

Not by the tyrant-law of might,
But by the Grace of God, we own,
And by the People's Voice, thy right
To sit upon thy Fathers' throne.—
Rule, VICTORIA, rule the Free;
Heaven defend and prosper Thee!

These isles and continents obey,
Kindreds and nations, high and far,
Between the bound-marks of thy sway
The Morning and the Evening Star.—
Rule VICTORIA, rule the Free,
Millions rest their hopes on Thee.

No Slave within thine empire breathe,
Before thy steps oppression fly;
The Lamb and Lion play beneath
The meek dominion of thine eye.—
Rule, VICTORIA, rule the Free,
Chains and fetters yield to Thee.

With mercy's beams yet more benign,
Light to thy realms in darkness send,
Till none shall name a God but thine,
None at an Idol-altar bend.—
Rule, VICTORIA, rule the Free,
Till they all shall pray for Thee.

At home, abroad, by sea, on shore,
Blessings on Thee and thine increase;
The sword and cannon rage no more,
The whole world hail Thee Queen of Peace!—
Rule, VICTORIA, rule the Free,
And the Almighty rule o'er Thee!

Blackwood's Magazine.

SHEFFIELD, JUNE 28TH, 1838.

MORAL EFFECTS OF FICTION.

BY SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

FICTION, if its nature be attentively considered, seems to be capable of producing two moral effects.

I. It represents a degree of ideal excellence, superior to any virtue which is observed in real life. This effect is perfectly analogous to that of a model of ideal beauty in the elegant arts. As in the arts of painting and sculpture, so in the noblest of all arts, the art of living well, the pursuit of unattainable perfection raises us more near to what we never can reach. Valour or benevolence may be embodied in the hero of a tale, as female beauty in the Venus, or male beauty in the Apollo. This effect of fiction is represented with majestic eloquence by Bacon. To this he confined his attention; and does not seem to have considered another effect, perhaps, not of inferior importance.

II. Every fiction is popular, in proportion to the degree in which it interests the greatest number of men. Now to interest is to excite the sympathy of the reader with one of the persons of the fiction—to be anxious about his fortunes, to exult in his success, and to lament his sufferings. Every fiction, therefore, in proportion as it delights, teaches a new degree of fellow-feeling with the happiness or misery of other men; it adds somewhat to the disposition to sympathize, which is the spring of benevolence; and benevolence is not only the sovereign queen of all the virtues, but that virtue for whose sake every other exists, and which bestows the rank of virtue on every human quality that ministers in her train. No fiction can delight, but as it interests; nor can it excite interest, but as it exercises sympathy; nor can it excite sympathy, without increasing the disposition to sympathize, and consequently, without strengthening benevolence. There is no doubt that the best school of compassion is real calamity; and that the intercourse of sympathy and benefit, in active life, is the most effectual discipline of humanity. The effect of similar scenes in fiction is proportionably fainter, but it may be repeated as often as is desired; and, at all events, it is so much added to the school of real events.

This importance will appear greater, if we could transport ourselves back to the first abject condition of the human brute. A rare act of virtue, probably of valour, the quality most necessary and most brilliant, is versified and recited; his only wish is, that his beastly idleness may be diverted; but something of the sentiment which produced the virtue steals into his soul. The suc-

cess of the singer rouses others. When they have exhausted mere brute courage, they think of the motive which inspired it. He who is killed for his tribe, or for his family, is the more favoured hero. The barbarous poet and his savage hearers find that they have been insensibly betrayed to celebrate and admire humanity. One act of virtue is, as it were, multiplied by a thousand mirrors of rude fiction: these images afford so many new pictures to the imagination of the savage. In a long series of ages, it may be said, with truth,

"Say, has he given in vain the heavenly muse?
Her track, where'er the goddess roves,
Glory pursues, and generous shame,
Th' unconquerable mind, and freedom's holy flame."

Every state of society has its predominant virtue, of which it delights to multiply the ideal models. By frequently contemplating these, other virtues are excluded, and the favourite quality is nourished to that excess at which it becomes a vice. Admiration of the valour of Achilles inspires a criminal rage for war, and lessens our abhorrence for the rapine and cruelty of the hero. Treatises on morals, written in the most dissimilar times, may exactly coincide; but it is otherwise with fiction, and such practical modes of inspiring moral sentiment; they proceed from the feelings, and they must be marked by the prevalent feelings of the age which produces them. Unhappily, the effect of the moral treatise is small; that of the fiction, though unequal and irregular, is very great. 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 human 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. With respect to posterity, the case is somewhat different; as they become more and more civilized, they limit their admiration to the really admirable qualities of energy, magnanimity and sensibility; they turn aside their eyes from their attendant ferocity, or consider it only as a proof of the power of the poet, as an exact painter of manners. 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 as 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; 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.

If fiction exalts virtue by presenting ideal perfection, and strengthens sympathy by multiplying the occasions for its exercise, this must be best done when the fiction most resembles that real life which is the sphere of the duties and feelings of the great majority of men. At first sight, then, it seems that the moralist could not have imagined a revolution in literature more favourable

to him, than that which has exalted and multiplied novels. And now I hear a clamour around me:—"Tom Jones is the most admirable and popular of all English novels; and will Mr. Philosopher pretend that Tom Jones is a moral book?" With shame and sorrow it must be answered, that it does not deserve the name; and a good man, who finds such a prostitution of genius in a book so likely to captivate the young, will be apt to throw it from him with indignation; but he will still, even in this extreme case, observe, that the same book inspires the greatest abhorrence of the duplicity of Bliffl, of the hypocrisy of Thwacum 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—

"Fierce wars and faithful loves."

A more refined objection against novels has been made by Stewart, from whom I am always unwilling to dissent, especially on the mixed questions of taste and morals, which he generally treats with uncommon success. He admits that fiction cultivates the moral taste, the advantage ascribed to it by Lord Bacon; but he seems to deny (though with some fluctuation) that it cultivates sympathy—the advantage for which I have ventured to contend. The sum of his objections is that every repetition of a melancholy scene blunts sensibility; that this is not balanced, as in real life, by strengthening the active habit; and that a custom of contemplating the elegant distresses of fiction, makes the mind shrink from the homely, and often disgusting, miseries of the world. The last objection has a certain degree of truth. A mind accustomed to compassionate distress only when divested of disgusting circumstances, will, doubtless, not be so ready to pity haggard and loathsome poverty, as those who have been long habituated to contemplate that sort of misery. But the true question is, whether such a mind will not be more disposed to pity, in such circumstances, than one who has never had compassion excited before.

It deserves particular consideration, that distress is never presented in fiction, but where it is naturally followed by pity, which it is the object of the fiction to inspire. It must be, and it ought to be, quite otherwise in real life. The physician is immediately roused by the sight of suffering, to consider the means of relief; the magistrate connects the sufferings of the criminal with the advantage of society; the angry man feels a gratification in the sufferings of his enemy. These states of mind are natural; some of them useful, and even necessary. The case of the physician is that of every man constantly engaged in the practice of benevolence; but they are all examples where pain is dissociated from the sufferings of others, and where real misery produces sentiments different from pity—the most generally useful of all human feelings.

From the larger proposition I differ also—that "an habitual attention to scenes of fictitious distress is not merely useless to the character, but positively hurtful." Impressions are weakened by repetition; associations between two ideas, or between two feelings, or between an idea and a feeling, are strengthened by repetition; and the force of such associations will be directly in proportion to the number of times that the ideas or feelings have co-existed, or immediately succeeded each other. This theory is applicable to every operation of the mind, but the mere passive receiving of impressions; it is obviously applicable to all the passions, and is, indeed, the law on which their growth depends. Take the instance of avarice. There is, in avarice, an association between the idea of money and the feeling of pleasure. It is perfectly clear, that the oftener this idea and this feeling have been associated, the stronger is the power of the idea to call up the feeling. It would be most extravagant, indeed, to suppose, that the repetition of fits of anger did not make a man more irascible, in a manner so independent of outward acts, that men often become more passionate, from the painful necessity of concealing all its outward marks. If the contemplation of pathetic scenes weakens pity, why should not the contemplation of excellence weaken the love of virtue?

Then, though each single impression is, no doubt, weakened by repetition, yet this may be more than counterbalanced by new impressions, received from the same object, in frequent successive contemplation. Every mind which possesses any sensibility to rural beauty, receives the strongest impression at first, from