

without approaching the neat; simple, but never weak; sublime, but never inflated; strong, without being harsh; terse, but never curt; clear and brilliant as crystal, it approaches the line which 'trembles on perfection.' 'It has,' says Dugald Stewart, 'all the beauties of Addison, Johnson, and Burke, without their imperfections.' Frequently imitated, it is the most unapproachable of styles. While it presents not a single point to the caricaturist, it drives the imitator to despair. If it has any faults, they lie in a lack of ease,—in a tone of majesty too uniformly sustained,—in a slight and occasional mannerism in the construction of his sentences,—in an apparent ignorance of the charm which airy negligence, if it avoid affectation, can give to diction, as well as to the motion of a birch waving in the wind, and to the wandering tresses of female beauty,—and in the consequent want of some of those careless graces which delight us in Hume and Goldsmith. His imagination, again, is cast in a medium between the gorgeous and the tame. It is more that of the orator than the poet. Even its darings are rather those of the excited speaker, than of the wild-eyed bard. It is not a teeming and exhaustless fertility, like that of Jeremy Taylor, Burke, Carran, and Wilson. Nor is it a profound, though limited power, like that of Wordsworth, Chalmers, and Foster. Nor is it a turbid, earthy, but fertile source, like that of Warburton and Andrew Thomson. It is a high, pure, and cultivated energy, equal to the demands of his intellect, and nothing more; illustrative rather than combinative; epical, rather than dramatic; refined, rather than rich; select, not copious. It is an imagination resembling that of Thomas Campbell, or Lord Jeffrey, more than any other eminent man of the day.

"The partition which, in his case, Nature had made thin between genius and derangement, at length burst asunder. The majestic orb of his intellect liberated, wandered, wandered, went utterly out of its course, and 'yet the light that led astray, was light from heaven.' Hall's was no vulgar frenzy, no grinning, howling, and cursing mania; it was cometary in its character, meteorous, sublime. It brought out his faculties into a broader and more vigorous play. The burning hand of madness laid on his brain, did not sear up, but kindled his powers into lurid life. In the language of Lamb, applied to 'Lear,' 'the storm of frenzy turned up, and laid bare that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches.' He thought incessantly; all that he had read or knew, came back streaming, rushing, like a tempest through his soul. The sun of his judgment, in health so vigorous and clear, was in eclipse; but, in its stead, 'glared the crested hydra' of imagination round the sultry solitudes of his soul. He jested bitterly, as we have seen; declaimed powerfully. He preached magnificent sermons,—would they had been caught from his foaming lips! He prayed fervent, unearthly prayers; and we can conceive no sight more affecting or more awfully grand, than that of this lofty spirit conversing with God through the cloud of madness; amid the eclipse of reason, still groping toward heaven; praying, shall we say, as an angel would pray, were his glorious faculties unclouded, by gazing too nearly and too ardently at the Shechinah! And if even a poor

creature, like Christopher Smart, 'who, indeed,' says Johnson, 'went to the tavern, but was always carried home again,' could, in an asylum, and with a key on the wall, write poetry almost as grand as Job or David; if Nat. Lee soared into sublimity, as he wrote his insane tragedies by the light of the moon; if every clown be a Shakspeare in his dreams; if the speeches of ordinary men, in the brief and bright frenzy preceding the darkness of death, have far exceeded their capabilities in the day of health; if dramatists, and poets, and novelists, have dug some of their richest gems out of the mine of madness, and made their Lear and Ophelias, and Cleopatras, and Eastree Grays, talk an eloquence which has hardly a parallel in the written language of men; how vivid must have been the impressions, and how eloquent the ravings, in such circumstances, of such a being as Hall! It is a subject for the noblest painting or poetry; it is a subject for solemn reflection, for humble scorchings of heart, for pity, and for tears. In the supposed necessary nearness of 'great wit' to madness, we do not believe; but much less can we subscribe to Elia's paper on the 'sanity' of true genius. The truth lies between. Frequently, we are afraid, frenzy lurks in the neighbourhood of a lofty mind, like a lion near a fount, waiting the moment for its fell spring. But that the workings of noble faculties always near the abhorred brink of insanity; that the towering sons of men are most apt to be crowned and 'maned' with the fire of madness,—we shrink from supposing. Still less do we think that, in Hall's case, it was designed as a thorn in the flesh to humble his pride. This is a mere assumption, intolerable in worms. Who told them to cry out 'a judgment, a thorn?' Let us check our unbridled speculations, stifle our senseless curiosity, be humble, and look at home. Hall himself continued to look back upon this period with a certain melancholy and regretful interest. His mind then, he averred, had exhausted itself. Obligated to keep up with his fire-winged frenzy, how could it but be crippled? His memory had been overstrained. His imagination, especially, had suffered. He had come out from the cloud, not with face shining, but with locks shorn. Much of his strength had departed, if he had not become weak as other men.—Others said that, on the contrary, he was bettered by the affliction, and that his preaching improved in beauty and unction, if the power and splendour of his ancient manner were forever gone."

The sketch of Dr. Chalmers opens with some apposite remarks on the untiring energy so characteristic of some of the master minds of this age.

"We have somewhere heard the indolence of true genius deplored. But certainly the charge does not apply to men of genius in our day. In an age distinguished above all others for fervid excitement and unrelaxing energy, it was to be expected that the brighter and loftier spirits should share in the general activity. And so verily it is. There is scarcely such a being nowadays as your sluggish and slumbering litterateur, reposing under the petty shadow of his laurels, dreaming of immortality, and soothing his soul with the pleasing idea that, because he