

sion, under the fictitious name of An- geloni, will richly repay the perusal. There is great originality and much entertainment in them. His Vindication of Admiral Byng is a strong performance, and throws great odium upon those who aspersed that unfortunate man to fall, to screen themselves. He was originally an apothecary, then a chemist; and underwent great changes of fortune.

THOMAS NEWTON, BISHOP OF
BRISTOL.

THIS ingenious and pious prelate had not a great depth of learning, but he made up for it by a great extent of reading. He condensed all that he had read on the prophecies into an excellent treatise. Though strictly orthodox, and firmly attached to the church, of which he was certainly a brilliant ornament, he yet entertained a notion which few orthodox men are willing to encourage, and that was the everlasting mercy of God to all mankind, exhibited in the ultimate salvation or deliverance of them from the bonds of misery, and the power of corruption. The view of a final restoration of universal happiness by the Saviour of the world, opened his mind to a repugnance to the horrid notion which dooms a considerable part of the rational creation to eternal punishment, in the regions of darkness and despair. The Reverend Mr. Thomas Broughton, vicar of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and author of a Dictionary of all Religions, in folio, had the honour of convincing the good bishop of the weak foundation on which that merciless doctrine has been built; for this amiable prelate made it his constant practice to pay frequent and familiar visits to all his clergy, and encouraged himself greatly to them. W.

An exact Copy of a curious original Letter from Mr. John Flamsteed, the first Astronomer-Royal, at the Observatory of Flamsteed-House, in Greenwich Park, to Sir Jonas Moore, Kt. the then Surveyor-General of the Ordnance.

"For Sir Jonas Moore at
Tower, these."

"The Observatory, Feb. 8, 1671."

"S; I have examined the mean motions y^a suspected erroneous and find them accurate to sixths, and farther more needless since y^a error of one sixth in a day will not amount to more y^a 20^h p^t of a third, in 1800 years which is as far back as any observations of the sun extend: You will therefore

find some other cause of the fault in y^a calculation; for mine gives the sun's return to his apogee or the circle of mean anomaly to be completed in 365 4^h 56 m 59 s 17 m 29 s 44 m ; as y^a may see by this proof."

"The earths mean diurnal motion is 59 m 08 s 19 m 43 s 47 m 21 s

Diurnal recess of y^a 8 12 48 47

Therefore y^a earths diurnal motion of Anomaly is 59 m 08 s 11 m 30 s 58 m 34

And in 60 days 1 29 m 08 s 11 m 30 s 58 m 34

in 120 — 3 28 16 23 01 57 08

240 — 7 26 32 46 03 54 16

360 — 11 24 49 09 05 51 24

5 days — 4 55 40 57 34 53

6 hours — 14 47 08 52 45

9 min. — — 22 19 34 19

17 sec — — — 41 53 24

29 thirds — — — 1 11 27

44 fourths — — — 1 48

summe 12 00 00 00 00 00

"Therefore y^a sidereal year is as above stated; the worke has bene a little troublesome to me to cleare from my old papers & I thinke I might have easier wrought it anew in decimalls then have bene at the labor I have to state it thus. I have repeated the worke from my papers at large that y^a might be fully satisfied of it & p'haps it may be usefull to prevent mistakes in your owne. I have no more to adde but that I thinke I shall waite upon y^a againe on Tuesday morning next in the mean time I wish y^a all health & happiness & rest y^a humble servant

"JOHN FLAMSTEED.

"The waterman that brings this one Jeremy Holt is he whom I told y^a of at the Tower Mr. Stevens Mr. Gammon & some others have spoken to me much in his commendations for a sober and discreet fellow & one y^a will be very diligent; he was desirous to waite upon y^a and I gave him this opportunity.

The above Sir Jonas Moore, from being simply a country schoolmaster in Yorkshire, by his merit, and the king's favour, for whom he rendered services in that country, rose to high rank, and enjoyed several posts of honour under the crown, and among others, that of Surveyor-General of the Ordnance; in which situation he was of great service to literature and to learned men; and was the means of establishing the Royal Observatory, and placing his friend Mr. Flamsteed there at the first Astronomer Royal.

J. N.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PRESENT PERIOD.

[TO BE CONTINUED OCCASIONALLY.]

AS we mean to dedicate a special article of our Miscellany to the general History of Letters, both domestic and foreign, we will, in this Number, give, by way of Preliminary, a concise retrospective view of the state of learning in Europe, since the commencement of the present century.

In comparing the present century with those immediately preceding, it will not be found, that so much has been done toward the improvement of science, as may be imagined by superficial observers, and might have been expected from progressive experience. The philologists, orators, poets, historians, and novellists, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were by no means inferior, to those of the eighteenth. In mixed mathematics, particularly in astronomy, some valuable, at least curious discoveries have been made, from the great improvement of telescopes; and other instruments of observation. Mechanics have been carried to a much greater degree of perfection; and natural and experimental philosophy have acquired a certitude and accuracy, beyond what they had in any prior period; pharmacy has also been purified from the dregs of former times; anatomy and chirurgery have been eagerly and successfully cultivated; and the principles of the healing art have been simplified and better arranged.

Such are the parts of science, with respect to which our age can boast some sort of superiority: for, with regard to the fine arts, as they are termed, we apprehend they are rather languishing than acquiring vigour. A partial or local improvement, in some of them, may have taken place, and has, no doubt, taken place in this nation; but we greatly mistake, if on the whole, they have not lost more than they have gained.

Whether in political, moral, or religious knowledge, we are a whit wiser than our forefathers, appears to us a problem, that may be disputed with

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equal plausibility on both sides of the question. It is true, the general principles of social compacts and civil institutions have been more thoroughly canvassed, and perhaps better understood; the natural rights of man more clearly ascertained and more strongly asserted; the various sorts of government better discriminated and more impartially appraised; but how far these fine theories are compatible with practice, or are likely to be attended with permanent blessings to society, is yet to be seen.

New systems of ethics have likewise been created, and bases of various forms have been contrived for the statue of Virtue; yet we think it must be confessed, that the goddess is not more sincerely worshipped, nor her votaries more numerous, than in the days of our predecessors; we fear the reverse is true.

As to theology, or the science of religion, it has certainly undergone some considerable changes within these fifty years, and is apparently on the eve of still greater alterations; but whether these alterations will produce a more genuine religion, that is, a more exalted idea of the Supreme Being, a greater respect for his behests, and a more humble submission to his will; in short, a more fervent and disinterested piety, seems to us highly problematical; Time, the greatest instructor, will show how far our mistrust is grounded.

One thing, however, may be advanced as true: religion in general wears a more amiable face; intolerance is no more her inseparable companion; and mankind seem willing to go to heaven, without jostling one another on the road. The principles of religion too have been more minutely examined; many inveterate prejudices exploded; revelation grounded upon more rational motives of credibility; a number of various corruptions eliminated from the sacred volumes with which the hand of time had tarnished them; and biblical criticism established on such principles, and guided by such rules, as must necessarily tend to its perfection.

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This, therefore, is all well; yet if all this conduces not to meliorate the heart of man, to inspire him with a greater degree of the love of God and of his neighbour; what will religion profit by it?

On the other hand, it is but too true, that irreligion has made great strides during the same period. The metaphysics of Hume, the eloquence of Bolingbroke, the learning of Freret, the wit of Voltaire, and the fascinating logic of Rousseau (not to mention a numerous, but less formidable, tribe of inferior writers) have inflicted severe wounds on Christianity, and spread the contagion of infidelity far and wide: even Atheism, who before lurked in corners, and covered his face with a deceitful veil, has recently shown himself without disguise; and *Hammonds* and *Dantons* have appeared, who boldly dared the DUTY to punish them for disbelieving his existence.—And this is called *The Age of Reason*!

Having thus given a short view of the present state of literature in general, we will next, in as few words as possible, and we flatter ourselves with strict distributive justice, assign to the different nations of Europe their respective shares; and begin by

ITALY.

Every one knows that, on the revival of letters, Italy was their first foster-mother; and the golden age of LEO will ever be accounted a remarkable era in the history of human knowledge. For a century, at least, it retained its superiority; and although it has since been visibly sinking in the public scale, yet it still holds a considerable rank in every branch of science, where religion is not directly or indirectly concerned. It has produced excellent historians, most ingenious poets, and some tolerable orators; it has greatly embellished its fine melodious language, and was the first modern nation that had a good Lexicon. In mathematics and experimental philosophy, it is not below its neighbours; and it has always been deemed the best school for music, painting, and sculpture. Divinity alone (and philosophy in as far as it is connected with divinity) has been bound in fetters by monachism, superstition, and inquisitorial tribunals. But these fetters will probably soon be shaken off by that ingenious people: God grant they may not at the same time shake off Religion

herself, under the idea that she had forged their chains: this is no uncommon process in national revolutions. Some change in the religious creed of Italy appears to be inevitable. The scriptures are more generally studied, and have been translated into the vulgar tongue; the bishops of particular dioceses, supported by their respective sovereigns, begin to exercise a jurisdiction independently of Rome; papal infallibility is scouted every where, save in the Papal territories, and even there feebly defended, perhaps not believed; superstitious rites and usages are daily diminishing, and freedom of thought pervades all ranks of men who have had any sort of liberal education. What may we not augur from such symptoms?

SPAIN and PORTUGAL.

Although these nations have, for almost two centuries, made very little figure in the field of science, it is not hence to be concluded that this has been owing to want of capacity; they are naturally a thinking and acute people, and, in the sixteenth century, held a respectable rank among the nations of Europe; but here the inquisition, more rigid and bloody than that of Italy, has stifled every spark of genius that has come within its reach, and plunged the inhabitants into an ignorance hardly to be credited. The time, however, seems to approach, when that diabolical tribunal *must* be abolished; and, to do justice to this and the last reign, its power has already been greatly curtailed: still, however, it has power enough to prevent a general dissemination of knowledge; and few, comparatively, are the works of value that have yet been written on the other side of the Pyrenees. Yet the Spanish language seems peculiarly formed for fine composition, whether in prose or verse; and they have now a national Dictionary that vies with any in Europe.

FRANCE.

Unhappy France! Thou wast once a nation of learned men. Although thou didst not embrace the muses so early as thy southern neighbour, thou receivedst them with not less tenderness, and cultivated them with more industry. In what species of writing (Epic poetry excepted) didst thou not excel? What art or science didst thou not improve and adorn? What charms didst thou not give to one of the most barbarous

tongues in the universe? Thy Gothic-Gallic jargon, embellished by the skill of thy grammarians and orators, became the language of the world, and the vehicle of knowledge, to the ends of the earth. "Ah! how are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of learning perished!"

Reader, we mean not, by this apostrophe, to debase the French nation, nor to throw any slur upon their late exertions to shake off the yoke of despotism, and vindicate their just rights; we are only penetrated with sorrow and regret, that the vindication of those rights should be attended with consequences so fatal to LEARNING, and, we fear, to liberty itself, at least for a long portion of time. But is France at present without learned men? are the arts and sciences there totally neglected? Neither the one nor the other! But, alas! the number of truly learned men in France, at this moment, are like the gleanings of the field: old age, exile, or the guillotine, has swept the great harvest away! and it will be yet a long, long winter before such another crop can appear. The arts and sciences are not altogether extinct; but they shed only a faint light; the rays of which serve chiefly to show what Vandalic devastation has been made among their best productions. Let us turn our eyes from so dismal a prospect, and cherish a hope, that the genius of France may yet *trim his withered bays*, and rise to his former renown.

GERMANY, HOLLAND, &c.

A petulant French Jesuit once made it a question, Whether a German were capable of wit? And not less petulant was the observation of an Englishman, that the Dutch carried their genius in their backs. Odious assertions! The German Luther had at least as much wit as Father Bohours; and the Colloquies of Erasmus, of Rotterdam, contain more Attic humour than can be collected from the whole mass of English writers, from Chaucer to Swift.

That the French, a vain and jealous nation should condemn German literature, is not much to be wondered. They have sometimes affected to despise their masters, the Italians. But that we, a Saxon colony, should join in the assertion, is certainly a matter of surprise. The truth is, that, although the German be the parent of our own tongue, or at least a sister-dialect, we have not,

until very lately, paid any attention to German books, unless they were written in Latin. Yet Germany has, in the course of the present century, produced as many good works, in German, as any country in the world. We know not even if it be saying too much, to affirm, that more German books are annually published than in one half of the world besides: they are not all excellent, to be sure, but most of them are good, and few intollerable; and there is not a branch of science which is not highly cultivated, especially in the Protestant universities. Formerly, the Germans wrote in various dialects, as numerous as their various provinces; and still there are shades of difference in the languages of Berlin, Leipzic, and Vienna. But having now an excellent Lexicon, and several good Grammars, they seem to aim at some sort of uniformity, both in style and phraseology. Their poetry is greatly improved, and every day improving. In novel-writing, they are more natural than we. Of their oratory we cannot say so much. In mathematics, natural history, physic, experimental philosophy, they are second to none. In rational theology, they have made great progress; and in biblical criticism, hold the very first rank.

What we have said of Germany is more or less applicable to Holland, Sweden, Denmark, and the other northern regions that border on Germany, and speak Teutonic dialects. To them the German has been chiefly the great vehicle of knowledge, which they have generally transfused into their own tongues; but, in Sweden, of late, many very learned men have arisen, who, in philology, and every species of critical knowledge, are not inferior to the Germans; and they have one of the best translations of the Bible that have been made into modern languages.

The literature of Holland is, in some measure, peculiar to itself. Although their language be a German dialect, it has not been much written in; their principal works are in Latin or French. This latter was imported by the French refugees, who fled from the persecution of Louis XIV. and, through them, soon became familiar to the Dutch themselves: almost as many French works have issued from the presses of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and the Hague, as from those of Paris and Lyons. We speak not at all of the Netherlands, because we know no works of any great merit.

merit in the Flemish dialect. It has, for many years, been giving place to the French, which now bids fair to extinguish it. The language of Lille is become the language of Brussels; and in half a century more, perhaps, there will be no other dialect spoken on this side the Rhine. It might be expected that we should say something of Polish and Russian literature; but we confess we are little acquainted with either, except through the medium of German Reviews. We know only that the Russian language has been improved in later times, and is said to be copious and harmonious; if any works of great importance shall appear in it, we will endeavour to get an account of them. We have seen some Polish publications, but their number is not great; and now we imagine, that an unfortunate nation will be taught to lift up the respective languages of its new masters.

GREAT BRITAIN.

Having thus made the grand tour as rapidly as most of our modern travellers, we return with pleasure to our native soil; and are happy in the thought that it has not been less productive of every sort of knowledge, than climes that enjoy a warmer sun. Montesquieu was wont to say, "That England was a country to think in;" and this concession from a French writer is no small eulogy. In fact, we are a thinking, more than an ingenious, nation: we have seldom been guilty of invention; but we are bold and persevering imitators; and have generally perfected what had been invented by others; of this our various manufactures are a sensible and striking proof. "Vos machines font mieux montées," said to us an intelligent Frenchman, whom we met some years ago at Birmingham; and this is pure truth. The employers of our artists spare no cost; and our artists, patient and well paid, leave nothing untried in their various operations, from the mill that grinds the sugar-cane, to the screw that draws a cork. Hence the great demand for our wares all over the globe. If our learning and science had but kept pace with our mechanics, we should have been the most learned and enlightened people under the sun; as it is, we have no reason to blush. Let us see what we have done in the lapse of a hundred years.

In the first place, we have considerably polished, and, at the same time,

perhaps, enervated our language; we write more grammatically, but not more forcibly or eloquently; we have a good Dictionary of our language, but far from being a perfect one, or even equal to those of some other nations, though we are sometimes apt to boast the contrary. Its defects are great and numerous; we cannot but lament, that a gentleman, who has long laboured to improve it, and supply its deficiencies, has not met with that encouragement to which he had a claim; and without which he could not carry on to expensive an undertaking.

On oratory and elocution, several useful tracts and lectures have appeared; but there is very little new in them. Dr. Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and Mr. J. Walker's *Melody of Speaking delineated*, are the only works of the kind that possess originality; yet they have been little read.

History has had a better fate. We have many good historians; but Hume shines among them like the moon among inferior stars.

From history to novels, the transition is short; and here, if number prevail, two are invincible. Since the fertile pen of Richardson poured forth its sentimental torrent, a thousand streamlets have emulated its course, and purled away, with an uniform similarity, through the enchanted plains. An inundation of *poetry* has also deluged the land; but the grand, the sublime, the Shakspearean, and the Miltonic, seem beyond the grasp of modern bards. Two or three good comedies have graced the stage; but the Tragic Muse has been in a deep lethargy for many years.

Natural history and experimental philosophy, more especially botany and chemistry, have made great progress among us; but the Swedes and Germans led the way.

The chair of Newton has not been refilled; and this is no matter of astonishment, since academical honours have been made the reward and badge of a party.

Politics have been cultivated with uncommon ardour, especially since the French Revolution; and some new ingenious systems have been broached, which have not yet received the sanction of public approbation. We avoid men-

tioning names, that we may avoid the imputation of partiality.

In theology, a wonderful revolution has happened in this country. The principles of Calvin, which were once common to Presbyterians and Episcopalians, are now exploded by both; and Arminianism has had a complete triumph over the gloomy system of Gomarus. There were some few Socinians in the days of Charles II. and in every succeeding reign; but they were individuals, who had no public conventicles, nor offensive communion. At present, they are a numerous and respectable body; and are daily increasing. The acrimonious opposition, which they have met from the established church, and the obstinate refusal of government to repeal the *test and corporation acts*, have not a little contributed to this increase.

Sanguis martyrum semet sementur, is an axiom that will always be found to be true; whatever be the principles of the persecuted.—We say persecuted; because we are thoroughly convinced, that every sort of restraint, in matters merely religious, is a species of persecution; although it be not persecution unto death. This latter, indeed, is happily abolished; or, at least, gone gradually into disuse.—We no longer hang a Popish priest for saying mass; nor burn the tongue of an Unitarian with a hot iron for denying the trinity. The times will not bear such severities; yet we have no hesitation in asserting, that as long as a single Briton is, on account of his religious tenets, excluded from any place which he is capable of filling, genuine liberty he does not enjoy.—To oblige men, by penal laws, to think alike, is to renew the bed of Procrustes; which philosophy ought to have broken in pieces for ever.—Difference in opinion is as natural as difference in complexion; and one may be as justly persecuted for being black, brown, or fair, as for being of this or that religious persuasion.—Theological knowledge is promoted by divisions; every party exert their talents and industry, to seek and draw, from the common arsenal of controversy, arms to support their own cause; and from the clash of arms meeting arms, some sparks of unquestionable truth are now and then elicited.—In one point of divinity, we seem almost agreed, namely, that the Scriptures, our common rule of faith, have not been handed down to us in

their original purity; and both the orthodox and dissenter have acknowledged the expediency of correcting them by the canons of sound criticism.—The collation of the MSS of the New Testament, by Mills, and of the Old Testament, by Kennicott, does honour to the University of Oxford; and, from the same feminary of learning, we expect, with avidity, a collation of the MSS of the most ancient and valuable Greek version, known by the name of *Synagoga*. No doubt, the other more ancient versions, particularly the Syriac and Latin Vulgate, will, in time, be also collated; and each of these collations will contribute to remove from the sacred Books, the grubs and straws that have stuck to their amber, in the course of time.

But, if Biblical criticism have received great improvement, we cannot say so much for polemic and didactic theology. Our modern controversialists have generally forgotten the rules of good breeding, and our preachers the rules of Christian charity. The pulpit is now more than a *drum ecclesiastic*; it is a military drum in the strictest sense; and the ministers of the gospel of peace, beat the war alarm with uncommon vehemence.—May God, in his mercy, forgive, and bring them back to their clerical duty!

The fine arts have flourished in England since the commencement of this century; and particularly since the institution of the Royal Academy. The late President, both by precept and example, inspired our painters with a spirit of emulation, which has produced as many good artists, as, perhaps, any other nation, during the same period. We have also sculptors, who do honour to the nation; and our engravers are equal to any that France or Italy have produced.

At present, there is a dearth of important publications; but this, we trust, like the dearth of provisions, is only a temporary evil. The fierce Bellona has ever been at variance with the gentle Muses; although she has often been the subject of their song.—But the flame of war cannot rage for ever; and learning and science must again revive in the fostering lap of peace. Ah! may the soon unfold that lap, and may science and learning acquire new vigour in her warm embraces!