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THE STORY
OF THE
MOOR OF VENICE.
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THE STORY
OF THE
MOOR OF VENICE.
BY
G. B.

THE
S T O R Y
OF THE
MOOR OF VENICE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

of
Giraldi Cintio
WITH

TWO ESSAYS

ON

SHAKESPEARE,

AND

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

BY *WOLSTENHOLME PARR*, A. M.
LATE FELLOW OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, JUN. AND W. DAVIES,
(SUCCESSORS TO MR. CADELL) IN THE STRAND.

1795.

THE
ZOROASTRIAN
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PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

IN perusing the various Catalogue of new Publications, with which the British Press is daily teeming, it is natural to be impressed with at least some portion of that impatience and resentment which one of the Roman satirists has expressed against his countrymen with such feeling and animation. At so distant a period it is not possible to know the precise degree of literary insolence which roused his indignation: but if, like his late Imitator amongst us, he waited till every sanctuary of religion had been violated, every pale of authority broken down, and private confidence itself betrayed, we must allow that he did not yield without reason to the severest invective of Criticism.

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The structure of the human mind, the natural and unalterable force of human passions have, however, rendered it impossible to discuss with impunity the mysteries of faith, or the principles of government. Every attempt to subvert the old, or to propagate new opinions, most assuredly kindles a proportionate flame of opposition in the breast of some daring enthusiasts, who cling with pious fervour to the prejudices they have been taught to revere, or to the emoluments they have been accustomed to enjoy.

In battles contested with so much fury, it is always dangerous, and generally fruitless, to engage. By those who delight in peace, it is better they should be left to disfigure, tear, wound, and demolish each other, until the rancour of controversy, fatigued by its own excesses, has subsided into sober reflection, or loses itself, as it more frequently does, in the spite and malignity of Impotence. The mild voice of persuasion is fraught with maxims too rational to be adopted; and will either not
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be heard at all amidst such boisterous and deafening clamours, or else will aggravate the venom already collected by the mortification which it offers to the pride of Disputants.

One observation is applicable to all their theories. Such reformers as keep the eye too steadily fixed on the dazzling point of abstract excellence, may gather from the state of their own minds, when struggling against the arbitrary propositions of their adversaries, or resisting the cautious advice of their friends, a very simple and important lesson of legislation. When the passions are inflamed and the humours vitiated, the most accurate and incontrovertible deductions of reason may, by the shock of contending principles, be injurious to the cause of tranquillity and virtue; and, by repelling with too much disdain the vices they are destined to correct, produce a dangerous and fatal Resistance.

Disgusted with this view of abilities misapplied, and lamenting the devastations which

the hostilities of passion have sometimes been able to carry into the provinces of intellect, we should turn with peculiar complacency to the instructive information of the traveller, or the faithful portraits of Biography. It will not, perhaps, be deemed foreign to the purpose, for one who is offering considerations on individual character, and publishing reflections that have occurred to him in a foreign country, to dwell for a moment on the manner in which those two kinds of composition are at present conducted. It is chiefly among those writers that the moralist should endeavour to enforce the laws of honour, of virtue, and of Truth.

The models of antiquity were long held in veneration, and though the range of science be now extended far beyond the limits of Greek or Roman speculation, yet the wisest amongst us have always considered it as dangerous to abandon those great preceptors of mankind, wherever their example could be followed, their opinions known, or their march delineated.

M. A. Stillingham

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ated. This law, if too universally and too injudiciously obeyed, might perhaps impose a degrading servility on modern composition. Where the models, however, are unexceptionable, deviation might be deemed folly, and attempts at novelty repressed as intemperate innovation. When a measure has once been established as just and general, the want of conformity will either be rebuked as literary presumption, or condemned as literary fraud. At least the author, whose title promises what his pages do not fulfil, and raises expectations which his volumes do not satisfy, should be cautious to remove all moral objections to his work; should provide excuses for what may appear in that species of composition either penurious or excessive; and justify by his ability, what his fancy or his ambition has suggested.

The general outline and the rational principles of biographical writing, are to be collected from comparing the lives of Plutarch with the moral and political character of that sage

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philo-

philosopher himself. His subject was great, interesting, and important; distinguished by some pre-eminence of virtue, or remarkable for some superiority of talent; such as might either improve us in the exercise of our faculties, or exalt our knowledge and love of excellence. His method of treating it was simple and energetic; which neither confuses by a multitude of particulars, nor suppresses those which are interesting for fear of obscuring the predominant quality. His mind was equally capable of illustrating his primary purpose by the tendency of the inferior topics, or deriving from the consideration of them alone the great and decisive delineation of character. It is true that the superstition of the age in which he lived, and the inexplicable incidents of human life, had induced him to look upon Fortune as a being of rational and divine controul; but this persuasion did not prevent him from searching rigorously into the moral causes of success, and detecting the follies of indiscretion. Having himself exercised such subordinate offices of political business as fell to the

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the share of his countrymen, he had learned to distinguish real from ostensible motives; and, amidst the pomp of embassy, or the bustle of war, could penetrate into the most secret recesses of the soul. No portion of ancient history is in itself more valuable, or has been executed with greater skill, than his discussion of the conduct of Marius and Silla towards the conclusion of the Jugurthine war. The dangerous ambition of Cæsar is equally exposed by his defence of Catiline, his conquest of Gaul, and his corrupt dismissal of Pompey's Legions.

It was the same rare and uncommon quality of detecting the different motives that lead to the same action, that enabled Shakspeare to pronounce of Brutus and his associates,

“ This was the noblest Roman of them all:

“ All the conspirators, save only he,

“ Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar;

“ He only, in a general honest thought

“ And common good to all, made one of them.”

JUL. CÆS.

Such maxims as are frequently repeated and held by the persons of whom he treats, to be general rules of conduct, such witticisms as display their peculiar turn of thought and vivacity, are properly considered by him as constituent and essential parts of biography. His known partiality for both lively and proverbial sentences, may afford us equal reason to admire the œconomy with which he has used them, and the judgment with which they are selected.

Biography, conducted upon such principles and with so much understanding, will ever be ranked among the most interesting and instructive species of composition. Converted, as it has been lately in Great Britain, into memoirs* and private anecdotes, it becomes the school

* The Confessions of Rousseau are undoubtedly an immoral work; but this writer seems to have triumphed over criticism still more effectually than Shakespeare himself. He writes to the passions in a manner so enchanting, that he must be in every state of society the favourite author of mankind.

of

of vice and treachery; the infamous vehicle in which the strumpet proclaims her debaucheries, and the villain avows his crimes. Did not they find readers, such disgusting publications would scarcely deserve the honour of being censured. But we would willingly suppress the passion by which they are encouraged; that malicious prying curiosity into the secrets of family history, where dissipation and idleness seek for apologies in divulging the weakness and folly of others. Offences are not committed without the hope of profit or of praise. A suitable degree of public virtue and resentment would have shut these babblers up for ever in the vaults of Silence.

What shall we say of the manner in which Dr. Johnson has been treated by those who have apparently sacrificed his reputation to the light and ridiculous vanity of informing the world how well they knew him. If this extraordinary man be supposed to resemble Socrates in his genius and moral character, his fortune has certainly not been similar in find-
ing

ing a Plato and a Xenophon to support his doctrines, and record his Virtues.

Much cannot be learned from the report of conversation, to which he seems generally to have been provoked by his companions, for the sole purpose of swelling his own posthumous memoirs. The mind when exasperated by impertinence, or forced into action by reiterated questions, shews but a very unfaithful specimen of its powers. The capricious humour, or the favourite idea of the day, the casual state of health and spirits, the very atmosphere itself, may colour the natural disposition with a degree of spleen or cheerfulness to which it is not allied. A strong propensity, which would have vanished before the tranquil and intense reflection of a study, may betray the speaker into erroneous or immoral propositions. Fortunately however for mankind, they are not condemned to search in these deplorable sketches for the character of that excellent writer. But if, by any miraculous revolution in what seems to be the established order

order of events, these posthumous volumes should survive the works of Johnson himself, he will then appear to have been a tyrant in society as well as politics; a perverse unprincipled reasoner in morality, and a bigot in religion. Yet one of those, who have thus disfigured him, boasts that his book is sailing down the stream of Time, while every admirer of literary excellence, every observer of the sacred laws of friendship, must wish it to be finally and irretrievably lost in the ocean of Oblivion.

There is another very numerous class of writers who have quitted the ancient models; and, it must be confessed, not entirely without plausibility, if we consider the vast improvements in the art of travelling since Herodotus published his account of Ægyptian Antiquities, and Pausanias expressed his admiration of Grecian ability and taste. It does not appear however that the change has arisen so much from any allowed superiority in the new method, as from the importance which these
 authors

authors have conspired to attribute to their own feelings and reflections. Travels are not now a history of art, or a criticism on its remains; a delineation of manners, or an analysis of government; but an account of the writer's own activity and talents: his recollections, his raptures, and disgusts, of which the reader cannot always discern the reason, or acknowledge the justness. There is, however, one point in which the method of Herodotus might have been adopted with advantage, and where it does not appear that the egotism of the modern compiler would have suffered any material degree of mortification. It would be adviseable for him, perhaps, whenever he is relating any circumstance so miraculous, that the credulity of his readers may not dispose them to implicit belief, not to support the legend with a personal assertion, but frankly ascribe it to the women or the priests from whom it was originally received.

When such men publish, without a blush, the most scandalous libels on their friends, their

their hosts, and their protectors; on ambassad-
 dors, at whose tables they have been fed, and at
 whose expence they have travelled, Impudence
 itself is affrighted by their effrontory; and
 even Ingratitude joins with all the common
 feelings of humanity, to decry their baseness
 and perpetuate their Infamy.

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An extreme veneration for the excellent writers of antiquity, does not prevent us from paying due respect to such of the moderns as have either contributed to the honour of their own country, or to the general embellishment of society. It would be strange indeed if, to an Englishman residing long in the state of Venice, where so many of his scenes are laid, Shakespear did not appear to merit as much of his notice as the most venerable classics of Greece and Rome. It is a singular circumstance in the writing of this author, that all those pieces which are founded on authentic history are infinitely less interesting, if not inferior in point of composition, to those which are drawn from Romance, or (if any such there be) from his own imagination. This reflection makes us naturally desirous of exam-

examining the sources from whence he derived the outlines of his story. To gratify those who may be stimulated by such a curiosity, has been the motive for executing the following Translation. The Essays with which it is accompanied, do not pretend to be complete dissertations on the tragedies whose titles they bear, but only to contain some remarks not offered by others, or at least not with the same view in their Application.

ON THE TRAGEDY

CORIOLANUS

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ON THE TRAGEDY

OF

CORIOLANUS.

ON THE TRAGEDY

OF CORIOLANUS

S T O R Y
O F
C O R I O L A N U S.

IT is the duty of the historian to record the transactions of which he undertakes to treat, with such scrupulous and impartial fidelity, that the imagination should never be suffered to exercise its powers to amplify or diminish them. The love of truth is the only passion which history should ever attempt to gratify; and this gratification is always impaired by any mixture of observation which lessens or destroys the simplicity of facts. But as human actions arise from and have a continual reference to human passions, the reader of genius will be warmed by their perusal, and will find a perpetual fund of enthusiasm and indignation in viewing the patience of

suffering virtue, or the oppression of unrelenting tyranny. The sensibility thus originally excited by a divine and spontaneous operation of the soul, is prompted by its natural expansion to communicate itself to the bosoms and the feelings of others. All the treasures of Nature are open to the imagination that burns with this glowing desire of sympathy; and language itself assumes a superior tone of elevation and Dignity.

Whatever has been fabulously attributed to the inspiration of Castalia and Helicon is then really infused into the human breast, which pours forth from an inexhaustible source of sentiment the streams of a rich and genuine poetry. If then the object of History be to inform the mind, and that of Poetry to rouse the sensibility, as the most philosophical critics have long ago determined, it is evident that these two classes of composition will require to be governed by very different laws and regulations. The page of the historian will be loaded with a minute detail of various parti-

culars

culars, which by the poet must be moulded into one general mass of interesting and important action. To facilitate this great and necessary operation, he is not only permitted to change the real succession of events, but allowed to invent and substitute others more affecting, when those which have actually happened are too mean or trivial for his purpose. In the republic of letters a permission is frequently equivalent to a command; and the poet will be condemned and rejected for that very fidelity and precision for which the historian has been rewarded with applause and laurels. Nor is this to be wondered at, since even the duties of morality are liable to the same variations. It is the exalted privilege of reason to appreciate the value of virtue herself, which loses its quality and changes its nature, if exercised in opposition to the dictates of prudence and Discretion.

If these observations be just, it is time to apply them to the tragedy before us. We must suppose that the reader has already been

apprized of some observations made by his commentators on the historical plays of Shakespeare. They are there considered as a new and singular species of composition, which ought not to be subjected to an examination guided by the laws which a rigorous tribunal has established for theatrical representations in general. Did we indeed find in them only violations of dramatic unities, and deviations from certain formalities which custom and prejudice have ordained, we should willingly leave them to the censure of Voltaire, and to the apologies which those have produced in their favour, who are conducted by a freer spirit in literary labours. But in assuming the dramatic form they ought at least to have conformed to the dramatic principle: they ought not to have been, as *Coriolanus* will be found to be, a minute and exact copy of historical detail, in which the action has acquired no additional interest or solidity from the art or combination of the poet. This is a defect which instead of awakening our sympathy, leaves us in a cold indifference

indifference about the catastrophe which the author is preparing for us; and becomes an inexcusable violation of a fundamental law of nature and criticism. Such an offence can neither be veiled or extenuated by the dexterity and genius with which the author may have assigned proper and characteristic sentiments to the persons of his drama, nor by the new materials with which he has decorated and enlarged the biographical fabric of Plutarch. We may praise the religious scruples and the careful veneration with which the Romans transported to the capitol the gods of their conquered provinces; and prepared for them a more magnificent altar, and a more splendid ritual of adoration and sacrifice. But the eye of rational morality will yet be able to distinguish the injustice with which they were invaded, and the cruel rapacity with which they were plundered.

The historical plays of Shakespeare are however always a lively and ingenious comment on those events, which he selects for the

exercise of his observation and talents. It will be found perhaps that he merits the highest degree of praise for the execution of this part of his work, and for the pleasure the reader receives from it, if we examine for a moment the character of Coriolanus himself. In doing this we shall not be led into any long or philosophical disquisition of his moral qualities : it is sufficient to refer them only to that species of interest and sympathy which tragedy aims at inspiring. If it appears that the character of the principal hero of the drama is but ill adapted to produce the effects which the interest of the tragic muse requires, and the composition itself is still attractive, it will be evident he has executed with a masterly hand his historical portraits, and assigned to each of them natural sentiments with a just and forcible expression. This interest if considered in general, is however far too weak for tragical exhibition ; but if we recollect the partial curiosity with which every nation views the characters and events of its own history, it will reasonably account for the favour and reputation

tion he still enjoys in his own country, and the pleasure with which an English audience listens to the virtues or the crimes of former kings. To excite by illusion a fictitious sentiment of grief or compassion, is perhaps the most delicate operation of human art. The mind, when exposed to these trials, becomes jealous of its own dignity and firmness; and, if the utmost skill be not exerted to seduce it, obstinately refuses to yield to tender or pathetic impressions. The sufferer in real life, on the first view of his misery and wretchedness, excites our sympathy and obtains our pardon, although his torments have been occasioned by his own guilt or incapacity. But in the poetical representations of humanity, pity loses its facility, and instead of its former character of a natural emotion, assumes the discretion and reserve of a moral virtue. Simple distress is then no longer able to draw us from our indifference, or disturb our serenity. Before our tears will flow for an imaginary sufferer, we must not only be persuaded that neither his vices nor his errors have contributed

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to his afflictions, but also that he possesses a sufficient degree of merit and virtue to engage our affection and Esteem.

Courage, accompanied with an extreme degree of military ardour and activity, seems to have been the only good quality possessed by Coriolanus. This is a virtue which we easily praise and admire; but if it be not united with the refined taste and the polished humanity of Scipio, it has certainly no claim to our love, no hold on our attachment. Valour tinged with ferocity, becomes an object of terror and disgust to the very people for whose honour or protection it has been nobly and successfully exerted. It produced in Coriolanus a rude and barbarous demeanour, which we should not be extremely sorry even in real life to see chastised, much less in the shadows of a theatrical Representation.

It is certainly possible for one individual to render very important services to another, with such haughtiness and asperity of manner, that
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he who receives the favour may reasonably consider himself as absolved from all the ties and obligations of gratitude. If this be lawful in our private and domestic capacities, it is certainly more unequivocally just with regard to the community at large ; where it is the duty of every individual portion of the people to contribute as much as lies in his power to the public good. He is but a false and suspicious patriot who, when arrived at distinction, seeks only to give a freer scope to his insolence and tyranny ; and thinks that when he has once given general proofs of the love of his country, he may indulge without restraint his hatred and contempt for his fellow-citizens. The public will not be long held in subjection to the authority of past services ; and exile is not perhaps too severe a punishment for one who considers his countrymen as vilified by his own appearance amongst them, and dishonoured by his own superior and exalted Prowess.

When we see this banished hero animated with a bloody spirit of revenge, returning to burn

burn and pillage his native country we almost desire his death. In that awful and tremendous moment, when he has by the violence of his own conduct reduced himself to the dreadful alternative of destroying Rome or devoting himself, we feel the influence of the tragic passions; but we are not persuaded that he deserves to live, till the fatal instant when he has resolved to die.

“ My mother, mother, Oh !

You've won a happy victory to Rome.

But for your Son, believe it, Oh ! believe it,

Most dang'rously with him you have prevail'd ;

If not most mortal to him. Let it come.”

are perhaps the only verses in the whole piece that breathe the true and genuine spirit of the tragic muse. History affords no example ; nor is it possible for the imagination to conceive a more perfect situation, nor a more auspicious opportunity of atoning for abused authority, violated patriotism, and filial disobedience. It appears therefore that the life of Coriolanus is not a subject well adapted

adapted to tragedy; first, on account of the confusion arising from the variety and minuteness of historical detail: and secondly on account of the rough, unpleasant, and perhaps disgusting character which he discovers in his political and domestic conduct. But were the manner of his repentance and his death to be chosen by a poet of suitable feeling and capacity, the theatre might derive from it one of its most moral and interesting exhibitions. Every one sees to what a beautiful and sublime series of pathetic sentiments this subject would lead; in developing the patriotism of Volumnia contrasted by her maternal affection; in unfolding the different shades of the same patriotism obstructed by the conjugal tenderness of Virgilia. The breast of Coriolanus himself would be disturbed by an obstinate and full-grown spirit of revenge, silently opposed by the spectre of dishonour that frights him from its gratification; loudly pleaded against by the friends of his youth and the protectors of his childhood, and finally overcome by filial and wedded Love. A
 purer,

purser sacrifice of private affections was never offered by any family at the shrine of public Virtue.

In scenes of such tender expostulation, it would be undoubtedly difficult to preserve those hardy outlines of the Roman character, which constantly degraded the female sex in all their civil regulations. It is indeed surprising, that a nation which had twice overturned the form of their government to avenge the violence which their chief magistrates had offered to women, should never have conceived the project of emancipating them from their domestic slavery. Was it because the authority of public opinion had proscribed as a weakness the workings of natural affection; or because a momentary access of enthusiasm had overpowered the habitual sentiment of Tyranny?*

But

* We are rather inclined to favour the latter opinion. The service rendered by Volumnia to her country was certainly important, and had been purchased by her at
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But there are virtues in a barbarous state of society, which the pride and vanity of civilized nations can neither conceive nor imitate. The Goths and the Vandals had buried in one common tomb the vices and the elegancies of the ancient world, that the manners of men might be moulded anew, and receive from an equal influence of both the sexes their due proportion of social gaiety. And if, as Mr. Hume somewhere supposes, the sages of ancient learning returning to their chair of instruction, would deride the gentleness and humanity of modern Europe, we should still have the courage to reject with disdain their unmanly proposition, and fight with invincible obstinacy against the contagion of their Brutality.

the price of all that was dearest to her. Yet the temple raised upon this occasion was not consecrated to female merit, but to female Fortune,

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THE
MOOR OF VENICE.

THE
MOOR OF VENICE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is very unsatisfactory to offer to the public a translation which very few will have an opportunity of comparing with the original. I have been deterred from printing the Story of Giraldi along with the present version by my unwillingness to enlarge the bulk of a volume which bears the name of one who never before offered any composition to the public eye. Besides I am in hopes that soon will be published in Italian a translation of some of the plays of Shakespeare, where the original novels may appear with greater propriety. Such a work has been undertaken at Padua by a person perfectly equal to the task, and is at present in some forwardness. The English in general will not hear of such a publication, on account of the difficulty which they suppose foreigners must meet with in understanding Shakespeare. But it may be observed on

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he other hand, that the scenes of Shakespeare contain so much minute knowledge of local customs that they can only be understood by the people of the country. I shall mention one instance in Othello—

The Clown, at the beginning of the third act, asks the musicians if their instruments have been at Naples, that they speak in the nose thus. The Commentator observes on this passage, that the venereal disease first made its appearance at the siege of Naples. There are few clowns in Italy that know this; but every clown there knows that Pulcinella is the Neapolitan mask, and that Pulcinella speaks through his nose. He generally knows too that the man who plays this puppet, puts in his mouth a reed similar to that which is placed in the orifice of the hautboy.

THE
MOOR OF VENICE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN
OF
GIAN BATTISTA GIRALDI CINTIO,
OF
FERRARA.

THERE was once in Venice a Moor of great merit, who for his personal courage, and the proofs he had given of his conduct, as well as his vigorous genius in the affairs of war, was held in great esteem by those gentlemen who, in rewarding patriotic services, excel all the republics that ever existed. It happened that a virtuous woman of great beauty called Desdemona, not drawn by female appetite, but by the virtue of the Moor, fell in love with him; and he, subdued by the charms and noble sentiments of the lady, be-

came equally enamoured of her. Their passion was so successful that they were married although her relations did all in their power to make her take another husband. They lived together in such peace and concord while they were at Venice, that there never passed between them either word or action that was not expressive of affection. The Venetians resolving to change the garrison which they maintain in Cyprus, elected the Moor to the command of the troops which they destined for that island. Although he was extremely pleased with the honour proposed to him (as it is a dignity conferred only on those who are noble, brave, trusty, and of approved courage) yet was his joy diminished when he reflected on the length and inconvenience of the voyage, supposing that Desdemona must be very averse to undertaking it. His wife, who valued nothing in the world but her husband, and rejoiced exceedingly in the testimony of approbation so lately shewn him by a powerful and celebrated republic, was extremely impatient for the departure of the troops, that she might accom-

accompany him to a post of so much honour. But she was very much vexed at seeing the Moor disturbed; and, not knowing the reason, said to him one day at dinner, "How can you be so melancholy after having received from the Senate so high and so honourable a distinction?"—"My love for you, Desdemona," replied the Moor, "disturbs my enjoyment of the rank conferred upon me, since I am now exposed to this alternative—I must either endanger your life by sea, or leave you at Venice. The first would be terrible, as I shall suffer extremely from every fatigue you undergo, from every danger that threatens you: the second would render me insupportable to myself, as parting from you would be parting from my life."—"Ah! husband," returned Desdemona, "why do you perplex yourself with such idle imaginations? I will follow you wherever you go, though it were necessary to pass through fire instead of only going by water in a safe and well equipped vessel. If there are dangers in the way, I will share them with you; and indeed your

affection for me could not be great, if you thought of leaving me at Venice to save me from a sea-voyage, or believed that I would rather remain here in security than share with you both danger and fatigue. I insist therefore on your preparing for the voyage with all that cheerfulness which your dignity ought to inspire." The Moor then tenderly embraced his wife, saying, "May Heaven long preserve us in this degree of reciprocal affection." Soon afterwards, having settled his affairs and prepared the necessary stores, he went on board the galley with his wife and his company, and sailed for Cyprus with a favourable wind. He had in his company an ensign of a very amiable outward appearance, but whose character was extremely treacherous and base. He had imposed on the Moor's simplicity so successfully, that he had gained his friendship; for although he was in fact a very great coward, yet his carriage and conversation were so haughty and full of pretension, that you would have taken him for a Hector or an Achilles. This rascal had also conducted his wife with

him

him to Cyprus, who was a handsome and discreet woman; and being an Italian, Desdemona was so fond of her, that they passed the greatest part of their time together. In the same company was also a lieutenant, to whom the Moor was much attached. The lieutenant went often to the Moor's house, and dined frequently with him and his wife. Desdemona seeing that the Moor was so fond of him, shewed him every mark of attention and civility, with which the Moor was much pleased. The detestable ensign, forgetting his duty to his own wife, and violating all the laws of friendship, honour, and gratitude with which he was bound to the Moor, fell passionately in love with Desdemona, and thought only how he might enjoy her. He dared not however avow himself, for fear the Moor if he discovered it should instantly put him to death. He sought by all the private means in his power to make Desdemona conscious of his love. But she was so entirely taken up with the Moor, that she thought neither of him nor of any one else; and all that he did

to

to engage her affections produced not the least effect. He then took it into his head, that this neglect arose from her being pre-engaged in favour of the lieutenant; and not only determined to get rid of him, but changed his affection for her into the most bitter hatred. He studied besides how he might prevent in future the Moor from living happily with Desdemona, should his passion not be gratified after he had murdered the lieutenant. Revolving in his mind a variety of methods, all impious and abominable, he at last determined to accuse her to the Moor of adultery with the lieutenant. But knowing the Moor's great affection for Desdemona and his friendship for the lieutenant, he plainly saw that unless his deceit was very artfully conducted, it would be impossible to make him think ill of either of them. For this reason he determined to wait till time and place afforded him a fit opportunity for entering on his wicked design; and it was not long before the Moor degraded the lieutenant for having drawn his sword and wounded a foldier upon guard.

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This accident was so painful to Desdemona, that she often tried to obtain for him her husband's pardon. In the mean time the Moor had observed to the ensign, that his wife teased him so much in favour of the lieutenant, that he feared he should be obliged at last to restore him to his commission. This appeared to that villain the proper moment for opening his scheme of treachery, which he began by saying, "Perhaps Desdemona is fond of his company."—"And why?" said the Moor.—"Nay," replied he, "I do not chuse to meddle between man and wife; but if you watch her properly, you will understand me." Nor would he, to the earnest entreaties of the Moor, afford any further explanation. These words had stung the Moor so severely, that he endeavoured perpetually to find out their meaning, and became exceedingly melancholy. Whereupon, when his wife sometime afterwards repeated her solicitations that he would forgive the lieutenant, and not sacrifice the service and friendship of so many years to one slight fault, particularly as the lieutenant and
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the foldier were friends again, the Moor grew angry, and said to her, "It is somewhat extraordinary, Desdemona, that you should take so much trouble about this fellow; he is neither your brother nor your relation, that he should claim so much of your affection." His wife with much sweetness and humility replied, 'I have no other motive for speaking, than the pain it gives me to see you deprived of so excellent a friend as you have always told me the lieutenant was to you. I hope you will not be angry with me; yet his fault does not merit so much of your hatred: but you Moors are of so warm a constitution, that every trifle transports you with anger and revenge.' The Moor, still more irritated by these words, replied, "Perhaps one who suspects it not may learn that by experience; I will be revenged for the injuries done to me, so thoroughly, that I shall be satisfied." His wife was much terrified by these expressions, and seeing him, for the first time, in a passion with her, submissively answered, 'I have none but the purest motives for speaking on the business: but not to displease

displease you in future, I promise never to speak of it again.' The Moor, on this new application made by his wife in favour of the lieutenant, imagined that the ensign's words meant that she was in love with him: he therefore went to that scoundrel in a state of great dejection, and endeavoured to make him speak more intelligibly. The ensign bent on the ruin of this poor woman, after feigning an unwillingness to say any thing to her disadvantage, and at last pretending to yield to the vehement entreaties of the Moor, said, "I cannot conceal the pain I feel in being under the necessity of making a discovery which will be to you so very shocking; but since you insist on it, and the attention which I ought to pay to the honour of my commanding-officer, prompts me to speak, I will not now refuse to satisfy your demand and my own duty. You must know then that Desdemona is only displeas'd at seeing you angry with the lieutenant, because, when he comes to your house, she consoles herself with him for the disgust which your blackness now occasions her to feel."

feel." These words penetrated to the very bottom of the Moor's heart; but to be better informed (although his previous suspicion made him give great credit to the ensign's information) he assumed a threatening countenance and said, 'I know not what prevents me from cutting out that insolent tongue of yours that has so impudently attacked the honour of my wife.' The ensign then replied, "I expected no other reward for this friendly office of mine; but since my duty has made me go so far, and my regard for your honour still remains, I tell you again that the case is so; and if her feigned affection for you has blindfolded you to such a degree that you have not seen what is so very visible, that does not at all lessen the truth of my assertion. The lieutenant himself, who is one of those who are not content with their own enjoyments when some other is not made acquainted with them, told me so; and," added he, "if I had not feared your displeasure, I would have given him at the time that death he merited. But since the information I give
you,

you, which concerns you more than any one else, makes you treat me so very improperly, I am sorry I did not hold my tongue, that I might have avoided giving you offence." The Moor then answered, in great agitation, ' If you do not make me to see with my own eyes the truth of what you tell me, be assured that I will make you wish you had been born dumb.'— " This would have been easy enough," replied the villain, " when he came to your house: but now that you have driven him away for a much lighter reason than that which ought to have banished him thence, it will be difficult to prove it. For though I think yet that he continues to enjoy Desdemona whenever you give him an opportunity, he must necessarily proceed with greater caution now than he did before he had incurred your displeasure. But I do not despair of making you see that which upon my word you will not believe." They then separated. The poor Moor went home with a barbed arrow in his side, waiting impatiently for the day when the ensign should shew him what
was

was to render him for ever miserable. But the known purity of Desdemona's conduct gave no less uneasiness to the villanous ensign, because he was afraid he should not be able to convince the Moor of what he had so falsely assured him. He applied himself therefore to the invention of new malice, and devised other expedients. I have already said that Desdemona went frequently to the ensign's house, and passed great part of the day with his wife. The villain had observed that she often brought with her a handkerchief that the Moor had given her, and which, as it was very delicately worked in the Moorish taste, was very highly valued by them both; he determined to steal it, and by its means complete her ruin. He had a little girl of three years old that was much caressed by Desdemona; and one day, when that unhappy woman was on a visit to this villain, he took up the child in his arms and presented it to Desdemona, who received it and pressed it to her bosom. In the same instant this deceiver stole from her fast the handkerchief, with such dexterity,

that

that she did not perceive him; and went away with it in very high spirits. Desdemona went home, and taken up with other thoughts never recollected her handkerchief till some days after; when, not being able to find it, she began to fear that the Moor should ask her for it as he often did. The infamous ensign watching his opportunity went to the lieutenant, and to aid his wicked purpose left the handkerchief on his bolster. The lieutenant did not find it till the next morning, when, getting up, he set his foot upon it as it had fallen to the floor. Not being able to imagine how it came there and knowing it to be Desdemona's, he determined to carry it back to her; and, waiting till the Moor was gone out, he went to the back-door and knocked. Fortune, who seemed to have conspired along with the ensign the death of this poor woman, brought the Moor home in the same instant. Hearing some one knock he went to the window, and, much disturbed, asked who is there? The lieutenant hearing his voice, and fearing that when he came down he should do him

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some mischief, ran away without answering; the Moor came down, and finding no one either at the door or in the street, returned full of suspicion to his wife, and asked if she knew who it was that had knocked. She answered with great truth that she knew not. "But I think," said he, "it was the lieutenant;"—"It might be he," said she, "or any one else." The Moor checked himself at the time though he was violently enraged, and determined to take no step without first consulting the ensign. To him he immediately went, and related what had just happened, begging him to learn from the lieutenant what he could on the subject. The ensign rejoiced much in this accident, and promised to do so. He contrived to enter into discourse with him one day in a place where the Moor might see them. He talked with him on a very different subject, laughed much, and expressed by his motions and attitudes very great surprize. The Moor as soon as he saw them separate went to the ensign, and desired to know what had passed between them. The ensign, after
many

many solicitations, at last told him that he had concealed nothing from him. He says he has enjoyed your wife every time that you have staid long enough from home to give him an opportunity; and that in their last interview she had made him a present of that handkerchief which you gave her. The Moor thanked him, and thought that if his wife had no longer the handkerchief in her possession, it would be a proof that the ensign had told him the truth. For which reason one day after dinner among other subjects he asked her for this handkerchief. The poor woman, who had long apprehended this, blushed excessively at the question, and to hide her change of colour, which the Moor had very accurately observed, ran to her wardrobe and pretended to look for it. After having searched for some time, "I cannot conceive," said she, "what is become of it! have not you taken it?"—'Had I taken it,' replied he, 'I should not have asked you for it. But you may look for it another time more at your ease.' Leaving her then, he began to reflect what would

be the best way of putting to death his wife and the lieutenant, and how he might avoid being prosecuted for the murder. Thinking night and day on this subject, he could not prevent Desdemona from perceiving that his behaviour to her was very different from what it had been formerly. She often asked him what it was that agitated him so violently. You who were once the merriest man alive are now the most melancholy. The Moor answered and alleged a variety of reasons, but she was not satisfied with any of them; and knowing that she had done nothing to justify so much agitation, she began to fear that he grew tired of her. She once in conversation with the ensign's wife expressed herself thus: "I know not what to say of the Moor; he used to treat me most affectionately; and I begin to fear that my example will teach you women never to marry against their parents' consent, and the Italians in particular, not to connect themselves with men from whom they are separated by nature, climate, education, and complexion. But as I know him to

the confidential of your husband whom he consults on all occasions, I intreat you, if you have heard any thing that might explain this mystery and be of use to me, not to deny me your assistance." These words were accompanied with a flood of Tears.

The ensign's wife, who knew all (as her husband had in vain endeavoured to prevail upon her to become an accomplice in the murder of Desdemona) but durst tell her nothing for fear of her husband, only said, 'Take care not to give the Moor any cause for suspicion; and do all in your power to convince him of your affection and fidelity.' — "Why so I do," said she, "but to no purpose." The Moor, in the mean time, did all in his power to prove what he desired not to find true, and begged the ensign to make him see the handkerchief in possession of the lieutenant. Although this was a difficult undertaking, yet the villain promised to do all in his power to give him a satisfactory proof of this. The lieutenant had a woman in the

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house,

house, who was a notable embroiderer in muslin, and who, struck with the beauty of Desdemona's handkerchief, determined to copy it before it should be returned to her. She set about making one like it and while she was at work, the ensign discovered that she sat at a window where any one who passed in the street might see her. This he took care to point out to the Moor, who was then fully persuaded that his chaste and innocent wife was an adulteress. He agreed with the ensign to kill both her and the lieutenant; and consulting together about the means, the Moor intreated him to undertake the assassination of the officer, promising never to forget so great an obligation. He refused however to attempt what was so very difficult and dangerous, as the lieutenant was equally brave and vigilant; but with much entreaty and considerable presents, he was prevailed on to say that he would hazard the experiment. One dark night, after taking this resolution, he observed the lieutenant coming out of the house of a female libertine where he usually passed his evenings,

evenings, and assaulted him sword in hand. He struck at his legs with a view of bringing him to the ground, and with the first blow cut him quite through the right thigh. The poor man instantly fell and the ensign ran to him to put him to death. But the lieutenant, who was courageous and familiar with wounds and slaughter, having drawn his sword notwithstanding his desperate situation, and raised himself for defence, cried out Murder as loud as he could. The ensign perceiving that some people were coming, and that the soldiers quartered thereabouts had taken the alarm, fled for fear of being caught, and turning about again pretended likewise that he had been brought there by the noise. Placing himself among the rest and seeing that the leg was cut off, he concluded that though he was not dead, he must die of his wound: and although he was exceedingly rejoiced at all this, yet he condoled with the lieutenant as much as if he had been his brother. The next morning this accident was spread all over the city, and came to the ears of Desdemona,

E 4

who

who being very compaffionate, and not fufpecting that this could occafion mischief to herfelf, expreffed the greateft concern for the lieutenant's misfortune. The Moor drew from hence the worft of inferences, and faid to the enfign, " You muft know that my fimpleton of a wife is almoft mad with forrow for the lieutenant's accident."— ' How could it be otherwife,' faid he, ' as he is her life and foul?'— " How," faid the Moor, " her life and her foul! I will feparate her foul from her body. I fhould difgrace my manhood if I killed her not." And difcourfing together if poifon or the dagger would be beft, and not liking either the one or the other, the enfign faid, ' A method has occurred to me that would fatisfy you without creating the leaft fufpicion. The houfe where you live is very old, and the ceiling of your chamber is broken in many places. Defdemona might be beaten to death with a ftocking full of fand, and no marks of this would remain on the body when fhe is dead we will pull down a part of the ceiling, and bruife your wife's head; the

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give out that a beam in falling has done this, and killed her. If you follow this advice you will avoid all suspicion, and every one will believe her death to have been accidental.' This savage advice pleased the Moor; and waiting for a convenient opportunity, he concealed the ensign one night in a closet that communicated with their chamber. When they were in bed the ensign according to his instruction made a noise in the closet, and the Moor immediately asked his wife if she had heard it? She answered Yes.—“Get up then and see what it is.” Poor Desdemona obeyed, and as soon as she was near the closet-door the ensign rushed out, and with the stocking that he had prepared gave her a violent blow on the small of the back. She fell down scarce able to breathe; but with what little force she had, she called the Moor to her assistance. He got out of bed, and said to her, “Most infamous woman, you are now to receive the just reward of your infidelity!—even so are those wives treated who, pretending to love their husbands, are untrue to their beds.” The
 poor

poor woman hearing these words, and feeling that she was ready to expire from a second blow that the ensign had given her, said, ' That since the justice of this world was refused her, she attested the Divine Justice in favour of her honour and her truth ;' and invoking the Divine Assistance, she was finished by the impious ensign, who struck her a third time. Afterwards they placed her in bed ; and after breaking her skull, they drew down, as they had determined beforehand, a part of the ceiling. The Moor then called out for help as the house was falling. The neighbours on this alarm ran thither, and found Desdemona dead under the beams. Her life had been so virtuous that every one lamented her fate ; and the following day she was buried, to the great sorrow of the whole island. But God who is a just Observer of the hearts of men, suffered not so great a crime to pass without the punishment that was due to it. So that the Moor, who had loved Desdemona more than his eyes, finding himself deprived of her, began to regret her so extremely, that

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he almost lost his senses, and went about the house looking for her in every room. Reflecting besides that the ensign had been the cause of his losing along with her all the enjoyments of life, and even his own faculties, that villain became so insupportable to him that he could not bear the sight of him; and had he not feared the strict and impartial justice of the Venetians, he would have put him openly to death. But not being able to do this with safety to himself, he degraded him from his commission, and permitted him no longer to remain in the company. Hence arose between them the most bitter enmity that can be conceived; and the ensign, the greatest of all villains, studied only how he might be revenged on the Moor. He went to the lieutenant, who was cured and walked about with his wooden leg, and said to him, "The time is now come when you may be revenged for the loss of your leg; and if you will come with me to Venice, I will tell you who the assassin was. Here I dare not inform you for many reasons; but there I will be your witness
in

in a court of justice." The lieutenant, who felt himself violently exasperated against the person though unknown to him, thanked the ensign, and came away with him to Venice. When they were arrived, the ensign told him that the Moor was the person who had cut off his leg, because he suspected him of adultery with his wife, and that for the same reason he had murdered her, and afterwards given out that she had been killed by the ceiling's falling in upon her. The lieutenant on hearing this, immediately accused the Moor before the Council of the injury done to himself and the murder of Desdemona; and the ensign being called as a witness, asserted the truth of both these accusations, and added that the Moor had communicated to him the whole project, with a view of persuading him to execute both these crimes; and when he had murdered his wife from the impulse of a furious jealousy, he had related to him the manner in which he had put her to death. The Venetian magistrates hearing that one of their fellow-citizens had been treated with so much cruelty by a
bar-

barbarian, had the Moor arrested in Cyprus and brought to Venice, where, by means of the torture, they endeavoured to find out the truth. But the Moor possessed force and constancy of mind sufficient to undergo the torture without confessing any thing ; and though by his firmness he escaped death at this time, he was after a long imprisonment condemned to perpetual exile, in which he was afterwards killed, as he deserved to be, by his wife's Relations.

The ensign returned to his country, where still continuing his old practices, he accused one of his companions of having attempted to murder a nobleman who was his enemy. The man was taken up and put to the torture, and denying firmly the crime laid to his charge, his accuser was also put to the torture ; where he was racked so violently that his vitals were injured, and upon being conducted home he died in great agony. Thus was the Divine vengeance executed against those who had murdered the innocent Desdemona.

The

The ensign's wife, who had been informed of the whole affair, after his death thus circumstantially related the Story.

Giraldi Cintio wrote a hundred novels, entitled Eka-tommithé. These are divided into Decades; and the Moor of Venice is the seventh of the Third Decade. The edition is in two volumes, and was printed by Leonardo Torrentino, in the year 1561.

The ensign returned to his country, where still continuing his old practices, he scolded one of his companions of having attempted to murder a nobleman who was his enemy. The man was taken up and put to the torture, and during thirty the cross laid to his charge, his accuser was also put to the torture; where he was racked to violence that his ribs were injured, and upon being conducted home he died in great agony. Thus was the justice vengeance executed against those who had rendered the innocent delinquent.

The

ON
OTHELLO.

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O T H E L L O.

PERHAPS we are indebted for the most delightful modern compositions to those minds of which the powers were first awakened by the wildness of Gothic fictions, and afterwards corrected by the historians, or chastened by the critics of Greece. Such, we are informed by himself, was the progress of Rousseau's fancy; and such probably was the education and discipline of Shakespeare's Muse. The tenderness of romantic passion is admirably adapted to soften the rigour of the Greek academy, while the justness of Platonic reasoning and the truth of Aristotelian principles are calculated to suppress the wonders and extravagances of Gothic invention.

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There

There is somewhere a defect in ancient poetry if Euripides (who disgusts us in every scene with short and satiric declamations against the female sex) is still acknowledged to be the most pathetic of the Greek tragedians. In the very moment that we are lamenting his want of feeling and humane affection, we are overpowered by the transcendent vigour of his genius. But more perfect poems might certainly be written by one whose passions are liable to receive impressions from every natural incentive, and whose science enables him to govern the springs on which the theory of emotion depends.

To this superior degree of excellence Shakespeare seems to have arrived whenever his subject was founded on romance. History he always treated with that respectful awe and deference due to an austere preceptor, whom we are contented to admire and imitate. The lighter productions of fancy were the inspirations of his youthful dreams, the companions of his early sport, whom he loved and cherished,

end

endeavoured to excel. From them he probably began his poetical career; and to these he constantly returned with all the passion of a fond remembrance, and with all the emulation of an ancient Rival.

There is something so enchanting in the very irregularities of these compositions, that he willingly adopted even their flights and excentricities. Perhaps too he was induced by another motive suggested by Horace, and so natural to noble minds—The desire of obtaining victory against a foe of formidable aspect and gigantic Force.

Ille per extentum funem mihi posse videtur
 Ire poeta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
 Injrat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet
 Ut magus; et modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis.

It is not very rash to conclude from this passage, that the Roman critic secretly wished to rescue the theatre of his country from the subjection in which it was held to the authorities of Greece, and from that uniformity in which

it was consequently imprisoned. If this interpretation be allowed, it was the opinion of Horace that the unity of place (and of course the unity of time) would deserve to be repealed as a law of dramatic poetry, whenever a genius should arise sufficiently powerful to carry the magic of illusion beyond that narrow sphere in which it was left by the poets of antiquity. But authorities are not wanted to justify applause when pleasure is felt; and the voice of Nature alone is warranted in pronouncing an opinion, when that pleasure has been weighed against the sensations produced by more regular and artificial Models.

In the tragedy of the Moor of Venice the unity of action, which indeed ought never to be violated, is acknowledged even by the severer critics to be complete. The consistency of the subordinate characters, and the wonderful skill with which they are all made to contribute to the proposed catastrophe, have been fully discussed, and have received their due portion of praise. The character of

Othello

Othello alone, proved by the preceding novel to have been almost wholly created by the imagination of Shakespeare, seems never to have been sufficiently considered, though it eminently deserves to be examined with a view to poetical effect. We are equally interested and surpris'd by every part of it; by his education, his temper, his moral and religious Principles,

So much of the conduct of men depends on the habits of early life, that it was extremely necessary for the poet to describe first the original occupations of Othello, that these might serve as a ground-work to the probability of succeeding fictions. This basis of his character was to be consistent with the merit that had rais'd him to his distinguished rank in the Venetian army; and to explain the singular passion * with which he had inspired the

* The French translator has hazarded an ingenious conjecture on this subject, though it is evidently ill founded. Because Desdemona mentions a maid called Barbara,

the tender and unfortunate Desdemona, as well as to lay open the source of his opinions and his foibles. To illustrate these two leading incidents of his life, it was certainly not injudicious to throw a blaze of glory round the commencement of his fortune, opposing a series of dangers to his progress that could only be surmounted by consummate Valour.

“ She lov'd me for the dangers I had past.”

But as if these were not sufficient to excite a general sympathy and affection, the poet has represented Desdemona as the most benevolent and compassionate of human beings; and, by a beautiful management, has effected her

that waited on her mother, he has contended that this was a black woman; and that Desdemona had early lost her aversion to the colour of Othello. But Barbara is still a common Christian name both in Venice and in England. Besides, for this purpose it was injudicious to mention her only in the conclusion of the play; and is inconsistent with the surprize of Brabantio and his imputation of witchcraft to the Moor.

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ruin by means of that very compassion when excited a second time by the disgrace of Cassio. Of his military merit and capacity the mind is left to form its own ideas, assisted only by obscure indications, that extol far more than the explicit detail of history, or the pomp of excessive praise. The very early period at which he began his course of warlike employments, the confused and marvellous account of his imminent perils and singular escapes, his zeal and fondness for the service, his dislike of peace and leisure, are all so many master-strokes of Shakespeare's pencil that finish the portrait of a brave and experienced General.

“ For since these arms of mine had sev'n years pith,
 “ Till now, some nine moons wasted, they have us'd
 “ Their dearest action in the tented field;
 “ * * * * *
 “ The tyrant custom * * * *
 “ Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
 “ My thrice driven bed of down. I do agnize
 “ A natural and prompt alacrity
 “ I find in hardness; * * * *
 “ * * * * *”

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Such

Such a train of youthful adventures, where every thing dearest to humanity was daily hazarded, working upon a noble temper, naturally destroyed all petty considerations of detriment and interest. The mind thus schooled thinks not of adopting the common measures of prudence, and scorns to make estimates and divisions of natural sentiment. It knows no medium between the extremes of a boundless confidence and an implacable hatred. When therefore his tenderness for Desdemona and his attachment to Cassio had once yielded to the surmises of jealousy, he rushed with a resistless impetuosity into the bloody and horrible projects of assassination and Murder.

His temper was hasty and violent, free and generous; neither prone to suspicion, nor apt without reason to forgive; neither inclined to disturb itself with doubts, nor qualified afterwards to restore its own tranquility. Diffimulation is a vice, of which the practice was to him not only unintelligible, but of which, without a prompter, he would not perhaps have

have known the existence. From the nature of his past life he was so little acquainted with the arts of conversation and the modes of society, that on his elevation, probably for the first time, to a portion of civil authority, and his entrance into family affairs and domestic regulations, some confidential person became necessary for advice and instruction. Iago seemed to be formed for the perfect execution of this office.

“ This fellow’s of exceeding honesty

“ And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,

“ Of human dealings. ———

“ * * * * *

The dark and insidious practices of this monster were so far from his thoughts, that even in the last moments of his guilt and despair he expresses his astonishment at the proceeding, and his curiosity to know the Cause.

“ Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil,

“ Why he hath thus ensnar’d my soul and body ?”

In

In his love as well as in his jealousy there are singular and original traits that belong exclusively to Othello's character. A soldier of fortune in foreign service, whose enterprizes are successful and whose merit eclipses the fame of his rivals, generally excites more envy than admiration. But the distinction between foreigner and native is infinitely weaker than between the Moors and the inhabitants of Europe. Desdemona was perhaps the first that had felt and expressed a real and unaffected sorrow for the hardships he had suffered ;

“ And he lov'd her, that she did pity them.”

His mind perhaps then first conceived the exquisite pleasure of social communication and attachment; and opened to him the enchanting prospect of a milder happiness than he had hitherto enjoyed. His vehement and fiery disposition grasped with avidity this unusual joy, and hinged his future hopes and affections on the object with such force, that
sepa-

separation must produce the most tremendous and fatal Convulsions.

When Shakespeare has once established a principle of conduct, that principle is not only observed, but frequently converted into a motive for succeeding revolutions of sentiment. The complexion of Othello, that had placed him at such a distance from Desdemona's love, and with other considerations had so much encreased his tenderness and gratitude for her passionate declarations in his favour, becomes afterwards a powerful weapon for the arm of jealousy.

“ ——— Haply, for I am black,

“ And have not those soft parts of conversation

“ That chamberers have; or for I am declin'd

“ Into the vale of years;—yet that's not much.—

“ She's gone; I am abus'd; and my relief

“ must be—to loath her. ———

“ * * * * *

It was the pain that Desdemona had first felt for his early misfortunes, that had persuaded

suaded Othello of the sincerity of her affection, The ideas then of love and compassion were from that moment connected so closely in his mind, that when she apparently wept for the death of Cassio, he instantly acquired force and cruelty enough to execute his sanguinary Purpose.

A sensation continually present to the mind is shifted about by all the passions, and becomes at one time the support of confidence, and at another the slave of Suspicion,

From the blessings of love and confidence so congenial to his mind, he is hurled into all the tortures of jealousy which his nature abhorred. The society he had gained, the sympathy he had excited, must be now abandoned; and his misery is aggravated by all those singularities of his fortune and situation which had before augmented his joy. The solitude of Philoctetes is not more wretched, nor his anguish more deplorable.

“ Had

- " Had it pleas'd Heaven
 " To try me with affliction; had it rain'd
 " All kind of sores and shames on my bare head;
 " Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips;
 " Given to Captivity me and my hopes;
 " I should have found in some place of my soul
 " A drop of patience. But alas! to make me
 " A fixed figure for the hand of Scorn
 " To point his slow and moving finger at—
 " Yet could I bear that too, well, very well;
 " But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
 " Where either I must live or bear no life,
 " The fountain from the which my current runs
 " Or else dries up; to be discarded thence,
 " Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
 " To knot and gender in: turn thy complexion there
 " Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubim:
 " There, there look grim as hell."

The moral character and opinions of Othello
 are more the result of momentary feeling and
 the suggestions of his own private sense of ho-
 nour, than the consequences of system or the
 just deductions of reason. His education had
 precluded the general exercise of deliberation,
 and his passions were gaining force, while his
 reason languished in the weakness which in-
 activity

activity produces. A sense of honour which so imperfectly supplies its place, steps in on every occasion with fragments of advice that involve him in the most singular and surprising contradictions. When his frame is convulsed and his spirit trembling at the knowledge of Desdemona's infidelity, he determines to commit a crime unworthy (as he confesses and laments) of the military name and profession; but in the gratification of his revenge feels not a pang of remorse for that virtue which he abandons.

“ Oh now for ever

“ Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!

“ Farewell the plum'd troops and the big war,

“ That make ambition virtue! O farewell!

“ * * * * *

“ ——— Othello's occupation's gone!”

Imperfectly however as this sense supplies the place of reason in a moral view, it is certainly calculated to produce poetically a much greater beauty and variety of effect. The ardour and surprize of poetry have nothing in common

common with the rational and tranquil proceedings of prudence; where, without the aid of imagination, all that is to happen may be foretold by the simple force of sagacity, founded on experience. Othello jealous in his chamber, and Achilles angry in his tent, are pictures that interest us more than Æneas piously bearing away his father from the flames of Troy, or patiently expostulating with the wrath of Juno and the fury of the elements. A burning city and a tempest raised for the purpose of executing Divine vengeance, are dazzling and sublime objects; but when the hero in the midst of them wants energy and fire, in the place of real and genuine passion, we are cheated with the weakness of descriptive Poetry.

Happy had it been for mankind, if all the mischiefs with which superstition has deformed society could have been compensated by the graces with which it has embellished poetry. So strong indeed is the alliance between those two sources of terrible and romantic fiction, that

that an epic or a tragic character is not considered as complete without some tincture of religious ecstasy. The fancy of Shakespeare, though excessively delighted with such embellishments, did not however adopt them rashly without first being assured of their fitness and congruity. The wandering and military life of Othello must be supposed to have prevented him from conforming generally to the tenets of any particular sect; and to have left his religious faith in still more uncertainty than his moral principles. Whatever struck his imagination in the belief of either people with whom he was most conversant, as applicable to his own fortune, naturally rested on his mind, and rendered it a tiffue of the Christian and Mahometan persuasions. The singularity of his adventures, his numberless perils and escapes, might induce him almost reasonably to receive as true the potency of spells and the doctrines of predestination. The pleasures of love and the charms of beauty figured with so much distinction in the Mahometan scheme of happiness, that what-

ever

ever superstition consecrated to the benefit or protection of mankind, was endued with a capacity to improve or perpetuate these enjoyments. Hence has Shakespeare judiciously taken occasion to confer a sort of preternatural importance on the handkerchief that was the last fatal confirmation of his jealousy,

- “ ——— : That handkerchief
 “ Did an Egyptian to my mother give ;
 “ She was a charmer, and could almost read the thoughts
 “ of people.
 “ She told her, while she kept it, it would make her
 “ amiable :
 “ Subdue my father intirely to her love ; but if she
 “ lost it,
 “ Or made a gift of it, my father’s eye
 “ Should hold her loathly, and his spirits should hunt
 “ After new fancies : *

The idea of an irreverfible predetermined destiny returns to his mind, when, conscious of the innocence of his former life and inten-

* See the Appendix.

tions, he finds himself involved in the most horrible of crimes ; when, after all the dangers he had passed, he sees that his courage can no longer protect him though apparently in a state of tranquility and peace.

“ Who can controul his fate? —

“ * * * * *

“ Man but a rush against Othello's breast,

“ And he retires ; —

“ * * * * *

In his death the same sense of honour still prevails. In his last moments he is exhibited in all the agony of guilt without one symptom of fear ; he shews a tender and anxious regard for his reputation, but none for himself ; obscurely hoping that the services which he has rendered to the state may diminish the infamy attached to a foul and atrocious murder.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

THOSE who are yet to be convinced of the real existence of a belief in the force of charms among the disciples of Mahomet, may compare this speech of Othello with the following copy of a paper, which Wortley Montague wore about his neck till the moment in which he died at Padua. It is by no means fair to conclude from such a circumstance, that this singular character had deserted the Christian religion. The question of his conversion will require stronger proofs; as this might have been worn only for the sake of travelling with greater security in those inhospitable Regions.

The original charm is written in Arabic, and now in the possession of Signor Marfili, Professor of Botany at Padua. The present translation was done not from the Arabic, but from an Italian version, which the proprietor had caused to be executed with great care and Fidelity.

IN THE NAME OF GOD, MISERICORDIA.

WE are told in the Tales of Seeich Gemaluddin Jusof (to whom may the mercy of God be shewn) that Haliffa, the Lord of Credenti, had in his service a hundred young slaves, all of whom were of extraordinary beauty. It happened one day that a black woman, called Mergian, was presented to him, for whom it was impossible to awaken the passions of whoever beheld her. To such a degree was she disgusting and deformed. The moment Haliffa saw her his affections were raised to the greatest height. He fell in love and neglected the other slaves. Day and night he

he lived only with her, and placed in her hands all his possessions. He could not be without her for a single moment, and consulted her in affairs of the utmost importance, to the great astonishment of the matrons and other slaves. By the divine permission she one day fell sick; and her infirmity continually increasing, was accomplished also in her that divine decree which circumscribes and renders inevitable the final close of mortal life. She was afterwards stripped to be buried. But this was not permitted by her enamoured master, who for three days and three nights took no food, not so much as a drop of water; and deplored his loss beyond the reach of Consolation.

The holy ministers of the canon assembled about him, and by various exhortations prevailed on him to allow her to be interred. As they were carrying her body to its tomb, the following prayer fell from the ringlets of her hair, and was immediately carried to the Sovereign. As soon as he had read it, he desired

PRAYER

fired

fired to see the dead body; which then appeared, even in his eyes, a frightful and deformed slave. He was struck with surprise and astonishment. When the ministers of the court knew that Mergian no longer appeared beautiful in the eyes of her master, they discovered this change to be occasioned by the pious ejaculation which she had constantly worn. So that taking it from the hands of their Sovereign, and considering its substance, they declared it to be good, of incomparable accuracy, and worthy of their entire approbation. This ought to be worn about the person or in the hair, in order to feel its prodigious effects. It renders the person who wears it invulnerable to the darts of slander, preserves them from enchantments, and every other perverse operation of human malice, and gives duration and increase to prosperity and pleasure. Whoever doubts the efficacy of this relique, is certainly both Atheist and Infidel. May the Lord God preserve us from such Blindness.

PRAYER.

PRAYER.

I implore the aid of thee, O most high God,
 to whom are due both homage and praise ;
 who by thine own inscrutable means hast
 established poverty and riches ; of Thee, Inha-
 bitant of the Empyrean firmament, munificent
 and liberal, who canst give life to things inani-
 mate ; of Thee who hast created man, woman,
 and invisible spirits ; who canst preserve to us
 that which thou hast given us, who canst dis-
 pose at thy pleasure all things upon earth ;
 King of kings, and Author of the Books on
 the Holy Law ; of Thee, from whom are de-
 rived all merits and all graces, endued with
 infinite power and greatness : Lord of the
 World and of Eternity—God omnipotent,
 whose divine attributes I worship with all hu-
 mility : I invoke that aid which thou hast
 promised me : Thou who hast created the
 darkness and the light of the Sun and of the
 Moon ;

Moon ; who haft distinguished and separated the Days from the Nights ; who haft made the Heavens, and all that is therein ; who with provident counsel haft created Paradise and Hell ; who haft made to appear thy wisdom in the formation of the Koran ; Ornament of true believers, in the creation of Adam and of Eve, and in that of Enoch ; in the invention of the Ark of Noah ; in the events with which the life of Abraham has been accompanied ; of Ifmael, of Joseph, of Jacob, of Job, of Zachariah, of Lot, of David, of Loeman the wife man of Arabia, of Moses, of Jesus, and of Maria ; Thou who art the Creator of the Earth and of the Sea, the Author of the Mosaic Law, of the Gospel, and of the Psalms of David ; Thou who haft instituted the holy pilgrimage to Mecca ; who inspirest mildness and persuasion into the Prophets, among whom thou haft in an especial manner distinguished Mahomet ; who haft given sometimes, to the astonishment of mankind, the power of speech to brutes ; who art
the

the Guardian of the human race, — do thou
guard me and keep me in thy grace, since
there is neither power nor virtue except in
Thee alone, O God, great sublime, and mu-
nificent,

THE END.

1 of 1

the Guardian of the human race,—do thou
guard me and keep me in thy grace, since
there is neither power nor virtue except in
Thee alone, O God, great Iahweh, and in-

finite.

THE END.

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THE
S T O R Y
OF THE
MOOR OF VENICE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

^{of}
Giraldi Cintio
WITH

TWO ESSAYS

ON

SHAKESPEARE,

AND

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

BY *WOLSTENHOLME PARR*, A. M.
LATE FELLOW OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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