

In contemplating the feat of this extraordinary man, it must appear to every one that his bodily prowess, gigantic as it is, appears as dust in the balance compared with the powers of his mind. To think, and to judge rightly, under some of the most appalling circumstances that ever surrounded mortal man—to reject the delusive for the more arduous—to resolve and to execute—form such a combination of the best and rarest attributes of our nature, that where are we look for them in the same man?—*London Sporting Magazine for July.*

CHARACTER OF THE IRISH.

Character is to nations as to individuals—protection, wealth, and power. The good and evil that is in character is, in a great degree, the result of circumstances solely, over which Providence alone has control. But, independent of this, there is a national genius which predominates over all; like the hereditary peculiarities of some families, it is well to ascertain not only the individual character, but the family bias. In treating of nations we should try to discover the original, peculiar character, independently of those modifications impressed by evil or by fortunate events—that character to which a nation may be raised, and towards which it may by calamity decline. Without this the statesman is working in the dark, and the philanthropist wastes his efforts.

True, there are those who think such inquiries vain and frivolous; that all mankind are to be acted upon by the same means, and consist of the same materials. Thinkers of this class are but vulgar politicians, and very superficial philosophers, and we shall not stop to combat an assumption contrary to the common sense and experience of mankind. There is a peculiarity even in the vices and villainies of men, and those most hackneyed in the corruptions of the world will admit, that in this wide field there is an infinite diversity.

There is a character peculiar to the different races of men, which is not entirely effaced even by great intermixture. There is also a character which in some mysterious manner is incident to the soil. The northern Irish, who still preserve much of the colour of their Scottish original, and even the Irish of Cromwellian race, who are hardly yet Irish in feeling, are strongly marked with the great lineaments of the nation. As the Saxons communicated to the Normans the great features of their character, so the old Irish have impressed upon their British invaders the outlines of their lineage. The triumph of character has surpassed the triumphs of arms.

The popular writers and orators of any nation afford a good exemplification of its character; they are the embodied spirit of the nation; they are the voice of the people, uttering the deep and sublime things shut up in the bosom of the populace. Nations sometimes for a long period lose their power of utterance, and they suffer, and are deeply afflicted under the dread privation; for they delight in the faculty of speech, and of holding converse with the world. Providence can bestow no greater blessing upon a nation than to give a multitude of tongues to speak its thoughts and feelings. It is revived by the melody of its own voice: the echoes of its favourite strains speak upon every hill, and fill every valley with pleasure. The people are roused as one man by the consciousness of feeling; they are enlightened by their own musings as they ponder upon the things they themselves have uttered; and led by the mysterious faculty of speech, they find their way to greatness and prosperity.

If then we would know the genius of a people, we must attend to what they have said, and how they have spoken. When Ireland revived, after a short breathing, from the state of wretchedness and exhaustion, in which her civil wars had left her, and had shaken off in her first risings a portion of the penal and disabling laws which oppressed her, the spirit of the nation found utterance, and spoke with the mouths of Burke, and Grattan, and Curran, and Swift. Like one who had long been dumb, and in despair, she spoke rapidly, and with great power.

A crowd of mighty winds were filled with her new-found energy. The spirit of her sweetest muse dwelt in the simple and amiable Goldsmith. His poetry, as polished as Pope's, has infinitely more of tenderness and feeling. In Pope we see the art and the artist; in Goldsmith we discern nothing but the subject before us, and the simple sweetness of the strain. His verse seems the natural flowing of the feelings, like the melody of some gentle stream in a sunny valley. We cannot congratulate the genius of the discoverer who found out that Pope was no poet; neither do we do this great man any dishonour in placing Goldsmith by his side as his equal in all things. The lights of a glorious age, different but equal, Pope had more cultivated dignity of style—more manner: his verses bore evidence of great labour, and the effect was striking. His poetry was like his nation—powerful, cultivated, excellent; but all in some degree the effect of a laborious and thrifty spirit, sparing no pains, and making the uttermost even of the least things.

Goldsmith was the opposite of all this; there is a facility in his verse that looks like carelessness, something like the negligence of his nation, in the management of his subject; but in its precious glow of feeling, its touching tenderness, and its power over the heart, there is no poem in the English language that can be placed before the "Deserted Village;" though there are many that show more skill, and thought, and attention, bestowed upon them. Na-

ture had done all for Goldsmith; study did much for Pope. The former hardly knew he was a poet; the latter learned his powers in the severity of his studies.

Moore, though very different from Goldsmith, is not less national. The genius of this brilliant poet is in all respects Irish; his beauties, his blemishes, his sins, and his atonements, all belong to his nation. There are poets that have offended less, but there is, perhaps, but one—and his offences are of a deeper dye—who hath equal brilliancy and pathos. The melancholy, the gaiety, the plaintive sweetness, and almost riotous exuberance of mirth, are all his own and his country's. Since the days of remotest antiquity, no lyre has ever made so sweet a melody as Moore's. He stands in this age alone and unrivalled; the master of the sweetest and only minstrelsy.

The ancient music of Ireland was a rich and long neglected mine of melody. The genius of Moore possessed itself of all its treasures, and in the inspiration of its deep caves, resounding with the spells and enchantments of forgotten ages, he was filled with the "soul of music." The music of Ireland was exquisitely pathetic and plaintive; it was wild and unequal; passing, but always with skill and feeling, through every variety of note and modulation, and from one strain to another; from the deepest melancholy to the gaiety of a spirit resolved to shake off its weight of care, and to forget its sorrows in excess of merriment.

The harp of this skilful minstrel gave tone to the ear and to the heart of the nation, for which he touched its chords. "Moore's Melodies" are not confined to the drawing room and the saloon; they have had the merit to please the vulgar, and have been sung in the streets to admiring crowds; an eulogy at once upon the poet and the people. They must be true to nature, or they could not please the crowd, and it evinced no mean taste in the populace which could be pleased with compositions so polished.

Ireland abounded with orators, good and bad; but her first race were giants. Of this mighty race, Burke might be considered the first, and Grattan the last. Between these two stood many a glorious name, resplendent with important services. It is not ours to call forth the spirits of the mighty dead; the two we have named will serve to illustrate the genius of their country. The brilliancy, the splendid magnificence of Burke, the grandeur and variety of his dazzling imagery, the rushing torrent of his thoughts, flowing and spreading into a boundless amplitude of illustration; his flight was with the eye, and the wing of the eagle of his own hills, and the plumage of the bird of paradise.

In a British House of Parliament his rich and copious eloquence contrasted finely with the lofty declamation of Pitt, and the simple and vehement appeals of Fox. These two great men were worthy to stand by the side of Burke and Sheridan; but if eloquence alone gave eminence, these latter would, perhaps, have deserved the first place.

Mr. Grattan's style is like Burke's, but possessing, perhaps, more strength and point. Grattan was more fortunate than Burke, he was not more at home in the scene of his labours; these, too, were concerned about the destiny of their native land; a subject grander, and coming more home to the heart, than the trade and foreign policy of any nation. Burke poured around his subject the splendour of the noon day; Grattan often invested his with the dazzling brilliancy of the lightning's flash. His vehemence was sublime; Burke's was magnificent. The latter was the hill of Lebanon, crowned with its great cedars; the other was the scorched summit of Sinai.

It requires but to mention Curran, to add his wit, his pathos, his burning sarcasm, his playful and elegant humour, his unrivalled facility, clothing every thing he touched with beauty, and strewing flowers over the barrenest heaths of the law; it requires but to mention this favourite of all the world, the orator of the heart, and feelings, and imagination, in conjunction with those we have already named, to obtain a clear idea of what is the genius of Ireland in this high department of human excellence. These spread before us the fervour, the sentiment, the deep thought and deep feeling, the fine imagination and exquisite fancy, which belong to the national character.

Such materials, however, are not the fittest for the ordinary business of life; they belong to its great occasions. War, politics, poetry, philosophy, are, accordingly, the subjects which chiefly attract Irish ambition, rather than the more safe and profitable pursuits of trade. Hence much of that disease called Irish pride—a distaste for little things, and a longing after such objects as by their grandeur or importance furnish food for the imagination, and fill a mind which has travelled out of itself, and its little concerns, and made another home in its wide speculations.

The genius of these great men re-acted upon its kindred spirit in the nation, and produced a crowd of imitators. Those who felt the stirrings of a congenial mind fancied themselves inspired with the same genius, and because they could copy the style, imagined they also breathed the spirit of the great masters. Hence the mock Irish style of which there are so many instances. There is no style so easy to imitate; none so difficult to succeed in. This miserable falsetto can never be mistaken for the voice of the muse.

But even all this imitation is an evidence of the beauty and grandeur of the originals. Demosthenes spread a swarm of eo-

phists over Greece; and the "statue that enchants the world" has made thousands of unlucky artists. The prevailing qualities of the great minds we have mentioned, and their defects, are those also which abound in the bosom of their country: they form the great mental strata of the land. It was this deep and fervid feeling, this enthusiasm which, at the first preaching of the Gospel, drank the sublime doctrines of Christianity with delight, and then sent forth from the saturated soil a mighty torrent of piety and zeal, to enrich and bless other lands. The devotedness of this people as Christians in the early ages, was the effect of that spirit which, in war, leads them into the hottest of the battle; in politics, makes them ever ready to have recourse to extremes; in trade, and in the common concerns of life, makes them prodigal and unthrifty; makes them always generous, and sometimes unjust.

It is a trite observation to say, that the best things, when perverted, become the worst; but it is true, generally. The calamities of Ireland had a more unhappy effect upon that country, than they would, perhaps, have produced upon any other nation. High qualities of mind, when turned to evil, ever occasion the most disastrous results. The unconquerable zeal which disdains all selfish considerations, which no force can subdue, or danger appal, which, in the midst of peril and suffering, spreads its broad wing of benevolence over all mankind, may be tortured into sin, and dragged down into wickedness; and, changing its character, but not its energy, in its fall, may rise from its overthrow, foul, fierce, and polluted, and, in its debasement, adding cunning to its strength, may clothe itself with crimes. The high and heroic devotedness which, in a good cause, and directed by virtuous principle, is the admiration of the universe, when sorrow and suffering blind its faculty of perception, and it mistakes evil for good, may become the scourge of the world; and men may be incredulous that it ever could have been engaged in a good cause; and benevolence itself, wearied and disgusted with an obstinacy which no kindness can conciliate, or perseverance subdue, may turn away in despair, as from something which God and nature had cursed with an impracticable obduracy.

Something of this kind may be found in Ireland. There is an evil spirit in the lower classes of the people, and an intractable obstinacy; and there is too often a want of sufficient zeal for the task they have undertaken, amongst those who would moralise and improve them. That the spirit we refer to was not originally evil, may be discerned from this—that it is accompanied, even in its fallen state, by virtues of such high character as never consort with what is decidedly and naturally wicked;—kindness, generosity, good-humour, fidelity, and goodness of heart. Its original character is seen, also, in those of the same race who possess the advantages of cultivation, and having been redeemed from the ruin which had fallen upon their less fortunate countrymen, escaped the fearful perversion of their fine qualities.

Not many Irish gentlemen of ancient blood remained in the country after the surrender of Limerick, in 1691; but there are a few, and the odd and awkward circumstances by which they were surrounded, presented to the world that character, which has been sketched in the "king of the black islands," a strange and real romance, the mock dignity, which was yet never assumed, and was imposing because conferred by a multitude; the claims that were laughed at as absurd, and yet were not liked, because felt to have a kind of reality; the respect that could not be withheld, the aversion which could not be entirely concealed, the visionary importance, the personal power, and at the same time the weakness of this personage, were all circumstances of such incongruity as added much to the wildness of the moral scenery of Ireland.—*Ward's London Miscellany.*

Sir Joshua Reynolds has never perhaps been equalled in expressing the innocence of childhood, unless we except the venerable and classic Stothard; he indeed has produced some lovely proofs of excellence in this department, and both have afforded convincing testimony that to them the consideration of infancy has been a path of delightful and pleasing discovery. They have portrayed on the canvas the infantine human form, before the action of passion, or contagion of bad example, could begin their ravages on its beauty; and they have been delighted to contemplate those remains of that happy state of innocence which once was ours, before sin and death came into the world—ruins indeed!—but yet they are remains!

It is a fact, that in Russia, all the foreign newspapers and journals admitted into the imperial dominions, are subject to the examination of the censorship, and that every thing objectionable in them, whether it be an entire article, a sentence, or a mere expression, is obliterated by a chemical ink.

The precept, "know thyself," was not solely intended to check the pride of mankind, but likewise that we might understand our own worth.—*Cicero.*

A Weekly Paper for the Blind was commenced in March last, at Palermo. It is printed with letters *in relievi*, so as to be read by the touch. It is entitled: "Il Consolatore dei Ciechi."—(*The Comforter of the Blind.*)