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LITERATURE AND ART.

HOW GREAT MEN WORK.

The methods of authors in the course of composition have been singular, and though no two of them have worked alike, they have, most of them, illustrated the old proverb that genius is labor, and that few great works have been produced which have not been the result of unwearied perseverance as well as of brilliant natural powers. Some men have undoubtedly possessed astonishing facility and readiness, both of conception and expression, as we shall presently see; but, as a rule, the writings of such men, except in the case of Shakespeare, are not so valuable as they might have been, and are marred by crudities which might otherwise have been finished beauties, by deformities which should have been graces. First among the sons of literary toil stands Virgil. He used, we are told, to pour out a large number of verses in the morning, and to spend the rest of the day in pruning them down; he has humorously compared himself to a she-bear, who licks her cubs into shape. It took him three years to compose his ten short eclogues; seven years to elaborate his "Georgics," which comprise little more than two thousand verses; and he employed more than twelve years in polishing his "Æneid," being even then so dissatisfied with it, that he wished before his death to commit it to the flames. Horace was equally indefatigable, and there are single odes in his works which must have cost him months of labor. Lucretius' one poem represents the toil of a whole life; and so careful was Plato in the niceties of verbal collocation, that the first sentence in his "Republic" was turned in nine different ways. It must have taken Thucydides upward of twenty years to write his history, which is comprised in one octavo volume. Gibbon wrote the first chapter of his work three times before he could please himself; and John Foster, the essayist, would sometimes spend a week over one sentence. Addison was so particular that he would stop the press to insert an epithet, or even a comma; and Montesquieu, alluding in a letter to one of his works, says to a correspondent, "You will read it in a few hours, but the labor expended on it has whitened my hair." Gray would spend months over a short copy of verses; and there is a poem of ten lines in Waller's works, which, he has himself informed us, took him a whole summer to formulate. Miss Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Hume, and Fox, have all recorded the trouble they took. Tasso was unwearied in correcting; so were Pope and Boileau. Even Macaulay, with all his fluency, did not disdain the application of the file; and there are certain passages in the first chapter of his history which represent months of patient revision.

Some authors have rapidly sketched the plan of their intended work first, and have reserved their pains for filling out the details. The great French novelist, Balzac, followed this method. He sent off to the printer the skeleton of the intended romance, leaving pages of blank paper between for conversations, descriptions, etc.; as soon as that was struck off he shut himself up in his study, eat and drank nothing but bread and water till he had filled up the blank spaces, and in this way laboriously completed his book. Godwin wrote his "Caleb Williams" backward—beginning, that is to say, with the last chapter, and working on to the first. Richardson produced his ponderous novels by painfully elaborating different portions at different times. Burton, the author of the "Anatomy of Melancholy;" the great scholars Bartholomew and Turnebus; Butler, the author of "Hudibras;" Locke; Fuller, the "witty" divine; Bishop Horne, Warburton, Hurd, and many others kept common-place books, which may account for the copious and apposite illustrations which enrich their volumes. Sheridan and Hook were always on the alert for bits of brilliant conversation and stray jokes, which they took good care to jot down in their pocket-books for future use. Swift would lie in bed in the morning "thinking of wit for the day;" and Theodore Hook generally "made up his impromptus the night before." Washington Irving was fond of taking his portfolio out into the fields, and laboriously manipulating his graceful periods while swinging on a stile. Wordsworth and De Quincey did the same.

But it is now time to reverse the picture, and to mention meritorious pieces produced against time and with extraordinary facility. Lucilius, the Roman satirist, wrote with such ease, that he used to boast that he could turn off two hundred verses while standing on one leg. Ennius was quite as fluent. Of Shakespeare we are told, "His mind and hand went together, and what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we (the editors of the first folio) have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." When the fits of inspiration were on Milton, his amanuensis could scarcely keep pace with the fast-flowing verses; but we must remember that the poet had been brooding over his immortal work for years before a line was committed to paper. Of English writers, perhaps the most fluent and easy have been Dryden and Sir Walter Scott. In one short year Dryden produced four of his greatest words—namely, the first part of "Absalom and Achitophel," "The Medal," "Mack Flecknoe," his share in the second part of "Absalom and Achitophel," and the "Religio Laici." He was less than three years in translating the whole of Virgil. He composed his elaborate parallel between poetry and painting in twelve mornings. Everybody knows the extraordinary literary facility of Sir Walter Scott—how his amanuensis, when he employed one, could not keep pace with the breathless speed with which he dictated his marvellous romances. If we can judge from the many original MSS. of his novels and poems which have been preserved to us, it would seem that he scarcely ever recast a sentence or altered a word when it was committed to paper. The effect of this is that both Dryden and Scott have left a mass of writings valuable for the genius with which they are instinct, but defaced with errors, with grammatical blunders, and with many pleonasm and tautologies, the consequence of their authors not practicing what Pope calls

"The first and greatest art, the art to blot."

Dr. Johnson's "Rasselas" was written in a week, to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral. Horace Walpole wrote nearly all "The Castle of Otranto" at a sitting which terminated not by mental fatigue, but by the fingers becoming too weary to close on the pen. Mrs. Browning wrote her delightful poem entitled "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," a long elaborate romance in a difficult metre, in twelve hours, while the printer was waiting to put it into type. It is comparatively easy to understand the rapidity with which these compositions were produced, because, being works of imagination, couched in a style essentially bold and free, choice phraseology, careful rhythm, and copious illustration were not so much needed; but when we learn that Ben Johnson completed his highly wrought comedy of "The Alchemist" in six weeks, and that Dr. Johnson could throw off forty-eight octavo pages of such a finished composition as his "Life of Savage" at a sitting, one is indeed lost in bewildering admiration, and perhaps half inclined to doubt the author's word. However much we may wonder at feats like these, we should not forget Sheridan's witty remark, that very easy writing is generally very hard reading; and comfort our common-place selves with the thought that, in nine cases out of ten, genius in literature is like genius in practical life, little else than honest, indefatigable labor fortunately directed.

It is curious that two of the greatest historical works in the world were written while their authors were in exile—the "History of the Peloponnesian War," by Thucydides, the "History of the Rebellion," by Lord Clarendon. Fortescue, the chief justice in Henry VI.'s reign, wrote his great work on the laws of England under the same circumstances. Locke was a refugee in Holland when he penned his memorable "Letter concerning Toleration," and put the finishing touches to his immortal "Essay on the Human Understanding." Lord Bolingbroke had also "left his country for his country's good" when he was engaged on the works by which he will be best remembered. Everybody knows Dante's sad tale, and his miserable wanderings from city to city while the "Divine Comedy" was in course of production. Still more melancholy is it to review the formidable array of great works which were composed within the walls of a prison.

First come the "Pilgrim's Progress," and "Don Quixote;" the one written in Bedford gaol, the other in a squalid dungeon in Spain.

Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World" was composed in the Tower. George Buchanan executed his brilliant Latin version of the Psalms while incarcerated in Portugal. "Fleta," one of the most valuable of our early law works, took its name from the fact of its having been compiled by its author in the Fleet Prison. Boethius' "Consolations of Philosophy," De Foe's "Review" and "Hymn to the Pillory," Voltaire's "Henriade," Howell's "Familiar Letters," Dr. Dodd's "Prison Thoughts," Grotius' "Commentary on St. Matthew," and the amusing "Adventures of Dr. Syntax," all these were produced in the gloomy cells of a common prison. Tasso wrote some of the loveliest of his sonnets in a madhouse, and Christopher Smart his "Song to David"—one of the most eloquent sacred lyrics in our language—while undergoing confinement in a similar place.

HOW BIRDS FLY.

You will find if you carefully examine a bird's wing, that all the bones and muscles are placed along the front edge, which is thus made very stiff and strong. The quill feathers are fastened in such a way that they point backward, so that the hind edge of the wing is not stiff like the front edge, but is flexible and bends at the least touch. As the air is not solid, but has a tendency to slide out under the wing when this is driven downward, and of course it will do this at the point where it can escape more easily. Since the front edge of the wing is stiff and strong, it retains its hollow shape, and prevents the air from sliding out in this direction, but the pressure of the air is enough to bend up the thin, flexible ends of the feathers at the hinder border of the wing, so the air makes its escape there, and slides out backwards and upward. The weight of the bird is all the time pulling it down toward the earth; so, at the same time that the air slides out upward and backward past the bent edge of the wing, the wing itself, and with it the bird, slides forward and downward off from the confined air. It is really its weight which causes it to do this, so that the statement that a bird flies by its own weight is strictly true.

This is true also, of insects and bats. They have all wings with stiff front edges and flexible hind edges which bend and allow the air to pass out, so that flying is nothing but sliding down a hill made of air. A bird rises by flapping its wings, and it slides forward at the same time. At the end of each stroke of its wing it has raised itself enough to make up for the distance it has fallen since the last stroke, and accordingly it stays at the same height and moves forward in a seemingly straight line. But if you watch the flight of those birds which flap their wings slowly, such as the woodpecker, you can see them rise and fall through a space great enough to be seen. Birds also make use of the wind to aid them in flight and by holding their wings inclined like a kite, so that the wind shall slide out under them, they can sail great distances without flapping their wings at all. They are supported, as a paper kite is, by the wind, which is continually pushing against their wings and sliding out backward and downward, thus lifting or holding up the bird and at the same time driving it forward.

The birds are not compelled to face the wind while they are sailing, but by changing the position of the wings a little they can go in whatever direction they wish, much as a boy changes his direction in skating by leaning a little to one side or the other. Some birds are very skilful at this kind of sailing, and can even remain stationary in the air for some minutes when there is a strong wind; and they can do this without flapping their wings at all. It is a difficult thing to do, and no birds except the most skilful flyers can manage it. Some hawks can do it, and gulls and terns may often be seen practicing it when a gale of wind is blowing, and they seem to take great delight in their power of flight.—St. Nicholas for September.

THE HARE TRADITION OF THE FALL.

To this tradition succeeds that of the Fall, already cited, with the following variation: The two brothers perceived the rainbow and wished to reach it. An old man with white hair gave them the magical arrows and laid on them the same prohibition as in the Montagnais parable. A condition laid on man as the price of happiness and life, a prohibition and a transgression followed by evil; this is what we find at the beginning of all theogonies.

The two brothers disobeyed the order; the younger laid hold of the arrow which he had fired. But the latter darting forward, led them to the summit of a conical mountain which rose to heaven.

Scarcely had they arrived when they heard a subterranean and mocking voice saying: "Well, my friends, your language is no longer alike. They would have abandoned their arrow, but it was difficult to do so, for the arrow kept ascending. Suddenly, having reached the very top of the mountain, they found a multitude of men. 'What are you going to do here?' they said to one another; 'this mountain is, in truth, very hard and solid, but it is too small for the whole of us.' Then they made fire, and as there were asphalt mines there, the bitumen burned, the rocks burst with a frightful noise, and the multitude became affrighted. Suddenly the high mountain disappeared. It changed into an immense plain. The men terrified and no longer understanding each other, dispersed in every direction. They fled each to his own way. The nations were formed. It is since that time, it is said, that we no longer speak the same language.

There existed a man who dwelt in a porcupine's den. He became black there, and was about to be burned. All at once he who sees before and behind (*Enna-gu'ini*) struck their land with his thunder; he delivered the man by opening to him a subterranean passage toward the strange land. The man was called without fire or country (*Kron-odin*); we call him also *Rat-om* (the traveller). Having looked at *Enna-gu'ini*, he saw him who had passed into the middle of the fire and was afraid. 'Ah! my grandfather, I am afraid of thee,' he said to him. 'Not at all my grandson,' said the giant, 'I am good and do not destroy men; remain with me,' and the Traveller, the man without country, remained with Him who sees behind and before, who placed him on his shoulder, carried him in his hands, put him in his mittens. He killed elks and beavers for the man. 'He who wears out heaven with his head (*Ya-na-kfui-odinza*) is my enemy,' he acknowledged to him one day, 'his young people are numerous; one day he will me and then thou wilt see my blood redden the vault of heaven.' The man became sad. 'Come,' continued *Enna-gu'ini*, 'I see him who is advancing, let us go to meet him.' He gave to the Man without country an enormous beaver's tooth; 'Hold,' he told him, 'hide thyself I am about to go to fight the wicked giant; here is a weapon, hold it high and firm.' He set out.

A moment after the monster was heard struggling in the grasp of Him who sees. Long they fought; but the evil giant was getting the best of it, when Him who sees cried out, 'Oh! my son, cut, cut the nerve of his leg.' The Man without fire cut the nerve, the giant fell prostrate and was killed. His wife and children shared the same fate. This is why we do not eat the nerve of the leg.

'It is good my son, go away,' then said Him who sees. 'If ever thou dost perceive the sky to redden, then they shall have shed my blood.' 'Hold,' he added; 'here is my staff; before sleeping, plant it beside thy pillow, and when anything painful shall come to thee, cry to me.'

He went off, and the Man without place remained sad. When anything was difficult to him, when malignant animals tormented him, he climbed up a fir and called his great father, Him who sees behind and before, and immediately the latter heard his voice. When he went to bed he planted the giant's staff at his pillow, and then returned in dreams to the house of his mother.

As to her, she wept for him as dead, for he never saw his country more. He followed a beautiful young girl and married her. The pork he changed into baked flour, and the fat

into vapor. He rendered the food very fat. Suddenly it happened that the sky became red. The Man without fire or place then remembered the word spoken to him, and burst into sobbing. He ran through the woods crying, 'Oh! my Great father, Alas! Alas!' 'At the end he rose no more, no longer did he command any one. He dug himself a grave in a hillock on an island, and said, 'when I die, it is there you shall put my bones.' That is the end.

WORDS OF WISDOM.

Delays increase desires, and sometimes extinguish them.

To extol one's own virtue is to make a vice of it.

The surest way not to fail is to determine to succeed.

Have one settled purpose in life, and if it be honourable it will bring you reward.

Conversion is only the foundation of the structure. Alas for the tree which is all blossom and no fruit!

Don't be satisfied with one good deed or one victory, but string them together like so many pearls, one after the other.

If ill thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he doth not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel.

A passionate and revengeful temper renders a man unfit for advice, deprives him of his reason, and robs him of all that is great and noble in his nature.

Happy is he who has learned this one thing, to do the plain duty of the moment quickly and cheerfully, wherever and whatever it may be.

The devil easily triumphs over a faith that says God is able, or God is willing, but he retreats before a faith that says God does. This is at the root of the whole matter.

She who does not make her family comfortable, will herself never be happy at home; and she who is not happy at home will never be happy anywhere.—Addison.

Though the Word and the Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolds the throat of the heart, that both the Word and the Spirit have easier entrances.—Baxter.

None shall be saved by Christ but those only who work out their own salvation while God is working in them by his truth and his Holy Spirit. We cannot do without God, and God will do without us.—Matthew Henry.

Let all our employment be known to God; the more one knows of Him the more one desires to know of Him. And as knowledge is commonly the measure of love, the deeper and more extensive our knowledge shall be the greater will be our love; and if our love of God were great, we should love him equally in pains or pleasure.

O help us God, while it is day, By kindly words and deeds, To store good memories away, For the last evening's needs: And so to hear, at set of sun, The comfort of our Lord's "Well done;" Nor feel remorse, and grief and shame But gladly face the falling night, And hope for heaven's eternal light Through the Redeemer's name.

To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and re-pressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example.—Dr. Johnson.

Your afflictions and deserts only prove that you are under the Father's hand. There is no time when the patient is an object of such tender interests to the surgeon, as when he is under his knife. So you may be sure, if you are suffering from the hand of God. His eye is all the more bent on you. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."—M^cCheyne.

Almost sweet is unsavory; almost hot is lukewarm. Almost a Christian is like the Ephraimites who could not pronounce Shibboleth, but Sibboleth. Almost a Christian is like Ananias, who brought a part, but left part behind. Almost a Christian is like the virgins, who carried lamps without oil; like the willing-unwilling son, who said he would come, and would not.—Henry Smith.