

A SOUL IN ALL THINGS.

There lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are His,
That make sojny the solitary place
Where no eye see them. And the fairer forms
That cultivation glories in are His.
He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year;
He makes the bounds which winter may not pass,
And blunts his pointed bay; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ,
Uninjured, with imitable art;
And, ere one flowery season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.
The Lord of all, himself through all diffused,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.
Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God. One Spirit—His
Who wore the plaited thorns with bleeding brows—
Rules universal Nature! Not a flower
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
Of his unrivalled pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the sea-side sands,
The forms with which he sprinkles all the earth.—
—Happy who walks with him! whom, what he finds,
Of flavour, or of scent, in fruit or flower,
Or what he views of beautiful or grand
In Nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God!—COWPER.

From Fraser's Magazine.

THE THREE DIVINES.

ROBERT HALL—CHALMERS—EDWARD IRVING.

That we may not be suspected of any partiality, especially by our dissenting brother, I would suggest that we lead off with that great ornament of Dissenters, Robert Hall.

His *Sermon on Infidelity* is, in its way, a masterpiece. The force and finish of that composition have no parallels in the English tongue. His style is thoroughly English. He never uses a latinised word where a Saxon one will do. Dr. Gregory presents us with an interesting anecdote, illustrative of this peculiarity: 'In one of my early interviews with Mr. Hall,' says the doctor, 'I used the word *felicity* three or four times in succession. He asked, 'Why do you say *felicity*, sir? Happiness is a better word, more musical, and genuine English, coming from the Saxon. Words derived from the Saxon are generally more musical, as 'My heart is smitten and withered like grass.' There's plaintive music. 'Thou hast delivered my eyes from tears, my soul from death, and my feet from falling.' I could think of the word *tear* till I wept. Then, for another noble specimen, and almost all good Saxon English, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' With these preferences, he ordered the word '*perforated*' to be expunged in one of his published sermons, and the Saxon and more expressive word '*pierced*' to be substituted.' The taste of Hall, in this respect, I exceedingly admire. The humbler classes in England rarely use a latinised expression; and our own countrymen, owing to their early initiation in the rich and expressive Saxon of the Scottish dialect, are quite at sea when they hear the sesquipedalia of Johnson.

I have always felt, that there is a force and a *vis penetrandi* in Saxon English, which we look for to no purpose in the cumbrous latinity of the great lexicographer, or the historian of the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.' Milton is always most mighty when he clothes his thoughts in pure Saxon. His *L'Allegro* is almost pure Saxon. The following sonnet on his blindness is an instance of my meaning:

"When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent, which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve there with my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he, returning, chide:
'Both God exact day-labour, light denied.'
I humbly ask. But patience, to prevent
That mummy, soon replies, 'God doth not need
Either man's works, or his own gifts: who best
Bears his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
Is kingly—thousands at his bidding speed,
And pass o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

But, to return to Hall. His is the almost peculiar merit of employing Saxon words, and imparting, at the same time, great smoothness and elegance of structure. An instance of this we have in the following extract from his *Sermon on Infidelity*:

"Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow? Eternal God! can what are thine enemies intent? What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not pierce! Miserable men! proud of being the offspring of chance; in love with universal disorder; whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to their designs;

and who are at ease only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world.'"

Where Hall introduces more copiously words of classic origin, the Saxon and the Latin blend so beautifully together, that his sentences rise to a pitch of magnificence and power seldom equalled. Thus, in the same sermon:

"The idea of the Supreme Being has this peculiar property, that as it admits of no substitute, so, from the first moment it is formed, it is capable of continual growth and enlargement. God himself is immutable; but our conception of his character is continually growing more extended and refulgent, by having transferred to it new elements of beauty and goodness; by attracting to itself, as a centre, whatever bears the impress of dignity, order, or happiness. *It borrows splendour from all that is fair, subordinates to itself all that is great, and sits enthroned on the riches of the universe.*"

I must set before you one other extract from Hall, and it is quite a gem. It is from his exquisite and impressive funeral sermon on the death of the Princess Charlotte:

"The nation has not been certainly wanting in the proper expression of its poignant regret at the sudden removal of this most lamented princess, nor of their sympathy with the royal family, deprived by this visitation of its brightest ornament. Sorrow is painted in every countenance, the pursuits of pleasure and of business have been suspended, and the kingdom is covered with signals of distress. But what, my brethren, if it be lawful to indulge such a thought, what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? Or could we realise the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness—to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth? Or were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?"

The last sentence is perfect harmony, and the whole passage impregnated with rich and melting eloquence. Dr. Parr declared of Robert Hall, that 'he has the eloquence of an orator, the fancy of a poet, the acuteness of a schoolman, the profoundness of a philosopher, and the piety of a saint.' This is the character of the preacher himself: that of his style is no less unique. Sometimes he is terse and Saxon, every inch like Cobbett or Swift. At other times, his language rolls forth with the pomposity of Johnson. But, in all respects, his English is pure and thoroughly indigenous. I must leave him in the enjoyment of an immortality beyond the reach of rivalry or decay.

"Chalmers," is, even after our admiration of the chaste eloquence of Hall, the mightiest of the mighty.

"His mind scatters from its pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn!"

"I agree with you fully in your admiration of the reverend doctor. Whether I contemplate Dr. Chalmers as a philosopher, a theologian, an orator, or a Tory, he is in each and all *facile princeps*,—the acutest philosopher, the profoundest theologian, the most eloquent orator, and the soundest of Tories. He has impressed much of his own character on the divines of our church, and continues to gain upon those of every other communion in Christendom. His oratory, style, and even phraseology, are peculiar to himself; his own mind originates and colours the whole texture of his discourses. There can be no mistaking a sermon of Chalmers; the internal evidences are so palpable, that were the external utterly wanting, the adjustment of all question about its parentage would be easy. It is remarkable, however, that the composition of the sermons of the reverend doctor is any thing but according to the best usages of our celebrated writers. He distorts and mutilates our English without compunction. Lindley Murray, Johnson, or any other stickler for correctness, find no quarters from the professor of divinity in Edinburgh. He wants words expressive of his meaning, and he makes them. His sentences not unfrequently extend over a page or two; and his sermons do not so much demonstrate a proposition as expound it. He imitates in many of them the spinning dervish, performing very attractive gyrations around one thought, snatching a particle of it at intervals, and turning it over and over in his evolutions, and making it fling off flashes of purest splendour. He does not advance from step to step in argument,—he keeps within a circle: but that circle he fills with coruscations the most impressive and brilliant. Expansion, not procession, is his forte. The cruise of oil and the barrel of meal he spreads out, and makes a hundred-fold. The effect of this amplification is that, whilst it produces strong impressions in the pulpit, it wears beyond endurance when presented from the press."

There is, I see, a new edition of the works of Chalmers coming out in monthly volumes; a goodly design, no doubt, to benefit the living orator, as Gregory's edition of Hall was meant to benefit the relatives of the dead. But it is rather somewhat derogatory to its merits, that the doctor has so applied the *labor limæ*, that the luxuriance of earlier achievements has been entirely pruned. Let any one compare the sermons, for instance, in the last three volumes with the reports of them that appeared in the *Pulpit*, and the meagreness of the former is most conspicuous in the company

of the latter. The short-hand writer, notwithstanding defects and mistakes, took down the *interlardel* extemporaneous bursts of the preacher, as well as the more studied portions; and, independently of this, excision has been too liberally applied.

I suspect Chalmers's writings are not destined to endure amid the splendour which has surrounded his popular eloquence in his lifetime. The style is *outré*, and corrupt; his repetitions endless; and what adds to the effect of his personal and living oratory detracts from his excellence in the form of print and well-bound duodecimos. The sentiments and the impressive master-thoughts that his prolific mind has given birth to, will be familiarised to us by the labours of less gifted minds, and the master-architect will be more remembered than read,—the subject of its panegyric rather than the subject of the next century's studies.

Let us turn to another illustrious orator, who has fallen asleep, and side by side with the martyrs, and covenanters, and holy worthies, that repose their ashes in the churchyard of St. Mungo at Glasgow. I feel somewhat reluctant to repeat the eulogies pronounced at the manse on the now departed Edward Irving, as I find in your own pages you have sketched his character with a master's pen, both on the occasion of his decease, and more recently in latter numbers. In person and in mental power, in nobleness of nature and Christian attainment, our minister admitted that he was "*instar omnium*." "He was," said our minister, "the stern covenanter grafted on the meek apostle."

"The saint," said Mr. Philipson, "on the eloquent and profound metaphysician—Coleridge and Jeremy Taylor consolidated. Beset by wasps; worshipped as an angel by some whose pure was their only virtue the one day, and libelled and maligned by the same party the next, as Mammon's barometer gave indication; his errors exaggerated; his noble nature stung to madness by dwarfs he could have extinguished by the wing of his doublet, when the softness and charity from only one brother, experienced in his trials, would have wooed him from his errors and won him to orthodoxy."

"Irving," said our minister, "was an original. One never detects him borrowing: right or wrong, he thought for himself. But his ashes sleep sweetly in the bosom of his mother earth, and his spirit safely in the bosom of his Father and his God."

"In his orations are found gems, if there be also imbedding them, clay and common earth. Hooker and the giants of that age and school were the models of his style; and if he cramped himself, by restricting his thoughts to the forms of phraseology current in the earlier age, he made up for this by developing massive and glowing thoughts, that were struck into the hearts of his audience too deeply ever to be erased or forgotten. With this there was a complete action, a graceful and impressive personal eloquence, that breathed from face, and eye, and fingers, and acted as a pioneer to his arguments. To every rhetorical and intellectual accomplishment there was added that deep-toned and fervid spirituality which imparted its electric stimulus to all he did and said. His gifts and graces were melted into one rich harmony, that none could attend to without feeling. On ordinary matters Edward was as playful as a child, simple, unaffected, humorous. On the truths of the Gospel he ever spoke in solemn and awful tones. In his own house he was a hospitable and generous man, combining the entertainment of gentle chivalry with the piety of the old Puritan. But I should occupy your ears for months in dilating on the traits of that noble but erratic mind. He has now fallen, like a meteor, from the bosom of splendour into the grave of thick night; like an eagle, smitten down in consequence of too near an approach to the burning orb of mid-day. Hand me that volume of discourses by Irving.—*Favete linguis*:"

"What makes God hide our sins from His sight, or from the sight of the world?—'Tis mercy. What showereth the rain and sheddeth the beams of the sun on the world?—'Tis mercy. What openeth the gates of heaven to the penitent?—'Tis mercy. What sacrificed God's dearly beloved son for the chief of sinners? 'Twas mercy. No government can be held of God that does not make a containing vessel for mercy, which would otherwise deluge all things. Therefore God hath constructed, for the containing of his mercy, the everlasting Gospel, by which he can be just and the justifier of every sinner. This, though it contains, does not limit his mercy. The Gospel is a chart for the great ocean of God's mercy, without which misery would be all-prevailing over the earth. Had the soul of man not fallen into strife with itself—had it continued entire and pure, then there would have been no display, save of the holiness and mercy of God in one harmonious union. It is because the character of man has become divisible into good and evil, that the character of God has become divisible into mercy and justice."

"I think," said the episcopal minister, "I can furnish you with one of the finest pieces in the English tongue, from the page of Irving:

"Take up a handful of dust and ashes, and there behold the materials out of which the Lord God Almighty fashioned man—this living form of man, so quick and pregnant with all sensual and spiritual feeling. And if you would know the kindness which your father hath put forth in the work of his hands, look to the tribes, from the worm to the lion, all made of us good materials; in size, strength, fleetness, and durability, surpassing man. But,