

Bacon, more than three centuries ago, laid down, and which have thus become the foundation of the law, as it were, of modern science.

I will now turn for a short time to the subject of literature. That subject again is so vast that if I were to attempt to go over any one of its numerous fields I should not find the time sufficient to enable me to do so, but there is one leading remark which I will venture to make, and which, I think, it is well for any one who studies literature to keep in view. There are various kinds of productions of literature, of very different forms and very different tastes—some grave and some gay, some of extreme fancy, some rigorously logical, but all, as I think, demanding this as their quality,—that truth shall prevail in them. A French author has said that nothing is beautiful but truth, that truth alone is lovely, but that truth ought to prevail even in fable. I believe that remark is perfectly correct; and I believe you cannot use a better test, even of works of imagination, than to see whether they are true to nature. Now, perhaps I can better explain what I mean in this respect by giving you one or two instances than I should be able to do by any precept and explanation. A poet of very great celebrity in the last century, and who certainly was a poet distinguished for much fancy and great power of pathos, but who had not the merit of being always as true as he is pointed in the poetry he has written—I mean Young—has said, at the commencement, I think, of one of his "Nights:"—

"Sleep, like the world, his ready visit pays  
Where fortune smiles; the wretched he forsakes,  
And lights on lids unsullied with a tear."

Now, if you will study that sentence, you will see that there are two things which the poet has confounded together. He has confounded together those who are fortunate in their peace of mind, those who are fortunate in the possession of health, and those who are fortunate in worldly advantages. Now, it frequently happens that the man who is the worst off in his worldly circumstances—to whom the world will pay no homage—on whom it would not be said that fortune smiled—enjoys sweeter and more regular sleep than those who are in possession of the highest advantages of rank and wealth. You will all remember, no doubt, that in a passage I need not quote, another poet—one always true to nature—Shakespeare, has described the shipboy amidst the storm, notwithstanding all the perils of his position on the mast, as enjoying a quiet sleep, while he describes the king as unable to enjoy any rest. That is the poet true to nature; and you will thus, by following observations of this kind, by applying that test to poetry as well as to history and to reasoning, obtain a correct judgment as to whether what you are reading is really worth your attention and worth your admiration, or whether it is faulty and is not so deserving. I may give another instance, and I could hardly venture to do so if my friend and your friend, the celebrated Lord Carlisle were here, because the want of truth I am going to point out is in the writings of Pope. There is a very beautiful ode of Horace, in which, exalting the merits of poetry, he says, that many brave men lived before Agamemnon; that there were many sieges before the siege of Troy; that before Achilles and Hector existed there were brave men and great battles; but that, as they had no poet, they died, and that it required his genius of poetry to give immortal existence to the bravery of armies and chiefs. Pope has copied this ode of Horace, and in some respects has well copied and imitated it in some lines which certainly are worthy of admiration, beginning—

"Lest you should think that verse should die,  
Which sounds the silver Thames along."

But in the instances which he gives he mentions Newton, and says that only brave men had lived and fought, but that other Newtons "systems framed." Now, here he has not kept to the merit and truth of his original, for, though it might be quite true that there were distinguished armies and wonderful sieges, and that their memory has passed into oblivion, it is not at all probable that any man like Newton followed by mathematical roads the line of discovery, and that those great truths which he discovered should have perished and fallen into oblivion. I give you these two instances of want of truth even in celebrated poets, and I think it is a matter you will do well always to keep in view, because there is a remarkable difference between the history of science and the history of literature. In the history of science the progress of discovery is gradual. Those who make these discoveries sometimes commit great errors. They fall into many absurd mistakes, of which I could give you numerous instances; but these blunders and these errors disappear—the discoveries alone remain; other men afterwards make these discoveries the elements and the groundwork of new investigations, and thus the progress of science is continual; but truth remains, the methods of investigation even are shortened, and the progress continually goes on. But it is not so with regard to literature. It has indeed happened often in the history of the world, among nations that have excelled in literature, after great works have been produced which brought down the admiration of all who could read them, that others, attempting to go farther—attempting to do something still better—have produced works written in the most affected and unnatural style, and, instead of promoting literature, have corrupted the taste of the nation in which they lived. Now, this is a thing against which I

think we should always be upon our guard, and having those great models of literature which we possess before us—having Shakspeare, and Milton, and Pope, and a long line of illustrious poets and authors—we should always study to see that the literature of the day is, if not on a par with, at least as pure in point of taste as that which has gone before it, and to take care that we do not, instead of advancing in letters, fall back and decay in the productions of the time. I will now mention to you another instance—it is apparently but a trifling one, and still it is one in which I think nature and truth are so well observed that it may be worth your while to listen to it. One of our writers, who blended the most amusement with instruction, and ease of style with solidity of matter, as you all know, was Addison. He describes a ride he had along with a country squire, whom he fell in with travelling from London to a distant town. They came to an inn, and Addison says they ordered a bowl of punch for their entertainment. The country squire began—as was perhaps a mode with country squires, which may have continued even to the present day—to depreciate trade, and to say that foreign trade was the ruin of the country, and that it was too bad that the foreigners should have so much the advantage of our English money. Upon which, says Addison, "I just called his attention to the punch that we were going to drink, and I said, If it were not for foreign trade, where would be the rum, and the lemons, and the sugar which we are about to consume?" The squire was considerably embarrassed with this remark, but the landlord, who was standing by, came to his assistance, and said, "There is no better drink than a cup of English water, if it has but plenty of malt in it." Now, although that appears a slight and trifling story, and told in a very common way, yet it is perfectly true to nature, and it conveys in a very lively manner a rebuke to the ignorance and prejudice of the person with whom Addison represents himself to have been conversing.

#### THE CORRESPONDENCE OF A PUBLIC OFFICE.

During the year 1852, about 3,000, or nearly 10 letters each office day was received at the Education Office, Toronto. Every letter thus received required to be opened, classified, endorsed and numbered, and the proper references made thereon previous to a reply being prepared to it. From the following interesting paper, taken from Dickens' *Household Words*, correspondents with the Department will obtain many valuable hints, and the general reader much useful information upon the routine of a public Office.

Troubled with an army of correspondents, and with cupboards full of unsorted letters, we were curious to see what large establishments do with the letters they receive, and must keep very many years; for a letter once received at a public office has as much care taken of it—though written by the late Mr. Joseph Ady himself—as if it were a letter from a Prime Minister or a despatch from the Governor of the Cape to the Secretary of the Colonies. With this curiosity to satisfy, we arranged with a friend in a Government office, that we would be with him the next morning to see his "table," as he called it, and the modes of sorting, entering, circulating, answering, indexing, and keeping the large mass of letters, which it was his business to open, and sort, and enter, and circulate, and index, and keep—in short, to do everything with but answer; although one part of his duty, and that by no means the lightest, is to see that they *are* answered.

In a well known office to the west of Temple Bar, we found a large table covered with letters; with a huge white vellum Post Office bag, once white, but now of a very different colour—crusted with red sealing-wax and string, and some remains of bits of black wax to show that it had been in a court mourning of its own for a king or a queen. Our friend was soon at work. He sorted the letters on his table according to their consequence, he told us, and this too, without opening them, for some he knew by their envelopes, some by their seals, and others by the hand-writing upon them.

"These are Treasury letters," he said, "and I take them first. There is 'Treasury' upon them in the corner, and I am now sorting them according to the services—Colonial, Commissariat, or Home." As he opened them he flattened them on their faces, and then proceeded with other Home correspondence, such as Foreign Office letters, Inland Revenue letters, and letters from the various departments of Government in London. These he treated in the same manner, and then proceeded to sort the contents of the large vellum bag, which the office messenger had by this time emptied on his table.

What a medley of communications in point of size now broke upon the view! Here were some as big as six octavo volumes made into a brown paper parcel; some of a lesser size, like a volume of *Household Words*; some of foolscap size; and some as small as the envelopes in ordinary use for an amount of letter-writing that a penny is sufficient to convey from Kirkwall to St. Michael's Mount. Our friend was evidently not very well pleased with the little letters, for he put them