

jection to him is one of a rather damaging kind, that he is not very original—that what he has done has been executed before. As we have said of Irving that he is a reproduction of Goldsmith, we may assert with equal justice of Prescott, that his method and manner are those of Robertson. A writer in order to retain long his hold on the public mind, must have a style that is unlike what has appeared before, and that men take time to become reconciled to, as to guano or gutta serena. When the reader finds himself saying like the Israelites, *Mana*, what is this?—when he asks himself as when he first tastes pine-apple or cocoa nut, whether it be good, and tries it twice or thrice before he makes up his mind, and feels it a little hard to be reconciled to the new element—when this occurs a new notoriety has made his appearance. He will last for a generation, perhaps for two or three. With no such harbingers did Prescott appear. Men recognised in him an old acquaintance. This is Robertson again, with a little less magniloquence, and a little more incident. *Ferdinand and Isabella*, the *Conquest of Mexico and Peru*; such are the subjects on which this agreeable writer has employed his pen. He is one of the few authors of the day who takes time and proceeds on the idea that an historical work cannot be too carefully laboured. He has chosen confined limits for his themes, and in this and other particulars, exhibits himself as a mind of moderate dimensions. He adduces many authorities, by which he shews the industry that has gone to the execution of the work, but the result is not commensurate with the effort bestowed. When we consider how closely we are led up to any particular era in the romances of Scott and Dumas, writers who are not to be supposed to have ransacked so many sources of information as Prescott, we enquire if this slender thread of narrative be the worthy result of so much preparation. These novelists will make Froissart or Philip de Comines, the media by which they are enabled to relate many agreeable tales, in each of which the architecture, dress, state of art and religion, position of the nobles, condition of the peasantry, and a multitude of other qualities appertaining to the period, stare you in the face. Why in the instance of such as Prescott should it be chiefly from the references and notes, that you learn how much research has been put forth? Why should not you perceive this in a more agreeable and dramatic manner, by a thousand living instances of the time, springing up in the course of the narration? We allow that this remark is less applicable to Prescott than to most of the historians that have gone before. His predecessors have been more liable than he to the accusation of a bald, uneventful narration. Still, even with him in our eye, we are forced to think of the historians as cold and meagre, to regard the romancers of the age as the best reporters of the past, to view them as the persons who have most skilfully and faithfully reproduced the olden time, and who best deserve what Hamlet says of the player, ‘they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time.’ Prescott adopting a mould first used by Robertson has improved upon his