

THE
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FOR THE PHILADELPHIA MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

GERMAN LITERATURE.

GOETHE.

FOREIGN literature, like a plant of foreign growth, should be transplanted and nurtured with care. The soil which at first may be unfavourable, changes beneath the hand of cultivation, and assumes a more genial disposition. The national character of different countries is so various, and its peculiar traits are so much diversified by the influence of local and moral causes, that we must necessarily refer to this source the dissimilitude of literary taste. Manners, customs, and popular institutions, seem to have a more immediate bearing on literature, than on the arts; in the latter the range is more confined, and the claims to models of perfection are perhaps less disputed. Public opinion varies with the vicissitudes of the national career. The natural flow of sentiment and tasteful discrimination follow the progress of a people's refinement, and are the plainest indications of its advancement in the polished arts of life. The picture which history presents to our view, upon minute examination, is seen to assume a new aspect with every successive generation; and its different shades become so intimately blended when regarded at a whole view, the brilliant so intermingled with the obscure, that we are naturally led to contemplate the more prominent objects.

In the history of the world, this peculiarity has distinguished every period, that the arts flourish only under the security and protection of the public welfare: it was this that trained and nurtured them in their infancy, and prepared them for a more complicated system. As time advanced, new ideas awoke the genius of man, new theories were introduced and old ones discarded, and a gradual succession of new discoveries contributed to expand his views, and open the paths of ambition and enterprise. These remarks have been made in order to point out the origin of those opposite motives which have conspired to disunite into separate members the great body of society, and which at the same time link together the general mass. A contrariety in inclination and pursuit we may readily suppose to have been the immediate result, which must at once direct and regulate the moral and political existence of the people. As language is one of the primary sources of social intercourse, it must have much influence upon a similarity of taste and pursuit, and it is hence that we have been so accustomed to express the same opinions, in matters of intellectual discernment, with our mother country, and thereby rendered our devotion to the cause of

Of the tall hill that overlook'd thy home,
 Long have I linger'd lonely, till the light
 Of that fair ev'ning star, to lovers dear,
 Shone on my vacant eye. Entranced I sat
 Musing upon the well-remember'd smile,
 The music of thy voice, and the heart's throb
 That tinged the blushing cheek; the delicate hand
 Trembling in mine that press'd it to my bosom
 When we last met and parted; the farewell
 Till next we meet—O, on that conscious hill
 With what new wishes, loves, and cheerful hopes,
 Did my thoughts run out to futurity.

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THE FASTIDIOUS MAN.

My friend Lesslie was a very mirror of fastidious refinement. He carried the maxim of *nil admirari* to the ultimate extreme, and seemed to find no aliment so grateful to his morbid sensibility, as the luxury of finding fault. Not that he was morose in his temper, nor a cynic in any of his habits. He was regarded in the highest circles of either sex, as a finished gentleman, and was remarkable for the scrupulous solicitude with which, in his ordinary intercourse, he kept aloof even from the gentlest sarcasm and most harmless repartee. Poor George, I have often seen tears start into his eyes, when he had struck unwittingly upon a chord painful to any of his friends, and discerned his mistake too late for evasion or retraction. He was noted, too, for the delicate tact with which he could draw out the timid without abashing them, and soothe by gentleness the confusion of the sensitive. Yet with all this kindness of feeling, there was about him a squeamishness of taste, and an over nicety of judgment, which seemed to turn up its nose at all things actual and possible. He never used the language

of invective, and not often that of censure. His disapprobation was almost always negative. He could sit unmoved when all around him were throbbing, as it seemed, with rapture; and when their ecstasy was over, expressed his opinion by twirling his watch-key as if nothing had occurred. Sometimes, it is true, when a whole company began with one consent to censure and vituperate any thing, person, or opinion, he would stand forth as its advocate, and employ all the subtilty of logical refinement in support of some trifling and unimportant paradox. But this arose entirely from a habit of perpetual dissent, and a somewhat vain ambition of espousing the weaker side. His idiosyncrasy of character was so well known, that what he uttered on these occasions was never regarded as his bona fide sentiments, by which means he attained the convenient and honourable privilege of venting, by way of opposition, what absurdities he pleased, without discredit to the soundness of his judgment or the sincerity of his heart.

This disposition of mind owes its origin, no doubt, to uncommon native de-

licacy, rendered morbid by improper cultivation, and excessively fastidious by unconscious affectation. His peculiarity in this respect became so soon developed, that even when at school, he received the cognomen of *Master Hard-to-please*; and while in college, was a good deal vexed by the sarcastic inscription on his door of Solomon's sad experience, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." From my first acquaintance with him, which commenced during an academical career, I loved him as a brother. And yet I could not conceal from myself—though I shut my eyes to many of his faults—that this trait in his character was really offensive. I often thought of giving him my counsel on the subject, and urging him to shake off this disagreeable peculiarity, as the exuvix of a recluse life and private education. But from this attempt I was deterred by an intimate knowledge of his temper, which I knew would receive the admonition with unruffled calmness, but dismiss it with equal unconcern. I left him therefore to learn from experience what I ventured not to teach him, in the full persuasion, that this morbid delicacy, unless checked in youth, would become in later life its own corrective and its own punishment. How far my expectations were verified, will be seen in the sequel of my story.

We were still brother-collegians, class-mates, chamber-fellows, and bosom friends, when a visit to Philadelphia afforded me an opportunity of observing a full exemplification of Lesslie's oddities. We visited the Theatre. Lesslie, I knew by means which none but a confidante could have enjoyed, was a warm admirer of the drama. The play was *Hamlet*. I knew it to be his favourite; and I easily discerned the sparkling of his eye, which marked his satisfaction when the curtain rose. Our immediate neighbours, being chief-

ly city bucks, seemed to pride themselves in being inattentive. My friend, therefore, found himself at liberty to follow his inclination and indulge his taste, by yielding himself wholly to the enchantment of the stage. By degrees, however, the interest of the scenes and the excellence of the acting fixed the attention even of the coxcombs who surrounded us, and they soon gave vent to their satisfaction in audible expressions. Their applause no sooner reached the ear of Lesslie, who until then seemed totally absorbed, than they recalled him to refinement and absurdity. As if to mark his dissent with all practicable emphasis, he followed every phrase of approbation which dropt from their lips by a bitter expression of contempt, and mingled a half-suppressed hiss with every plaudit of the house. This incident, had I been previously doubtful, would have been sufficient to convince me, that in the apparent delicacy of my friend's caprice was largely mingled; and I despaired of overcoming a defect which was so strangely compounded of original peculiarity, inveterate habit, and unconscious affectation.

Days and months elapsed, and at length we separated. My friend departed his college life with great resignation and applause; and I, having lingered a weary twelvemonth longer, gave up in my turn the literary ghost. It is needless to detail the manner in which a year or two of my subsequent existence were employed. I am not the hero of my own tale. I shall therefore proceed to state, that on a beautiful evening in September, I was standing by the side of George Lesslie in a splendid ball-room in the flourishing town of O—, where he practised or professed to practise the business of a lawyer. The room was illuminated with a galaxy of beauty upon whom my censorious companion whispered in my ear his splenetic commentaries, as they passed. I say, whispered in my ear,

for all that he audibly pronounced was most delicately polite in meaning, and uttered in the most honied suavity of tone. It was indeed an entertainment in itself to observe the ease with which he would stop in the middle of a sarcasm, to drop a compliment to some waiting beauty, and then with ineffable nonchalance return, to finish the interrupted sentence. I soon perceived that my friend, in setting down at O—, had not forgotten to make himself known with all his singularities. That every body in the room knew the fastidious nicety of his taste, was plain from the oblique glances which ever and anon were directed towards his face, as if in quest of approbation. In the article of female beauty, it had always been thought impossible to please him; and that such was his reputation here, I gathered from the reverential awe with which the younger ladies gazed upon him, and the apparent anxiety of mothers to win admiration for their daughters.

It was a current saying among our friends in college, that if Lesslie ever married, his wife would be an angel. I now took occasion to ask whether his angel was yet discovered. He smiled satirically, and replied, "You shall see." He then began to describe *seriatim* the ladies who were present, with all that perverse severity of spirit, which makes one fault conceal a host of beauties. "Miss L—, too sober by half, wry-necked—small pox.—Miss D— an old maid.—Miss G— very pretty, but drinks.—Miss H— much prettier—been out at service. Miss A— rich, vain, and ugly.—Miss R— pretty and rich; but an arrant coquette.—Miss V—."—he paused as he named this lady, and I thought I saw some emotion in his eye, as it followed her steps across the room. She had just made her appearance, and was without dispute the ruling star. "Very

well," he continued, as if in soliloquy, "she looks well to-night—*facile—facillime—princeps*." "What," said I, "am I to look upon Miss V— as in any sense *angelic*?" He looked at me for a moment, apparently abstracted, and then answered with some animation, "No—no; for heaven's sake don't mention it. There have been match-makers enough between us, but I twisted them fairly round my finger. To tell you the truth," he continued, in a lower voice, "though the girl has beauty, and sense, and fortune, there is leaven in the lump that I don't relish; and upon my honour, I would at this moment as soon marry Mrs. Shuckford."

This seemed to be so strong an expression of contempt, that I could not forbear following the direction of his eye, to get a sight of the lady whom he used apparently as a personification of all that is worthy of disdain, and soon singled her from among the rest. I would describe her, if I thought it necessary; but I am sure that every body will have her picture spontaneously portrayed in his imagination, when I barely state, that she was a thorough-going *gossip* of respectable standing in society. No one who has been familiar, to any degree, with the diversities of society, need be told of the physiognomical and moral attributes of such a being. The sharp acid features, the busy twinkling eye, the perpetual *festinatio* locomotion, the interminable and unceasing tongue, the oscillating fore-finger, are no doubt all familiar. For my own part, I no sooner laid my eyes upon her, than I saw her through and through. I turned to my friend with a smile, and would have spoken, but he interrupted me. "If you value your peace of mind and your precious reputation, get rid of that smile as expeditiously as possible; for as surely as you live, if you wear it long, your whole history and character will be in Mrs.

Shuckford's memorandum book to-night, and riding on the winds of heaven to-morrow morning."

There was an air of solemnity mingled with the dry humour which characterized this speech, from which I learned that my friend regarded Mrs. Shuckford not only with contempt, but a spice of fear withal. He shunned her as a basilisk, and his study the whole evening seemed to be to place the diameter of a great circle between himself and the object of his dread. I found, at the same time, that her name had been adopted by him, to express the peculiar kind of contempt which he entertained for certain classes of objects:—"As restless as Mrs. Shuckford's tongue"—"As true as Mrs. Shuckford's stories"—were favourite expressions in his mouth; and he seemed to have no stronger method of expressing his repugnance, than by the phrase, "I would as soon marry Mrs. Shuckford." "And who is Mrs. Shuckford?" said I to him at last. "A widow of thirty-six," said he, "with two jilts for daughters, and two coxcombs by way of sons. Her late husband is said to have suffered purgatory in her society, and she seems no way loath to inflict the same upon a second. Heaven shield the poor fellow whose turn comes next!" "Amen," said I—and the next day we parted.

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"There is Mr. Lesslie's house," said the coachman, pointing to a dismal looking habitation, half concealed amidst a grove of leafless trees. I looked out and started back with amazement. "Impossible!" said I; "that cannot be Lesslie's house—at least not the Lesslie whom I desire to see." "I don't know any thing about your desires, sir," said the fellow, "but I'm pretty sure that's Squire Lesslie the lawyer's house—that's all."

We had now reached the gate which opened into the avenue leading towards

the house. I therefore dismissed the coach, and taking my baggage in my hand, pursued my way in much doubt and hesitation towards the mansion. In every thing around me there was an air of negligence and discomfort so little congenial with the ancient character of my friend, that I was unable to persuade myself that he was contented to reside in such a dwelling. When I had penetrated through the intervening trees to such a distance that the house became fully visible, this feeling became strengthened, so that I reached the threshold almost fully persuaded that I had been misguided through a mistake of names. I was soon, however, undeceived. A figure which stood at a window near the door, disappeared as I approached, and the next moment I was in the embraces of my friend. "Come in, come in, my dear ——," said he; "it is long since I have enjoyed such pleasure." But his voice faltered, and his looks belied his words. His limbs seemed scarcely able to support him, and he was in fact compelled to accept my aid in entering the house. He ushered me into a large room, decorated in a rich but tasteless manner, the walls of which exhibited two half-length portraits. In the one I recognized my friend; but though the other seemed familiar and awakened many long forgotten recollections, I could not recall either the person or the name. I was about to propose the inquiry, when my whole attention was attracted by the appearance of Lesslie. His face was as pale as death, his lips quivering, and his whole body apparently convulsed. Exceedingly alarmed, I flew to his assistance. "Are you ill, my dear George?" said I. "Not at all—not at all," he replied, forcing an unnatural gaiety; "never better in my life. Let us change the conversation—let us talk of old times." Notwithstanding my uneasiness, I complied with his request, and conversed of the events

in our early history. We then spoke of my last visit to O——; and to cheer his dejection, I playfully inquired of the ladies to whom I had then been introduced. Among the rest I named Miss V—— and Mrs. Shuckford. When I spoke of the former the colour returned to his cheeks, and his eye sparkled for a moment; but at the sound of the other name, his whole visage became altered and assumed a hideous expression. He glanced at the picture which I have mentioned, and as my eye followed his,

I recognized it in a moment, but forbore to ask an explanation of its suspension in his drawing-room. Again I endeavoured to converse, and again I incautiously mentioned Mrs. Shuckford. He started from his seat, and staggering with difficulty towards a sideboard, drank a heavy draught of unmixed brandy before he could articulate; then turning to me with a drunken leer, said in an unnatural voice, "Did not you know, my dear boy, that I was **MARRIED?**"

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THE HUNGARIAN WARRIOR.

My noble horse—my gallant gray!
 Through Moslem ranks we'll ride to day;
 And thou shalt bear to faithless foe
 My lance's thrust, my falchion's blow.
 On to the combat—Danube's plain
 Offers the death for warrior meet;
 A funeral pile of foemen slain,
 A surcoat for his winding sheet.

Crest of my fathers! battle field
 Has seen thee blazing on my shield,
 When falchion's sweep and armour's clang
 Fierce as a rattling whirlwind rang.
 Crest of my fathers! shine once more
 • Till thou art dimm'd by hostile gore;
 But may thy plate to guard me fail,
 Should my hand grow weak, or my cheek turn pale!

Ha! 'tis the signal! Forth good brand—
 Mine is no heartless laggard's hand!
 Thou art the warrior's mistress, steel!
 And thine the love his soul should feel.
 Thou to thy lord art ever true,
 As his heart and hand are firm to you.