

THE
INVARIABLE PRINCIPLES

OF

POETRY:

IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO

THOMAS CAMPBELL, ESQ;

OCCASIONED BY SOME

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS IN HIS SPECIMENS
OF BRITISH POETS,

PARTICULARLY RELATING TO THE

Poetical Character of POPE.

BY THE

REV. W. L. BOWLES.

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REV. W. L. BOWLES.

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A LETTER, &c.

SIR,

A Short time since a friend of yours, and one of the most distinguished poets of the present day, Mr. MOORE, informed me that there had appeared, in the Morning Chronicle, an extract from your Specimens of British Poets, entitled, "CAMPBELL'S Answer to BOWLES." I have since read, with much pleasure, the work from which the extract was taken; and I beg to return you my thanks, for the kind manner with which my name is introduced, though you profess to differ from me, and state at large the grounds of that difference, on a point of criticism. The criticism of mine, which you have discussed, is that which appears in the last volume of the last edition of Pope's Works, entitled, "On the Poetical Character of Pope."

ERRATA.

- Page 7, l. 7.—For "more poetical than a cultivated garden," read "more poetical than that of a cultivated garden."
29, l. 10.—For "froth of a coffee-pot," read "james of a chocolate-pot."
30, l. 3.—Dele "here."
l. 5.—Dele "feel."
37, l. 12.—For "regret," read "reject."
44, l. 9.—For "our beauties," read "her beauties."

As the opinion pronounced by the editor of the Morning Chronicle will probably be the opinion of all who read, without much reflection, *not my criticism*, but *your* representation of it; I am bound, in justice to myself, to state the grounds of my proposition clearly; to meet the arguments you have brought against it, manfully but most respectfully; and to make the public (at least that part of the public which may be interested in such a discussion) a *judge* between us!

I feel it the more incumbent on me to do this, knowing the deserved popularity of your name, and the impression which your representation of my arguments must make on the public; though I must confess, it does appear to me that you could not have read the criticism which you discuss.

First, then, to state the grounds of that criticism clearly; it was, *verbatim*, as follows:

"All images drawn from what is BEAUTIFUL or SUBLIME in the WORKS of NATURE, are MORE beautiful and sublime than images drawn from art, and are therefore more poetical. In like manner, those PASSIONS of the HUMAN HEART which belong to nature in general, are, *per se*, more adapted to the HIGHER SPECIES of poetry, than those which are derived from incidental and transient manners."

The reader will instantly perceive, that these propositions are connected and consecutive; and to prevent the possibility of their being understood otherwise, I added, as illustration, the following instances, equally connected and consecutive.

"A description of a forest is more poetical than a cultivated garden; and the passions which are portrayed in the EPISTLE OF ELOISA, render such a poem more poetical, (whatever might be the difference of merit in point of composition) intrinsically more poetical, than a poem founded on the characters, incidents, and modes of artificial life; for instance, the Rape of the Lock."

The reader will see, in this statement, a general proposition connected with its illustrations.

Further, to prevent misconception, I added,

"Let me not, however, be considered as thinking that the *subject alone* constitutes poetical excellency. The execution is to be taken into view at the same time; for, with Lord HARVEY, we might *'fall asleep over the CREATION of BLACKMORE*, but be alive to the touches of animation and satire in *'Boileau*.' By execution, I mean not only the colours of expression, but the design, the contrast of light and shade, the masterly management, the judicious disposition, and, in short,

"every thing that gives to a GREAT SUBJECT
"INTEREST and animation."

"The SUBJECT and the EXECUTION are
"equally to be considered; the one, respecting
"the poetry; the other, the *art* and *talents* of the
"poet. With regard to the *first*, POPE cannot
"be placed among the HIGHEST ORDER of
"POETS: with regard to the second, NONE
"WAS EVER HIS SUPERIOR.*"

This was my first proposition. I do not think that any thing, Sir, you have advanced, at all shakes it; and, moreover, I do not doubt I shall be able to *prove* that you have misconceived my meaning; ill supported your own arguments; *confounded* what I had *distinguished*; and even given me grounds to think you had replied to propositions which you *never read*, or, at least, of which you could have read only the *first* sentence, omitting that which was integrally and essentially connected with it.

In an article of the Edinburgh Review, the same mis-statement was made, and the same course of arguments pursued. I feel, indeed, bound to thank Mr. JEFFERY, if he wrote the article, for the liberal tribute he paid to my *poetry*, at the expense of my *canons of criticism*. But in truth, from the coincidences here re-

* This admission is liable to exception, but it is a fault on the right side.

marked, I might be led to think Mr. CAMPBELL wrote the Review, were I not more disposed to think he drew his knowledge of my criticism on POPE, *not* from the criticism itself, but, *at second-hand*, from the *criticism on the criticism* in that Review, inadvertently involving himself in all its misconceptions and misrepresentations.

For, I beg you to observe, Sir, that, in my first proposition, I do not say that WORKS OF ART are in no instance *poetical*; but only that "what is sublime or beautiful in works of nature "is MORE so!" The very expression "*more so*" is a proof that poetry belongs, though not in the same degree, to both. I must also beg you to remark, that, having laid down this position, I observe, in the very next sentence, (lest it should be misunderstood as it now is, and was by a writer in the Edinburgh Review,) substantially as follows,—that the general and loftier passions of human nature are *more* poetical than artificial *manners*; the one being eternal, the other local and transitory. I think the mere slating of these circumstances will be sufficient to shew, that both the Edinburgh Review and yourself have completely misrepresented my meaning. With respect to the images FROM ART, which you have adduced as a triumphant answer to what I laid down, I shall

generally observe, that *your own illustrations* are against you. The Edinburgh Review, in the same manner, had spoken of the Pyramids. Now the Pyramids of Egypt, the Chinese Wall, &c. had occurred to me, at the time of writing; as undoubtedly POETICAL in WORKS OF ART; but I supposed that any reflecting person would see that these were poetical, *not essentially as works of art*, but from associations both with the highest feelings of nature, and some of her sublimest external works. The generations swept away round the ancient base of the Pyramids, the ages that are past since their erection, the mysterious obscurity of their origin, and many other complex ideas, enter into the imagination at the thought of these wonderful structures, besides the association with boundless deserts; as the Wall of China is associated with unknown rocks, mountains, and rivers. Build a pyramid of *new brick*, of the same dimensions as the pyramids of Egypt, in Lincoln's Inn fields, and then say how much of the poetical sublimity of the immense and immortal piles in the deserts of Egypt is derived, *not from art*, but from the association with GENERAL NATURE! Place your own image of the "GIANT OF THE WESTERN STAR" upon such a pyramid, if it could be made as HIGH as the Andes, and say whether it would be considered

as *poetical* as now it appears, "looking from its throne of clouds o'er half the world."* I had often considered these and such instances generally and specifically; and think, if you reflect a moment, you will agree with me, that though they are works of art, they are rendered POETICAL chiefly by those moral or physical associations of GENERAL NATURE, with which they are connected. But to come to your most interesting example. Let us examine the strip which you have described so beautifully. On what does the poetical beauty depend? not on *art*, but NATURE. Take away the *ruines*, the *winds*, the *sun*, that, in association with the streamer and sails, make them look so beautiful! take all poetical associations away, ONE will become a strip of blue bunting, and the *other* a piece of coarse canvass on three tall poles!!

You speak also of the *poetical* effect of the *drum* and *fife*! Are the drum and fife poetical, without other associations? In the quotation from Shakspeare which you adduce, the fife is "ear piercing," and the drum is "spirit stirring;" and both are associated, by the consummate art of Shakspeare—with

* In this very poetical image, a part of its sublimity is instantly lost by the introduction, for the sake of the rhyme, of "unfar'd!"

I mention this noble image, not to criticise, but to illustrate my meaning. Can any one doubt that it would not have been more sublime without the "standard unfar'd?"

what?—with the “PRIDE, POMF, and CIRCUMSTANCE of GLORIOUS WAR!” and passions and pictures are called up; those of fortitude, of terror, of pity, &c. &c.; arms glittering in the sun, and banners waving in the air. It is these pictures and passions from GENERAL NATURE, and these alone, which make a drum or fife poetical; and let the same drum or fife be heard before a booth in a fair, or in a regiment with wooden guns, and this poetical effect will be lost. I therefore turn your own instances against you.

Having laid down my first position, I proceeded to speak of a minor province of the Poet’s art, *descriptions of external nature*. I had spoken of the higher order of poetry, as derived from the loftier passions of NATURE. What I said of the knowledge of EXTERNAL NATURE was not with a view of shewing that a poet should be a botanist, or even a Dutch painter; but that no one could be “*pre-eminent*,” as a great (*descriptive*) poet, without this knowledge, which peculiarly distinguishes COWPER and THOMSON. The objects I had in view, when I used the expressions objected to, were *Pope’s Pastorals* and *Windsor Forest*; and I thought my meaning could not have been misunderstood. I will appeal to your own quotation from the first of these poets. Why is COWPER so eminent as a descriptive

poet? for I am now speaking of this part of his poetical character alone. Because he is the most accurate describer of the works of *external nature*, and for that reason is superior, as a *descriptive poet*, to POPE.* Every tree, and every peculiarity of colour and shape, are so described, that the reader becomes a spectator, and is doubly interested with the truth of colouring, and the beauty of the scene, so vividly and so delightfully painted from nature herself; and you yourself have observed the same in your criticism on this exquisite poet, in WORDS AS DECISIVE AS MY OWN.

Having thus merely stated my sentiments in general, as they stand in order and connection in the Essay on the Poetic Character of POPE, I shall now pursue your arguments more in detail.

You say, “as the subject of *inspired fiction*, “*nature includes artificial forms and manners*.” “RICHARDSON is no less a painter of nature “than HOMER!” I will not stoop to notice your vague expression of “*inspired fiction*,” but will admit that RICHARDSON is not less a painter of nature than HOMER. For, indeed, RICHARDSON,

Irritæ, mulcet, falsis terroribus, implet,
Ut magus!

But let us take *Clarissa Harlowe*, the most affecting of RICHARDSON’s “*inspired fictions*!”

* Mr. CAMPBELL’s own quotation will be seen in the Postscript.

Though Lovelace be a character in ARTIFICIAL LIFE, the interest we take in the history of CLARISSA is derived from FEELINGS of GENERAL NATURE. Its great characteristic is PATHOS; and this I have distinguished as a far more essential property of poetry than flowers and leaves! The passions excited are those of GENERAL NATURE; and so far, and no farther, is RICHARDSON poetical. There is nothing poetical in the feathered hat or the sword-knot of Lovelace; nor in the gallant but *artificial* manners of this accomplished villain. In Sir Charles Grandison the character of Clementina is *poetical*, and for the same reasons; but there is nothing very *poetical* in Sir Charles himself, or "the venerable Mrs. Shirley!"

I must here observe, that when I speak of passions as poetical, I speak of those which are most elevated or pathetic; for it is true, passions are described in TERENCE as well as SOPHOCLES; but I confine my definition to what is *heroic, sublime, pathetic, or beautiful*, in human feelings; and this distinction is kept in view through the Essay on the Poetic Character of POPE. SHAKESPEARE displays the same wonderful powers in Falstaff as in Lear, but not the same *poetical* powers; and the provinces of comedy and tragedy will be always separate; the one relating to abstract emotions, the other

combined with the *passing fashions*, and incidental variations of the "Cynthia of the minute."

To proceed; you say, "HOMER himself is a minute describer of works of art!" But are his descriptions of works of art more poetical than his descriptions of the great feelings of nature? Nay, that great part of the ODYSSEY derives its peculiar charm from the scenes of NATURE; as the ILIAD does from its loftier passions. The most remarkable of the works of *art* mentioned by HOMER, are the ships in the catalogue and the shield of Achilles. The first is solely rendered *poetical* by the brief interspersions of natural landscape. The shield of Achilles derives its poetical interest from the subjects described on it, far more than from its workmanship, and these subjects are the creation of the heaven and earth, scenes of Pastoral and Military life, the rural dance, &c. Besides, was the age of HOMER an æra of refinement or *artificial* life? by whom not even such a *poetical work of art* as a *bridge* is mentioned!

But RICHARDSON and HOMER are not sufficient to overwhelm me and my hypothesis; and it is remarked, as if the argument was at once *decisive*, that MIRROR is full of imagery derived from art; "Satan's spear," for example, is com-

pared to the "MAST OF SOME GREAT ADMIRAL!" Supposing it is, do you really think that such a comparison makes the description of Satan's spear a whit *more poetical*; I think *much less* so. But MILTON was not so unpoetical as you imagine, though I think his simile does not greatly add to our poetical ideas of Satan's spear! The "mast of the great admiral" might have been left out; but remark, in this image MILTON DOES NOT compare Satan's spear "*with the mast of some great admiral*," as you assert. The passage is,

"His spear, to equal which the TALLEST PINE
 "Hewn on NORWEGIAN HILLS, TO BE the mast
 "Of some great admiral, were but a wand!"

You leave out the chief, I might say the only, circumstance, which reconciles the "mast" to us; and having detroncated MILTON's image, triumphantly say, "MILTON is full of imagery 'derived from art!'" You come on, "*destridue sinistradue*," and say, not only Satan's spear is compared to an "*admiral's mast*," but "*his shield to the moon seen through a telescope!*"

My dear Sir, consider a little. You forget the passage; or have purposely left out more than half of its essential poetical beauty. What reason have I to complain, when you use MILTON thus? I beseech you recollect MILTON's image.

"His pond'rous shield,
 "Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
 "Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
 "At evening, FROM THE TOP OF FESOLE,
 "Or in VALDARNO, to DESCRY NEW LANDS,
 "RIVERS, OR MOUNTAINS, IN HER SPOTTY GLOBE."

Who does not perceive the art of the poet in introducing, besides the telescope, as if conscious how unpoetical it was in itself, all the circumstances from NATURE, *external nature*. The evening—the top of Fesole—the scenes of Valdarno,—and the LANDS, MOUNTAINS, and RIVERS, in the moon's orb? It is these which make the passage poetical, and not the "*telescope!*"

I will not press the inevitable inference on you. I adduce your own illustration against you; not so much for the sake of shewing how desirable it were for a distinguished author, when writing against another person's opinions, to examine what those opinions were, but that we might both the more admire the consummate art, and the knowledge of his art, exhibited by the great master of whom you speak, *who* has so admirably brought forwards these adjuncts from NATURE herself, which make the admiral's mast, and the artist's telescope, poetical!

Whilst I am on this subject, let me point out a grand and sublime passage of this great poet, in which images *from art* are most successfully introduced, and made most

highly *poetical*. Whatever is *picturesque* in works of *art* is *poetical*, though, I contend still, that images drawn from what is sublime or beautiful in *NATURE*, are more poetical than those drawn from *ART*. The passage I allude to is in the *Paradise Regained*—the picture of Imperial Rome.

"On each side an Imperial city stood,
 "With tow'rs and temples proudly elevate
 "On seven small hills, with palaces adorn'd,
 "PORCHES, and THEATRES, BATHS, AQUEDUCTS,
 "STATUES, and TROPHIES, and TRIUMPHAL ARCS,
 "GARDENS, and GROVES, presented to his eyes,
 "Above the height of mountains interpos'd," &c. —
 "The CITY which thou see'st, no other deem
 "Than GREAT and GLORIOUS Rome, QUEEN of the EARTH
 "So far remov'd, and with the spoils enrich'd
 "Of nations; there the CAPTIVOL thou see'st,
 "Above the rest, lifting his stately head
 "On the Tarpeian rock, her citadel,
 "Impregnable, and there Mount Palatine,
 "The Imperial palace, compass, huge and high,
 "The structure, skill of noblest architects,
 "With GILDED BATTLEMENTS, CONSPICUOUS far,
 "TURRETS, and TERRACES, and GLITTERING SPIRES," &c.—
 "Thence to the gates cast round thine eye, and see
 "What conflux issuing forth, or entering in,
 "PÆTORS, PROCONSULS to their provinces
 "Hasting, or on return, in robes of state,
 "LICTORS, and RODS, the ensigns of their pow'r,
 "Legions, and cohorts, Turns of horses and wings,
 "Or embassies from regions far remote,
 "In various habits on the Aprian road,
 "Or on th' *Emilian*," &c.

What a magnificent assemblage; and this truly grand and most poetical picture I here gra-

tuitously set before you, conscious as you must now, I think, be, of the weakness of your telescope, and admiral's mast! And with the impression left on the imagination by this lofty and beautiful assemblage, drawn chiefly from art, but mixed up in a grand and impressive picture, by MILTON's consummate powers of painting; I will still contend, that "images drawn from what is BEAUTIFUL and SUBLIME in *NATURE*, are *more poetical* than images drawn from art."

After what has been said, I think it needless to point out the causes that contribute to the glorious and rich effect of this picture; or the poetical effect of that more concise but sublime passage of HORACE, on the same subject,

"*Fumum et opes strepitumque Romæ.*"

But I cannot dismiss this part of the subject, and the "launching of the ship," which I have already touched on, without quoting your own animated description.

"Those who have ever witnessed the spectacle of the launching of a ship of the line, will, perhaps, forgive me for adding this to the examples of the sublime objects of artificial life. Of that spectacle I can never forget the impression.

"When the vast bulwark sprung from her cradle, the CALM WATER on which she swung

"MAJESTICALLY round, gave the IMAGINATION a contrast of the STORMY ELEMENT, of which she was soon to ride. All the days of battle, and nights of danger, she had to encounter; all the ENDS of THE EARTH which she had to visit, and all that she had to do and suffer for her country, rose in awful pictures, sentiment before the mind; and when the heart gave her a benediction, it was like one pronounced on a *living being*!" Now let me ask you, when you so beautifully described this ship, why was it necessary to describe its LAUNCHING at all? If images derived from art are so beautiful and sublime as those derived from nature, why was it necessary to bring your ship *off the stocks*? It was complete, as far as it was concerned, before; it had the same sails, the same streamers, and the same tackle. But surely your own illustration is decidedly in your favour, when it appears, from this animated description, to make the object of art so poetically interesting, you are obliged to have recourse to NATURE!

This circumstance, confirms my doubt, whether you ever really read my estimate of POPE'S Poetical Character. The reason of this doubt is, because I think, if you had read it, you could not have forgotten the *two first sentences*. You criticisms, say some of your admirers, have

poetry force," which we plain and humble *poets* can never hope to attain! Even if I had been less explicit, could you suppose that, when I used the expression of general nature, I meant to confine the idea that expression conveyed, to *general nature alone*?

You observe, in page 264 of your first volume *Specimens of British Poets*, that "Nature is the poet's goddess; but by nature no one rightly understands her mere inanimate face, however charming it may be; or the simple landscape painting of trees, clouds, precipices, and flowers." Why then try POPE, or any other poet EXCLUSIVELY, BY HIS POWERS OF DESCRIBING inanimate phenomena? Nature, in the wide and proper sense of the word, means life in all its circumstances—nature MORAL as well as EXTERNAL."—*Campbell's Specimens*.

Have I ever tried POPE by the exclusive power of painting *inanimate phenomena*? I ever denied that nature, in the proper sense of the word, means nature *moral* as well as *natural*? Have I not, in the very first sentence of the observations on POPE'S Poetical Character, said nearly the same thing? Could I ever escape your notice, if you had, (I will say read the criticism,) but only looked at the *first sentences*?

To set before you, in one view, your palpable perversions of my positions, I will briefly state the course of my argument, and your representation of it. The plain course of my argument was simply this:—1st. *Works of nature*, speaking of those *more* beautiful and sublime, are *more* sublime and beautiful than works of art; therefore more poetical.—2d. The passions of the human heart, which are the same in all ages, and which are the causes of the sublime and pathetic in sentiment, are *more poetical than artificial manners*.—3d. The great poet of human passions is the most consummate master of his art; and the heroic, the lofty, and the pathetic, as belonging to this class, are distinguished.—4th. If these premises be true, the descriptive poet, who paints from an intimate knowledge of external nature, is more poetical, supposing the fidelity and execution equal, *not* than the painter of human passions, but the painter of external circumstances in *artificial life*; as COWPER paints a morning walk, and POPE a game of cards.!!

This is the ground of my argument; and your representation, leaving out the most essential part, is this: "He alone is a poet, who paints from works of external nature; and this knowledge of external nature must be as minute as that of a botanist and Dutch painter!" I appeal to your book; and if this were not your mutilated

representation of my argument, you would never have thought it necessary to say that SOPHOCLES was a GREAT POET, notwithstanding there is no minute painting of "leaves," &c. in Philoctetes! I must therefore refer you again to my Essay on the Poetic Character of POPE, which you will find in the *last* volume of the last edition. I have here given a short analysis of my argument, and your *mutilation* of it; on which mutilation alone you build your *answer*. For, indeed, you have totally left out the middle of my argument, and ridiculously joined the head and the legs, like the PICTURE of NOBODY in the London shops; and then advancing against this grotesque figure of your own making, think you have completely demolished it, whilst you leave yourself VULNERABLE at every blow you strike.

If this be so, I ask you whether you do not think I have some reason to make this remonstrance? You leave out the most material part of my proposition; and, taking a sentence relating to another point in *another* place, you separate it from its direct application, and misapply it to that with which it had no relation; omitting what was connected and even consecutive, and *connecting* what was neither the one nor the other?

The minute knowledge of *external* nature, which I laid down as one essential of a great descriptive poet, you apply to *tragedians*, in whose more elevated works (the subject of which are the loftier passions of *general* nature) descriptions of *external* nature ought least of all to have place. But perhaps I ought to thank you for thus bringing me back to the delightful remembrance of the most interesting studies of my youth,—the tragedies of SOPHOCLES, and particularly the Sphærian fountains, the Lemnian rock, and the solitary cave of Philoctetes. Nor can I forget, that one of the companions of my youthful studies, now in the dust, made this melancholy abode the subject of one of the most beautiful, and affecting, and picturesque sonnets in the English language: the insertion of which in your next edition, by THOMAS RUSSEL, of New college, would be, I am persuaded, far more acceptable than many specimens you have admitted.

To return to SOPHOCLES. There is no minute description of leaves and flowers; no, Sir, certainly not; but you have forgotten that the affecting story of the desolate Philoctetes displays not only the higher passions of GENERAL NATURE, but exhibits the interesting admixture of many of the external beauties of her most romantic scenery, of her most secluded

solitudes. It is many years since I read it; but recalled to its wild poetic scenery, and impassioned language, I repeated, with a sigh,

Νῦν δ', ὡ ἀφνῆται, γένηται τὴ παύσην,
 Αἰσχροῖσι νύκας, λαιστοῖσι νόθη,
 Δοῦλην, ὥστε τινὲς ἐμὲ βαρύνει.
 Χαεῖ, ὡ Λέμνος ἐξὸν ἀμφιπόλει, &c.

It is the rocks, the caves, the wild and solitary scenery, the desert island, and the surrounding seas, all images of nature, that, mixed with the language of human passions derived from the same general nature, give this ancient and unique drama its peculiar charm; reminding us of the romantic imagery in the Tempest and Midsummer Night's Dream, so beautifully interwoven by SHAKESPEARE with those interesting dramas.

The miserable abode of the lonely inhabitant of Lemnos is marked by one image drawn from art, which is so minute, and sets so strongly before us the wants and poor resources of the desolate exile, that none of the minute circumstances which render so natural the narrative of Robinson Crusoe, can be imagined more affecting. I allude to the “αὐτοχρύλον Ἐκπύμα παύλαργε τινος τεκμήματ' αὐθῆς” in the cave of Philoctetes. There is nothing poetical in an ill-carved cup; but in this place it is rendered so, and most strikingly affecting, by the associated circumstances.

I forgot to notice one of your instances, and that too striking to be passed over. To return, therefore, from SOPHOCLES to SHAKESPEARE, from general *passions* to description. In the quotation from SHAKESPEARE, where you triumphantly appeal to the "*towers*, and solemn *temples*, and gorgeous *palaces*;" recollect, Sir, the tower is "*cloud-capt*;" the temple is associated with the "solemnity" of religious awe; and "*palaces*" with the splendour of earthly magnificence: and all these images are brought into one grand and awful picture, to shew the mighty devastation of final ruin; and are associated with that leading idea of the destruction of the *globe* itself, which will leave not a WRECK behind! Thus the "*cloud-capt towers*" become highly poetical; nor can I leave this point without speaking a word of the particular object of the tower. POPE himself has thought its image so pleasing, that, in the catalogue of ships from HOMER, he sets before us the prospect of English spires, not Grecian. If the "*cloud-capt tower*" itself be a striking, and often a beautiful, object; how much more poetical, when, grey with years, or illumined by the setting sun, it carries the thought to that worship with which it is connected, the sabbaths of our forefathers; or harmonizes with the soft, sinking landscape of evening, and the ideas of another world.

If ever I should have the pleasure of seeing you in this county, in which I should sincerely rejoice, not far from my own house, I could shew you a tower which is "*cloud-capt*," but not poetical; though it is of the same size with other towers, and adorned with pinnacles. It is what is called a *sham* tower, built in all respects like other towers as to *one side*, but it is only a wall built in this shape, and added to a cottage for the sake of a view, from the poetical and picturesque terrace of an ancient Abbey. To take you to scenes with which you are better acquainted. I would ask you, what makes the venerable towers of Westminster Abbey, on the side of the Thames, more poetical, as objects, than the tower for the manufactory of *patent shot*, surrounded by the same scenery, and *looming* amidst the smoke of the city?

But, enough of this! I have read your observations with greater attention than you could have read mine; and having so read them, I must confess I do not find one point established against those positions which I had distinctly laid down, unless that may be called an answer, where, in refutation of so plain a position, you say the same thing.

For another circumstance, which almost persuades me you never read my Criticism on POPE's Poetic Character, is this. You say,

"He glows with passion in the Epistle of Eloisa;
 "and displays a lofty feeling, much *above* that of
 "the satirist and man of the world, in his
 "Prologue to Cato, and his Epistle to Lord
 "OXFORD."—*Campbell.*

This may be called by Mr. PERRY "an
 "answer!" how complete an answer it is, will be
 shewn by the following few lines of my Criticism:
 "We regret that we have little more truly
 "pathetic from his pen than the Epistle of
 "Eloisa; the Elegy to the unfortunate Lady;
 "and let me not forget one of the sweetest and
 "most melodious of his pathetic effusions, the
 "Address to Lord OXFORD,

"Such were the notes my once-lov'd Poet sung,"

Bowles.

As I am conscious of having been misunderstood, may I again intreat pardon for shewing what I did say of a poem founded on *manners*, and what I did *not*. I said this of the Rape of the Lock. "In this composition POPE stands alone, unrivalled, and possibly never to be rivalled. All his successful labour of correct "and musical versification, all his talents of "accurate description, though in an inferior "province of poetry, are here consummately "displayed; and as far as artificial life, that is, "manners, not PASSIONS, are capable of being "rendered poetical, they are here rendered so

"by the fancy, the propriety, the elegance,
 "and the poetic beauty of the machinery."

Now I would put to you a few plain questions; and I would beseech you not to ask whether I *mean* this or that, for I think you must now understand *what I do mean*. I would beseech you also not to write *beside* the question, but answer simply and plainly, whether you think that the sylph of POPE, "trembling over the froth of a chocolate-pot," be an image as poetical as the delicate and quaint Ariel, who sings "Where "the bee sucks, there lurk I?" Or the elves of SHAKESPEARE:

"——— Spirits of another sort,

"That with the morning light make sport."

Whether you think the description of a game of cards be as *poetical*, supposing the execution in the artists equal, as a description of a WALK in a FOREST? Whether an age of refinement be as conducive to pictures of poetry, as a period less refined? Whether passions, affections, &c. of the human heart be not a higher source of what is pathetic or sublime in poetry, than habits or manners, that apply only to artificial life? If you agree with me, it is all I meant to say; if not, we differ, and always shall, on the principles of poetical criticism.

Your last observation is this: "I know not "how to designate the possessor of such gifts,

"but by the name of a genuine poet. Nor do I, nor did I ever; and I will venture to assert, that if you examine well what I have said on POPE's several writings you will not think I ever shewed, or could feel reluctance to attribute to him that high name.

Again. You say, "POPE's discrimination lies "in the lights and shades of "*human*' manners," which are at least as interesting as those of "*rocks and leaves*!" Does it require more than the commonest understanding to perceive the *fallacy* of this language?

I fear it would be thought impertinent to ask you at what University you acquired your logic; your logic is this: "*Human manners* are the "province of poets;"

Therefore,

"The *general and loftier passions* are *not more* "poetical than *manners of artificial life*!" Shall I hint further, that the expression *human manners* is vague and inapplicable. *Human* manners may designate equally the red Indian, in the forests of the Mississippi; the plumed soldier, and the grey-haired minstrel of chivalry; or Peggy Moreen, in a Bath ball-room. Every comedy, every farce, has *human* manners; but my proposition was confined to *manners of a refined age*, which I called artificial; and which you have *artificially* slurred over with irrelevant expressions, that

prove nothing. Artificial manners are *human*, but "*human manners*" need not be "*artificial*."

I beg further to say, that there is not one passage, concerning the poetical beauties of which you have so justly spoken, which I have not expressly pointed out myself, as the reader may find in turning to the passages; particularly let him remember what I have said respecting the PATHOS and the PICTURES, and the SOLEMN and SWEET HARMONIES, of the Epistle of ELOISA. And can I help pointing out, *not with triumph*, but with regret, that you not only *agree with me* in some points, but that where we differ your criticism conflictingly labours against your own argument: for when, nearly in the last sentence, you say, "he, POPE, *glows with passion* in the "Eloisa, and displays a LOFTY feeling, much "ABOVE that of the SATIRIST and man of the "world, in his Prologue to Cato, and his Epistle "to Lord OXFORD;" what is that but to say, that "glowing passions and lofty feelings are much "ABOVE those which distinguish the SATIRIST "and man of the world!" Q. E. D.

On POPE's Moral Character.

I have hitherto spoken of the general principles of poetic criticism; in which, if you and I should be found materially to differ, it is of no consequence. The appeal is to the public, and they will judge for themselves.

But whatever may be thought of our principles of criticism, I cannot conclude, without advert-
ing to something which far more concerns me. In speaking of the last edition of POPE, you have no hesitation to say, "that the writer of his life has kept in the shade his good qualities, and exaggerated his bad." I can only draw the inference, that the good qualities of the poet's heart must have been studiously and invidiously concealed, and the bad ones thus exaggerated; and you add, that the "editor's virtuous indignation on this might well have been spared."

I feel happy in an opportunity, the only one I ever may have, of meeting this charge. It

has often been said, in prose, "and verse." In all circumstances of life, when I found myself misrepresented, I have endeavoured in the language of a poet familiar to you,

"Gently to take all that *ungently* came!" *Speaker.*

But, after so deliberate a charge in a work, which, I trust, from its intrinsic merits, will,

"Et hunc in ævum,
"Vivat et plures;"

I am constrained, from respect to you, myself, and the public, at least to put in a plea to the contrary.

As you could not, I think, have read my criticism on the poetic character of POPE, so I hope you must have taken your ideas of my life of that great poet, not from the life itself, but from the criticisms of others, whose professed trade is misrepresentation.

Before, therefore, I enter on the defence which your expressions have extorted from me, let me mention one remarkable circumstance.

Soon after Lord BYRON had published his vigorous satire, called "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," in which, alas! *pars magna fui*, I met his Lordship at our common friend's house, the author of the "Pleasures of Memory," and the still more beautiful poem, "Human Life." As the rest of the company were going into another room, I said I wished to speak one word

to his Lordship. He came back, with much apparent courtesy. I then said to him, in a tone of seriousness, but that of perfectly good humour, "My Lord, I should not have thought of making any observations on whatever you might be pleased to give to the world as your opinion of any part of my writings which were before the public; but I think, if I can shew that you have done me a palpable and public wrong, by charging me as having written what I *never wrote*, or thought of, your own principles of justice will not allow the impression to remain." I then spoke of a particular couplet,* which he had introduced into his satire; and taking down the poem, which was at hand, I pointed out the passage to which his lines alluded, and said, "If by any possible construction he could shew that my expressions could convey such an idea as he had ludicrously held out, I fully deserved all he had said, and much more. If no construction of the words could possibly imply such a meaning as he had given, then he would acknowledge the injustice." He examined the passage in my poem on the

* "Thy woods, Madeira trembled to a kiss"—*Byron's Satire*.

If I had written this, or half what is attributed to me in criticism, I might well take to myself

"Some have at first for wits, then poets, pass'd;

"Turn'd critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last."

Spirit of Discovery; and then with a frank ingenuousness, acknowledged he had been entirely misled, saying that he took his opinion, not from the book itself, but from the representation of that very Review, which was one of the objects of his satire. He then said he had given orders that the poem should be entirely suppressed, and we shook hands, and parted.

I mention this circumstance, because it does appear to me, by your using the very same observations which were made in that Review, both with regard to criticism and the *Life*: your criticisms on both were derived, at *second-hand* from the same source.

I have read many other, and some very bitter, animadversions. Still I am not conscious of *exaggerating* a single fault in the *Life* of POPE. I am not conscious of *purposely* "*keeping in the shade*" a single virtue. I said, in the *Life*, I wished "to be judged, as I presumed to judge; and I should have been happy to have received one half or one tenth of the *condemnation* I shewed. For instance, have you given one proof of *that exaggeration* of faults with which I am charged? If you had (as I said *then*, so I say now) shewn me the "*exaggeration*," shew me a single charge advanced without foundation, and I shall be as happy to retract it, as any of POPE's warmest admirers.

Im immediately after you have made the charge of "exaggerating," you mention an anecdote, relating to POPE's conduct to the Duchess of MARLBOROUGH. You prove that it could not have been true; and who would not suppose, from its mention immediately succeeding the charge of *exaggeration*, that I had countenanced, at least, this calumny? Now what is the fact? WALPOLE first brought forward the charge. WARTON quoted WALPOLE, and I let the observations remain; not for the sake of injuring POPE, but for recording my DISDAIN OF SUCH UNFOUNDED SLANDER! My words, which you never saw, or have, I will hope forgetfully, omitted, are these.

"One circumstance is mentioned by HORACE WALPOLE, which, if true, was indeed flagitious. WALPOLE informs GRAY, that the character of Atossa was shewn to the Duchess of BUCKINGHAM, and to the Duchess of MARLBOROUGH; that POPE received a THOUSAND POUNDS from the Duchess of MARLBOROUGH, promising, on these terms, to *suppress* it! That he TOOK THE MONEY, and then published it."

Now as you spoke of this circumstance immediately after having charged me with *exaggeration*, what must the inference be? at least, that I admitted the story, or, from invidious feelings towards

POPE, let it remain without notice! Will the reader believe that my observations are literally these.

"A story so base ought not for a moment to be admitted, solely on the testimony of WALPOLE. POPE certainly was not a favourite (on account of political differences) with the WALPOLES; though he received civilities from Sir ROBERT; and till there is other proof, besides the *ex parte* evidence and sole assertion of WALPOLE, the same candour which made us regret, what, upon no better foundation, was said of ADDISON, ought to make us REGRET, with equal readiness, the belief of a circumstance so derogatory to the character of POPE! Whatever can be *proved*, ought not to be rejected; whatever (charge) has no other foundation *than* the *ipse dixit* of an adversary, is entitled to NO REGARD, particularly when the first essential of (moral) character is concerned."—*Bonley*.

Author of the Specimens of British Poets, is this EXAGGERATION? Let me be permitted, on this occasion, to say a few more words, in self-defence.

In speaking of the faults in the character of POPE, I confined myself to what was fairly deducible from his published writings, except in the instance of his printing his own letters,

and then abusing CURR for doing it; but Dr. JOHNSON had spoken, with sufficient confidence, of his *duplicity* in this respect; and I only compared the letters in my possession with those in print, by which the case was substantiated. In what I said respecting his conduct and language to ADDISON, I appealed to the published account of his *professed panegyrist*; and the observations I made, were demanded, in justice to another person *wrongfully* accused.

Point out an exaggeration even in this, and I will readily retract it; will Mr. CAMPBELL do the same, if he find he has imputed *exaggerations*? In the life of POPE, I dwelt on those points, which I thought it necessary to prove. It would have been absurd to dwell as long on those amiable and interesting parts of his character, which every one acknowledged. Have I shewn any desire to keep these qualities in the shade? Have I kept in shade his tender solicitude and affection for his aged mother, or the warmth of his friendship for those he loved? It was the farthest from my heart so to do; and does the following passage look like such cold and uncharitable feelings?

“In this year he lost his aged mother, who
“had gradually sunk before his eyes into the
“extremest imbecility of age, and whose cradle
“of parting repose he had so long rocked with

“solicitude and affection; and the most beautiful
“monument in his garden, &c.

“By the death of GAY and his mother, he
“lost not only much of that which sweetened
“life, but much which operated, on the various
“occasions of disgust with the world, as a balm
“to his wounded feelings: whatever *irritation*
“he might sometimes have experienced, he no
“sooner TURNED HIS EYES on those HE LOVED,
“but his passions seemed to subside, and his
“spirit became gentle. Hence, in the severest
“denunciations of satirical indignation, he so
“often and so delightfully interests us by unexpected touches of DOMESTIC TENDERNESS!!”
—*Life of Pope.*

If I did not dwell longer on these delightful parts of his character, it was not from the most distant wish of not doing justice to his tenderness, affection, and friendship. You say, he was a firm and fond friend. Have I not said as much? In the case of his clandestinely printing BOLINGBROKE's Patriot King, I only spoke of the *fact*. I drew no inferences, and said nothing more than yourself must allow, that the books were clandestinely printed, and that BOLINGBROKE never forgave the offence.

But we both err in thinking his friendships were as firm as they were fond. If his were friendship and *not* love to Lady MARY WORT-

HEX MONTAGUE, it was far from being as "*firm*" as it was once "fond;" and "my virtuous indignation" is as much excited by his unmanly couplet now as it ever was: and I trust the same *virtuous indignation* will be excited in every virtuous heart, as often as *one* disgraceful couplet is read, which I shall not point out.

In the account of his youthful gallantries with the two Misses BROUNT, there is nothing very seriously affecting his character; and some circumstances which I thought reflected on it, as the knowledge was derived from unpublished letters, I judged it my duty to suppress!

As to *friendship*, we cannot deny, he spoke with adulation of AARON HILL at one time, and the greatest disrespect at another; and you have not scrupled to give this conduct as strong a name as I have done, stigmatising it as "mean prevarication." Here I cannot have *exaggerated*, for you use nearly the same expressions; but *I* have *extenuated*, not *exaggerated*, this part of his character, and therefore place before you another extract.

"If he sometimes contradicted himself, in speaking at one time disrespectfully of those whom he had at other times exalted, it ought 'in charity to be attributed more to *acuteness of feeling*, at the time, than to *waywardness* and unmanly caprice."—*Life of Pope*. And

I must be permitted to say, that, taking the whole of his moral character into view, I have not *exaggerated* but *extenuated* whatever appeared to me faulty in his conduct; and, as a proof of this, I set before you my concluding words.

"If these and other parts of his character appear less amiable, let the reader keep constantly in mind the physical and moral causes which operated on a mind like his. Let him remember his life, 'one long disease;' the natural passions which he must have felt in common with all the world, disappointed, and thrown back on his heart, only to gather them with more force, and more ineffectual wishes; his *confined* education; his being used from the cradle to listen only to the voice of partial indulgence; of tenderness, almost maternal, in all who contemplated his (physical) weakness, and his incipient talents. When he has duly weighed these, and attended to every *alleviating circumstance* that his knowledge of the world or his charity may suggest, then let him not hastily condemn what truth has compelled me to state; but let him rather, without presuming on his own virtues, lament the imperfections of our common nature, and leave the judgment to Him, who knoweth whereof we are made, who remembereth we are but dust!! Whatever might have been his de-

"fects, *he* could not be said to have many bad "qualities* who never lost a friend; and whom "ARBUTHNOT, GAY, BATHURST, LITTLE- "TON, FORTESCUE, and MURRAY esteemed "and loved through life."—*Conclusion of the Life of Pope, vol. i.*

Now, Sir, I appeal to yourself, to your own candour, to your own charity; I appeal to the public, before whom you have brought me, to plead for my critical, and, I may say, moral character, whether the passages which I have extracted, and I could easily extract more, be not EXTENUATING POPE's faults, not EXAGGERATING them!

This has been called, in the poem of which I have spoken, "having a mouth of candour, and "a heart of gall!" I, Sir, who know that heart as well as any one else, know that it has as little gall as that mouth has of *affected* candour. No one being who has known me, from my youth up, no one being who has known me but "yesterday," thinks I deserve any thing like such an imputation; nor will any thing advanced in the life of POPE justify it.

To you, Sir, I am entirely a stranger, though I am not a stranger to the beauties of your Poems: when I am less a stranger, which I shall hope, before the earth closes over me, to be, you will acknowledge, that in every thing I

* With the exceptions mentioned.

have written, concerning POPE, my judgments might be wrong, but *my heart* was not; and, with many thanks for the pleasure and instruction I have received in reading your Specimens of British Poets; and with more, for giving me this opportunity of vindicating myself, I remain, with great respect, your most obedient and sincere humble servant,

W. L. BOWLES.

Bremhill, April 2, 1819.

P. S. You, Sir, have every advantage of me; your criticism has been copied, and disseminated over half the kingdom, with the title, which Mr. PERRIN gave it, *Campbell's Answer to Bowles*. I hope some of those who were so ready to announce your victory, will in common justice admit *Bowles's Answer to Campbell*! Whether they do or do not, I hope at least that what I have felt myself compelled to write will have some little weight with the various Editors of Newspapers, Reviews, Magazines, and Journals; and that in the Reviews which are promised, they will pause before they publish their account of your complete vindication of POPE against the futile criticisms and unjust accusations of Mr. BOWLES, till they have can-

dilly perused Mr. BOWLER'S defence. I have only to add, that if I have inadvertently said one word which you might think personally unkind, or such as the argument did not warrant,

LD INDICTUM VOLO!

The quotation introduced by yourself from COWPER'S Poems, is here inserted to exemplify the accurate knowledge of external nature which a true painter of our beauties must possess.

Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,
Diversified with trees of every growth,
Alike, yet various. Here the gray smooth trunks
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,
Within the twilight of their distant shades;
There, lost behind the rising ground, the wood
Seems sunk, and shorted to its topmost boughs.
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Though each its hue peculiar; paler some,
And of a wannish gray; the willow such,
And poplar, that with silver lines his leaf,
And ash far stretching his umbrageous arm;
Of deeper green the elm; and deeper still,
Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak.
Some glassy-leaf'd, and shining in the sun,
The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve
Diffusing odours: nor unnoted pass
The sycamore, capricious in attire,
Now green, now tawny, and, ere autumn yet
Have chang'd the woods, in scarlet honours bright.
Over these, but far beyond (a spacious map
Of hill and valley interspersed between)
The Ouse, dividing the well-water'd land,
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires, &c.

It is this knowledge that gives such original interest to the scenes painted by SOUTHEY and WORDSWORTH, and may I not conclude that the quotation, which you have selected (of which this description is only a part) was selected on account of its beauty, though perhaps you may consider it too much in the Dutch style of painting? At all events, it is beautiful in its place, as *relieved* by other and more distant views of the same landscape.

I trust it will not be thought, that I would presume to speak with disparagement of POPE'S airy, appropriate, delightful, and inimitable sylphs: I am not speaking of the art, invention, or execution of the Poet, but the mere poetry. Where POPE gives a more poetical employment to the more dignified order of Genii, he is equal to SHAKESPEARE; for instance,

"Some in the fields of purest æther play,
"And bask and whiten in the blaze of day;
"Some guide the course of wandering orbes on high,
"Or roll the planets through the boundless sky.
"Some less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light
"Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,
"Or suck the mists in grosser air below,
"Or dip their pinions in the painted bow" &c.

To prevent the possibility of its being thought that I could speak in terms less glowing than yourself of the passion with which POPE glows in the Epistle to Abelpard, I conclude with my

LETTER

[46]

TO

* * * * *

ON THE

REV. W. L. BOWLES' STRICTURES

ON THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS OF POPE.

BY THE RIGHT HON. LORD BYRON.

"I'll play at *Boys* with the sun and moon."

OLD SONG.

"My mother's auld, Sir, and she has rather forgotten herself in speaking to my Lady, that canna weel bide to be contradicted, (as I ken nobody likes it, if they could help themselves.)"

TALES OF MY LANDLORD, *Old Mortality*, vol. ii. page 163.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1821.

observations on that most affecting and passionate production, which I much fear you will here be somewhat astonished to read for the first time.

"In this Poem POPE appears on the high ground of the Poet of Nature. It is sufficient that nothing of the kind has ever been produced equal to it for PATHOS, PAINTING, and MELODY."

I must certainly plead guilty to the inaccuracy of that part of my criticism, in which I speak of *descriptive* poetry. I have certainly said "no one can stand pre-eminent as a great Poet," (obviously a great descriptive Poet,) "unless he has not only a heart susceptible of the most exalted feelings of nature, but an eye attentive to and familiar with," &c. &c. The context requires that sentence should have been written thus. "No one can be pre-eminent as a great (descriptive) Poet, notwithstanding his heart may be susceptible of the most pathetic and exalted feelings of nature, unless he have, also, an eye attentive," &c.

Bating some verbal inaccuracies in my criticism, this is the only sentence I would correct; but even as it stands it does not affect my *general arguments*.

SUBSEQUENT ERRATA.

Page 24, line 17, read "in the English Language, by THOMAS RUSSELL, of New College, the insertion," &c.
Page 28, line 15, for "my," read thy.
Page 37, line 13, for "regret," read reject.
Page 44, line 9, for "ou," read her.