

Pendennis and Copperfield: Thackeray and Dickens. 57

- ART. III.—1. *The Personal History and Experience of David Copperfield the Younger.* By CHARLES DICKENS. London, 1850.
 2. *The History of Pendennis.* By WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY. London, 1850.

THACKERAY and DICKENS, Dickens and Thackeray—the two names now almost necessarily go together. It is some years since Mr. Thackeray, whose reputation as an author had until then, we believe, been of somewhat limited extent, suddenly appeared in the field of literature already so successfully occupied by Mr. Dickens. But the intrusion, if it may be called such, was made with so much talent, and so much applause followed it, that since that time the two have gone on as peers and rivals. From the printing-house of the same publishers they have simultaneously, during the last few years, sent forth their monthly instalments of amusing fiction—Dickens his “*Dombey*” and his “*Copperfield*,” and Thackeray his “*Vanity Fair*” and his “*Pendennis*.” Hence the public has learned to think of them in indissoluble connexion as friendly competitors for the prize of light literature. There is, indeed, a third writer often and worthily named along with them—Mr. Douglas Jerrold. But though, when viewed in the general as humorists and men of inventive talent, the three do form a triad, so that it is hardly possible to discuss the merits of any one of them without referring to the other two, yet, as the characteristic form of Mr. Jerrold’s literary activity has not been specially that of the popular novelist, he is not associated with his two eminent contemporaries so closely, in this denomination, as they are associated with each other. As the popular novelists of the day, Dickens and Thackeray, and again, Thackeray and Dickens, divide the public attention. And as the public has learned thus to think of them together, so also, using its privilege of chatting and pronouncing judgments about whatever interests it, it has learned to set off the merits of the one against those of the other, and to throw as much light into the criticism of each as can be derived from the trick of contrast. One party of readers prefers Dickens, and points out, with an ardour almost polemical, that Thackeray wants such and such qualities which are conspicuous in their favourite; another party wears the Thackeray colours, and contends, with equal pertinacity, that in certain respects Thackeray is the superior writer. Very much the same things, we believe, are said on this subject both by ladies and by gentlemen at all literary parties. Now, though we cannot say that the public has as yet gone very deep in their discriminations between the two favourites, and

though we are of opinion that, with all our grumblings and criticisms, we should be willing to leave both writers to go on in their own way, and only be too glad that we have such a pair of writers to cheer on against each other at all; yet we think that, in this notion of contrast, the public has really got hold of a good thread for a critic to pursue, and we mean, as far as possible, throughout this paper, to avail ourselves of it.

It is admitted that both writers are as well represented in their last as in any of their previous productions. "Copperfield," according to the general voice of the critics, is one of the best of Mr. Dickens's stories, written with decidedly more care and effort than its immediate predecessors, as if the author had determined to shew the captious public that his genius was as fine and fresh as ever. And though we have heard "Pendennis" described as a mere continuation of "Vanity Fair," and no advance upon it in point of excellence, we believe the general opinion to be that Mr. Thackeray has not discredited himself by his recent performance, but has rather increased his popularity. Moreover, no two stories are better calculated to illustrate, in the way of contrast, the characteristic peculiarities of their respective authors. The very spirit and philosophy of all Mr. Dickens's writings is that which we find expressed in the character and life of David Copperfield, so that, did we want to describe that spirit and philosophy in a single term, we should not be far wrong in calling it *Copperfieldism*; and, on the other hand, in no work has Mr. Thackeray exhibited so fully that caustic, thoroughly British, and yet truly original humour, with which he regards the world and its ways, as in his sketch of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Arthur Pendennis. When we say "Pendennis" and "Copperfield," therefore, it is really the same as if we said Thackeray and Dickens. And this facility of finding the two authors duly contrasted in the two stories, is increased by the fact that the stories are in some respects very similar. In both we have the life and education of a young man related, from his childhood and school-time to that terminus of all novels, the happy marriage-point; in the one, the life and education of the orphan child of a poor gentleman in Suffolk; in the other, the life and education of the only son of a West of England squire, with a long Cornish pedigree. In both, too, the hero becomes a literary man, so that the author, in following him, finds room for allusions to London literary life. There are even some resemblances of a minuter kind, such as the existence in both stories of a mysterious character of the outlaw species, who appears at intervals to ask money and throw the respectable folks of the drama into consternation; from which one might imagine that the authors, during the progress of their narratives, were not ashamed to take

hints from each other. But however that may be, there can be no doubt that the general external similarity that there is between the two stories will serve to throw into relief their essential differences of style and spirit.

These differences are certainly very great. Although following exactly the same literary walk, and both great favourites with the public, there are perhaps no two writers so dissimilar as Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray. To begin with a matter which, though in the order of strict science it comes last, as involving and depending on all the others,—the matter of style or language: here everybody must recognise a remarkable difference between the two authors. If Messrs. Bradbury and Evans would furtively supply us with a page of the manuscript of "Copperfield," together with a corresponding page of the manuscript of "Pendennis," we should probably be able, on comparing the two, and examining the state of their penmanship, to detect some characteristic differences in the habits of composition of the two novelists, and to say which of them is, on the whole, the more careful and trained, and which the more easy and fluent writer. Nay, even without having such an unusual facility afforded to us, we might, by way of a first attempt in the graphiological art, try to infer something or other (and we advise our readers to infer it) from a comparison of the free and somewhat dashing penmanship of Dickens, as exhibited to the public in the printed specimens, with the neat and elegant writing of those stray autographs of Thackeray, which, in exploring the albums of our fair friends, we have occasionally seen. But in such a case we prefer having recourse to a receipt of our own, which we have usually found effectual when we wanted some insight into the mechanism of an author's style. This receipt, which we impart to the reader on the condition that he make no ungrateful application of it, is that the critic should deliberately copy out with his own hand a suitable paragraph or two from the author whose manner he wishes to study. By this means the critic attaches himself, as it were, to the author in the act of composition, and is able to discover much—not only haste or slovenliness, if there is any; not only superfluous expression, false metaphor, or bad punctuation; but also the tricks of association, the intellectual connexions and minute flights by which the author leaps from thought to thought and from phrase to phrase. We have selected a passage from "Copperfield," and one from "Pendennis," whereon the reader, while enjoying them for their own sake, may, if he chooses, try his ingenuity. That the test may be the fairer the passages selected are as nearly as possible in the same sentimental key.

Glance at a Model Prison.—"It being then just dinner-time, we went, first into the great kitchen, where every prisoner's dinner was in course

of being set out separately, (to be handed to him in his cell,) with the regularity and precision of clock-work. I said aside, to Traddles, that I wondered whether it occurred to anybody that there was a striking contrast between these plentiful repasts of choice quality, and the dinners, not to say of paupers, but of soldiers, sailors, labourers, the great bulk of the honest working community, of whom not one man in five hundred ever dined half so well. But I learned that the 'system' required high living; and, in short, to dispose of the system, once for all, I found that on that head and on all others, 'the system' put an end to all doubts, and disposed of all anomalies. Nobody appeared to have the least idea that there was any other system, but *the* system, to be considered. As we were going through some of the magnificent passages, I inquired of Mr. Creakle and his friends, what were supposed to be the main advantages of this all-governing and universally over-riding system. I found them to be the perfect isolation of prisoners—so that no one man in confinement there knew anything about another; and the reduction of prisoners to a wholesome state of mind, leading to sincere contrition and repentance. Now, it struck me, when we began to visit individuals in their cells, and to traverse the passages in which those cells were, and to have the manner of going to chapel and so forth, explained to us, that there was a strong probability of the prisoners knowing a good deal about each other, and of their carrying on a pretty complete system of intercourse. This, at the time I write, has been proved, I believe, to be the case; but as it would have been flat blasphemy against the system to have hinted such a doubt then, I looked out for the penitents as diligently as I could. And here again, I had great misgivings. I found as prevalent a fashion in the form of the penitence, as I had left outside in the forms of the coats and waist-coats in the windows of the tailors' shops. I found a vast amount of profession, varying very little in character: varying very little (which I thought exceedingly suspicious) even in words. I found a great many foxes, disparaging whole vineyards of inaccessible grapes; but I found very few foxes whom I would have trusted within reach of a bunch. Above all, I found that the most professing men were the greatest objects of interest; and that their conceit, their vanity, their want of excitement, and their love of deception, (which many of them possessed to an almost incredible extent, as their histories shewed,) all prompted to these professions, and were all gratified by them."—*Copperfield*, pp. 603, 604.

Glance at an Inn of Court.—"If we could but get the history of a single day as it is passed in any one of those four-storied houses in the dingy court where our friends Pen and Warrington dwelt, some Temple Asmodeus might furnish us with a queer volume. There may be a grave Parliamentary counsel on the ground-floor, who drives off to Belgravia at dinner-time, when his clerk, too, becomes a gentleman, and goes away to entertain his friends and to take his pleasure. But a short time since he was hungry and briefless in some garret of the Inn; lived by stealthy literature; hoped, and waited, and sickened, and no clients came; exhausted his own means and his friends' kind-

ness; had to remonstrate humbly with duns, and to implore the patience of poor creditors. Ruin seemed to be staring him in the face, when, behold a turn of the wheel of fortune, and the lucky wretch in possession of one of those prodigious prizes which are sometimes drawn in the great lottery of the Bar. Many a better lawyer than himself does not make a fifth part of the income of his clerk, who, a few months since, could scarcely get credit for blacking for his master's unpaid boots. On the first floor, perhaps, you will have a venerable man whose name is famous, who has lived for half a century in the Inn, whose brains are full of books, and whose shelves are stored with classical and legal lore. He has lived alone all these fifty years, alone and for himself, amassing learning, and compiling a fortune. He comes home now at night from the Club, where he has been dining freely, to the lonely chambers where he lives a godless old recluse. When he dies, his Inn will erect a tablet to his honour, and his heirs burn a part of his library. Would you like to have such a prospect for your old age, to store up learning and money, and end so? But we must not linger too long by Mr. Doomsday's door. Worthy Mr. Grump lives over him, who is also an ancient inhabitant of the Inn, and who, when Doomsday comes home to read Catullus, is sitting down with three steady seniors of his standing, to a steady rubber at whist, after a dinner at which they have consumed their three steady bottles of Port. You may see the old boys asleep at the Temple Church of a Sunday. Attorneys seldom trouble them, and they have small fortunes of their own. On the other side of the third landing, where Pen and Warrington live, till long after midnight sits Mr. Paley, who took the highest honours, and who is a fellow of his College; who will sit and read and note cases until two o'clock in the morning; who will rise at seven, and be at the pleader's chambers as soon as they are open, where he will work until an hour before dinner-time; who will come home from the Hall and read and note cases again until dawn next day, when perhaps Mr. Arthur Pendennis and his friend Mr. Warrington are returning from some of their wild expeditions. How differently employed Mr. Paley has been! He has not been throwing himself away: he has only been bringing a great intellect laboriously down to the comprehension of a mean subject, and, in his fierce grasp of that, resolutely excluding from his mind all higher thoughts, all the wisdom of philosophers and historians, all the thoughts of poets; all wit, fancy, reflection, art, love, truth altogether—so that he may master that enormous legend of the law, which he purposes to gain his livelihood by expounding.”—*Pendennis*, vol. i. pp. 290-292.

Now, after transcribing these two extracts, we must say that our impression of the difference between the two authors in the matter of style is very much what it has always been from a general reading acquaintance with their works; namely, that Mr. Thackeray is the more terse and idiomatic, and Mr. Dickens the more diffuse and luxuriant writer. Both seem to

be easy penmen, and to have language very readily at their command; both also seem to convey their meaning as simply as they can, and to be careful, according to their notions of verbal accuracy; but in Mr. Dickens's sentences there is a leafiness, a tendency to words and images, for their own sake; whereas in Mr. Thackeray's one sees the stem and outline of the thought better. We have no great respect for that canon of style which demands in English writers the use of Saxon in preference to Latin words, thinking that a rule to which there are natural limitations, variable with the writer's aim and with the subject he treats; but we should suppose that critics who do regard the rule would find Mr. Thackeray's style the more accordant with it. On the whole, if we had to choose passages at random, to be set before young scholars as examples of easy and vigorous English composition, we would take them rather from Thackeray than from Dickens. There is a Horatian strictness, a racy strength, in Mr. Thackeray's expressions, even in his more level and tame passages, which we miss in the corresponding passages in Mr. Dickens's writings, and in which we seem to recognise the effect of those classical studies through which an accurate and determinate, though somewhat bald, use of words becomes a fixed habit. In the ease, and, at the same time, thorough polish and propriety with which Mr. Thackeray can use slang words, we seem especially to detect the University man. Snob, swell, buck, gent, fellow, fogy—these, and many more such expressive appellatives, not yet sanctioned by the Dictionary, Mr. Thackeray employs more frequently, we believe, than any other living writer, and yet always with unexceptionable taste. In so doing he is conscious, no doubt, of the same kind of security that permits Oxford and Cambridge men, and even, as we can testify, Oxford and Cambridge clergymen, to season their conversation with similar words—namely, the evident air of educated manliness with which they can be introduced, and which, however rough the guise, no one can mistake. In the use of the words genteel, vulgar, female, and the like—words which men diffident of their own breeding are observed not to risk; as well as in the art of alternating gracefully between the noun lady and the noun woman, the Scylla and Charybdis, if we may so say, of shy talkers—Mr. Thackeray is also a perfect master, commanding his language in such cases with an unconscious ease, not unlike that which enables the true English gentleman he is so fond of portraying, either to name titled personages of his acquaintance without seeming a tuft-hunter, or to refrain from naming them without the affectation of Radicalism. In Mr. Dickens, of course, we have the same perfect taste and propriety; but in him the result appears to arise, if we may so express ourselves, rather from the

keen and feminine sensibility of a fine genius, whose instinct is always for the pure and beautiful, than from the self-possession of a mind correct under any circumstances, by discipline and sure habit. Where Mr. Dickens is not exerting himself, that is, in passages of mere equable narrative or description, where there is nothing to move or excite him, his style, as we have already said, seems to us more careless and languid than that of Mr. Thackeray; sometimes, indeed, a whole page is only redeemed from weakness by those little touches of wit and those humorous turns of conception which he knows so well how to sprinkle over it. It is due to Mr. Dickens to state, however, that in this respect his "Copperfield" is one of his most pleasing productions, and a decided improvement on its predecessor "Dombey." Not only is the spirit of the book more gentle and mellow, but the style is more continuous and careful, with fewer of those recurring tricks of expression, the dead remnants of former felicities, which constituted what was called his mannerism. Nor must we omit to remark also, that in passages where higher feeling is called into play, Mr. Dickens's style always rises into greater purity and vigour, the weakness and the superfluity disappearing before the concentrating force of passion, and the language often pouring itself forth in a clear and flowing song. This, in fact, is according to the nature of the luxuriant or poetical genius, which never expresses itself in its best or most concise manner unless the mood be high as well as the meaning clear;—for maintaining the excellence of the style of a terse and highly reflective writer, such as Thackeray, on the other hand, the presence of a clear meaning is at all times sufficient, though, of course, here also the pitch and melody will depend on the mood.

But it would be unfair to our courteous publisher, as well as to the reader, if we had quoted the foregoing extracts only as samples of the style and manner of our two novelists. We believe also, that they will suggest, or at least illustrate, certain more prominent and tangible differences between them.

Regarding the general intellectual calibre, for example, of the two men, viewing that as far as possible without reference to their special function as artistic writers, we should say that the passages we have quoted represent pretty fairly their average powers of thought; their competence, either by native faculty or acquired culture, to deal intellectually with any subject that might be submitted to them. Now, here again, our impression is, that Thackeray's is the mind of closer and more compact, Dickens's the mind of looser, richer, and freer texture. In the passage we have quoted from Thackeray there is certainly no positive or express display either of thought or of learning, and we would by no

means cite it as a specimen of what he could do in the way either of speculation or of erudite allusion ; still there is about it a knowingness, an air of general ability and scholarship, that suggests that the man who wrote it could take an influential place, if he chose, either in an assembly of critics, or in a committee of men of business. There is a general force of talent, a worldly shrewdness and sagacity, as well as a certain breadth of culture, latent in it, from which we argue that the writer would in any company make himself felt, if not as a man of energetic activity, at least as a man of quiet brain and vigour. Mr. Dickens, too, is of course a man whose intellect would be remarkable anywhere ; for no writer could rise to his degree of excellence in any department without much of that general force and fulness of mind which would have enabled him to excel in any other ; perhaps, also, his natural versatility is greater than that of Mr. Thackeray ; still we do not see in him that habitual knowingness, that close-grained solidity of view, that impressive strong sense, which we find in what Thackeray writes. Mr. Dickens may be the more pensive and meditative, but Mr. Thackeray is the more penetrating and reflective writer. The contrast between them in this respect is not unlike that which might, though at the risk of confusion, be drawn between some of the best recent novelists of France and their contemporary Balzac. Like Balzac, Thackeray strikes us by his shrewd, hard, and all but remorseless insight, thus creating the impression that in the matter of general sagacity, the mere *lumen siccum* which all men need, he must be superior to many who could still rival him as artists. Dickens, we should suppose, would be more apt to fall into commonplace than Thackeray ; indeed, in the passage on model prisons which we have quoted from "Copperfield," and which, as it is an important passage, and controversial in its tone, may be regarded as a fair average specimen of Mr. Dickens's habits as a thinker, it is only the soundness of the conclusion, and the evident sincerity of the feeling, that redeem the writing from a dangerous resemblance to common talk. Neither, on the one hand, does Mr. Dickens deepen and elaborate his thoughts by special effort, which might be deemed unsuitable in a novel ; nor, on the other hand, do all his thoughts on their first expression, carry with them that air of native weight which would belong, we imagine, to the opinions of Thackeray. A writer of Mr. Dickens's celebrity ought not to devote a whole page to the repetition of what everybody says, in very nearly the same words that everybody uses. He ought, by giving his own reasons as profoundly as possible, to elevate and strengthen the common opinion. Here, of course, however, the same remark is of force that we applied to the matter of Mr. Dickens's style. As Mr. Dickens's language, though loose

and redundant in the tame and level passages, gathers itself up and acquires concentration and melody under the influence of passion or pathos, so his thought, ordinarily lax and unwrought, attains real pith and volume when his feelings are moved. For this, we repeat, is the prerogative of an essentially susceptible and poetic nature, that every part and faculty of it, judgment as well as fancy, does its best when the frenzy is upon it. As a man, therefore, more capable of the poetic excitement than the majority of his literary contemporaries, Mr. Dickens might occasionally, we think, strike into a *questio vexata* with peculiar effect, and render to the public a positive intellectual service. Still, our impression is, that as regards the possession and habitual practice of a cool, masculine, and decisive judgment, Thackeray's writings shew him to be a man more competent to exert an influence on current affairs. Dickens, when enthusiasm did call upon him to interfere, would act more resistlessly; but Thackeray would be the man of more sound and steady intelligence.

Yet, curiously enough, the two writers seem, in this respect, to have exchanged their parts. Dickens is by far the more opinionative and aggressive, Thackeray by far the more acquiescent and unpolemical, writer. The passage on model prisons quoted above, wherein Mr. Dickens attacks the silent system of prison management, is but one instance out of hundreds in which he has, while pursuing his occupation as a novelist, pronounced strong judgments on disputed social questions. To whatever cause the fact is to be attributed—whether to a native combativeness conjoined with great benevolence of disposition, or to external circumstances that have developed in him the habit of taking a side in all current controversies—we should say, without hesitation, that few men, dominated so decidedly by the artistic temperament, have shewn so obvious an inclination as Mr. Dickens to step beyond the province of the artist, and exercise the functions of the social and moral critic. It was a law of Solon, that no Athenian should stand neutral at a time when any great question agitated the state;—whosoever did not come to the poll, give his vote like a man, and take his due part in the public business, was to be punished with death as a useless and immoral fellow. There was a profound sense in this law; and Mr. Dickens seems but to appreciate it, and to act up to his duty as an English citizen, when, by means of pamphlets, public speeches, letters to the newspapers, articles in periodicals, and other such established methods of communicating with his fellow-subjects, he speaks his mind freely on practices or institutions that offend him. It ought, indeed, to be a matter for congratulation, when such a man comes forward to give a practical opinion at all; he ought to be listened to with special deference,

and his suggestions ought to be carefully considered. Nor is it a secret that Mr. Dickens, following the dictates of a warm and generous heart, has rendered, on various occasions, very zealous and important services to the cause of public morality and benevolence. Recently, indeed, his shrewd observation and brilliant powers of writing, have been employed from week to week in the express task of exposing certain anomalies and abuses in our social arrangements, lying, as it would seem, quite snugly out of sight of official vigilance. In all this he merits only encouragement and success. We cannot, however, assent so easily to his habit of interspersing controversial remarks, and direct passages of social criticism and remonstrance, through his fictions. Clearly as these works belong to the department of artistic writing, there is not one of them that does not contain matter that is purely dogmatic in its import—judgments pronounced promptly and peremptorily by Mr. Dickens in his own name on various questions of morals, taste, or legislation. Prison-discipline, the constitution of the ecclesiastical courts, the management of schools, capital punishments; Mr. Dickens's opinions on these, and many other such topics of a practical kind, are to be found explicitly affirmed and argued in his novels. Nor is he content with expressing his views merely on practical points. Modes of thinking, doctrines, theological and speculative tendencies, likewise come in for a share of his critical notice. Passages might be quoted from his stories, for example, where he has distinctly attacked and denounced transcendentalism in philosophy, and puritanism in religion. Now, of course, a man must have his views on these subjects, and these views must break out in his works, however artistic their form; but it is a dangerous thing thus openly and professedly to blend the functions of the artist with those of the declaimer. A man who does so must needs be very sure of himself, and must have his own beliefs elaborated as a whole into their most complete and living form of combination. For, as we have before said, when a man like Dickens dogmatizes, one is entitled to expect something that shall, both in reason and in expression, have a finish and beauty beyond the art of the mere platform speaker. Every thought should then be conceived under the extreme pressure of a wish to say all in little space; and every word should sparkle like a well-set jewel. For our respect for the talent a man shews as an artist, ought not, as a matter of course, to extend itself so as to shelter all his dicta as a moralist or practical politician. It may be requisite to adjust our relations to him differently, according as he talks to us in the one capacity or in the other. We may owe one degree of respect for Mr. Dickens as the describer of Squeers and Creakle, and quite

another degree of respect when he tells us how he would have boys educated. Mr. Spenslow may be a capital likeness of a Doctors' Commons lawyer; and yet this would not be the proper ground for concluding Mr. Dickens's view of a reform in the ecclesiastical courts to be right. No man has given more picturesque illustrations of criminal life in London than Mr. Dickens; yet he might not be equally trustworthy in his notions of prison-discipline. His Dennis the hangman in "Barnaby Rudge" is a powerfully conceived character; yet this is no reason for accepting his opinion on capital punishments. In short, the arguments and opinions of an artist must stand on their own merits, with this additional proviso that, for permitting an artist to argue at all, we require him to argue right-royally, like an Apollo in the robe of a barrister. True, very many of Mr. Dickens's judgments on practical matters are sound and excellent—some of those we have alluded to in the number; on some points, however, and especially in those higher regions of speculative doctrine into which we have said that Mr. Dickens has not seldom ventured, we believe his sentiments to be defective. We shall have, probably, to revert to this consideration before we conclude the present paper.

Mr. Thackeray, though more competent, according to our view of him, to appear in the character of a general critic or essayist, seems far more of a *pococurante* than Mr. Dickens. Whether it is that he is naturally disposed to take the world as he finds it, or that, having at some time or other had very unsatisfactory experience of the trade of trying to mend it, he has taken up *pococurantism* as a theory, we have no means of saying; but certain it is, that in the writings he has given forth since he became known as one of our most distinguished literary men, he has meddled far less with the external arrangements of society than Mr. Dickens, and made far fewer appearances as a controversialist or reformer. An exception might, indeed, be taken to this remark with reference to certain essays in *Punch*, and particularly certain recent satirical sketches there of Jesuits and Jesuitism, which bear the stamp of Thackeray's manner. But generally, and even with regard to these particular papers, it will be found that it is not of the social arrangements and conventions amid which men and women move, so much as of men and women themselves, that Mr. Thackeray is the satirist. The foibles and vices of individual human beings; the ugly things that are transacted and the commotions that go on in that little world, twenty-three inches or thereby in circumference, which each man carries under his own hat—these, and not the storms and discussions of the big world without, are the stuff out of which Mr. Thackeray weaves his fictions. His care is not about

the conditions, political or social, to which this conceited young dandy, that old debauchee, that sentimental little minx, and all the rest of us, must submit during our little bit of life; what he delights to do is to follow these various personages as they get on amid these conditions—to watch, with an interest half humorous, half sad, the dandy as he struts along Pall Mall; to trace the old wretch to his haunts; to detect the young minx boxing her brother's ears in private. And here, certainly, he is fierce and pitiless enough. What he likes in men and women, what he hates, what he will tolerate, and what moves his indignation and contempt, are indicated with too great clearness to be mistaken. But he does not carry his polemics into the field of exterior circumstances. The "snob," as such, is his quarry, and as he hovers aloft on the watch for him, it matters nothing whether he descries him in Crim Tartary or in England—on this side or on that side of any political frontier; the snob, and not his environment, is the object of his attention; hawk-like he gives chase and pins the victim. "Let us cease to be snobs; till then, whether we are in Crim Tartary or in England, whether we have liberal institutions or live under a despot, is of very secondary consequence;" such is virtually the rule according to which he writes. How in his more private and unprofessional character he may think it right to act; whether or not he would make a busy vestryman if elected, or whether he regards all partizanship in public politics as a mere Hoolan and Doolan affair, to be left to the editors of newspapers, we have no means of knowing; the impression made by his writings, however, is that, in these matters, like many more of our best men, he is far gone in a kind of grim, courteous pococurantism.

To pass, however, to the consideration of what is after all the most conspicuous difference between the two novelists, namely, the essential difference between their styles of literary art, their peculiar faculties and tastes as descriptive and imaginative writers. Here it will assist us very much in our discriminations if we call to mind, by way of illustration, the leading distinctions of style and faculty in the kindred art of painting.

One evident source or reason of distinction, then, in the art of painting, is the outwardly-fixed variety of those objects which it may be the aim of the painter to seize. From this source arises first of all, the theoretical distinction of painters into two great classes—landscape-painters and figure-painters. The former, speaking generally, are those who seek to represent scenes of inanimate nature; portions, larger or smaller, of all that varied glory of form and colour that lies between the concave of sky and cloud above, and the plane of earth and sea beneath. The objects of the figure painter, on the other hand, are beings en-

dowed with life, either singly or in groups. Though, of course, the distinction is strict only in theory—the landscape-painter introducing figures into his pictures, and the figure-painter requiring backgrounds for his—yet it holds to a certain extent also in practice; and we hear of painters who are said to be good in their figures, but poor in their backgrounds, and of others of whom the reverse complaint is made. And, subordinate to this leading distinction are a number of others. Thus, under the designation of landscape-painters, using that term in its utmost generality, may be included such classes as these—landscape-painters proper, who represent portions of the earth's surface, whether in calm or rugged aspects; painters of sea-pieces; tree-painters; painters of street-scenes and city-vistas; painters of the interiors of edifices, both noble and humble; flower-painters; fruit-painters; and the like. By a similar license, the term figure-painters may be supposed to include such classes as these—cattle-painters; historical painters; portrait-painters; painters of scenes of village or town life; painters of imaginary actions; allegorical or symbolical painters; and so forth. Certain of these classes, as, for example, the landscape-painters proper, the historical painters, the allegorical painters, and the painters of imaginary actions, rank as higher in kind than the others; the greatest painters have been great both in figure and in landscape; and perhaps the most interesting paintings are those wherein the two are duly combined, one or the other predominating.

But, independent of these outwardly-determined distinctions, and helping greatly to complicate them, are others, having their origin not in the outer variety of nature, but in the spirit and form of thought of the painter. Taking rise in this source, for instance, is the important distinction between what may be called the Real, and what may be called the Ideal, (we beg Mr. Thackeray's pardon for the use of these two words, which we do not like any more than he, and would avoid if we could,) style or theory of art. In the real style of art, the aim is to produce pictures that shall impress by their close and truthful resemblance to something or other in real nature or life. It would be false to say that there may not be a genuine exercise of the poetic or imaginative faculty in this walk of art. Even in the humblest specimen of imitative painting, if it is to rise at all above the character of a mere copy, the artist must contribute some special conception or intention of his own, according to which the objects may be arranged, and which shall give them their effect as a whole. Still, in the higher sense in which the word imagination is often used, as implying a rarer exercise of inventive power, it cannot be said that the real style of painting is so imaginative as that which we have called the ideal. In this style of art the

conception or intention supplied by the painter bears a larger proportion to the matter outwardly given than in the other. A picture executed in this style strikes, not by recalling real scenes and occurrences, but by taking the mind out of itself into a region of higher possibilities, wherein objects shall be more glorious, and modes of action more transcendent, than any we see, and yet all shall seem in nature. When the aspiration of the artist in this style is greater than his powers of harmonious conception, the result is the extravagant or the unnatural; perfect art is attained only when the objects as represented are elevated above objects as they appear, precisely to that degree in which a world constructed expressly in the mood of the artist's intention might be expected to exceed the common world. It is observed, too, that artists who favour the ideal theory, usually work in the more ambitious departments of landscape or figure painting; and hence probably it is that the real style is sometimes, though perhaps not very happily, called *Low Art*, and the ideal style, *High Art*.

All this may be transferred with ease to the occupation of the literary artist, or writer of fiction. Thus, applying it to the particular case in view, it may be said, in the first place, with respect to our two novelists, that the artistic faculty of Dickens is more comprehensive, goes over a wider range of the whole field of art, than that of Thackeray. Take Dickens, for example, in the landscape or background department. Here he is capable of great variety. He can give you a landscape proper—a piece of the rural English earth in its summer or in its winter dress, with a bit of water, and a pretty village spire, in it; he can give you, what painters seldom attempt, a great patch of flat country by night, with the red trail of a railway train traversing the darkness; he can even succeed in a sea-piece; he can describe the crowded quarter of a city, or the main street of a country town, by night or by day; he can paint a garden, sketch the interior of a cathedral, or daguerreotype the interior of a hut or drawing-room with equal ease; he can even be minute in his delineations of single articles of dress or furniture. Take him, again, in the figure department. Here he can be an animal-painter with Landseer when he likes, as witness his dogs, ponies, and ravens; he can be a historical painter, as witness his description of the Gordon riots; he can be a portrait-painter or a caricaturist like Leech; he can give you a bit of village or country life, like Wilkie; he can paint a haggard or squalid scene of low city-life, so as to remind one of some of the Dutch artists, Rembrandt included, or a pleasant family-scene, gay or sentimental, reminding one of Maclise or Frank Stone; he can body forth romantic conceptions of terror or beauty, that have risen in his own imagination; he can com-

pose a fantastic fairy piece; he can even succeed in a powerful dream or allegory, where the figures are hardly human. The range of Thackeray, on the other hand, is more restricted. In the landscape department he can give you a quiet little bit of background, such as a park, a clump of trees, or the vicinity of a country-house, with a village seen in the sunset; a London street, also, by night or by day, is familiar to his eye; but, upon the whole, his scenes are laid in those more habitual places of resort, where the business or pleasure of aristocratic or middle-class society goes on—a pillared club-house in Pall Mall, the box or pit of a theatre, a brilliant *salon* in Mayfair, a public dancing-room, a newspaper office, a shop in Paternoster Row, the deck of a steamer, the interior of a married man's house, or a bachelor's chambers in the Temple. And his choice of subjects from the life corresponds with this. Men and women as they are, and as they behave daily, especially in the charmed circles of rank, literature, and fashion, are the subjects of Mr. Thackeray's pencil; and in his delineations of them he seems to unite the strong and fierce characteristics of Hogarth, with a touch both of Wilkie and Maclise, and not a little of that regular grace and fine sense of colour which charm us in the groups of Watteau.

Fully to compare the powers of description of the two writers, so as to see which is the more thorough and excellent artist in that to which his art extends, it would be necessary to compare descriptive passages from their writings, in which both have attempted the same or nearly the same thing—to compare, for example, a *salon* scene, or a tavern scene of Dickens, with a corresponding scene of Thackeray. We prefer, however, illustrating still farther the difference of their range as artists, by quoting a passage from each, suggesting, by extreme contrast, how far the range of the one in picture exceeds the range of the other. Here is a passage from Dickens of almost savage power and grandeur.

A storm on the east coast.—" 'Don't you think that,' I asked the coachman, in the first stage out of London, 'a very remarkable sky? I don't remember to have seen one like it.'—'Nor I—not equal to it,' he replied. 'That's wind, sir. There'll be mischief done at sea, I expect, before long.'

"It was a murky confusion—here and there blotted with a colour like the colour of smoke from damp fuel—of flying clouds, tossed up into most remarkable heaps, suggesting greater heights in the clouds than there were depths below them to the bottom of the deepest hollows in the earth, through which the wild moon seemed to plunge headlong, as if, in a dread disturbance of the laws of nature, she had lost her way and were frightened. There had been a wind all day; and it was rising then, with an extraordinary great sound. In another hour

it had much increased, and the sky was more overcast, and it blew hard.

“But, as the night advanced, the clouds closing in and densely overspreading the whole sky, then very dark, it came on to blow, harder and harder. It still increased, until our horses could scarcely face the wind. Many times in the dark part of the night, (it was then late in September, when the nights were not short,) the leaders turned about, or came to a dead stop; and we were often in serious apprehension that the coach would be blown over. Sweeping gusts of rain came up before the storm, like showers of steel; and, at those times, when there was any shelter of trees or lee walls to be got, we were fain to stop, in a sheer impossibility of continuing the struggle.

“When the day broke, it blew harder and harder. I had been in Yarmouth when the seamen said it blew great guns, but I had never known the like of this, or anything approaching to it. We came to Norwich—very late, having had to fight every inch of ground since we were ten miles out of London; and found a cluster of people in the market-place, who had risen from their beds in the night, fearful of falling chimneys. Some of these, congregating about the inn-yard while we changed horses, told us of great sheets of lead having been ripped off a high church-tower, and flung into a bye-street, which they then blocked up. Others had to tell of country-people, coming in from neighbouring villages, who had seen great trees lying torn out of the earth, and whole ricks scattered about the roads and fields. Still there was no abatement in the storm, but it blew harder.

“As we struggled on, nearer and nearer to the sea, from which this mighty wind was blowing dead on shore, its force became more and more terrific. Long before we saw the sea, its spray was upon our lips, and showered salt rain upon us. The water was out over miles and miles of the flat country adjacent to Yarmouth; and every sheet and puddle lashed its banks, and had its stress of little breakers setting heavily towards us. When we came within sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were like glimpses of another shore with towers and buildings. When at last we got into the town, the people came out to their doors, all aslant, and with streaming hair, making a wonder of the mail that had come through such a night.

“I put up at the old inn, and went down to look at the sea; staggering along the street, which was strewn with sand and sea-weed, and with flying blotches of sea-foam; afraid of falling slates and tiles; and holding by people I met, at angry corners. Coming near the beach, I saw, not only the boatmen, but half the people of the town, lurking behind buildings; some, now and then braving the fury of the storm to look away to sea, and blown sheer out of their course in trying to get zigzag back.

“Joining these groups, I found bewailing women whose husbands were away in herring or oyster boats, which there was too much reason to think might have foundered before they could run in anywhere for safety. Grizzled old sailors were among the people, shaking

their heads, as they looked from water to sky, and muttering to one another ; ship-owners, excited and uneasy ; children, huddling together, and peering into older faces ; even stout mariners, disturbed and anxious, levelling their glasses at the sea from behind places of shelter, as if they were surveying an enemy.

“The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and, at their highest, tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed into valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to hills ; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound ; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away ; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell ; the clouds flew fast and thick : I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.”—*Copperfield*, pp. 558, 559.

Now, certainly, there is nothing in all Thackeray that can be compared, in its kind, with this noble piece of verbal description, which we admire the more now that, in copying it out, we have seen how true the words are to the reality they depict, and how natural and solemn is the cadence. On the other hand, we dare say there are not a few passages in Dickens that could with perfect justice be compared, for clearness and finish, with the following passage from Thackeray, the elegance and French taste of which remind us of Balzac :—

A Mansion in Grosvenor Place.—“Pen and his uncle declined the refectation, but they admired the dining-room with fitting compliments, and pronounced it ‘very chaste,’ that being the proper phrase. There were, indeed, high-backed Dutch chairs of the seventeenth century ; there was a sculptured carved buffet of the sixteenth ; there was a side-board robbed out of the carved work of a church in the Low Countries, and a large brass cathedral lamp over the round oak table ; there were old family portraits from Wardour Street and tapestry from France, bits of armour, double-handed swords and battle-axes made of *carton-pierre*, looking-glasses, statuettes of saints, and Dresden china—nothing, in a word, could be chaster. Behind the dining-room was the library, fitted with busts and books all of a size, and wonderful easy-chairs, and solemn bronzes in the severe classic style.

“But what could equal the chaste splendour of the drawing-rooms? The carpets were so magnificently fluffy that your foot made no more noise on them than your shadow: on their white ground bloomed roses and tulips as big as warming-pans: about the room were high chairs and low chairs, bandy-legged chairs, chairs so attenuated that it was a wonder any but a sylph could sit upon them, marqueterie-tables covered with marvellous gimcracks, china ornaments of all ages and countries, bronzes, gilt daggers, Books of Beauty, yataghans, Turkish papooshes, and boxes of Parisian bonbons. Wherever you sat down there were Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses convenient at your elbow; there were, moreover, light blue poodles and ducks and cocks and hens in porcelain; there were nymphs by Boucher, and shepherdesses by Greuze, very chaste indeed; there were muslin curtains and brocade curtains, gilt cages with parroquets and love-birds, two squealing cockatoos, each out-squealing and out-chattering the other; a clock singing tunes on a console-table, and another booming the hours like Great Tom, on the mantel-piece—there was, in a word, everything that comfort could desire, and the most elegant taste devise. A London drawing-room, fitted up without regard to expense, is surely one of the noblest and most curious sights of the present day.”—*Pendennis*, vol. i. pp. 371, 372.

On the whole it may be said that, while there are few things that Mr. Thackeray can do in the way of description which Mr. Dickens could not also do, there is a large region of objects and appearances familiar to the artistic activity of Mr. Dickens, where Mr. Thackeray would not find himself at home. And as Mr. Dickens's artistic range is thus wider than that of Mr. Thackeray, so also his style of art is the more elevated. Thackeray is essentially an artist of the real school; he belongs to what, in painting, would be called the school of low art. All that he portrays—scenes as well as characters—is within the limits, and rigidly true to the features, of real existence. In this lies his particular merit; and, like Wilkie, he would probably fail, if, hankering after a reputation in high art, he were to prove untrue to his special faculty as a delineator of actual life. Dickens, on the other hand, works more in the ideal. It is nonsense to say of his characters generally, intending the observation for praise, that they are life-like. They are nothing of the kind. Not only are his serious or tragic creations—his Old Humphreys, his Maypole Hughs, his little Nells, &c.—persons of romance; but even his comic or satiric portraiture do not come within the strict bounds of the real. There never was a real Mr. Pickwick, a real Sam Weller, a real Mrs. Nickleby, a real Quilp, a real Micawber, a real Uriah Heep, or a real Toots, in the same accurate sense that there has been or might be a real Major Pendennis, a real Captain Costigan, a real Becky, a real Sir Pitt Crawley, and a real Mr. Foker. Nature may, indeed, have

furnished hints of Wellers and Pickwicks, may have scattered the germs or indications of such odd fishes abroad; and, having once added such characters to our gallery of fictitious portraits, we cannot move a step in actual life without stumbling upon individuals to whom they will apply most aptly as nicknames—good-humoured bald-headed old gentlemen, who remind us of Pickwick; careless, easy spendthrifts of the Micawber type; fawning rascals of the Heep species; or bashful young gentlemen like Toots. But, at most, those characters are real only thus far, that they are transcendental renderings of certain hints furnished by nature. Seizing the notion of some oddity as seen in the real world, Mr. Dickens has run away with it into a kind of outer or ideal region, there to play with it and work it out at leisure as extravagantly as he might choose, without the least impediment from any facts except those of his own story. One result of this method is, that his characters do not present the mixture of good and bad in the same proportions as we find in nature. Some of his characters are thoroughly and ideally perfect; others are thoroughly and ideally detestable; and even in those where he has intended a mingled impression, vice and virtue are blended in a purely ideal manner. It is different with Mr. Thackeray. The last words of his "Pendennis" are a petition for the charity of his readers in behalf of the principal personage of the story, on the ground that not having meant to represent him as a hero, but "only as a man and a brother," he has exposed his foibles rather too freely. So, also, in almost all his other characters his study seems to be to give the good and the bad together, in very nearly the same proportions that the cunning apothecary, Nature herself, uses. Now, while, according to Mr. Thackeray's style of art, this is perfectly proper, it does not follow that Mr. Dickens's method is wrong. The characters of Shakespeare are not, in any common sense, life-like. They are not portraits of existing men and women, though doubtless there are splendid specimens even of this kind of art among them; they are grand hyperbolic beings created by the breath of the poet himself out of hints taken from all that is most sublime in nature; they are humanity caught, as it were, and kept permanent in its highest and extremest mood, nay carried forth and compelled to think, speak, and act in conditions superior to that mood. As in Greek tragedy, the character that an artist of the higher or poetical school is expected to bring before us, is not, and never was meant to be, a puny "man and brother," resembling ourselves in his virtues and his foibles, but an ancestor and a demigod, large, superb, and unapproachable. Art is called Art, says Goethe, precisely because it is *not* Nature; and even such a department of art as the modern novel is entitled to the benefit of this maxim.

While, therefore, in Mr. Thackeray's style of delineation, the just ground of praise is, as he claims it to be, the verisimilitude of the fictions, it would be no fair ground of blame against Mr. Dickens, in *his* style of delineation, to say that his fictions are hyperbolic. A truer accusation against him, in this respect, would be that, in the exercise of the right of hyperbole, he does not always preserve harmony; that, in his romantic creations, he sometimes falls into the extravagant, and, in his comic creations, sometimes into the grotesque.

But, while Mr. Dickens is both more extensive in the range, and more poetic in the style of his art than Mr. Thackeray, the latter is, perhaps, within his own range and in his own style, the more careful artist. His stroke is truer and surer, and his attention to finish greater. This may be, in part, owing to the fact that Mr. Thackeray can handle the pencil as well as the pen. Being the illustrator of his own works, and accustomed, therefore, to reduce his fancies to visible form and outline, he attains, in the result, greater clearness and precision, than one who works only in language, or who has to get his fancies made visible to himself by the pencil of another. Apart, however, from the real talent with which Mr. Thackeray illustrates his pages, it may be cited as a proof of the distinctness with which he conceives what he writes, that the names of his characters are almost always excellent. Mr. Dickens has always been thought particularly happy in this respect; we are not sure, however, that Mr. Thackeray does not sometimes surpass him. Dr. Slo-cum, Miss Mactoddy, the Scotch surgeon Glowry, Jeames the footman—these and such-like names, which Mr. Thackeray seems to throw off with such ease, that he lavishes them even on his incidental and minor characters—are, in themselves, positive bits of humour.

It is by the originality and interest of its characters that a novel is chiefly judged. And certainly it is a high privilege, that which the novelist possesses, of calling into existence new imaginary beings; of adding, as it were, to that population of aerial men and women, the offspring of past genius, which hovers over the heads of the actual population of the world. Into this respectable company of invisibles, the eldest and most august members of which are the Achilleuses, the Theseuses, the Helens, and the CE dipuses of ancient mythus; the middle-aged and now most influential members of which are the Hamlets, the Falstaffs, the Panurges, the Fausts, and the Manfreds of later European invention; and the youngest and least serious members of which (the Scotch element here predominating) are the Meg Mer-rielses, the Nicol Jarvies, the Cuddie Headriggs, and the Sandy Mackayes of the modern tale-writers—two flights of new crea-

tures take wing from the volumes before us. In a Pantheon already so multitudinous, the new comers run no small risk of being soon lost in the throng; for a while, however, they will be remembered at our firesides, and invoked as ministers of harmless enjoyment. First, with the gentle and dreamy David Copperfield at its head, comes a train of figures such as Dickens loves to draw—Steerforth, the handsome, the brave, the selfish, whose awful end is told with such tragic terror; Mr. Peggoty the elder, who appears in the beginning of the story only as a hearty Yarmouth fisherman, but becomes absolutely heroic ere the close; the three other Peggotys, honest inarticulate Ham, poor lost little Em'ly, and Peggoty of the buttons; the affectionate broken-spirited Mrs. Copperfield, with her tormentors, the Murdstones; the active aunt, Betsy Trotwood, with her ward, Mr. Dick; the inimitable Micawber family; the good, absurd Traddles; the dying child-wife Dora, and her successor Agnes; Rosa Dartle, the fierce, the fiendish, with the scar on her lip; the "willin'" Barkis, the "lone lorn" Mrs. Gummidge, the "'umble" Heep, the "respectable" Littimer, and very many more. Surrounding the vain and clever Mr. Arthur Pendennis, on the other hand, comes a group quite different, and quite Thackeristic—the fine, firm, worldly old Major; the pious, fond Mrs. Pendennis, and the high-spirited Laura; the Fotheringay, stupid, yet a glorious actress; her father, the maudlin, tipsy reprobate, Captain Costigan; the Clavering family, with that repetition of Becky, the syren Blanche Amory; the all-accomplished Chevalier Strong; Monsieur Mirobolant, the French cook; Pen's friend and Mentor, the manly, rough, cynical George Warrington, who was found "drinking beer like a coal-heaver, and yet you could see he was a gentleman;" shrewd, likeable, little Harry Foker; poor, lonely Bows, the musician; Captain Shandon, the reckless dissolute man of genius, with his literary attendants, the Finucanes, the Doolans, the Bludyers, and the rest; Bungay, the publisher, and Mrs. Bungay; Morgan, the major's man; Fanny Bolton and Mr. Huxter; Madame Fribsby, the milliner, and minor characters innumerable. A glance even at these mere lists of *dramatis personæ*, will, we think, verify our preceding remarks, and recognise Mr. Dickens as being decidedly the more poetical and ideal, and Mr. Thackeray as being decidedly the more world-like and real in the style and tendency of his conceptions. For our own part, liking both styles well, we would point out as our favourite characters in the one group, Steerforth, the elder Mr. Peggoty, Mr. Micawber, and the child-wife Dora; and as our favourites in the other, the Major, Captain Costigan, Blanche Amory, and George Warrington. Were we required to say which single character is, to our taste, artist-

ically the best in each, we should hesitate, in the one case, between Mr. Peggoty and the child-wife, in the other, between Major Pendennis and George Warrington; but, in the end, allowing ourselves to be swayed by sentimental liking, we should probably decide for the child-wife and Warrington. The former is an exquisite and most touching conception, such as Mr. Dickens has hardly equalled before; the latter is a perfectly original addition to our gallery of fictitious portraits, and is especially interesting as being a nearer approach than Mr. Thackeray had before favoured us with, to an exhibition of his serious *beau idéal* of a man. We are great admirers of "the stunning Warrington."

But, after all, it is by the moral spirit and sentiment of a work of fiction, by that unity of view and aim which pervades it, and which is the result of all the author's natural convictions and endowments, all his experience of life, and all his intellectual conclusions on questions great and little—it is by this that the worth of a work of fiction, and its title to an honourable place in literature, ought ultimately to be tried. Even the consideration of artistic merit will be found ultimately to be involved in this. The characters and scenes of a novelist, and the mode in which he evolves his plot from the commencement to the catastrophe, are but the special means by which, in his particular craft, it is allowed him to explain his beliefs and philosophy. Whether he does so consciously or unconsciously, whether he boasts of his philosophic purpose, or scouts the idea of having such a purpose, it is all the same. It remains for us, therefore, to go somewhat deeper than we have hitherto done, in our discrimination of the spirit of Thackeray's, as compared with the spirit of Dickens's writings. Here also "Pendennis" and "Copperfield" shall form the chief ground of our remarks.

Into this important question, as between the two novelists, the public has already preceded us. Go into any circle where literary talk is common, or take up any popular critical periodical, and the same invariable dictum will meet you—that Dickens is the more genial, cheerful, kindly, and sentimental, and Thackeray the more harsh, acrid, pungent, and satirical writer. This is said everywhere. Sometimes the criticism even takes the form of partizanship. We have known amiable persons, and especially ladies, express, with many admissions of Thackeray's talent, a positive dislike to him as a writer—grounding this dislike on his evident tendency to fasten on the weaknesses and meannesses, rather than on the stronger and nobler traits, of human nature; his delight, for example, in making his readers conceive a rouged old duchess without her wig and false teeth, an elderly Adonis without his padding and stays, or a romantic young lady eating

voraciously in her own room. In print, also, we have seen Mr. Thackeray taken to task for his exclusive preaching of the maxim "Humbug everywhere," and his perpetual exhibition of the skeleton that is in every house. On the other hand, there are persons, and ladies too among them, who take Thackeray's part, and prefer his unsparing sarcasm, bracing sense, and keen wit, to what they are pleased to call the sentimentalism of his rival. From what we have observed, however, we should think that Mr. Thackeray's partizans are the fewer in number.

All this, which was, of course, well known to Mr. Thackeray himself long ago—as witness his "Kickleburys on the Rhine," where Miss Kicklebury calls Mr. Titmarsh a naughty man and positively wicked in his satire, and poor Captain Hicks expresses his uneasy sense that the same Mr. T. is going to *cawickachaw* him—has recently been brought before his notice in a somewhat rousing manner. On the publication of the "Kickleburys" there appeared, as every one knows, a short review of it in the *Times* newspaper, in which the reviewer, to use the homely phrase employed in speaking of the matter by one of Mr. Titmarsh's friends, "walked into" the little book and its author. Here are one or two of the reviewer's sentences :—

"To those who love to hug themselves in a sense of superiority by admeasurement with the most worthless of their species, in their most worthless aspects, the *Kickleburys on the Rhine* will afford an agreeable treat, especially as the purveyor of the feast offers his own moments of human weakness as a modest *entrée* in this banquet of erring mortality. To our own, perhaps unphilosophical, taste the aspirations towards sentimental perfection of another popular author are infinitely preferable to these sardonic divings after the pearl of truth, whose lustre is eclipsed in the display of the diseased oyster. * * Mr. Thackeray's pencil is more congenial than his pen. He cannot draw his men and women with their skins off, and, therefore, the effigies of his characters are pleasanter to contemplate than the flayed anatomies of the letter-press."

With what merciless wit Mr. Thackeray replied to the attack in the *Times*, and with what ridicule he contrived to cover its anonymous author, everybody knows who is in the habit of keeping up with the history of our current literature. Still, we must say that Mr. Thackeray, in his reply, left the main charge untouched. Referring with much humour and effect to the heavy language of the foregoing sentences, he did not discuss their meaning. He had, probably, good grounds for this. It is not on every trivial occasion that a man is bound to argue on so deep a question as the tendency and structure of his own genius; and in this particular case the matter was made more delicate by

the comparison which the reviewer had contrived to involve between Mr. Thackeray and Mr. Dickens. Yet, Mr. Thackeray may depend upon it, this is the kernel of the whole dispute between him and the public. As on many other occasions, the *Times* has only said tonitruously and from a mountain top what everybody has been saying low down at any rate. Having no reasons to restrain us from saying what we think on the matter, we will express ourselves freely.

In the first place, then, the question as between "the aspirations after sentimental perfection" of Mr. Dickens, and the "sardonic divings" of Mr. Thackeray, connects itself with what we have been saying as to the styles of the two authors. "Aspiration after sentimental perfection," in other words, the habit of representing objects in an ideal light, is a necessary ingredient in that poetic or romantic style of art which Mr. Dickens practises; and "sardonic diving," as the reviewer expresses it, is quite as necessary an ingredient in Mr. Thackeray's constitution as an artist of the real school. You may prefer the style of Reynolds to the style of Hogarth, if you like, and, if this is all that the reviewer meant, his taste was not necessarily unphilosophical; but you have no right, while admitting both styles of art, to insist that there shall be but one method. It may be proper enough for one artist to exhibit "the pearl of truth" in quite ideal circumstances and conditions—pure-cushioned, for example, on the crimson lining of a casket; but it may be as legitimate for another artist to display the pearl (display it still artistically remember) in its real and native bed—the hollow of the opened oyster. As pearls neither grow in crimson caskets, nor get thither by their own exertions, and are yet justly admired when found there, so it is no valid objection to Mr. Dickens's writings, in his style of art, that they represent men and women ideally, and as they never existed, or have existed only by flashes and at moments; but, on the other hand, what we require of a writer like Mr. Thackeray is, that, whether in delineating the bad or the good, he shall not exceed the proportions of the real. Nor do we think that he has done so. Abundant as are the rogues, fools, and bores in Mr. Thackeray's fictions, we believe he has kept very nearly the numerical ratio that Nature herself observes in her supply of such individuals; and he imitates Nature, too, in marking even his black characters with occasional veins of white. But he does not paint only rogues, fools, and bores; he paints, also, (though even here he *will* give the foibles,) good and amiable characters. True, as is frequently said, his amiable characters are often sadly silly, and not half so interesting as his bad ones—his Becky, for example, being a much more attractive person than his Amelia, and his Blanche Amory carrying off the

palm of interest both from Mrs. Pendennis and Laura. Even here, however, we fear he is not quite unnatural. And then his Warrington is really a noble fellow! In short, Mr. Thackeray is an excellent artist in his own style; and we should greatly fear that, if he were to be foolish enough to change that style, out of respect to any momentary expression of critical opinion, and to attempt the finer and dreamier imaginings in which Dickens excels, the result would be as when Wilkie did affect, or as if Hogarth had affected, high ideal art. And why should he do so? There may be one spirit, one general aim towards the increase of good in the world, and yet many instrumentalities, many modes of working. Religion itself, in prescribing the process of moral education, recognises two methods—that of hanging forth before men fine and noble ideals, which they may contemplate with an enthusiastic melancholy in their private solitude; and that of punishing them sharply, and inflicting on them instant and public shame, for their actual vices. And so, while a writer like Dickens may do good in one way, a writer like Thackeray may do good in another. Ask the waiters at the London clubs, if Mr. Thackeray's exposition of human nature as manifested in these institutions has not been of some service to them. Probably the reason why many readers do not like Mr. Thackeray's writings is, that they find them too personal in their allusions. So much the better. There are many corners of society, "frae Maidenkirke to John o' Groat's," as well as farther south, into which we should like to introduce a wholesome terror of Michael Angelo Titmarsh.

But whence arises this difference between the two writers? Why is Mr. Dickens, on the whole, genial, kindly, and romantic, and Mr. Thackeray, on the whole, caustic, shrewd, and satirical in his fictions? Clearly, the difference must arise from some radical difference in their ways of looking at the world, and in their conclusions as to the business and destinies of men in it.

Kindliness is the first principle of Mr. Dickens's philosophy, the sum and substance of his moral system. He does not, of course, exclude such things as pain and indignation from his catalogue of legitimate existences; indeed, as we have seen, few writers are capable of more honest bursts of indignation against what is glaringly wrong; still, in what may be called his speculative ethics, kindliness has the foremost place. His purely doctrinal protests in favour of this virtue, would, if collected, fill a little volume. His Christmas Books have been, one and all, fine fantastic sermons on this text; and, in his larger works, passages abound enforcing it. Not being able to lay our hands at this moment on any passage of this kind in "*Copperfield*,"

short, and at the same time characteristic, we avail ourselves of the following from "Barnaby Rudge."

Mr. Dickens's Apology for Mirth.—"It is something even to look upon enjoyment, so that it be free and wild, and in the face of nature, though it is but the enjoyment of an idiot. It is something to know that Heaven has left the capacity of gladness in such a creature's breast; it is something to be assured, that however lightly men may crush that faculty in their fellows, the Great Creator of mankind imparts it even to his despised and slighted work. Who would not rather see a poor idiot happy in the sunlight, than a wise man pining in a darkened jail? Ye men of gloom and austerity, who paint the face of Infinite Benevolence with an eternal frown, read in the everlasting book, wide open to your view, the lesson it would teach. Its pictures are not in black and sombre hues, but bright and glowing tints; its music, save when ye drown it, is not in sighs and groans, but songs and cheerful sounds. Listen to the million voices in the summer air, and find one dismal as your own. Remember, if ye can, the sense of hope and pleasure which every glad return of day awakens in the breast of all your kind, who have not changed their nature; and learn some wisdom even from the witless, when their hearts are lifted up, they know not why, by all the mirth and happiness it brings."

This doctrine, we repeat, is diffused through all Mr. Dickens's writings, and is affirmed again and again in express and very eloquent passages. Now, certainly, there is a fine and loveable spirit in the doctrine; and a man may be borne up by it in his airy imaginings, as Mr. Dickens is, (we might add the name of Mr. Leigh Hunt,) so cheerily and beautifully, that it were a barbarity to demur to it at the moment without serious provocation. Who can fail to see that only a benevolent heart, overflowing with faith in this doctrine, could have written the "Christmas Chimes," or conceived those exquisite reminiscences of childhood which delight us in the early pages of "Copperfield?" But when Mr. Dickens becomes aggressive in behalf of his doctrine, as he does in the foregoing, and in fifty other passages; when, as Mr. Cobden is pugnacious for peace, and as some men are said to be bigots for toleration, so Mr. Dickens is harsh in behalf of kindness—then a word of remonstrance seems really necessary. Is the foregoing doctrine, then, so axiomatic and absolute that no one may, without moral ugliness of soul, impugn or limit it? For our part, we do not think so. We know men, and very noble men, too, who would *not* rather see a poor idiot happy in the sunlight than a wise man pining in a darkened jail; we know men, and very cheerful men, too, who do *not* find the pictures of the book of nature to be all in bright and glowing tints, nor the sounds of nature to be all pleasant songs. In short, in his anti-

pathy to Puritanism, Mr. Dickens seems to have adopted a principle closely resembling that which pervades the ethical part of Unitarianism, the essence of which is, that it places a facile disposition at the centre of the universe. Now, without here offering any speculative or spiritual discussion, which might be deemed inappropriate, we may venture to say, that any man or artist who shall enter upon his sphere of activity, without in some way or other realizing and holding fast those truths which Puritanism sets such store by, and which it has embodied, according to its own grand phraseology, in the words sin, wrath, and justice, must necessarily take but half the facts of the world along with him, and go through his task too lightly and nimbly. To express our meaning in one word, such a man will miss out that great and noble element in all that is human—the element of *difficulty*. And though Mr. Dickens's happy poetic genius suggests to him much that his main ethical doctrine, if it were practically supreme in his mind, would certainly leave out, yet we think we can trace in the peculiar character of his romantic and most merry phantasies something of the want of this element.

Mr. Thackeray being, as we have already hinted, less dogmatic in his habits of writing than Mr. Dickens, less given to state and argue maxims in a propositional form, it is not so easy to obtain passages from his writings explaining his general views in the first person. On the whole, however, judging from little indications, from the general tone of his writings, and from literary analogy, we should say that he differs from Mr. Dickens in this, that, instead of clinging to any positive doctrine, from the neighbourhood of which he might survey nature and life, he holds his mind in a general state of negation and scepticism. There is in "Pendennis" a very interesting chapter, entitled "*The Way of the World*," written after that severe illness which interrupted the author in the progress of his work, and threatened to do more, and in which Mr. Thackeray falls into a more serious strain than usual. A long, and almost religious, dialogue takes place between Pen, then in a low moral state, and professing himself a sceptic and *pococurante*, and his elder friend Warrington, who retorts his arguments, denounces his conclusions, and tries to rekindle in him faith and enthusiasm. The dialogue is thus wound up:—

Pen and Warrington philosophizing.—"We are not pledging ourselves for the correctness of his (Pen's) opinions, which readers will please to consider are delivered dramatically, the writer being no more answerable for them, than for the sentiments uttered by any other character of the story. Our endeavour is merely to follow out in its progress the development of the mind of a worldly and selfish, but not ungenerous or unkind, or truth-avoiding man. And it will be seen that the

lamentable stage to which his logic has at present brought him, is one of general scepticism, and sneering acquiescence in the world as it is; or, if you like so to call it, a belief, qualified with scorn, in all things extant. The tastes and habits of such a man prevent him from being a boisterous demagogue, and his love of truth, and dislike of cant, keep him from advancing crude propositions, such as many loud reformers are constantly ready with, much more from uttering downright falsehoods, in arguing questions or abusing opponents, which he would die or starve rather than use. It was not in our friend's nature to be able to utter certain lies; nor was he strong enough to protest against others, except with a polite sneer; his maxim being, that he owed obedience to all Acts of Parliament, as long as they were not repealed.

“And to what does this easy and sceptical life lead a man? Friend Arthur was a Sadducee, and the Baptist might be in the wilderness, shouting to the poor, who were listening with all their might and faith to the preacher's awful accents and denunciations of wrath or woe or salvation; and our friend, the Sadducee, would turn his sleek mule with a shrug and a smile from the crowd, and go home to the shade of his terrace, and muse over preacher and audience, and turn to his roll of Plato, or his pleasant Greek song-book, babbling of honey and Hybla, and nymphs and fountains, and love. To what, we say, does this scepticism lead? It leads a man to a shameful loneliness and selfishness, so to speak—the more shameful because it is so goodhumoured and conscienceless and serene. Conscience! What is conscience? Why accept remorse? What is public or private faith? Mythuses alike enveloped in enormous tradition. If, seeing and acknowledging the lies of the world, Arthur, as see them you can, with only too fatal a clearness, you submit to them without any protest further than a laugh; if, plunged yourself in easy sensuality, you allow the whole wretched world to pass groaning by you unmoved; if the fight for the truth is taking place, and all men of honour are on the ground, armed on the one side or the other, and you alone are to lie on your balcony and smoke your pipe, out of the noise and the danger—you had better have died, or never have been at all, than such a sensual coward.

“‘The truth, friend!’ Arthur said, imperturbably; ‘where is the truth? Show it me. That is the question between us. I see it on both sides. I see it on the conservative side of the house, and amongst the radicals, and even on the ministerial benches. I see it in this man, who worships by Act of Parliament, and is rewarded with a silk apron and five thousand a-year; in that man, who, driven fatally by the remorseless logic of his creed, gives up everything, friends, fame, dearest ties, closest vanities, the respect of an army of churchmen, the recognised position of a leader, and passes over, truth-impelled, to the enemy, in whose ranks he will serve henceforth as a nameless private soldier. * * * Yes, I am a Sadducee, and I take things as I find them, and the world, and the Acts of Parliament of the world, as they are; and, as I intend to take a wife, if I find one, not to be madly in love, and prostrate at her feet, like a

fool, not to worship her as an angel, or to expect to find her as such, but to be good-natured to her, and courteous, expecting good-nature and pleasant society from her in turn. And so, George, if ever you hear of my marrying, depend on it, it won't be a romantic attachment on my side; and if you hear of any good place under Government, I have no particular scruples, that I know of, which would prevent me from accepting your offer.'

"'O Pen, you scoundrel! I know what you mean,' here Warrington broke out. 'This is the meaning of your scepticism, of your quietism, of your atheism, my poor fellow. You're going to sell yourself, and Heaven help you! You are going to make a bargain which will degrade you, and make you miserable for life, and there's no use talking of it. If you are once bent on it, the devil won't prevent you.'—*Pendennis*, vol. ii. pp. 236-238.

After Mr. Thackeray's protest that he is not to be held responsible for Pen's opinions, as delivered in the foregoing extract, and in the dialogue which precedes it, we may not, of course, seek his philosophy in these opinions alone. Indeed, we are too thankful to Mr. Thackeray for having had the boldness to introduce so serious a passage at all into a work of popular fiction, to wish to take any unfair advantage of it. But, it will be observed, Mr. Thackeray does not only report Pen's opinions, he also comments on these opinions very gravely in his own name, and he combats them through the medium of Warrington. When, however, a writer is at the pains to represent dramatically both the *pro* and the *con* of any question, we may be pretty sure that he has distributed nearly the entire bulk of his own sentiments on it between the two speakers to whom he assigns the task of conducting the argument. Accordingly, it seems to us, that in this antinomy between Pen and Warrington, we may, without any injustice, discern the main features of the author's own philosophy of life. In other words, it seems to us that there are many parts of Mr. Thackeray's writings in which the spirit of the *Pendennis* theory may be assumed to predominate; but that, ever and anon, traces of the Warrington spirit are also to be found in them.

Pen, in the passage before us, appears as a *pococurante* and a sceptic. Still honest and kindly, and above any positive meanness, he has sunk, for the time, into a general lowness of the spiritual faculty, the visible form of which is "a sneering acquiescence with the world as it is," or rather "a belief, qualified with scorn, in all things extant." But precisely here lies the point. To a man in this state of mind, all the things that do exist are not *extant*. As his eye sweeps through the universe, it rests by an internal necessity only on the meaner, minuter, and more terrestrial phenomena, which strike by their intense nearness; while the facts of the higher physics fade away into an invis-

bility, which, like that of the stars by day, passes for non-existence. Beings like Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, may, as the poet sublimely teaches, sing of God's mightier works—of the sun hymning in chorus with his kindred stars, of the fair earth wheeling on her axis, of the storms that rage between land and sea. *They* may speak of these things, for these things are extant to their vision. But let Mephistopheles enter, and how the note is changed! *He* cannot talk fine; *he* cannot gabble of suns and worlds, and all that sort of thing! What *he* sees and can report upon, is a far more matter-of-fact concern—how men are daily growing more foolish and miserable; how the little god of earth is still as odd in his ways as ever, and is continually getting into some new mess or other! Precisely such, though with less profundity and more principle, is the spirit of Pen. He is, like Mephistopheles, a *pococurante*. The higher things of the world not being extant for him, he qualifies his belief in all he does see with a sneer. Suppose, now, this spirit transferred into literature; how will it show itself there? In a general tone of scoffing; in a disbelief in enthusiasm, or any species of mental exaltation; in a tendency to avoid in one's self, and to turn into ridicule in others, all words or phrases that recognise the diviner truths of existence or the higher developments of mind; in a fondness for scandal and vile social investigations, and in a distaste for the magnificent and the beautiful. What, for example, is Mephistopheles's speech in the presence of the angels, but another version of that of which our modern literature is full—a perpetual tirade against such entities and expressions as (to enumerate a few in different departments,) spiritual-mindedness, fervid affection, a Christian life, the transcendental metaphysics, noble aspiration, high art? It would be unjust to say that, even in the least earnest portion of Mr. Thackeray's writings, he exhibits the spirit of scorn to anything like this extent. An admirer of Tennyson—the poet who, most of all men living, represents, and would woo back among us, the rare, the religious, and the exquisite—could hardly do this. Still, Mr. Thackeray is not altogether blameless in this respect; and, probably, whatever amount of truth there is in the general complaint against him, as a writer who delights in the contemplation of human weaknesses and absurdities, may be resolved into the cause under notice.

But there are moments in Mr. Thackeray's writings when Warrington breaks in. Believing many things that Pen believes; sympathizing with him in many of his feelings, and probably without any much more definite creed of his own, that he could state in words—Warrington is yet a nobler being than Pen. Higher things are extant to him; and though his hatred of

cant, and his rough cynical habit, would probably lead him to show his sense of these things in any other way rather than that of seasoning his talk with references to them, and might even prompt him to kick the words art, the ideal, transcendentalism, &c., to death, if ever they came too provokingly across his path, (a murder in which, but that the words still do serve a kind of useful purpose, we know many that would assist him); yet in his own soul he cherishes a fund of finer emotion, which will betray itself in bursts and flashes. Something of this we remark in Thackeray himself. It is seen in the general conception of some of his characters, such as Laura and Mrs. Pendennis, as well as Warrington; it is seen in occasional passages of serious reflection, of which perhaps the most remarkable is the one from which we have made an extract; and it is seen also in a frequent touch of real pathos, such as no mere affectation of the sorrowful could enable a writer to assume. On the whole, we should say that Mr. Thackeray has nowhere exhibited this serious spirit so conspicuously as in the second volume of his "Pendennis;" and remarking this, and how good the effect is, we must admit, without any prejudice to our previous observation regarding the necessity of Mr. Thackeray's keeping obstinately to his own style of art, that we should like to see him in future diminish the Pen a little and develop the Warrington.

There is one piece of positive doctrine, however, in which both Pen and Warrington agree, and of which Mr. Thackeray's writings are as decidedly the exponents in the present day, as Mr. Dickens's are of the doctrine of kindliness. This doctrine may be called the doctrine of *Anti-snobism*. Singular fact! in the great city of London, where higher and more ancient faiths seem to have all but perished, and where men bustle in myriads, scarce restrained by any spiritual law, there has arisen of late years, as there arose in Mecca of old, a native form of ethical belief, by which its inhabitants are tried and try each other. "Thou shalt not be a snob," such is the first principle at present of Cockney ethics. And observe how much real sincerity there is in this principle, how it really addresses itself to facts, and only to facts, known and admitted. It is not the major morals of human nature, but what are called the minor morals of society, and these chiefly in their æsthetic aspect, as modes of pleasant breeding, that the Cockney system of ethics recognises. Its maxims and commands are not "Thou shalt do no wrong," "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," "Thou shalt not covet,"—but "Thou shalt pronounce thy H's," "Thou shalt not abuse waiters as if they were dogs," "Thou shalt not falsely make a boast of dining with peers and Members of Parliament." He who offends in these respects is a snob.

Thus, at least, the Cockney moralist professes no more than he really believes. The real species of moral evil recognised in London, the real kind of offence which the moral sentiment there punishes, and cannot away with, is snobbism. The very name, it will be observed, is characteristic and unpretentious—curt, London-born, irreverent. When you say that a man is a snob, it does not mean that you detest and abhor him, but only that you must cut him, or make fun of him. Such is *Anti-snobbism*, the doctrine of which Mr. Thackeray, among his other merits, has the merit of being the chief literary expounder and apostle! Now it is not a very awful doctrine, certainly; it is not, as our friend Warrington would be the first to admit, the doctrine in the strength of which one would like to guide his own soul, or to face the future and the everlasting; still it has its use, and by all means let it have, yes, let it have its scribes and preachers!

We had thought, after this more grave investigation, to indulge in some remarks illustrative more especially of the humours of the two writers, as compared with each other, of the forms of the comic in which they respectively excel and show their mastery. Here also we should have seen the difference of their ultimate method and spirit; and should have found Dickens to be the more kindly, genial, and fantastic, and Thackeray to be the more tart, satirical, and truculent humorist. Forbearing any such process of contrast, however, the scope and results of which we have already indicated, we must close with a general remark, applicable to both writers.

Although the aim of all fictitious literature is primarily to interest the reader; and although, in a certain deep sense, it may be maintained that no kind of literary composition whatever is valuable that is not interesting, it would yet seem as if recently the determination to achieve that special kind of interest which consists in mere amusement, had prevailed too largely among our writers of tales and novels. We do not often see now that effort at artistic perfection, that calm resolution to infuse into a performance the concentrated thought and observation of the writer, and to give it final roundness and finish, which did exist in old times, and which supreme authorities have always recommended. The spirit of craft and money-making has crept into our artistic literature; and, even in our best writers, we have but a compromise between the inner desire and the outer necessity. Nor is this to be very harshly condemned, or very gravely wondered at. Our writers of fiction, for the most part, candidly own that they write to make money and amuse people. Their merit is therefore the greater, when, like the two eminent writers whose works we have been discussing, they do more than this. Should we suggest that their functions would be intrinsically higher, and more satis-

factory to their own better judgment, did they work less according to the external demand, and more according to the internal wish and form, they will admit the suggestion to the full, but say that on the whole they are not strong enough to follow it. Should we farther adduce the old consideration of fame, and the opinion of posterity, as an argument on the right side, they may even turn the laugh against us. "Posterity!" they may say, with Mr. Merryman in the Prelude to Faust:—

Would of posterity I heard less mention!
Suppose posterity had *my* attention,
Who'd make contemporary fun?

Besides, in the present and still increasing multitudinousness of books and authors, the chance of having readers among posterity is, even for the best, a very sorry hope. Still, we would adhere to our wish; and that very multitudinousness of books and authors may bring us right again one day. There are two literary devices or fashions to which at present one may trace much of the particular evil now under view. The one is the fashion or device of the three-volume novel; the other the fashion of publishing novels in serial numbers. The first, which we are happy to see is losing ground, is a wretched piece of publisher's despotism in literature, redeemed from absolute vileness only by that mystical artistic value which there is, and always will be, in the number three. The other, which is still gaining ground, operates deleteriously, by compelling an author to supply the parts of his story before he has thoroughly conceived the whole, and also by compelling him to spice each separate part, so that it may please alone. These conditions exist, and it is not given to any man, in any time, to be independent of conditions that will thwart him, and compel him to deviate from his ideal of excellence. Still, if such writers as Dickens, Thackeray, and Jerrold, who have already earned a reputation, who have as much talent as any of those past novelists of whom our literature is proud, and who may even venture now to lead the public against its own prejudices, were to set the example, by each doing his best, in the style each in his inner heart believes to be best, the good that would be effected might be very great.