

On the origin and vicissitudes of literature, science and art, and their influence on the present state of society. A discourse, delivered on the opening of the Liverpool Royal Institution, 25th November, 1817 / By William Roscoe.

Contributors

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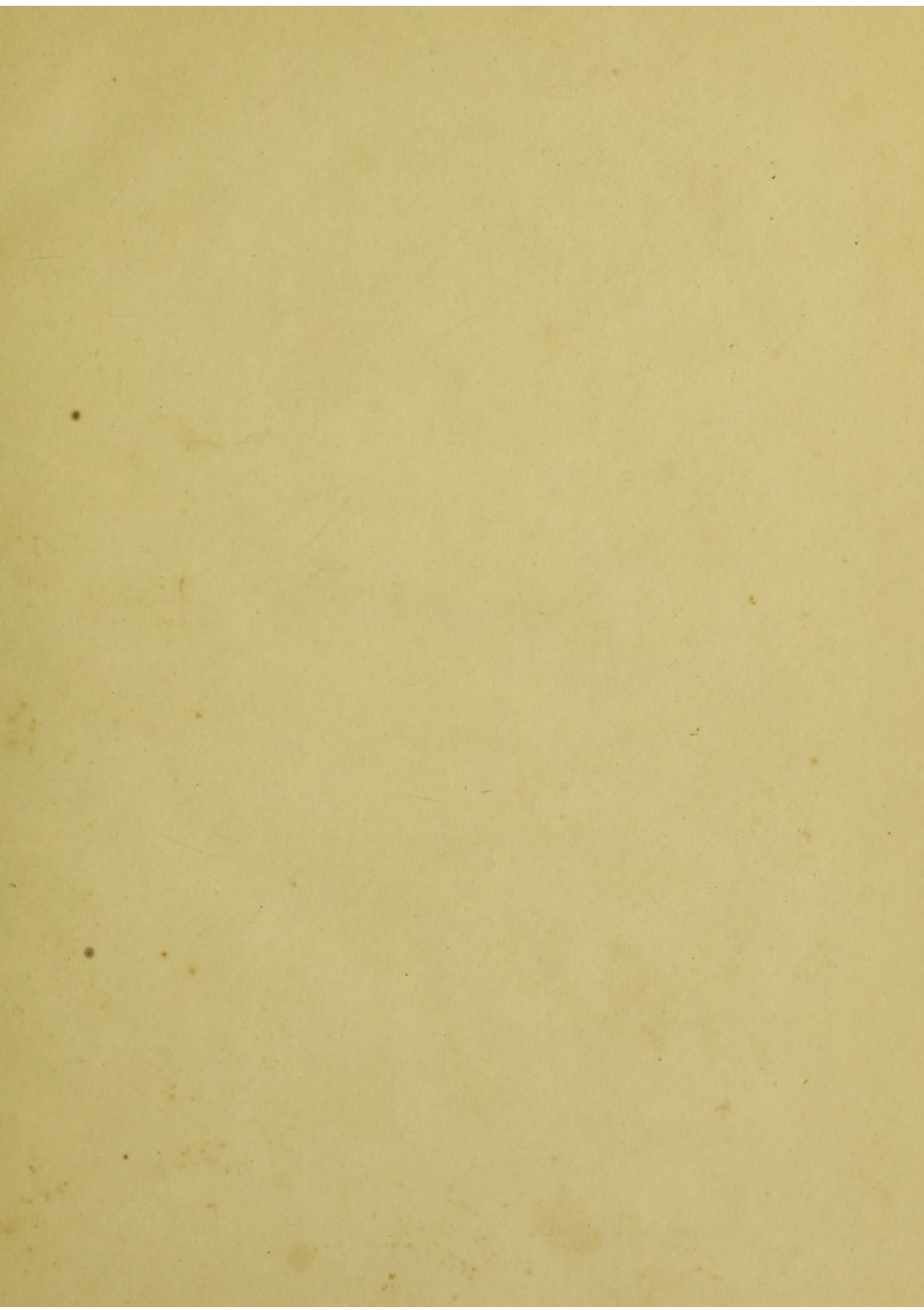
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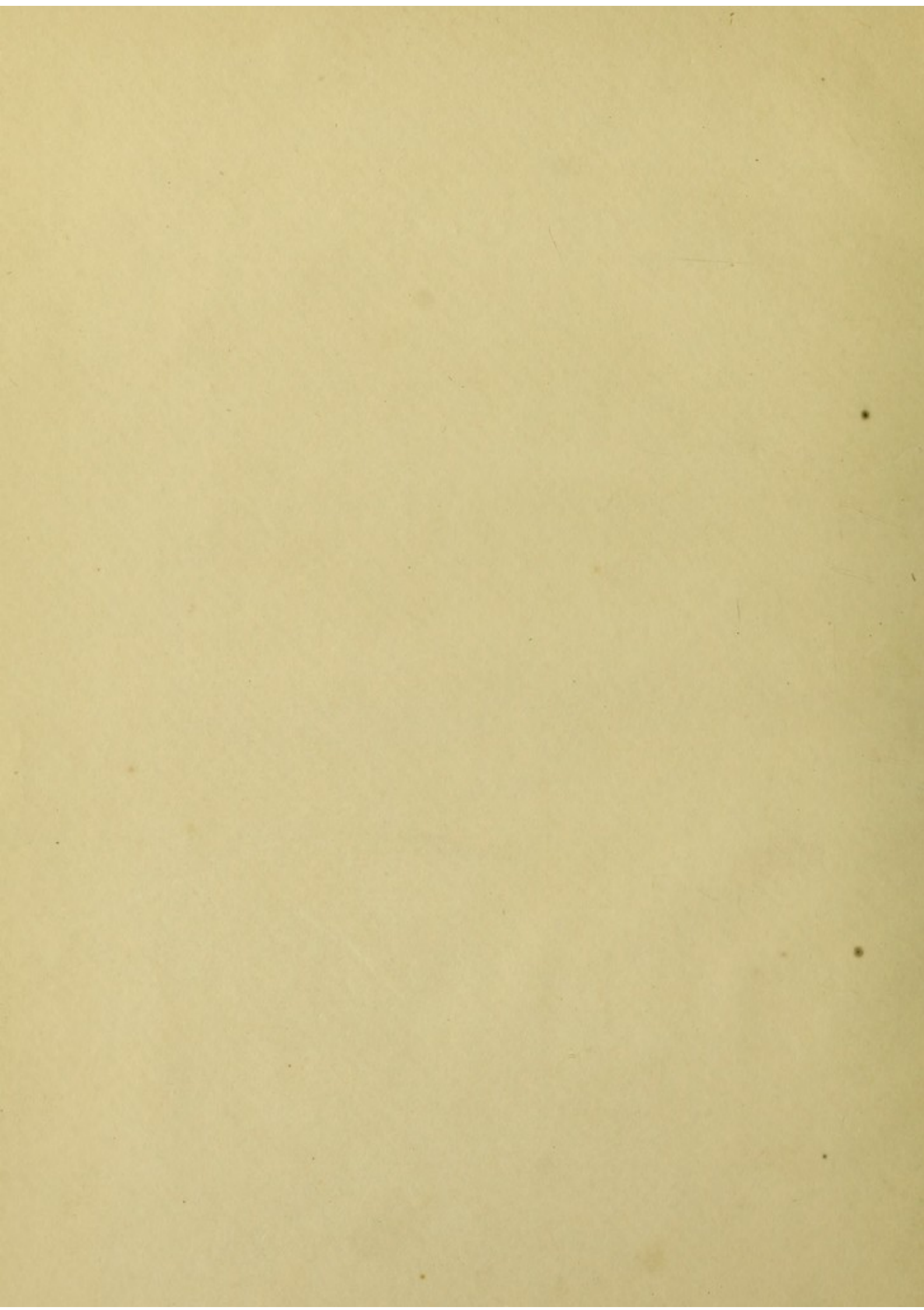
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ON THE
ORIGIN AND VICISSITUDES
OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ART,
AND THEIR INFLUENCE
ON
THE PRESENT STATE OF SOCIETY.

DISCOURSE.

DELIVERED ON THE OPENING

OF THE

LIVERPOOL ROYAL INSTITUTION.

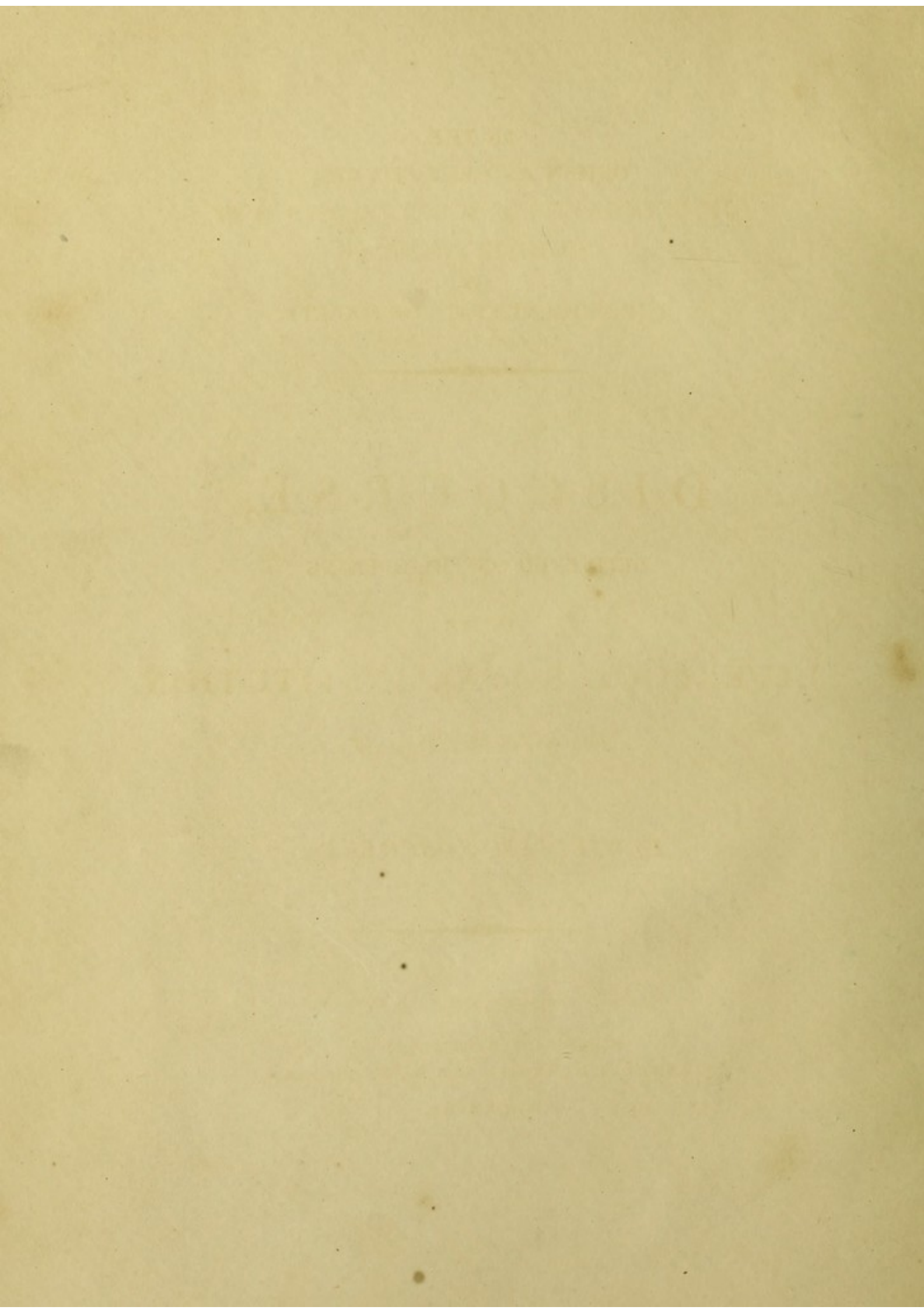
18th NOVEMBER, 1817.

By WILLIAM FOSCOE, Esq.

LIVERPOOL.

PRINTED BY W. BARNES, 18, N. 2ND ST.
AND SOLD BY CARRUTHER AND HATCH, LONDON.

MDCCCXVIII.



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TO
THE PROPRIETORS
OF THE
LIVERPOOL ROYAL INSTITUTION,
THE
FOLLOWING DISCOURSE,
PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF
THEIR COMMITTEE,
IS
MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

LIVERPOOL ROYAL INSTITUTION.

COMMITTEE ROOM, 26TH NOVEMBER, 1817.

To WILLIAM ROSCOE, Esq. Chairman of the Committee.

Dear Sir,

We solicit the favour of your consenting to publish the Discourse, which we had yesterday the gratification of hearing you deliver, on the opening of this Institution.

We are, dear Sir,

Your most obedient servants,

JOHN GLADSTONE, *Deputy Chairman.*

WM. CORRIE.

THO. EARLE.

W. WALLACE CURRIE.

WM. WAINEWRIGHT.

FLETCHER RAINCOCK.

THO. STEWART TRAILL, M. D.

B. A. HEYWOOD.

J. VOSE, M. D.

JAS. GERARD, M. D.

CHARLES TURNER.

JOHN YATES.

JONA. BROOKS.

THO. MARTIN.

ISAAC LITTLEDALE.

A DISCOURSE, &c.

THE opening of this Institution, which was intended to have taken place on the thirteenth of this month, has been postponed to the present day, in consequence of one of those unexpected and awful events which suddenly call off the attention of a people from their usual avocations, and render them for a time insensible to every thing but the calamity they have experienced*—a calamity which has, in the present instance, blighted the public hope, and carried grief and consternation into the bosom of every private family. Even at this moment, when the first shock of this great national loss is over—

* The death of Her Royal Highness the Princess Charlotte.

when the last obsequies to departed excellence are paid, and the beloved object of them is embalmed in your memories, I cannot but be anxious lest I should intrude upon your feelings, in thus calling your attention to other subjects—but, independant of my sense of duty to those who have confided to me this task, I feel the strongest conviction, that in the midst of this great public and private calamity, in which the tears of the father and of the prince are mingled with those of the husband and of the people, you will have derived consolation from that source whence alone it is to be obtained—from a deep and humble submission to the dispensations of that Being, who balances in his hands the destinies of nations, who can call light out of darkness, and who from the most gloomy and alarming circumstances can produce order, harmony and peace.

AMONGST the many attachments by which society is bound together, may properly be enumerated that which arises from the desire of attaining the same object, or from a participation of studies and pursuits; and this attachment is perhaps still stronger, when such object is of a great, disinterested and meritorious nature, intended to promote the welfare of others and to extend its beneficent effects to future times.—It is therefore with no common share of gratification, that I now find myself in the midst of an assembly convened together, for the purpose of opening, in this great commercial Town, an Institution for the promotion of Science, of Literature and of Art—an Institution which has already been distinguished by Royal patronage, and has received the liberal support of the Municipal Authorities of the place in which we live, whose members now honour us with their presence. Appointed by your Committee to address you on this

occasion, I gladly avail myself of the opportunity, at this our first meeting, to congratulate you in our united names on the success which has hitherto attended our efforts ; and to express our ardent wishes and humble hopes, that the Great Disposer of events may approve of the motives which have given rise to this attempt, and may render it subservient to those purposes of extensive utility which it is its avowed object to attain.

It will perhaps be expected that I should devote the time in which I hope to be honoured with your attention, to explain the nature of this Institution ; to point out the system of Instruction to be adopted ; and to expatiate on the various objects which it is intended to embrace ; but this has already been done, as fully as present circumstances admit, first, in the detailed plan, and more recently in the Report of the Committee ; both of which have been printed and submitted to the consideration of the proprietors. I shall therefore indulge myself,

on the present occasion, in a wider range; and shall endeavour to discover to what causes we are to attribute the rise and progress of Letters, of Science and of Art, and to trace the vicissitudes which they have experienced; at the same time taking notice of the bearings they have upon the more important avocations of life, and on the prosperity of those countries in which they have been encouraged. These enquiries appear to me to be highly essential to our present purpose; as enabling us, in the first place, to determine how far the accomplishment of our object depends upon extrinsic circumstances, and how far on our own exertions; and secondly, as tending to confirm us in the opinion, that scientific and literary pursuits are not only consistent with our more serious avocations, but that they have a direct and manifest tendency to promote the welfare and exalt the character of every community into which they have been introduced.

To whatever remote period we may trace back the history of the human race, and in whatever state of ignorance we may find them, we must allow them to possess those feelings and characteristics which are common to our species. Hence man, in his most uncultivated state, is as much alive to acts of beneficence as when he is improved by taste or enlightened by science. Generosity excites his gratitude and acts of hostility his resentment. The favours which he receives and sensibly feels, he will endeavour to acknowledge by some external act or expression; and his first effort for this purpose is that germ of civilization and refinement, the developement of which future circumstances may either hasten or retard.

Whether we suppose the idea of a Supreme Being to be innate or acquired, it is certainly one of those sentiments which are incident to the earliest periods of society; insomuch that we can scarcely suppose any nation to have been so ignorant, as to have enjoyed the

bounties of providence without once asking whence they were derived. It is indeed so natural that this should be the first reflection that must occur to a rational mind, that the aptitude and propriety of the conduct to the situation, satisfies us with the representation given by our great poet, of the feelings and language of our common parent—

—— “Thou sun, said I, fair light!
 And thou, enlightened earth, so fresh and gay!
 Ye hills and dales, ye rivers, woods and plains,
 And ye that live and move, fair creatures, tell,
 Tell, if ye saw, how came I thus, how here?
 — Not of myself—by some GREAT MAKER, then,
 In goodness and in power pre-eminent;
 Tell me how I may know him, how adore,
 From whom I have, that thus I live, and move,
 And feel that I am happier than I know.”

If from previous reasoning we are led to suppose that such would be the language of a rational being, in the situation described—that opinion may perhaps be thought to receive some confirmation from the consideration, that the earliest traces of literary com-

position have in all countries been devoted to religious purposes, and to the acknowledgment of blessings, which it was impossible in any other manner to repay.

But with all these succours, the individuals of the human race are still weak without the aid and support of each other. Hence the man who first teaches us to screen ourselves from the inclemencies of the weather, who instructs us how to till the earth, or to navigate the ocean, who frees the country from beasts of prey, or opposes himself to the brutal fury of the oppressor, appears, in the estimation of those who are benefitted by his labours, as a being of a superior order, intitled to their esteem, their veneration, and their homage. To attempt refined distinctions is not the character of a rude people—and hence the origin of Polytheism, or Hero-worship; which has been considered by a distinguished writer,* though

* Hume.

upon grounds which I own do not carry with them conviction to my mind, as the “primitive religion of uninstructed mankind.”

Nor is it alone to the emotions of gratitude and the sense of religion, that we are to attribute the expansion of those feelings which are expressed in works of literature and art. Whatever forcibly interests the affections of man, may be esteemed a concurrent cause of the efforts which he makes to communicate to another his own peculiar impressions. To the passion of love, we may in all ages attribute the most affecting and refined productions of the human intellect—even resentment and indignation have had no inconsiderable share in calling into action the faculties of the human race.

The intimate connection which subsists between literature and the arts, is in no instance more apparent than in their common origin, and the certainty with which they may be referred to the same principles

of human nature. Those emotions of admiration, of gratitude or of love, which call forth from one the spontaneous effusions of warm and energetic language, excite in another person the desire of perpetuating the resemblance of the object of his affection, or of recalling to memory those scenes which had afforded him so much pleasure. Whilst the poet celebrates in elevated language the deeds of his hero, the painter animates his canvas with the same subject, and whilst the former relates to us an impassioned narrative, the latter brings the transaction immediately before our eyes. The course of improvement thus begun is encouraged by applause, and excited to a still higher pitch by emulation; till at length not only individuals but nations become distinguished by their superior proficiency in these pursuits.

It may, however, justly be thought extraordinary, that when mankind have once arrived at a high degree of improvement, and by long and unwearied exertions have di-

vested themselves of the shackles of ignorance, they should again be liable to fall into a state of debasement, and to forfeit those acquisitions which required such an effort of genius and of labour to obtain. It might reasonably have been presumed, that when letters and arts had arrived at a certain eminence, when the principles on which they are founded are known and acknowledged, and particularly when those principles are illustrated and exemplified by the permanent labours of the chissel, the pencil, and the pen, mankind would thus far have secured their progress; and instead of having to fear a relapse into their former state of ignorance and barbarism, would only have to look ardently forwards towards higher degrees of improvement.

Experience however affords a perpetual proof, that this is not the condition of our nature. Even when knowledge and taste have been interwoven with the very manners and habits of a people, and disseminated

amongst large and prosperous nations, frequent instances have occurred, in which they have in a short time been obliterated and lost; insomuch that their very existence would be problematical, were it not for the ocular and substantial proofs which they have left of their former excellence, and which, when measured by the powers and capacities of succeeding ages, appear like the productions of a superior race of beings.

To what causes we are to attribute the progress or decline of a nation, in letters, or in arts, is certainly an investigation of no inconsiderable difficulty. Mr. Hume appears to have doubted whether the rise and progress of all the refined arts are not rather to be attributed to chance; as if chance meant any thing more than causes which it is difficult or perhaps impossible to ascertain. He concludes however that “in many cases good reasons may be given why a nation is more polite and learned at a particular time than any of its neighbours;” and proceeds

to explain this circumstance upon grounds to some of which it will be necessary hereafter to advert.

If we may trust to a very ancient popular opinion, the energies of nature have, from the earliest records of society, been continually declining; so that the productions of her later years can stand in no degree of comparison with those of her more vigorous youth. From the days of Homer, this has been the general burthen of the poet's song, and has frequently been confirmed by the deliberate sanction of the philosopher.—But although opinions mostly obtain credit by their antiquity, this opinion, in particular, derives no advantage from that circumstance. On the contrary, that very antiquity is the most decisive proof that it is wholly unfounded. If the human race had declined from its pristine vigour between the period of the Trojan war, and the time of Homer, to what a degree of imbecillity must it have fallen in the reign of Augustus. And if, in

like manner, the complaints of the Roman poets, of the deterioration of the human race, be well founded, to what a miserable state of degradation must it before this time have been reduced! After so long a descent, is it possible that nature could still have produced a Dante or an Ariosto? a Shakspeare or a Milton? a Corneille or a Racine? Names which, without an invidious competition with those of ancient times, will sufficiently shew that her vigour is not exhausted; but that she still continues to bring forth the fruits of the mind, no less than those of the earth, in all their original strength, quality and flavour.

In direct opposition to this dispiriting idea of the declining condition of our nature, others have entertained an opinion, that the human race is in a regular and progressive course of improvement, and that every age of the world is more enlightened than that which preceded it. As a proof of this, they point out the early state of

each nation, and trace its progress from barbarism to civilization, from civilization to refinement. Instead of bowing down before the mighty names of antiquity and acknowledging an inferiority of intellect, they pretend to avail themselves of the knowledge of former times, and suppose that by uniting with it the still more important discoveries of the moderns, the circle of knowledge is enlarged, and the conveniences, and even the elegancies of life rendered much more attainable than at any former period. Under these impressions, they scruple not to express their contempt for every former state of society, and their high opinion of that in which they have the happiness to live. Not however content with the eminence at which they have arrived, hope spreads her wings and launches into the realms of conjecture, and the confidence of having done much, gives the assurance that we shall accomplish more. Without wishing to damp this ardour, it may be proper to observe, that if we are to

judge from the experience of past ages, we shall scarcely be allowed to conclude that such regular, or progressive improvement, is the characteristic of the human race. If such were the fact, it must of course follow, that nations once civilized never again become retrograde, but must continue to rise till they attain their highest degree of perfection. But where are the countries in which letters and arts have made an uninterrupted progress? or where have they for any great length of time been even stationary? Is India still the fountain of knowledge? and can she boast of her sages, the oracles of wisdom, who attract inquirers and disciples from distant regions? Is the condition of Egypt improved by the flight of three thousand years? or have her pyramids been surpassed by the labours of subsequent times? What was Greece once? what is she now? Characterized in the first instance by whatever was bright in genius, rich in intellect, excellent in art—in the latter by whatever is degraded and servile in human

nature. Contrast republican with papal Rome. Examine the names that grace the rolls of antiquity, from the first to the second Brutus, and ask whether the inhabitants of modern Rome will be as well known at the distance of two thousand years, as their illustrious predecessors. Alas the scene is changed ! and for century after century the peasant and the slave have trampled on the dust of heroes, as unconscious of their worth as the cattle that crop the herbage on their remains. Such is the boasted improvement of the human race ; such the permanency of knowledge in nations where she has once established her seat ! The tree perishes ; and the transplanted scions will, unless they be carefully fostered, experience in their turn a similar fate.

Dismissing then the idea that there is in the human mind an inherent tendency towards either improvement or deterioration, let us now briefly inquire into the other causes which are supposed to have contri-

buted to those vicissitudes which it has successively experienced. Of these causes, few have been more strongly insisted on than those occasioned by diversity of climate and local situation. “There are even countries,” it has been observed by an eminent French writer,* “where the inhabitants have never received the first rudiments of improvement, and where it is probable they never will make any proficiency;” and he conceives he can exactly ascertain within what degrees of the equator such countries lie. To this it may be replied, that had such been the case, letters and arts must have been permanently confined to those countries only which are more favoured in point of situation than the rest of the globe. But the assertion is not borne out by experience. “Under the same climate,” says a judicious foreign author,† “the Greeks rose from a wild and barbarous people, till they became the masters of the world; and that

* The Abbé du Bos.

† The Abate Andres.

very Greece, which was so many years the garden of Europe, afterwards became a sterile desert. Bœotia lay in the vicinity of Attica, and consequently enjoyed the same climate; yet the Bœotians were accounted as stupid as the Athenians were acute. The splendor of Grecian science was diffused not only through Greece itself, but extended to colonies far distant from the metropolis, and very different with respect to climate." It requires indeed no very extensive acquaintance with history to discover, that the progress of letters and arts is not restricted by rivers or mountains; or that neither heat nor cold are uniformly hostile to the progress of learning; which at one time chose its residence amidst the sultry plains of Egypt, and at another rested on the frozen shores of Iceland. Such indeed is the constitution of man, that in many instances the facility of success deadens the desire of it, and the obstacles which he encounters only serve to give a keener edge to his exertions. "In those northern ungenial climates," says the

learned President of the Linnæan Society, “where the intellect of man indeed has flourished in its highest perfection, but where the productions of nature are comparatively sparingly bestowed, her laws have been most investigated, and best understood. The appetite of her pupils was whetted by their danger of starvation, and the scantiness of her supplies trained them in habits of economy, and of the most acute observation.”*

It has been asserted by many writers, in accounting for the vicissitudes of the arts and sciences, that they contain within themselves the principles of their own destruction; insomuch that when they have arrived at their highest excellence, they, in the course of human affairs, perish and decay. Thus Mr. Hume asserts, that “when the arts and sciences come to perfection in any state, they naturally, or rather necessarily,

* Sir J. E. Smith's Review of the Modern State of Botany.

decline, and seldom or never revive in that nation where they have formerly flourished ;” and the judicious Tiraboschi admits, that “ it is common to all the studies that are connected with the progress of taste, such as eloquence, poetry and history, as well as to the three sister arts, that when they have arrived at perfection, they as certainly return to that level from which they rose.” This the learned Italian has endeavoured to account for, by supposing that it is occasioned by an overstrained refinement, or a desire of excelling even those who may be considered as the just standards of eloquence and of taste. “ Thus,” says he, “ Asinius Pollio reprobated the style of Cicero, as weak, languid and unpolished, and introduced, in its stead, a kind of declamation so dry, meagre and affected, that it seemed to recall the rudeness of the early ages. The two Senecas, the Rhetor and the Philosopher, followed, and by refining still further on the matter and the style, reduced the art to a still lower ebb.” But whilst we may

assent to the truth of these observations, we cannot but perceive that they contain little more than the mere statement of a fact, in which we must all agree ; and that we must still recur to the question, to what cause is this alteration in the public taste, this decline of liberal studies, to be attributed? The ball will not rebound till it has reached the mark ; and it may with confidence be asserted, that neither literature nor art have ever yet attained their highest degree of perfection. We must therefore endeavour to discover the causes of this decline in some essential alterations in the condition and manners of a people, which degrades their dignity, perverts their moral character, and corrupts and extinguishes their taste. Thus, instead of supposing that the style of Cicero had attained such a degree of excellence, as to afford no opportunity for future orators to display their powers, will it not be more to our purpose to enquire, what was the character of the age in the time of Cicero, and at the period when this decline took place?

In the former, Rome was free, and the orator, fearless of offence, discussed in language as unrestrained as it was eloquent, affairs of the highest importance to individuals or the state. In the latter the people, after a series of oppression as disgraceful to the sufferers as odious in their tyrants, lost, with the dignity of their subject, the energy and simplicity of their style. The same circumstances occurred in Italy in the beginning of the sixteenth century; when the independant states of that country fell under the dominion of despotic princes, and the free and vigorous mode of composition that distinguished the revivors of learning, gave way to a more verbose, affected and enervated manner; till, with their independance and strength of character, the people lost that truth of feeling and correctness of taste, which can be permanently established on no other foundation. Thus whenever we find that a change has taken place in the literary taste of a nation, we may frequently discover the cause of it in the change of opinions

and manners consequent upon the events of the times, and the different combinations of society; and although we may not always be able to trace these causes with precision, this will scarcely justify us in denying one of the first maxims of philosophy, and supposing that in matters of taste, effects are produced without a cause.

From these considerations it will perhaps appear, that instead of attributing the progress or decline of letters and arts to the influence of climate, or to any stated and unavoidable vicissitude, we are to seek for them in the unceasing operation of moral causes, in the relations of society, and the dispositions and propensities of the human mind. One of the most important of these relations is that by which we are connected with the government under which we live; and accordingly many writers have sought in the nature of such government, the causes of the improvement or deterioration of the human race. That the enjoyment of civil

liberty is indispensable to the cultivation of literature, is an opinion which has been very generally advanced. “It is impossible,” says Mr. Hume, “for the arts and sciences to arise at first among any people, unless that people enjoy the blessing of a free government.” In illustrating this position, he observes that a despotic monarch, governing a large tract of country, never conceives the idea of securing the happiness of his people by established laws, but delegates his full power to inferior magistrates; each of whom “governs the subjects with full authority as if they were his own, and with negligence or tyranny as belonging to another.” “A people governed after such a manner,” he adds, “are slaves, in the full and proper sense of the word, and it is impossible they can ever aspire to any refinements of taste or reason. They dare not so much as pretend to enjoy the necessaries of life in plenty or security. To expect therefore that the arts and sciences should take their first rise in a monarchy, is to expect

a contradiction.” But although this sentiment in various forms, and with various modifications, has been often asserted, this has not deterred others from avowing a contrary opinion. Amongst these, one of the most strenuous is the Abate Andres, whose learned and extensive work on this subject gives great weight to his authority. “To contend,” says this author, “that the genius is depressed under a monarchical government, or that in a republic it acquires with the enjoyment of liberty a greater degree of elevation, is to assert a sophism, which is confuted by public experience—as if a Corneille, or a Bossuet, had found the sublimity of their talents depressed by their having lived under a powerful monarchy ; or as if Galileo, Lord Bacon, or Descartes, had lost, in the vexations they experienced, their freedom and elevation of mind !” The age of Louis XIV. was a period of high civilization and distinguished literary excellence. “Perhaps,” says the lively historian of that period, “it is that of all the rest which ap-

proaches the nearest to perfection." Yet this improvement was not the result of a free government, but the spontaneous growth of a country which had long been a stranger to political and civil liberty, and which even gloried in its subjection to despotic controul. A review of these circumstances then, so far from satisfying our enquiries, would serve rather to convince us that the progress or decline of literature depended wholly upon other causes, and that particular modes of government are either equally indifferent to it, or at most affect it only in a very slight and unimportant degree.

In attempting to decide upon these opposing facts and discordant opinions, it may, in the first place, be observed that it is not on the professed or nominal form of a government, on which its aptitude, or inaptitude to the promotion of literature depends. A jealous and suspicious government, whether it be a monarchy or a republic, or by whatever name it may be distinguished, locks

up the faculties and deadens the energies of a people. The truth seems to be that all governments derive their support from public opinion, and that when any government, whatever its denomination may be, is firmly established, it can admit of a degree of liberty in its subjects, which might be supposed likely to prove injurious, or fatal, to a more precarious or unsettled authority. The favourable opinion of his subjects was perhaps never conciliated by any prince in a greater degree than by Louis XIV. By whatever qualifications this confidence was obtained, it is certain that his administration enjoyed a degree of stability and splendor beyond that of any other European potentate. In proportion to the liberty conceded, was the proficiency made by his subjects. Within the precincts of that court, Fenelon produced his immortal work, which would have done honour to a Spartan legislator; and Boileau, with a freedom which an arbitrary government has seldom tolerated, dared to oppose the whole strength of his genius to

the favourite pursuit of his monarch, that of military glory, and endeavoured, by the precepts of wisdom and the blandishments of wit, to abate that inordinate ambition which proved so fatal, not only to the repose of his own subjects, but to that of Europe in general.

According then to the degree of confidence which any government has in its own stability, will, in general, be the liberty allowed to the expression of the public sentiment, and in proportion to this liberty will be the proficiency made in literary pursuits. Nor must this freedom of opinion and expression be confined to particular subjects. Few governments, however arbitrary, have attempted to restrain enquiries purely scholastic; the studies of classical literature or the pursuits of scientific curiosity; but this is not sufficient for the interest of letters. Debarred of expatiating at large on those more important subjects, which involve the regulations of society in politics, in morals,

in manners and in religion, the human faculties become contracted, devoted to minute and trivial discussions and unable to operate with vigour and effect even upon those subjects which are permitted to their research.

It has, therefore, seldom been in the power of an absolute monarch, whatever may have been his celebrity, to afford a degree of literary liberty equal to that which the people enjoy under a mixed or popular form of government; and indeed, with whatever liberality it may be granted, it cannot be for a moment forgotten, that it is a bare concession of the sovereign, existing only during such time as his own interests may appear to him to admit of it, and accompanied with such conditions and restraints as he may think proper to prescribe. Hence, it is neither so certain in its duration, nor so extensive in its effects, as that which is founded in right and defined by known and established laws. In a government legitimately constituted, the freedom of enquiry

and of expression is a permanent principle interwoven with the existence of the state ; in an absolute monarchy it is temporary and accidental, depending upon the character and will of the prince, and may be suppressed or extinguished whenever he may conceive that his interest or his safety requires the adoption of such a measure. The consciousness that this power, though not exercised, still subsists, and the uncertainty by what degree of irritation it may be provoked, deaden the efforts of the timid, and restrain and circumscribe those of the bold ; whilst the dissolving influence of arbitrary favour is often too powerful for even genius itself to resist.

But another striking distinction between a despotic and a popular government, as applied to the improvement of the human intellect, still remains to be noticed. In the former, as the administration of public affairs is concentrated in an individual, who is jealous of any interference in the exercise of

his authority, a large field of enquiry and of improvement is shut out from the investigation of the people, whose chief incitement to exertion is the hope of those favours and rewards which the sovereign may think proper to bestow. But in a state which partakes of the nature of a popular government, the path to distinction, to honour, to wealth, and to importance, is open to all, and the success of every individual will, in general, be in proportion to his vigilance and his talents. The studies of literature are only a reflexion or shadow of the transactions of real life; and he who is a stranger to the hopes and fears, to the passions and emotions which agitate the mind in the affairs of the world, however he may be conversant with words and modes of expression, will only repeat, perhaps in a more elegant form, the ideas of others, but will never attain that originality and strength of thought, which is only derived from close examination and long observation of actual life. Wherever we turn our eyes on the annals of

literature, we find its brightest ornaments amongst those who have retired from the field, from the senate, or from the bar, to bend the strength of their well exercised and indefatigable minds towards the pursuits of science or the cultivation of taste. It is they who have not only supplied the materials of history, but have taught the right use of those materials. In their works we see the living picture of mankind, such as he has been in all ages and in all his variations. It is they who have given animation and reality to these studies, which without their frequent interference and powerful aid, would long since have degenerated into puerile and effeminate amusements.

Amongst the external causes that deaden the operations of the intellect, and destroy the vital principle of exertion, few have been more effectual than a state of public insecurity, and the long continuance of desolating wars. When the mind is agitated by apprehension, when the means of subsistence

are precarious, when domestic attachments are endangered, and the duration of life itself is uncertain, how is it possible to turn to those studies which require uninterrupted leisure, and a perfect freedom not only from the severer calamities of life, but from the casual interruptions of society? The circumstances in which all Europe was placed during the middle ages, when, for a long course of time, one species of desolation was followed by another in quick succession, and the world was thinned in its numbers by famine, by pestilence, and by the sword, or debilitated and exhausted by oppression in every variety of form, exhibit too certain a cause of the deep debasement of the human mind and of the almost total relinquishment of liberal studies. Even independant of the miseries occasioned by war, whether unsuccessful or successful, its long continuance is hostile and destructive to letters and to arts. The ferocious spirit which it excites is highly discordant with that disposition which consults not

merely the being, but the well-being of the human race ; and endeavours to communicate to them the highest pleasures of which their nature is capable. In the arrogant estimation of brutal strength, wisdom and learning are effeminate and contemptible ; and where those qualities are little esteemed, the attainment of them will no longer excite exertion. Even the interruption which takes place in the intercourse between different states, during the continuance of a war, is itself highly unfavourable to the progress of science and letters ; as it prevents that free communication of discoveries and opinions between men of talents and genius, which excites a national and generous emulation, and has tended in a great degree to the improvement of mankind.

Thus then it appears that a state of general tranquillity, and a government which admits of the free exertions of the mind are indispensibly necessary to intellectual im-

provement. But these are only negative advantages. Though the blossoms may escape the blight and the mildew, yet warm suns and timely showers are requisite before they can expand, and ripen their fruit. It would, in fact, be in vain to expect that the arts and sciences should flourish, to their full extent, in any country where they were not preceded, or accompanied, by a certain degree of stability, wealth and competency; so as to enable its inhabitants occasionally to withdraw their attention from the more laborious occupations of life, and devote it to speculative inquiries and the pleasures derived from works of art. Whenever any state has attained this enviable pre-eminence, and enjoys also the blessings of civil and political liberty, letters and arts are introduced—not indeed as a positive convention of any people, but as a natural and unavoidable result. Nor has the cultivation of these studies been injurious to the prosperity, the morals, or the character of a people. On the contrary they have usually

exhibited a re-action highly favourable to the country where they have been cherished; not only by opening new sources of wealth and exertion, but by exalting the views, purifying the moral taste, enlarging the intellectual and even the physical powers of the human race, and conferring on the nation where they have once flourished a rank and a distinction in the annals of mankind, the most honourable and the most durable that can be attained.

It is not merely on industry, but also on the proper application of industry, according to the nature, situation, and productions of a country, that its prosperity depends.—Whether this be obtained by internal or external exertions, by agriculture, by manufactures or by commerce, or by the judicious union of all these, the same result may take place; but of all employments the cultivation of the earth, as it is the most indispensable, is also the most natural to man. An attachment to the country, to rural con-

cerns and rural prospects, seems interwoven in our very constitution. Even in the most polished state of civilization, and in the highest ranks of society, we find the attention and the affections still turned towards these subjects, which have been dwelt upon with pleasure by men of the greatest genius in every age and nation, and have never failed, as often as recalled in their delightful pictures, to affect the mind with the purest gratification. Hence it will follow, that the pursuits of agriculture tend not only to procure that competency which is requisite to our individual support, but at the same time to inspire those dispositions and feelings which are the source of intellectual enjoyment, and result in the productions of literature and taste. Instances might be adduced, both in ancient and modern times, where the prosperity, and even the refinement, of a nation has been chiefly raised upon the basis of successful agricultural pursuits; but it will not thence follow that this ought to be the exclusive, or even the prin-

cipal occupation of every nation—the choice of which must depend on the local situation and internal resources of any particular country; by a proper adaptation of which we have seen the most unfavourable and barren portions of the earth not only covered with an extensive population, enjoying all the conveniencies and elegancies of life, but becoming the seat of arts and science, and assuming a rank amongst nations, which many of the most favoured and fertile countries have not been able to attain.

The effect of manufactures is different; and upon the whole not so conducive perhaps as agriculture to the formation of intellectual character. Inasmuch, however, as they tend to increase the wealth of a country, they may be classed amongst those occupations which form the texture of the web of which letters and arts are the ornaments; but it is much to be feared that the unavoidable tendency of these employments is to contract or deaden the exertions of the

intellect, and to reduce the powers both of mind and of body to a machine, in which the individual almost loses his identity and becomes only a part of a more complicated apparatus.* Independant, however, of the direct and indispensable necessity of these occupations to the conveniency and accommodation of life, it must be observed, that without manufactures neither agriculture nor commerce could avail themselves of their energies to their full extent. It is she who enhances the value of the productions of the

* In thus stating the effects of manufactures on individual character, I am sensible I may be thought rather to have adverted to a former period than to the present time, when improvement is not merely confined to the producing a cheaper and better article, but is in many instances extended to the ameliorating the condition and cultivating the understanding of the persons employed, particularly of the young. The great importance of manufactures to this country, in its present situation, ought to prevent their being discouraged by any objections which may possibly be removed; and sufficient has certainly been done, in some of our largest establishments, to prove that the comfort and respectability of this laborious part of the community may be attained not only without detriment or expence, but with great and positive advantages to those who have adopted so judicious and humane a plan.

one, and multiplies those articles which are the objects of mutual interchange to the other.

Of the connection that has, from the earliest ages, subsisted between commerce and intellectual improvement, the records of the human race bear constant evidence. The perfection and happiness of our nature arise in a great degree from the exercise of our relative and social feelings ; and the wider these are extended the more excellent and accomplished will be the character that will be formed. The first step to commercial intercourse is rude and selfish, and consists of little more than an interchange, or barter, of articles necessary to the accommodation of the parties ; but as this intercourse is extended, mutual confidence takes place ; habits of acquaintance, and even of esteem and friendship are formed ; till it may perhaps, without exaggeration, be asserted, that of all the bonds by which society is at this day united, those of mercantile con-

nection are the most numerous and the most extensive. The direct consequence of this, is not only an increase of wealth to those countries where commerce is carried on to its proper extent, but an improvement in the intellectual character and a superior degree of civilization in those by whom its operations are conducted. Accordingly we find, that in every nation where commerce has been cultivated upon great and enlightened principles, a considerable proficiency has always been made in liberal studies and pursuits. Without recurring to the splendid examples of antiquity, it may be sufficient to advert to the effect produced by the Free States in Italy, and the Hanse Towns in Germany, in improving the character of the age. Under the influence of commerce the barren islands of Venice, and the unhealthy swamps of Holland, became not only the seats of opulence and splendor, but the abodes of literature, of science and the fine arts ; and vied with each other not less in the number and celebrity of eminent

men and distinguished scholars, than in the extent of their mercantile concerns. Nor is it possible for us to repress our exultation at the rising prospects and rapid improvement of our own country,* or to close our eyes to

* I trust these prospects will be realized, as well in a commercial and financial, as in a literary point of view. But there is another kind of improvement, which though less obvious is perhaps still more important. I allude to the evident change which is taking place in the lower class of the community; and which, if duly encouraged, cannot fail of producing the happiest effects. However deeply the sufferings which this class have of late experienced are to be deplored, it is certain they have had a powerful effect in suppressing, by the mere impossibility of gratification, that disposition to intoxication and licentiousness, which has so long been the bane of industry and morals and the reproach of our country. Hence a very great portion of our labourers are now become sensible of the necessity of restricting themselves in seasons of prosperity, and of paying an increased regard to the rules of economy and prudence; and this conviction has met with the most fortunate and best-timed support, in the establishment of banks for savings, and benefit societies, which are so well qualified to afford a different object and give a different character to those who engage in them. To these we may add, the many opportunities of education and improvement now afforded by the benevolence of the higher classes, not only to youth, but to adults, and the gratuitous distribution of bibles and instructive books to those who may be inclined to improve by them. Thus, as the superstructure of society expands into order and beauty, the foundations are continually strengthening and extending. Whatever may be the clash of political opinions, it must be allowed on all

the decisive evidence which every day brings before us, of the mutual advantages which commerce and literature derive from each other. Not only in the metropolis, but in many of the great commercial towns of the united kingdom, Academical Institutions are formed, and literary Societies established, upon different plans and with different resources, but all of them calculated to promote the great object of intellectual improvement. In some of these the town of Liverpool has led the way. It was, I believe, her Athenæum and Lyceum that set the first example of those associations which are now so generally adopted; and it may justly be observed that these establishments have no longer left the beneficial influence which commerce and literature have on each other to be inferred from historical deductions, or far sought arguments, but have

hands, that a well regulated and enlightened population is the surest guard of national liberty, tranquillity and happiness; and cannot fail to effect, in due time, every desirable reform in government, which, in fact, is, in all countries, only the result of the spirit of the people.

actually brought them together, have given them a residence under the same roof, and inseparably united the bold, vigorous and active character of the one with the elegant accomplishments and lighter graces of the other.

It is not then by those more laborious and serious occupations only, to which we have before adverted, that a nation is raised to honour and prosperity. Imperfect indeed would be the civilization and improvement of that people, who, wholly devoted to husbandry, or manufactures, or the mutual interchange of commodities, should, from an apprehension of expending their wealth on useless objects and pursuits, refuse to encourage scientific inquiries—should withhold their protection from the fine arts, and debar themselves of the pleasures derived from works of literature and taste. Strange and novel as the assertion may appear, it is no less true, that the advantages and enjoyments which these studies and pursuits af-

ford, are not only obtained without any expence to the country in which they are encouraged, but, that they actually repay, in wealth and emolument, much more than they require for their support. To what are all the astonishing improvements lately made in manufactures, in mechanics, in chemistry, and in every lucrative and useful occupation, to be attributed, but to the incessant researches and scientific discoveries of those distinguished individuals whose talents have been exerted to increase the products of the soil—to abridge the necessity of human labour—to produce at less expence an article of superior quality or elegance, or to devise the means of carrying on the most dangerous occupations with comfort and security to the persons employed. Let us for a moment take our stand on the eminence at which we have already arrived, and ask what would be the consequences if we were again to be deprived of the advantages derived from scientific discoveries, and reduced to the situation we

were in before such discoveries took place. In fact, it may now be safely asserted, that many of those occupations which, within the time of our own recollection, were carried on empirically, and without any certain knowledge of causes and effects, are now practised on scientific principles, and are become, in their turn, the best schools of information and experiment for those who are engaged in carrying the improvements of the present day to a still greater extent.

It would however be as degrading to ourselves, as it would be unjust to the dignity of science, to estimate her importance only in a direct and pecuniary point of view. That she has, in this respect, amply repaid the efforts that have been made for her encouragement, will readily be allowed; but is this the whole of her merits? Are the powers of the mind to be considered merely as subservient to the accommodation of our physical wants, or the gratification of our selfish passions? Is it nothing that she has

opened our eyes to the magnificent works of creation? That she has accompanied us through the starry heavens? Descended with us to the depths of the ocean? Pierced the solid rock? Called in review before us the immense tribes of animal and vegetable life, and from every part of the immense *panorama* of nature has derived an infinite source of the most exalted pleasure and the truest knowledge? Is it nothing that she has opened to our contemplation the wonderful system of the moral world? Has analyzed and explained to us the nature and qualities of our own intellect? Defined the proper boundaries of human knowledge? Investigated and ascertained the rules of moral conduct and the duties and obligations of society?—Whatever is wise, beneficent, or useful in government—in jurisprudence, in political economy, is the result of her constant and indefatigable exertions—exertions which always increase with the magnitude of the object to be attained.

Nor are the arts connected with design—as painting, sculpture and architecture, to be considered as a drawback on the accumulation of national wealth, or as useless dependants upon the bounty of a country. On the contrary, wherever they have been encouraged, they have contributed in an eminent degree not only to honour, but to enrich the state. How shall we estimate the influx of wealth into the cities of Italy in the sixteenth century, or into Holland and the Low Countries in the seventeenth, as a compensation for those works of art which, though highly prized on their first appearance, have continued to increase in value to the present day, and form at this time no inconsiderable portion of the permanent riches of Europe? See the productions of their artists sought after by the principal sovereigns and most distinguished characters of the times, who were proud to be represented by their pencils! and ask whether the remuneration conferred on their labours was exceeded by the profits obtained by single and individual exertions in any other depart-

ment. If it be conceded that the person who can produce an article of the greatest value from the least material bears the prize from his competitors, who can compare with the painter? who with a few colours and a sheet of coarse canvas, may, if endowed with the genius of a WEST, produce, even in the present day, a work that shall be considered as inadequately recompensed by a sum of three thousand guineas; and that, at the same time, gratifies the taste, improves the moral sentiment, and confers honour on the artist and on the country in which it was produced.

I trust then it will be clearly understood, that it is not as a matter of pleasure and gratification merely, or in common acceptance, as an object of luxury, that I thus venture to recommend the cultivation of the fine arts. My purpose is to demonstrate their indispensable utility, and to shew that where they are discouraged, no country must expect to obtain its full advantages, even in a lucrative point of view, much less to ar-

rive at a high degree of civilization and prosperity, and to signalize itself in the annals of mankind. Whoever has attended in the slightest degree to this subject must acknowledge how intimately the improvements in our manufactures have kept pace with the proficiency made in the arts of design—so as to give us a manifest superiority in this respect over the rest of the world. At the same time there are departments in which those arts have, by their own sole and independent energies, greatly contributed to the wealth and reputation of the country; as in the instance of Engraving, in which for a long series of years we have so particularly excelled.* Nor can a proficiency be

* Blest art! whose aid the Painter's skill endears,
And bids his labours live thro' future years;
Breaks that restraint, which to the world unkind,
To some one spot the favourite work confin'd;
Gives to each distant land, each future age,
The features of the warrior, saint, or sage;
The grace that seems with beauty's queen to vie;
The mild suffusion of the languid eye;
Till with the Painter's proudest works at strife,
The fragile paper seems to glow with life!

Fragment of a MS. Poem on Engraving.

made in the lowest departments of these arts, without an acquaintance with the highest. From one source only can the genuine stream be derived—although when once obtained, it may be diffused through innumerable channels.

But I begin to fear that I shall be misunderstood, and that in thus insisting on the direct advantages derived to a country from the cultivation of the fine arts, I shall be accused of treating the subject in a manner unworthy of you and of myself. I shall perhaps be told, that it is only in a commercial or a manufacturing place that an idea could have occurred of seizing upon those arts, whose province it is to delight the imagination and to elevate the mind, and of chaining them down to labour in the dull round of pecuniary profit. My exculpation is very brief. If these arts are cultivated at all, the result which I have stated is unavoidable. If you will protect the arts, the arts will, and ought to remu-

nerate you. To suppose that they are to be encouraged upon some abstract and disinterested plan, from which all idea of utility shall be excluded, is to suppose that a building can be erected without a foundation. There is not a greater error, than to think that the arts can subsist upon the generosity of the public. They are willing to repay whatever is devoted to their advantage; but they will not become slaves. If, in the infancy of their progress, some assistance should be requisite, such a necessity cannot long exist. The arts can only flourish where they command. Till an artist can produce a work of such merit, as to induce some individual to prefer it to its value in money, he ought not to expect a reward. It is a bounty and a degradation; and in its effects tends to mislead, and not to encourage the art. What should we think of giving a premium to the author of a worthless poem, by way of encouraging poetry? And yet it is generally from this class, both in arts and literature, that the complaints of the want

of public patronage proceed. It was not thus with the great masters of former times. I speak not of those whose productions stand on the summit of art, which add to their intrinsic value the incidental merit of rarity, and are, when met with, estimated beyond gold and gems—of a Raffaele or a Lionardo da Vinci—I allude only to those whose works are numerous and well known—a Titian—a Guido—a Rubens—a Rembrandt—a Vandyke, and a long train of other eminent artists in Italy, in Flanders, and even in France, who dispensed a favour as often as they finished a picture, and by upholding the dignity established the utility of the art.

But higher views await us ; and I acknowledge that I should be unjust to my subject were I to rest its pretensions here. Not that I intend to enter upon a definition of the pleasures derived from works of art, or of their collateral influence on the moral character ; but I hope I may be permitted, in a more general and popular way, to state the

utility and importance of these pursuits. To what mode of expression, if it may so be termed, did the ancients resort, when they wished to perpetuate through future ages the ideal forms of their divinities, the achievements of their heroes, and the resemblances of their sages and their bards, but to the aid of sculpture? Nor has the art itself disappointed the expectations that were thus formed of it. The figures of Alexander or of Pericles, of Socrates or of Plato, of Cicero and of Cæsar, yet seem to live in marble, and we are as well acquainted with their features as with those of our contemporaries and our friends. Nor has this confidence in the immortality of art diminished in our own times. For the heroic deeds by which so many of our countrymen have of late years been distinguished, and which throw a beam of imperishable glory over the dark gulph of calamity and bloodshed in which Europe was so long involved, what has been a higher recompense, or what has marked in a more effectual manner, the ap-

plause and admiration of a grateful people, than those splendid memorials of sculpture which have been devoted to their memory? Such as you, who now hear me, have raised, with patriotic and pious hands, in the centre of your town, in the midst of your commercial transactions, to honour the memory of the greatest naval commander on record, and which in honouring him honours yourselves?

But the limits of my present discourse are circumscribed. I cannot on this occasion enter with you into the province of the sister art of painting—describe to you what she possesses in common with sculpture, or where she exhibits energies of her own. I may indeed safely intrust it to yourselves to appreciate the value of an art, which selects for you whatever is interesting, beautiful, or sublime in the records of past ages, or the events of present times, and brings it in its most impressive forms and circumstances, in living colours before you—

which though confined only to one moment of time, can concentrate in that point the past and the future, and display a scene that shall harrow up the feelings, or delight the mind.—That not confined to the bounds of reality, can enter into the wilds of imagination, and give form and features to those ideas which the poet can only express in glowing and appropriate language—that from the appearances of external nature can select and fix her ever-varying features, and give to the charm derived from delightful scenery, the additional charm of the conscious power of art—and lastly, that can add to all this the inestimable faculty, so beautifully described by one of the first poets of the present age :—

But thou! serenely silent art!

By heaven and love wast taught to lend

A milder solace to the heart;—

The sacred image of a Friend!

No spectre forms of pleasure fled

Thy softening sweetening tints restore;

For thou canst give us back the dead,

Even in the loveliest looks they wore!

But whilst it may perhaps be admitted that the sciences and the arts amply repay the encouragement they receive, it may be supposed that the same remarks do not apply to the mere studies of literature, which withdraw so great a portion of time from more serious avocations. The delight and instruction which these studies communicate—the perpetual charm which they throw over our hours of leisure—the resources which they afford against indolence and languor, and the strong barrier which they form against vicious and degrading pursuits—all these will indeed be universally acknowledged; but in what manner they produce a re-action which contributes to the general wealth and prosperity of the community, is not perhaps so easy to perceive. But although the silent and modest claims of literature are not so apparent as those of science and the fine arts, yet they are neither less numerous nor less substantial.—Even their direct and immediate influence, in this respect, is by no means inconsiderable.

rable. How greatly, for instance, must these advantages have been felt by the city of Venice during the whole of the sixteenth century, when the immense number of literary productions which issued from her printing presses, must necessarily have employed in lucrative and useful occupations a very considerable portion of the population.—In the succeeding century, these profitable pursuits, which give activity to so many different branches of manufacture, were transferred in a great degree to Holland and the Low Countries ; where the excellent and learned works of so many eminent scholars were given to the world with such ability, industry, and correctness, as to raise the art of printing above the rank of a mere mechanical profession, and inseparably united the names of a Plantin, an Elzevir, or a Wetstein, with those of a Lipsius, a Scaliger, a Grævius and a Gronovius, in that immense number of beautiful volumes which are still the pride of our collections. But it is scarcely necessary to recur to other times

and countries, when we are surrounded by the most decisive proofs of the importance of this art in a mere pecuniary and commercial point of view. Such has of late been the diffusion of knowledge and the progress of taste in these kingdoms, such the proficiency made by our writers in every department, that in order to supply the avidity of the public, immense establishments, and extensive manufactories are required—employment is afforded to a great body of skilful and industrious individuals, and the external as well as internal commerce of the country greatly promoted.

These immediate and direct advantages may however be considered as adventitious and unimportant when compared with the benefits which society enjoys from the cultivation of literature. Other branches of study have their peculiar objects of inquiry; but her's are unlimited and universal, and she may be considered as the support, the nurse, and the guardian of all the rest. Whe-

ther the discoveries of science are to be explained and recorded, whether the principles and connections of the fine arts are to be illustrated, whether the rules and institutions of society itself are to be demonstrated and defined—it is she who is intrusted with the important office. It is her peculiar task to express, and as it were to embody and cloath our ideas in clear, appropriate and unequivocal language,—to preserve and improve the purity and accuracy of expression, so as to render the communication and interchange of mind still more definite, clear and perfect. It is indeed easy to throw an air of ridicule or contempt on the multifarious labours of lexicographers and grammarians, as it is when we walk through a well ordered garden to turn a glance of pity or indifference on the humble labourers who are binding up the flowers, or eradicating the weeds; but it must be remembered that without these labours, the garden would soon become an inextricable wilderness, or an useless waste.

Let us call to mind the darkness of the middle ages—that long and feverish sleep of the human intellect, and ask to what circumstances we are to attribute our restoration to day-light and to exertion. A few mouldering manuscripts, long hidden in the recesses of monastic superstition, and discovered by these early students of words and syllables, served in a short time, to excite throughout Europe the most ardent desire of improvement. The immense gulph that had separated the human race was no longer a barrier. The strong influence of kindred genius was felt through the interval of two thousand years ; and the scholars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were better acquainted with the sentiments and views, the talents and acquirements, of the ancient Greeks and Romans, than with those of their own countrymen in the century immediately preceding them. If indeed the gift of speech and the communion of ideas be essential to the human race, how must we honour those studies, that not only perpe-

tuates the voice of former ages, but open an intercourse between nation and nation, and convert the world into one country? Or how can even the political and commercial concerns of a people be conducted with safety and advantage, except by an acquaintance with the language, the customs, and the manners of those with whom our transactions are to take place?

Nor is it merely on preserving the purity or extending the utility of language and composition that literature founds her pretensions. She has also departments of her own, the variety and importance of which need only to be stated to be universally acknowledged. It is to her that we are indebted for the records of the institutions and transactions of past ages—those lights and land-marks which enable us to steer with greater confidence through the difficulties that may yet surround us. It is she who has embodied and preserved, in immortal language, those splendid productions of

fancy and imagination, which for so many centuries have been the delight and glory of the human race, and it is still her peculiar province

“to catch the manners living as they rise,”

and to hand down to future ages the true form, and features, and characteristic traits of the present day. If the discovery of the art of printing be in fact, as it is usually considered, one of the most fortunate events in the history of mankind, it is only by the exertions of literature that its promised advantages can be obtained. Will it then be said, that these studies and occupations, which extend to the most important objects of human inquiry and pursuit, and yet intermix themselves in the daily and hourly concerns of life, which improve the understanding, charm the imagination, influence the moral feelings, and purify the taste, are adverse to the interests and injurious to the character of a great community?—If

such had been the case, is it likely that states and kingdoms would have contended for the honour of having given birth to those illustrious persons whose names adorn the annals of past ages? or is there any circumstance that throws over a country a brighter lustre, than that which is derived from the number and celebrity of those men of genius to whom she has given rise?

In thus attempting to vindicate the studies of literature and the cultivation of the fine arts chiefly on the principle of utility, I am not insensible that I may be supposed to be indifferent or adverse to the opinions of those who have defended them on other grounds. There are many persons who contend, that their object is to please; and who attribute the enjoyment we derive from them to the bounty of the Creator, who throughout the whole of his works has shewn that an attention to order, to elegance, and to beauty, corresponding to certain fixed principles in our constitution, forms a part of his great

and beneficent plan. But whilst I admit the full force of this argument, I conceive that, in this instance, there exists no necessity for our separating the ideas of utility and of pleasure, and of relying for our justification on one of them only. The gifts of the Creator are full handed ; nor has he always placed it in our power to accept of that which is indispensibly necessary without at the same time compelling us to accept of the pleasure that accompanies it. We may morosely suppose that fine prospects, beautiful flowers, or sweet sounds, are below the dignity or unworthy the attention of an improved and rational mind ; but we cannot close our ears to the morning song of the lark, nor avoid the sight of the landscape ; unless we refuse to breathe the breath of heaven, and relinquish the cheerful beam of day ; and if we resolve that our palate shall not be gratified, we must deprive ourselves of that nutriment which is necessary to our very existence.—Apply this to all the conveniencies and even the ele-

gancies of life ; and then let us ask, what is the result of this system of intellectual and physical enjoyment, to which the cynical and short-sighted observer has applied the equivocal and injurious term of luxury* ? That great classes of the industrious part of the community are employed—ingenuity excited—talents rewarded—wealth circulated through an infinite variety of channels, and a general bond of union, arising from an interchange of services and rewards, is formed amongst the vast family of the human race.—“ A man of benevolence,” says Mr. Dugald Stewart, “ whose mind is tinctured with philosophy, will view all the different improvements in arts, in commerce,

* “ In nations depending for their wealth and greatness upon arts and manufactures, it is the grossest mistake to imagine that matters of this kind are indifferent. They are on the contrary of high importance.—Folly only declaims against the luxuries of the wealthy, because it is too short-sighted to see that they relieve the necessities of the poor. Nothing impoverishes a people but what is taken without measure by governments from the common stock—all other expences—wise or unwise in the individuals, soon return to it, and are sources of universal wealth.” ARMATA, VOL. II.

and in the sciences, as co-operating to promote the union, the happiness, and the virtue of mankind." Utility and pleasure are thus bound together in an indissoluble chain, and what the author of nature has joined, LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER.

From the preceding observations may we not then be allowed to conclude, as the result of our present inquiry, that with regard to taste and science, as well as in other respects, mankind are the architects of their own fortunes ; and that the degree of their success will, in general, be in proportion to the energy and wisdom of their exertions. To suppose that the human race is subjected to a certain and invariable law, by which they continue either to degenerate or to improve ; to presume that the progress of civilization, science, and taste, is limited to certain climates and tracts of country ; or to adopt the idea that when they have arisen to a certain degree of excellence, they must, in the common course of affairs, necessarily

decline, is to deaden all exertion and to subject the powers of the mind to the operations of inert matter, or the fluctuations of accident and chance. Experience however demonstrates that it is to the influence of moral causes, to those dispositions and arrangements in the affairs of mankind that are peculiarly within our own power, that we are to seek for the reasons of the progress or decline of liberal studies. It is to the establishment of rational liberty—to the continuance of public tranquillity—to successful industry and national prosperity, and to the wish to pay due honour to genius and talents, that we are certainly to refer the improvements that take place. The true friends of literature will therefore perceive, that nothing which relates to the condition and well-being of mankind can be to them a matter of indifference; and that it is not by a confined and immediate attention to one single object that we are to hope for success.—The result of these studies may be compared

to the delicious fruit of a large and flourishing tree ; but if we wish to obtain it in perfection, our attention must be paid to the nurture of its roots and the protection of its branches. Whatever therefore tends to debilitate the minds of youth ; to alienate them from graver pursuits ; and to call them away from those more serious and indispensable obligations which ought to form the column, on which the capital may at length be erected, is not only injurious to the concerns of real life, but actually defeats its own object. It is to the union of the pursuits of literature with the affairs of the world, that we are to look forwards towards the improvement of both ; towards the stability and foundation of the one, and the grace and ornament of the other ; and this union is most likely to be effected by establishments in the nature of the present Institution, founded in the midst of a great commercial community, and holding out opportunities of instruction, not only to those intended for the higher and more in-

dependant ranks of life, but for those who, amidst the duties of an active profession, or the engagements of mercantile concerns, wish to cultivate their intellectual powers and acquirements.

Nor is it to the period of youth alone that the purposes of this Institution are intended to be confined. Education is the proper employment, not only of our early years, but of our whole lives ; and they who, satisfied with their attainments, neglect to avail themselves of the improvements which are daily taking place in every department of human knowledge, will in a few years have the mortification to find themselves surpassed by much younger rivals. In order to afford the best possible opportunity of preventing such a result, it is the avowed object of this Institution, not only to establish a system of Academical Education, but to draw from every part of the united kingdoms the best instructors that can be obtained, on those subjects which are of the first

importance and the highest interest to mankind. By these means an establishment will be formed, original in its plan, and efficient in its operation ; affording to the inhabitants of this great town an opportunity of domestic instruction for their children, equal, it is hoped, to any that can elsewhere be obtained ; and preventing the necessity of resorting to those distant seminaries, where amidst the promiscuous society of youthful associates, the character is left to be formed as chance and circumstances may direct. Nor will the course of instruction cease with the period of manhood ; but will be continued for the use of those who may choose to avail themselves of it in future life ; thereby carrying the acquirements of youth into real use ; applying them to the practical concerns of the world, and preventing, as far as possible, that absurd and intire relinquishment of the benefits and attainments of education, which generally takes place at the precise time when they should be converted to their most useful and important purposes.

On the present occasion I shall not trespass further on your indulgence, than to mention one other object, which appears to me to be perfectly within the scope of this Institution. The great end of all education is to form the character and regulate the conduct of life ; and every department of it must be considered merely as auxiliary to this purpose. Experience, however, shews that it is one thing to acquire the knowledge of rules and precepts, and another to apply them to practice ; as a mechanic may possess the implements of his profession without having acquired the skill to use them. The same observation applies, perhaps yet more strongly, to all those precepts which are intended to influence the moral character and regulate the conduct of life. For this purpose various systems of ethics have been formed, by which the rules of moral duty are laid down in the most explicit and satisfactory manner : nor has there, perhaps, been any neglect in inculcating these systems on the minds of our young men, who,

in many instances, study these works as an essential part of their education, and become no unskilful disputants on their most important topics. But between the impressing these systems on the memory, and the giving them an operative influence on the conduct and on the heart, there is still an essential difference. It is one thing to extend our knowledge, and another to improve our disposition and influence our will.* It seems then essentially necessary to a complete system of education, that the principles of moral conduct, as laid down by our most distinguished writers, should be enforced and recommended to practice by every inducement that instruction and persuasion can supply. It is therefore my earnest wish that in addition to the various scientific and literary subjects already proposed by this Institution,

* It is well observed by a celebrated foreign writer, that "a cultivated understanding without a good and virtuous heart, taste and information without integrity and piety, cannot produce happiness either to ourselves or others; and that so circumstanced, our souls can reap only everlasting shame, instead of honour from our acquirements." *Gellert, Moral Lessons*, i. 262.

a series of lectures should be delivered on the formation of character, and the conduct of life ; intended to exemplify the rules of morality, and to inforce the practice of them, not merely by a scientific elucidation, but by a practical view of the affairs of the world, the consequences of a neglect or performance of the various duties of life, by the influence of the feelings, the dictates of conscience, and above all, by the sublime sanctions of the Religion we profess. By these means, and by these alone, the various acquisitions made in every department of science or taste will be concentrated in one point, directed to one great object, and applied to their proper purpose—the illustration and perfection of the human character.

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