

name—Milton. Original and mighty poets express, at its highest, the mind of their time as it is localized on their own soil. With Elizabeth the splendour of the feudal and chivalrous ages for England finally sets. A world expires, and ere long a new world rises. The Wars which signalize the new period contrast deeply with those which heretofore tore the land. Those were the factions of high lineage. Now, thought seizes the weapons of earthly warfare. The rights vesting in man, as the subject of civil government, by the laws of God and nature, are scanned by awakened reason, and put arms into men's hands. The highest of all the interests of the human being—higher than all the others, as eternity excels time—Religion—is equally debated. The Protestant church is beleaguered by hostile sects—the Reformation subjected to the demand for a more searching and effective reform. Creed, worship, ecclesiastical discipline and government, all come into debate. A thralldom of opinion—a bondage of authority, that held for many centuries the nation bound together in no powerless union, is, upon the sudden, broken up. Men will know why they obey and why they believe; and human laws and human truths are searched, as far as the wit of man is capable, to the roots. It is the spirit of the new time that has broken forth, and begins ambitiously, and riotously, to try its powers, but nobly, magnanimously, and heroically too. Milton owned and showed himself a son of the time. Gifted with powers eminently fitted for severe investigation—apt for learning, and learned beyond most men—of a temper adverse and rebellious to an assumed and ungrounded control—large-hearted and large-minded to comprehend the diverse interests of men—personally fearless—devout in the highest and boldest sense of the word; namely, as acknowledging no supreme law but from heaven, and as confiding in the immediate communication of divine assistance to the faithful servants—possessing, moreover, in amplest measure, that peculiar endowment of sovereign poets which enables them to stand up as the teachers of a lofty and tender wisdom, as moral prophets to the species, the clear faculty of profound self-inspection—he was prepared to share in the intellectual strife and change of that day, even had some interposing, pacific angel charmed away from the bosom of the land all other warfare and revolution—and to shine in that age's work, even had the muse never smiled upon his cradled forehead, never laid the magical murmurs of song on his chosen lips. He was a politician, a theologian of his age—amidst the demolition of established things, the clang of arms, and the streaming of blood, whether in the field or upon the scaffold, a thinker and a writer.

There are times that naturally produce real, others that naturally produce imitative poetry. Tranquil, stagnating times, produce the imitative; times that rouse in man self-consciousness, produce the real. All great poetry has a moral foundation. It is imagination building upon the great, deep, universal, eternal human will. Therefore profound sympathy with man, and profound intelligence of man, aided by, or growing out of, that profound sympathy, is vital to the true poet. But in stagnating times both sympathy with man sleeps, and the disclosure of man sleeps. Troubled times bring out humanity—show its terrible depths—also its might and grandeur—both ways, its truth. A great poet seems to require his birth in an age when there are about him great self-revelations of man, for his vaticination. Moreover, his own particular being is more deeply and strongly stirred and shown to him in such a time. But the moral temper may be too violent for poetry—as the Civil War of the Roses appeared to blast it and all letters—that of the Parliament contrariwise. The intellect of Milton, in the *Paradise Lost*, shows that it had seen "the giant-world engendered."

Happily for the literary fame of his country—for the solid exaltation in these latter years of the sublime art which he cultivated—for the lovers of poetry who by inheritance or by acquisition speak the masculine and expressive language which he still ennobled—for the serene fame of the august poet himself—the political repose which a new change (the restoration of detested and exiled royalty to its ancestral throne) spread over the land, by shutting up the public hopes of the civil and ecclesiastical republican in despair, and by crushing his faction in the dust, gave him back, in the visionary blindness of undecaying age, to "the still air of delightful studies," in order that, in seclusion from all "barbarous dissonance," he might achieve the work destined to him from the beginning—not less than the greatest ever achieved by man.

Educated by such a strife to power—and not more sublimely gifted than strenuously exercised—Milton had constantly carried in his soul the two-fold consciousness of the highest destination. He knew himself born a great poet; and the names of great poets sounding through all time, rang in his ears. What Homer was to his people and to his language, he would be to his; and this was the lower vocation—glorious as earthly things may be glorious—and self-respecting while he thought of his own head as of one that shall be laurel bound; yet magnanimous and public spirited, while he trusted to shed upon his language and upon his country the beams of his own fame. This, we say, was his lower vocation, taken among thoughts higher one accompanied it. The sense of a sanctity native to the human soul, and indefinable—the assiduous hallowing of himself, and of all his powers, by religious offices that seek nothing lower than communion with the fountain head of all holiness and of all good. And Milton, labouring "in the eye of his day, and in the eye of his age," trained by the sternest studies—trained by the turmoil raging

around him of the times, and by his own share in the general contention—according to the self dedication of his mind trained within the temple—he, stricken with darkness, and amidst the gloom of extinguished earthly hopes, assumed the singing robes of the poet.

The purpose of the *Paradise Lost* is wholly religious. He strikes the loudest, and, at the same time, the sweetest toned harp of the Muse with the hand of a Christian theologian. He girds up all the highest powers of the human mind to wrestling with the most arduous question with which the human faculties can engage—the all-involving question—How is the world governed? Do we live under chance, or fate, or Providence? Is there a God? And is he holy, loving, wise, and just? He will

"Assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to man."

The justifying answer he reads in the Scriptures. Man fell, tempted from without by another, but by the act of his own free will, and by his own choice. Thus, according to the theology of Milton, is the divine Rule of the universe completely justified in the sin into which man has fallen—in the punishment which has fallen upon man. The Justice of God is cleared. And his Love? That shines out, when man has perversely fallen, by the Covenant of Mercy, by finding out for him a Redeemer. And thus the two events in the history of mankind, which the Scriptures present as infinitely surpassing all others in importance, which are cardinal to the destinies of the human race, upon which all our woe, and, in the highest sense, all our weal are hung, become the subject of the work—the Fall of man consoled by the promise and undertaking of his Redemption.

The narrative of the Fall, delivered with an awful and a pathetic simplicity to us in a few words in the first chapter of Genesis, becomes accordingly the groundwork of the Poem; and these few words, with a few more scattered through the Scriptures, and barely hinting Celestial transactions, the War and Fall of the Angels, are by a genius, as daringly as powerfully creative, expanded into the mighty dimensions of an Epic. That unspeakable hope, foretold to Adam as to be accomplished in distant generations, pouring an exhilarating beam upon the darkness of man's self-wrought destruction, which saves the catastrophe of the poem from utter despair, and which tranquilizes the sadness, has to be interwoven in the poet's narrative of the Fall. How stupendous the art that has disposed and ordered the immensity!—comprehended the complexity of the subject into a clearly harmonized, musically proportionate Whole!

Unless the *Paradise Lost* had risen from the soul of Milton as a hymn—unless he had begun to sing as a worshipper with his hand uplifted before the altar of incense, the choice of the subject would have been more than bold—it would have been the daring of presumption—an act of impiety. For he will put in dialogue God the Father and God the Son—discussing their supreme counsels. He has prayed to the Third Person of the Godhead for light and succour. If this were a fetch of human wit, it was in the austere zealot and puritan a mockery. To a devout Roman Catholic poet, we could forgive every thing. For nursed among legends and visual representations of the invisible—panoplied in a childlike imposed faith from the access of impiety—his paternalism and his *ave-maria* more familiar to his lips than his bread, almost so as their breath—the most audacious representations may come to him vividly and naturally, without a scruple and without a thought. But Milton, the purged, the chastened, a spiritual iconoclast, drinking his faith by his own thirst from the waters of Zion, a champion whose weapons from the armoury of God "are given him tempered"—he to holy things could not lay other than an awful hand. We know that he believed himself under a peculiar guidance. Surely, he had visions of glory which, when he designed the poem that would include scenes in heaven, offered themselves again almost like very revelations. If we hesitate in believing this of him, it is because we conceive in him a stern intellectual pride and strength, which could not easily kneel to adore. But there we should greatly err. For he recognized in himself—

"Self-knowing, and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with heaven"—
that capacity of song which nothing but sacred Epics could satisfy. Diofant asks him—"Quid studeas?" and he answers—"Michele, immortalitatem!" This might persuade us that he finally chose the Fall of Man as he at first had chosen King Arthur. But not so. When Arthur dropped away from his purposes, naturally displaced by the after-choice, the will toward an Epic underwent an answerable revolution. The first subject was called by the "longing after immortality." But another longing, or the longing after another immortality, carried the will and the man to the second. The learning and the learned art of the *Paradise Lost*, concur in inclining us to look upon Milton as an artist rather than a worshipper. On closer consideration of its spirit we cannot think of his putting his hand to such a work without the inwardly felt conviction that God was with him in it.

New Works.

From Wade's London Review.
WIDOWERS.

There is no condition in life so utterly helpless, so utterly hopeless, as that which the father of a young family feels upon the first few days, or may be weeks, of his and their bereavement. Then, however, is the time that

exertion and decision are most needed on his part, as upon the very first step, with respect to future arrangement, will depend almost entirely the future happiness of his own and his children's lives: and, for the most part, then it is that some officious friend or interested acquaintance, by the display of an unfelt sympathy, gains an ascendancy over the entire family which can never be entirely shaken off, and, the baneful effects of which will only cease with the lives of his children. For the most part it ends with planting at his fireside some imperious, bustling, intriguing, and mercenary woman, as the gouvernante of his children, the purveyor of his house, and the "head of his table," and whose only object is to instal herself as "mistress of the mansion," and the curator of his purse. These are chiefly after all selected from the *advertising widows*, who declare themselves "free from incumbrance," and full of "maternal tenderness" toward the "sweet little dears" whom they are so anxious to enfold in their wolf-like clutches. It is true they may not come directly sought out so, but they always have a set of friends who "feel for their lone condition"—and for yours too! These friends will somehow entangle you with a widow if they can; and against this class of attacks, commenced at such a time, it is hard to cope. You think it all disinterested sympathy towards yourself, and are grateful for the entanglement which is to cost you so dearly! There is also, besides the widows, the class of "middle aged governesses, who would not object to take also the domestic superintendence;" and these are invariably on the lookout for a homestead of their own—are weary of single blessedness—and too old to bear either the dictation or the exactions of the majority of mothers. They are, however, infinitely preferable to the widows as housekeepers, for they will be less assuming and imperious towards yourself—less overt in their attempts to gain your affections—and, if less excellently qualified to manage a house, they will make their management less costly to you than the widow will. However, take the advice of one who speaks from experience—determine at once to marry again—to look out for a wife of suitable age and good disposition in your own circle—and, above all, determine never to choose a wife under your own roof. You will thus avoid many future annoyances, and consult your own and your children's happiness infinitely more than by taking any other course; but, above all things avoid the officious interference of your friend's wife and of your deceased wife's family.

From Douglas Jerrold's Magazine.

A WINTER'S NIGHT IN LONDON.

The streets were empty. Pitiless cold had driven all who had the shelter of a roof to their homes; and the north-east blast seemed to howl in triumph above the unrodden snow. Winter was at the heart of all things. The wretched, dumb with excess of misery, suffered in stupid resignation the tyranny of the season. Human blood stagnated in the breast of want; and death, in that despairing hour losing its terrors, looked in the eyes of many a wretch a sweet deliverer. It was a time when the very poor, barred from the commonest things of earth, take strange counsel with themselves, and, in the deep humility of destitution, believe they are the burden and the offal of the world. It was a time when the easy, comfortable man, touched with the finest sense of human suffering, gives from his abundance; and, whilst bestowing, feels almost a shame that with such wide-spread misery circled round him, he has all things fitting, all things grateful. The smitten spirit asks wherefore he is not of the multitude of wretchedness: demands to know for what especial excellence he is promoted above the thousand, thousand starving creatures; in his very tenderness for misery, tests his privilege of exemption from a woe that withers manhood in man, bowing him downward to the brute. And so questioned, this man gives in modesty of spirit—in very thankfulness of soul. His aims are not cold formal charities, but reverent sacrifices to his suffering brother. It was a time when selfishness hugs itself in its own warmth, with no other thoughts than of its many pleasant gifts—all made pleasanter, sweeter, by the desolation around; when the mere wailing rejoices the more in his warm chamber, because it is so bitter cold without; when he eats and drinks with whetted appetite, because he hears of destitution prowling like a wolf around his well-barred house; when, in fine, he bears his every comfort about him with the pride of a conqueror. A time when such a man sees in the misery of his fellow-beings nothing save his own victory of fortune—his own successes in a suffering world. To such a man the poor are but the tattered slaves that grace his triumph. It was a time, too, when human nature often shows its true divinity, and with misery like a garment clinging to it, forgets its wretchedness in sympathy with suffering; a time when in the cellars and garrets of the poor are acted scenes which make the noblest heroism of life—which prove the immortal texture of the human heart, not to be wholly seared by the branding iron of the torturing hours; a time when, in want, in anguish, in throes of mortal agony, some seed is sown that bears a flower in heaven.

From the Improvisatore.

A STREET SCENE IN NAPLES.

Towards evening we approached it. The splendid Toledo street lay before us; it was really a *corso*. On every hand were illumined shops; tables which stood in the street, laden with oranges and figs, were lit up by lamps and gaily-coloured lanterns. The whole street, with its innumerable lights in the open air,

looked like a stream sprinkled over with stars. On each side stood lofty houses, with balconies before every window, nay, often quite round the corner, and within these stood ladies and gentlemen, as if it were still a merry carnival. One carriage passed another, and the horses slipped on the smooth slabs of lava with which the street was paved. There was a fire kindled before a cornerhouse, before which lay two half-asked fellows, clad only in drawers, and with the vest fastened with one single button, who played at cards. Hand-organs and hurdygurdies were playing, to which women were singing; all were screaming, all running one among another—soldiers, Greeks, Turks, English. I felt myself transported into quite another world—a more southern life than that which I had known breathed around me. Around us we saw illuminated theatres, on the outside of which were bright pictures, which represented the principal scenes of the pieces which were being performed within. Aloft, on a scaffold, stormed a *Bejazzo* family. The wife cried out to the spectators, the husband blew the trumpet, and the youngest son beat them both with a great riding-whip, whilst a little horse stood upon its hind-legs in the backscene, and read out of an open book. A man stood, and fought, and sang, in the midst of a crowd of sailors, who sat in a corner; he was an improvisatore. An old fellow read aloud, out of a book, Orlando Furioso, as I was told; his audience were applauding him just as we passed by. "Monte Vesuvio!" cried the signora; and I now saw, at the end of the street, where the light-house stood, Vesuvius, lifting itself high in the air, and the fire-red lava, like a stream of blood, rolling down from its side. Punchinello made his merry leaps, peeped, twirled himself about, and made his funny speeches. All around was laughter. Only very few paid attention to the monk who stood at the opposite corner, and preached from one of the projecting stone steps.

From Von Orlich's Travels in India.

AN EGYPTIAN PEOPLE FORMERLY IN INDIA.

It is six miles north-east of Benares, and three of the cantonments, and evidently lies on a classic soil, for, that a large and mighty city must have stood here, is amply testified by the numerous ruins, and beautifully formed bricks, with which all the ground, and especially the banks of a lake, which extends from the east to west, are covered. The only fragment which has been preserved is a vaulted tower about sixty feet high; it is built of granite and blocks of red sandstone, which are let into one another, and fastened without any cement, and in the upper portion some bricks have been introduced. At an elevation of about twenty feet from the ground are several niches, surrounded by elegant arabesques, in which statues of men, women, and children, the size of life, formerly stood: some of these have been removed to Calcutta, to save them from the destructive spirit of the natives; seven statues of red sandstone, which were sadly mutilated, were, however, lying about. They are the figures of a people with flat noses, thick lips, and unusually large eyes. The hair lies perfectly smooth to the head, and falls in innumerable curls over the neck and shoulders. Some of them were quite naked, others wrapped in light garments, which are very curiously wrought, and fit tight to the body, or fall in picturesque folds. One of these figures wore a cord round the waist, exactly similar to that which distinguishes the Brahmans.

From Raber Rattler.

A FOREST SCENE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

His weapons were at the tree—he flew, and the hound made the death spring, but Floss doubled, and the enfeebled dingo fell on his back; had Floss had the knife, that fall had been his last; there was no time to be lost, and Floss again flew to the tree, the fallen dingo gave the signal howl; and see how Floss flies, every atom of his former strength and superhuman vigour is there, he feels the speed of a stag in every sinew, and the strength of the lion to his very fingers' ends—"give me my knife, and then on—ah," he is not a yard off it when the other hound springs from the next opening, and in one second his jaws are round the throat of the long sought game. Floss, with the strength of a mortal struck gladiator, hurled him to his feet, and again made a spring to his knife; the other hound was up, and soon rushed at his throat. Floss threw him off with his pistol, which he held in both hands, having taken it as being nearer than his knife; the dog fell heavily, and Floss placed his foot upon his neck, cocked his pistol, and levelled for the spring of the other, and but for an accident would doubtless have despatched them both; for at that moment a large cockatoo, being surprised at the unusualness of the scene, gave a scream of imitation of the natives' war yell, so natural or apparently so, to the terribly-situated Floss, that he turned round to see his new assailant.

The dog made a more desperate leap than before, and Floss fired right at his breast, and the bullet, with the usual precision of fear, just grazed his ear, and the next moment Floss was down. The suddenness of the jump caused him to slip over the dog he held down, and one dog fastened on him by the nose, cheek, and a part of his mouth, where he held on, to get breath and strength to renew his hold more firmly, and in a safer part, place his terrible grasp. The other dog, although he had the weight of his companion and Floss upon him, managed to make a faint hold on his right shoulder, and in that way all parties lay for some time, each endeavouring to repair the effects of exhaustion.