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OF

JOSEPH MAZZINI

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OF AN EUROPEAN LITERATURE.

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"I foresee the dawn of an European literature which no single people may claim as their own, for all of them will have contributed to its foundation."—Goethe.

The obscurest sayings of the truly great are often those which contain the germ of the profoundest and most useful truths. Genius rapidly traverses the living present to bury itself in the deepest mysteries of the universe; often making the grandest discoveries at a single glance. To one informed by this sublime instinct the laws which govern the lives of nations are revealed; the past and present interpret and explain each other, and not unfrequently disclose the future; for genius is prophetic.

But, owing to the intensity of his convictions, his passionate attachment to his own ideas, and his constant self-concentration, the man of genius is often unmindful or incapable of measuring the intellect of other men, and he therefore expresses himself in strange and daring fashion, or in brief and energetic symbols, and is regarded as wild or obscure by those
who are either unwilling or unable to penetrate his meaning.

[Mazzini here warns the reader against the vulgar error of treating the previsions of genius as dreams, and asserts that it is now evident to all, that new circumstances, new beliefs, desires, and customs, have created a want of the European literature foretold by Göthe; a literature which shall be the true expression of the conditions and aims of modern civilisation. All Europe, he says, appears to be inspired with a breath of new life, a spirit of literary innovation, urging intelligence upon paths yet unexplored, and proving the actual insufficiency of the antique rules and models.

He then proceeds to examine the progress already made, and the present state of European civilization, in order to determine what will be the essential characteristics required to render the new literature a complete representation of the wants, aspirations, relations, and affections of the peoples in this nineteenth century.]

One of the fundamental characteristics of this literature I believe to be indicated by the words of Göthe, quoted at the head of the present article. Those words contain a deep meaning, and are the result of a profound consideration of the silent progressive work of ages, and they establish—as it seems
to me—the essential difference between ancient and modern literature.

I am aware that to many the words European literature appear to imply the destruction of all spirit of nationality, and of all individual character among the peoples; while others regard them as the expression of a wild and Utopian dream. The first confound the idea of a nation's independence with its intellectual isolation, which is an error of judgment; the second despair alike of things and men—an error of the heart.

A glance over the history of the vicissitudes of literature among the various peoples into which the human race is divided, will at once reveal so great a diversity of method, of conception, and of style, as apparently to indicate a special character, and a peculiar and distinct tendency in the genius of different nations, as if Nature, when assigning the boundaries of rivers and mountains as limits to individual ambition, had also intended to mark out the intellectual frontier of each.

Whence this diversity? Are the causes in which it originates immutable, and their consequences therefore eternal, or are they subject to successive modification, and destined ultimately to be destroyed?

It will be evident that upon the answer to this question depends the possibility of the creation of an European literature.

In the days when literature—misguided by academic
pretensions, withered by arcadian formalities, and corrupted by protection—had lost even the memory of its ancient dignity and its early mission, literary men were accustomed to regard their art rather as a means of flattering the ear of the powerful few, than as an useful ministry among the multitude. They occupied themselves with the externals, not the substance of things; with the graces of expression, not the value of the ideas expressed.

The power of creation being denied them, they recited the glories of ages gone by, and busied themselves with commentaries, biographies, and histories of literature.

But the hidden link which does in fact connect the progress and character of literature with that of civil and political life, remained unsuspected by the monks, librarians, and court literati by whom these works were compiled, and for that reason their books were rather memoirs of individuals than histories of the intellectual vicissitudes of the peoples; and all their immense erudition, unillumined by any philosophical idea, did but result in an accumulation of names and information, as lifeless and barren as the headstones of a cemetery.

The diversity which they recognised in the intellectual development of each nation, and the special and peculiar characteristics distinguishing their separate literature, were considered by them as facts conclusive against the existence of a primary and
universal standard of taste. The problem was one to be solved only by the aid of history and philosophy, and since neither their own intelligence, nor the times in which they lived, allowed them to enter deeply into these more liberal studies, they went astray in search of a sole and immutable cause. Deceived by outward semblances, and seduced by the authority of the ancients and the systems of political writers—who attributed a capacity for independence, or a necessity of servitude to the peoples according to the degree of aptitude or intelligence they supposed them to possess—they declared that nature had confined intellect within certain laws corresponding to its topographical position, and pronounced climate to be the primary and supreme regulator of taste. Hence the idea of the essential diversity and special and immutable character of the literature of each different nation—an idea most injurious in its consequences, because tending, like all such theories, to restrain and depress genius, even when conscious of its creative faculty.

At length, through the action of that spirit which urges the human race towards higher destinies, the phantom of authority gave place to the sentiment of independence. Equality of rights, and the capacity of exercising them, were conceded to men of every zone, although their community of ideas and emotions was still denied. The laws of one state were ameliorated by rules and examples derived from another; the habits and customs of different nations became an
object of study, many old opinions fell into oblivion, many prejudices disappeared, but yet this prejudice of the absolute influence of climate upon genius and literature remained; perpetuated by the suffrage of mediocrity, in its nature inert, by the ravings of national vanity, and by the jargon of the endless tribe of pedants. Even now, we constantly hear it repeated and uttered as a sort of anathema upon all who seek to enlarge the sphere of taste; while every attempt to open up new paths to literary intelligence, and every exhortation to the Italians to study the master-works of other nations, is opposed and met by dulcet phrases about our classic soil and the Italian sky; phrases too readily accepted as an answer by those whose patriotism is satisfied with words alone.

But facts were opposed to this theory; facts which in matters of opinion constitute the sole supreme un-answerable authority, and which neither acuteness of rhetoric nor pertinacity of system can overthrow.

If I open the history of the various literatures of different nations, I observe an alternation of glory and decay, of reciprocal influence, of transfusion from one to another, as well as a continual mutability of taste, now national, now servile, now corrupt. The literature of no country is so entirely original as to have received no intermixture of foreign elements, either through tradition in its early days, or through conquest at a later date.

No people ever possessed a law of taste so firmly established as to remain unchanged throughout the
progress of ages; because taste, though elevated by many into an immutable abstraction, is, in fact, the result of education,* and represents the degree of civilisation to which a given people has attained.

Italian literature in its early days bore the stamp of the laws of taste communicated by the Arabs to the south of Europe. It was Platonic, mystic, and idealist in one age, and materialist in another; severe, national, and independent at one period, and again servilely imitative; then impotent and lascivious—the amusement of the idle, and the flatterer of the strong. Yet the same Italian sky diffused the enchantment of its eternal smile over the soul of the Trovatori and of Guinicelli, in the days of Dante, and in those of the Cicalate.

The literature of Spain, resplendent for five hundred years with the tropes and images of the East, became, for a long period—commencing with Juan II.—a mere imitation of the Italian, in consequence of the study of Dante, promoted by Villena Santilana and Mena, and the imitations of Petrarch, introduced at a later date by Garcilasso and Boscano. Yet the sun that shone upon Spain in the time of Charles V. was the same that illumined the turrets of the Alhambra when Grenada was the seat of Moorish dominion.

The climate of England is dark and cold; its spring without brightness, and its autumn without

* It is scarcely necessary to say that the word education is here applied in its widest sense, as the result of the civil, political, and religious teachings which hasten or impede the progress of nations.
luxuriance. Nevertheless, upon English soil, and among the mists of Scotland, arose the poetry most redundant in descriptive power; and for the last thirty years no country has produced poets who have understood the language of solitude, and transfused the very soul of nature into their verse, like Burns, Crabbe, Wordsworth, etc.

The metaphorical sublimity distinguishing eastern writers has been attributed to the splendour of their clime; yet the same characteristic marks the poems of Macpherson, and the collected works of Scandinavian authors given to the world by Mallet. The character of profound meditation, and the leaning towards the abstract, manifested by northern Europeans, was attributed to their cold climate; but later studies and investigations have revealed a similar spirit of contemplation and ideality in the religious systems and beliefs of the East, especially of India. And how numerous are the points of resemblance between Homer, Ossian, and the Biblical writers! The tree of knowledge has struck root, now in burning Egypt, and now amid the snows of Iceland, with the same indifference to climate that caused it to flourish in Attica, while it avoided the neighbouring Boetia. How great is the resemblance between the national songs of Corsica and Scotland, and the lovesongs of Persia, Italy, and Arabia; and how wide the diversity between the spirit that informs the literature of ancient Greece, and the songs of vengeance and liberty sung by the modern Klephts!
I have chosen these examples at random; but it is clear that these resemblances and varieties, so remarkable in the literature of different nations, are too numerous to be satisfactorily accounted for by climate alone.

What, then, are the true causes influencing the condition of letters in each nation, and how are we to explain this apparent singularity?

It may be asserted as a principle, that the attempt to seek the causes of the character and progress of a nation's literature, elsewhere than in the history of that nation, is to wander in pursuit of a phantom. In the life of peoples, as of individuals, everything is successive and connected.

When literature is the spontaneous and free issue of the universal mind of a people, it expresses and represents their degree of moral civilisation; when it is corrupt and enslaved, it is the representation of their political condition. It is, as Shakespeare calls it, the mirror of the times. Therefore, the study of the times is the sole means of clearing away the mist that occasionally envelops the history of literature, and the study of the institutions of a people can alone explain the origin of their special standard of taste. The climate of Athens and Sparta was the same; yet their different institutions created a literature in the first, and denied it to the last. The allegorical genius of the East was produced by its institutions, under which no revelation of the truth undisguised by the veil of emblem might be made with impunity. The
simple and uniform institutions of Switzerland have given a character of simplicity, directness, and utility to her literature, although the inequalities of her climate are so great that the traveller may pass almost from the heats of Senegal to the snows of Spitzberg.

Love is, perhaps, the only affection over which the institutions of the country exercise little or no influence; for he who truly feels that passion is elevated above all ordinary human interests, and transported into a world inhabited by two beings alone. Hence the expression of this affection is, to a certain extent, both unique and universal; the love-songs of Italy, Persia, and Arabia, at times appear as if inspired by the selfsame genius beneath the selfsame heaven; and yet, so omnipotent are the institutions of the country, that here in Italy, for example, we find the holy and pure sentiment of the 13th and 14th centuries transformed at a later period into the lust of the satyr or the affectation of the mere seeker after poetic conceits,—for true love cannot dwell in the heart of the slave.

The diversity existing between the literature of the North and that of the South has really the aspect of a fundamental and lasting distinction, decreed by nature. An intimate comprehension and profound analysis of the beautiful appears to be the gift of the races of the North, even as a lively and instructive sentiment of the beautiful appears inborn in the races of the South. The works of the North bear a stronger
stamp of originality, and reveal a constant leaning towards the abstract and ideal.

Not only, however, is this distinction gradually passing away, but even here much may be attributed to the influence of different institutions and of outward circumstances.

All intercourse between the North and East was formerly but slight and brief, and the causes that withheld the Northern peoples from becoming intimately acquainted with an ancient literature so perfect in its external form, enabled them at a later period to create one more original from their native elements.

The Reformation, by exciting to subtle disquisition, produced a necessity for serious and patient study, which greatly encouraged the Northern disposition to ponder the various aspects of things, and generated a spirit of meditation, long employed upon matters of religious controversy, but afterwards addressed to subjects of literature and the fine arts.

The great powers of reflection thus created would, of necessity, produce noble results; but as the political institutions of the North prevented their application to great national interests and realities, the human intellect, thrown back and concentrated upon itself, became passionately absorbed in systems and abstractions, and, restrained from all useful exertion in the active and positive sphere, took refuge amid ideal objects and relations, and worshipped its own imaginings.
The result was a literature, wild, and to all appearance unregulated in form, but vast and profound in inward substance; a poetry, psychological and entirely subjective in its nature, rather looking towards the future than interpreting the present; wandering upon the borders of an unknown world; melancholy and affecting as a hope undefined. England, on the contrary, is perhaps, of all countries, the one in which the greatest homage is paid to the actual and positive. Her institutions open a wide field for the exercise of intelligence, and all the elements of which her national prosperity is composed are free ground for the action of intellect.

Commerce, industry, and agriculture, the three bases upon which English greatness reposes, incline the mind to the study of the real; and the importance the English naturally and rightly assign to the present prevents any strong desire to throw themselves upon the future.

For all these reasons, the literature of England is—speaking generally—entirely positive in its character; historic, and treating of facts; and her poetry is all made up of feeling and description. . . .

Thus is the character of every literature determined by the institutions of the country, and the existing diversity is but the natural result of those civil and political conditions which excite or depress, promote or restrain intelligence.

I do but briefly sketch, as far as my space and powers allow, subjects which require to be broadly
developed; but when literary research is carried out in the direction I have indicated, the result will render yet more evident the truth of the assertion, that the laws and literature of a people invariably advance upon two parallel lines.

As for us Italians, our political institutions—now ferocious, now corrupt; sometimes impotent, often tyrannical, and never in accordance with the will of the majority—have produced a poetry, lovely and harmonious in form, and brilliant in colour and fancy, but almost always frivolous and effeminate, and in no way appealing to the higher faculties of the mind. Our literature—now learned, now academic, and now courtly—though erudite, elegant, and pleasing, has never yet been either useful or national, if we except the works of some of our historians and philosophers, and those few poets whose genius towers above the ages.

Nevertheless, with a tenacity worthy a better cause, we persist in rallying round a Palladium incapable of saving us from ruin, and in opposing the cry of patriotism to those who strive to arouse us to our ancient intellectual vigour. O Italians! it is well to defend our national honour and our past glories; but national honour is better guarded by overcoming our defects than by boasting of our gifts, and the best safeguard for our past glories would be the achievement of new.

Our fathers have done great deeds; but until we remember that time, by developing new rights, invari-
ably creates new duties, and so long as we content ourselves with worshipping their sepulchres, so long will Italy—once the first among nations—remain behind; for the palm of intellect can be maintained neither by sun nor sky.

During the earliest periods of civilisation, while a people is yet in its infancy, or little more, its progress is directed by the few in whom intellect and energy are combined; the multitude, ignorant and inert, is satisfied with accepting the benefit conferred. Literature, unfortified by the action of the general mind, pourtrays the positive and material aspect of society, rather than identifies itself with its moral tendency; it copies rather than creates, and follows the course of civilisation, manifesting and representing the degree already reached; but it neither precedes it, nor develops the germs of its future advance.

In such periods the institutions of a country are the sole dominant power, and impress upon literature the special characteristics and local peculiarities of which we have spoken above. But when civilisation has so far advanced that the period of its origin is already regarded as antique, the power of institutions is no longer so absolute. The number of those desirous of seeing and judging for themselves is increased, and, through the agreement of the observations and judgments of the generality, the power of public opinion is gradually raised upon the ruins of authority.

When the weight of public opinion thus counter-balances the effect of the institutions of a people, the
advance of civilisation is more rapid and secure. Slowly and cautiously formed, strong in infinity of means, pure in intention, and based on justice and the times, public opinion may be restrained, mocked, or repressed: destroyed it cannot be, and sooner or later its arbitration is supreme.

When society has reached this point the office of literature is changed. Where once it merely followed and expressed, it now precedes and foretells. It is the business of the writer to study the wants of his nation, to interrogate and penetrate the hearts of his fellowmen, and to reveal their soul's aspiration, purified from every stain or baseness acquired in its human relations. Thus constituted interpreter of the common Thought, the writer foresees and lends his aid in all great social transformations, so that it sometimes appears as if he had created events, when in fact he but matured them, and removed the obstacles in their way. If, therefore, certain uniform mental characteristics exist which are common to all the nations of Europe, if civilisation is undoubtedly bringing them together, if the power of opinion does gradually weaken and will destroy all national antipathies, and the nations do invoke and desire that fraternity which will be the result of their decay—it matters little that adverse laws, or the caprice or interest of the few, persist in the endeavour to keep them apart; the purpose and duty of literature is none the less decided. Its mission is to seize hold of this tendency in the peoples, in order to direct and
improve it, for it is the result of a progress which is the work of ages, and cannot recede. Those institutions (affecting but the surface of things, and not identified with the elements of human happiness) which are contrary to opinion, the ruler of the world, will but remain as anomalies in the progress of civilisation until time and the force of things sweep away the feeble remnant of their existence.

And are we now in this nineteenth century under the influence of certain causes urging us all through similar paths towards one and the same goal? Is our moral position such that its true manifestation and expression must be unique over the whole of Europe?

A brief review of European civilisation may perhaps lead us to this conclusion.

It is only through obscure allegories and uncertain traditions that we learn the first steps made by the species towards social life during the long period known to us as the heroic ages. Hesitating between the ferocious isolation in which they had lived and the new order of things, men first gathered together in groups. They were led by chiefs, and possessed the elements of religion, but of true civilisation there was as yet none. Physical force was the ruling power, physical force or chance decided their choice of leaders, the maintenance or destruction of whose sway was left to fortune.

The great struggle between good and evil, between the germs of intellectual development and the impulses of blind unregulated physical nature, was
manifested by the formation of laws approved by the majority, though frequently irrational; in their simple though barbarous customs, and in their wars, unjustly undertaken and ferociously conducted; the struggle afterwise symbolised in Oro and Trifone, Ormuzd and Ahriman, Jupiter and the Titans.

Meanwhile, the first stirrings of the human soul towards a better future are to be traced in their rare lyrics and warlike songs; but no true literature as yet existed. And yet, from the poets and historians, who are our only representatives of that period, we learn enough to convince us that the early days of all nations were similar, and the spectacle presented by the human mind in its first struggles with barbarism alike in every clime. The absence and the extreme of civilisation are alike in this: they destroy all evidence of individual character among the peoples.

Hence, the same few primitive ideas form the basis of all the most ancient mythologies; hence the similarity in the origin and formation of different nations, and the resemblance between the aphorisms and sayings of the gnomic poets of Greece and the mythical proverbs of the Indians.

The struggle ceased. The elements of the social world were assimilated; the peoples now possessed cities, laws, religions, and social customs; but unequal, and regulated by the special passions or particular dispositions of those elevated by genius or cunning into the position of lawgivers. The simple and primitive type impressed by nature upon the countenances
of all her children underwent various modifications, and the physiognomy assumed by the human tribes became as distinct as their institutions.

The seeds of intellectual civilisation were carried from Asia into Europe, but rendered sterile in some spots by tyrannical laws and the jealousies of caste; while in others they were scattered by constant wars and invasions, so that their free development was impossible. Greece, however, many of whose islands were contiguous to the Eastern world, isolated, and protected from foreign invasion by her mountains and her sea, gathered up and cultivated the germs brought from the East; and it was upon her soil that the majestic tree, destined to spread its branches over the whole of Europe, struck root.

Greece represents the first period of civilisation,* and the literature which is the interpreter of that period arose simultaneously; purely Greek and local in character, and bearing the impress of the Greek climate, Greek customs, and Greek sense of superiority. And indeed, under the influence of wise and energetic institutions, Greece did rapidly reach a point which, in many respects, is still worthy of our envy. But the higher the eminence to which she rose, the greater the distance she placed between herself and other nations.

* I speak here of the civilisation represented by literature. Italian civilisation was probably anterior, certainly coeval with the Greek, but it has left no monument either of art or literature behind. And the ancient Eastern world (but little known at the date of this article), with the exception of its two great religious epopes, possessed no literature, properly so called, anterior to the Greek epoch. Sakuntala cannot be dated farther back than two thousand years.—(1861.)
An oasis in the desert, she regarded the European nations lying around her with contempt, scornfully stigmatising them as barbarians.

However, the first period of civilisation can never be a period of diffusion. The edifice requires to be secured and established before it can be extended, and Greece, being frequently obliged to shed her blood in defence of her independence, could do no more than preserve the fruits of her own moral progress; she did not enlarge its sphere, save in the case of the few colonies which carried much of her civilisation to Sicily and the shores of this Italy, within whose bosom slept the destinies of the world.

Love of country was the characteristic of the age—an exclusive affection concentrated within the walls of the city where the Greek first beheld the light, and associated with the surrounding nature, soil, rocks, water, and sky. The man born beyond that circle was deemed unworthy of aught but a life of slavery. This potent individualism was naturally reflected by literature. In subject, form, style, and ornament, it was wholly and solely Greek. The poet, blessed with a country the envy of mankind, had no inducement to create a wider sphere for himself; he was not a man inspired by nature to reveal to mortals an universal truth; he was a Greek, seeking to immortalise his country's glories, and to educate her sons in veneration of the laws and religion of their ancestors. He looked to the land he trod for his subject, and to the heaven that smiled above her for his beauties of
colour and form. Hence the rarity of any profound or general idea in his poems, of any truly moral conception or trait descriptive of an affection common to all mankind. The chord of humanity was mute upon the Greek lyre. In the moral as well as in the physical world there is a constant tendency towards an equilibrium of parts. A nation whose fate it has been to live and progress apart, and whose civilisation has no wider basis than that included within its own frontiers, cannot long exist, because the immense inequality between it and the surrounding peoples gives rise to a permanent state of war between might and right, between the moral progress of the one and the inert barbarism of the many;—a war that is destined to endure until the civilised nation diffuse the benefit of her institutions, or succumb.

And Greece did succumb. While internal disensions, civil corruption, and the multiplicity of her philosophical sects, were weakening the power of Greece, a huge colossus had arisen in the West—Rome, the representative of active power, arose. The boundless patriotism and eminently warlike nature of her population, as well as her infamous policy, contributed to raise a throne whose apex was the Capitol, whose base covered the whole south of Europe.

Greece was unable alone to maintain herself against the Roman world. She fell; and with her independence fell the flower of Grecian genius. But the fruit remained. Nations, like individuals, live and die; but civilisation cannot die. It gained in exten-
sion what it lost in height and splendour. Like a liquid flowing in all directions from a broken vase, Grecian learning, flowing from the centre, diffused itself on every side. The miracles of Greek art were carried over all Italy by the rapacity of her conquerors, and Greek philosophy, politics, and literature, were propagated by numbers of her sons who were driven by violence, abhorrence of servitude, or cowardice, to abandon their country.

The broad distinctions between the East and West were confused beneath the iron sceptre of Rome, and the different populations, bending under the same yoke and submitted to the same influences and vicissitudes, experienced similar effects, and were drawn together by identity of suffering, aspiration, and position. Even religious distinctions began to disappear. Many creeds already presented important points of resemblance in their fundamental principles, especially in those countries where the religious power was limited to dominion over conscience, and was subservient to the political power. Those religions, which, as in Gaul and elsewhere, had created a powerful theocracy, uniting the office of ruler and priest in their ministers, were either persecuted or destroyed by the Romans.

In the meantime, while the multitudes were thus unconsciously being prepared for uniformity of religious faith, numerous philosophical sects, alike in some respects, but distinct in others, sowed the seeds
of that *eclecticism* destined to become one of the characteristics of the European world.

And the impress of this uniform tendency and general progress would undoubtedly have been stamped upon the literature of the period, had not civil dissensions, the unrestrained lust of conquest, a constant succession of wars and perils, the suspicions of tyranny and the action of a military government, all combined to prevent the Romans from creating a truly free and national literature. The dignity of their manners and customs, their almost perfect language, and their active and enterprising character, seem fitted to promote the formation of such a literature; but there was not—so to speak—time to create it from the elements of that epoch, and when at length a favourable period of tranquillity arrived, oppression interfered to prevent intelligence from investigating the wants and wishes of the peoples composing that vast empire.

The literature of Rome therefore, unable to assume a popular form, was given over to servile imitation. Its mythology, precepts, forms, and even subjects, were frequently borrowed from the Greeks, from whom it acquired simplicity rather than dramatic power or variety, beauty of expression rather than depth of thought.

Roman literature—of foreign growth—shone with a brilliancy not its own; like a plant transplanted from a foreign clime, it put forth its blossoms, but produced no fruit; it was beautiful but useless, and

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quickly deteriorated. The protection of some of the princes appeared to elevate it for a time, but it was like the embrace of Hercules, raising Antæus but to dash him to the earth. The flame burned brightly, but was quickly extinguished. Here and there a solitary genius arose to scale the heavens, but with the great soul of Tacitus the spirit of Roman genius departed.

Yet, if we compare Roman and Greek literature, we find that the sphere of poetry is somewhat enlarged. The Latin systems of religion reveal a nearer approach towards unity, and the passions are represented by Latin authors under a moral rather than physical aspect. Love, as described by Virgil, is a passionate aspiration of the soul, not a mere sensual feeling; and the tinge of melancholy which colours his verse seems the offspring of meditation upon human destiny. The chords of the heart are more frequently touched, and one feels that a step has been taken towards the revelation of the inner man.

This sublime revelation was first given by Christianity. Ideas had previously been multiplied in number. Once few and simple, they now tended towards the complex, universal, and abstract. The relations of sympathy were also multiplied between man and man; they learned to understand and to love one another. The moral aspect of existence was more and more revealed by civilisation, and men began to suspect the existence of certain sacred and inviolable rights in the human race, independent of
birth or local circumstance, and to have an indistinct prevision of the mission of man.

Meanwhile, the existing religions, creations of civilisation in its dawn, no longer satisfied or kept pace with the growing development of mankind. The offspring, for the most part, of fear or political cunning, symbolical of material agencies, and strange and obscure in their rites, they appealed, without exception, to the senses, though in language varying, as the physical wants of man varied, according to climate.

A religion became necessary which, by addressing man from a higher sphere, should supply the novel wants and respond to the novel aspirations of his moral faculties. Hence, while the scepticism, incredulity, and contempt which characterise the writers of this period, operated to undermine all ancient creeds and beliefs, thoughtful minds were dimly conscious of one prominent idea and sole conception, to be traced in each and all, however great their diversity of form; and this perception prepared the minds of men for a great moral revolution.

Christianity appeared. Interpreter of the inward aspirations of the peoples, and true expression of the hidden mysteries of the soul, Christianity—considered in its substance—may be said to have concluded the second epoch of civilisation, by formulating and promulgating its vast results in a few sublime principles. Viewing man, not as the deformed creature circumstances and evil institutions had made him, but from the height of his primitive nature, it addressed all
mankind as brothers, uttering words of peace and love to all, and declaring the moral equality of all. Fraternity and love were inscribed upon the banner elevated by Christianity in the midst of the human tribes, and its appearance was the signal for the abolition of slavery, and the commencement of an era during which the nations rallied one after another round the Cross, and advanced in harmony and goodwill upon the path of indefinite progress. Christianity tempered the exclusiveness of patriotism, laid the foundations of universal justice, and created that spirit of proselytism, that ardent desire of preaching and promulgating truth, which raised up in after days so many defenders of the sacred cause of humanity and right.

But one-half of Europe remained uninfluenced by the progress of the southern peoples. The northern races, still idolators of force, roamed their forests amid the darkness of ignorance, ungoverned by any regular laws. The South had learned to aspire towards a higher degree of civilisation, but—as if exhausted by the religious triumph achieved—lacked the energy to maintain it. And indeed, if to the newly-acquired sentiment of the rights of man had been added vigour and determination in their defence, a lasting barrier might have been raised between the destinies of the North and South, for the distinction between them would have become too great to be overcome.

But curiosity and suffering, two inseparable companions of the human race, interfered to prevent this.
The Northern tribes, urged on by desire of change and the need of lands more fertile than their own, poured in torrents over their frontiers, and precipitated themselves upon the Southern peoples. The struggle which had formerly existed between the East and West was now renewed between the North and South, but more destructive and tremendous, because the disparity between the belligerents was greater.

Christianity had sown the seeds of immense benefits among mankind, but it was impossible that so complete a religious transformation should take place, in a society where pagan manners, customs, and habits of thought still prevailed, without undermining the whole social edifice, and destroying all equilibrium of power among nations.

The first material consequences of the change appeared to be fatal to the State. It was as a torrent that fertilises distant lands at the expense of that where it breaks forth. Rome had lost the antique faith that once guided her heroes to battle, and was incapable of deriving any advantage from the new. The old was as a branch from a withered trunk, and the new had not, as yet, struck root in men's hearts. Moreover, the Romans were divided by slavery, corrupted by luxury, and mentally impoverished by the multiplicity of sects which had issued from the decay of their past religion. They occupied themselves with puerile disputes and theological subtleties, and despised their invaders as barbarians. But these barbarians were at least brave and warlike, while they
had neither the power of civilisation nor the energy
of barbarism. The very nerve of the empire was
destroyed, and it was utterly unable to resist the
Northern eruptions, which succeeded one another like
the waves of the sea.

The colossus was overthrown. Hordes of Goths,
Visigoths, Huns, and Vandals, swept over Italy, Gaul,
and Spain, by turns. Language, institutions, customs,
all disappeared, whelmed beneath the devastating
flood. A hundred different races were confused and
clashed together; a hundred different elements, civil
and barbaric, struggled for mastery; the moral uni-
verse presented an image of chaos; the sun of civilisa-
tion appeared extinguished, and the European world
buried for ever in darkness.

But not for ever. Within that chaos the elements of
life and progress were silently fermenting, and civilisa-
tion, though apparently destroyed, was in fact prepar-
ing to regain the equilibrium it had lost. Overthrown
and scattered in the South, it was insensibly acting
upon the North, and revenging itself on those who had
trampled it under foot by tempering the barbarism
of their nature and customs. While the mass of the
barbarians for a time overwhelmed the conquered
beneath their own ignorance and superstition, throw-
ing intelligence back into the narrow material sphere
it had lately abandoned, those among them who re-
turned to their homes, and the Roman slaves who
accompanied them, introduced Southern manners and
customs into their native land; and Christianity,
which had already been embraced by the invaders who remained, now penetrated to the British Isles, and united the populations of the Elbe, the Baltic, and the Vistula in the bonds of a common faith. While the great monuments of the science and literature of the empire were either buried in the cloister or destroyed, a ray of Southern culture diffused itself over the snows of the North, and the Mæsogothic translation of the Gospel by Ulfilas was followed by the appearance of poems, chronicles, and hymns, on every side, from the Alps to the Frozen Sea.

This was the commencement of an era in which the elements of barbarism and civilisation were mingled in almost equal proportions, but which appears to posterity a period of unmixed horror and darkness; for while intelligence, condemned to inertia, has left no fruits behind, many of the evils bequeathed to us by the barbarians exercise a baleful influence even in our own day. The feudal system—the offspring of German manners, and of the necessity of preserving conquests already made—at first a military institution, then a civil law, at length overran all Europe in the form of an insolent aristocracy.

Violence stood for government, and anarchy became law. Serfdom reduced the human being to the level of the beast of burden. From the numerous castles which owed their rise to the fears of conscious guilt their tyrannical seigneurs descended upon the crushed and degraded multitude, still further to deform and mutilate the work of creation.
Though Italy underwent similar trials, yet her destiny was less severe. She was a ruin, but a ruin haunted by the shadow of her gigantic power, sublime in the memories of her majestic past, and gleaming amid the surrounding darkness with the light of bygone glory. The spirit of greatness could never wholly forsake a land yet vibrating to the echoes of Roman victories and Grecian learning. And the beauty and fertility of the country, by attracting a constant succession of conquerors, produced multiplied vicissitudes, whereby that fire of genius, which long years of uniform oppression would probably have extinguished, was kept alive. Moreover, the Lombards founded in Italy a kingdom—a solitary example in those days—containing the germ of representative government, and framed a system of laws which have been extolled by Montesquieu.

The Lombards succumbed in their turn to Charlemagne, but the moral effects of their dominion remained; and it is not to climate, but to the above-named causes, that we must attribute the many elements of renovation, and the energy of character which, in the succeeding period of civilisation, again placed the Italians at the head of the great European movement; even as we attribute the peculiar characteristics and eminent beauties of Spanish and Portuguese poetry to the long residence in the Peninsula of the Arabs: a noble people, gifted with high imaginative and poetic genius.

But human intelligence was still bound by chains
too numerous to allow of its rising to any great sublimity of conception or idea. With the exception of a few popular rhapsodies, and some imitations of Latin authors, no literature as yet existed in Europe.

Both Charlemagne and Alfred attempted to introduce a better state of things, but their efforts were insufficient to counteract the evils produced by the feudal system, and their improvements died with them. The only indication of an intelligent advance towards a higher civilisation was the institution of chivalry; the offspring, in its primitive conception, of valour and generosity. The sentiment of personal independence—for the idea of popular liberty had not even been conceived in those days—was the soul of chivalry, and the loving worship addressed by it to beauty—until then contaminated by the impure breath of seigneurial lust—was the first alliance signed between valour and pity, the first altar raised by force to suffering innocence.

But chivalry—a solitary flower blooming among tares and weeds—was destined quickly to degenerate. The priesthood, fearing its effects, determined to take the direction of it into their own hands, and succeeded in doing so. It was transformed from a civil into a religious institution, and degenerated into fanaticism, intolerance, and ferocity.

Such was the third period of civilisation, a period concluded in the ninth century with the first Crusade; an enterprise displaying, in its fullest development
and maximum of power, the spirit of superstition, aristocracy, and chivalry then ruling Europe.

At the voice of a hermit, the entire West arose to arms, and precipitated itself upon the East.

But, owing to the working of that hidden law which controls all human things, the very circumstance which appears to attest the vigour of an institution is often the cause of its decay. The forces hostile to civilisation had reached their climax, and were consequentiy doomed to decline. The Crusades lasted two centuries—two centuries of movement and agitation, that broke the slumbers of Europe. The nobles were compelled to sell their lands to meet the expenses of their expeditions, and while they were fighting in foreign countries their power was weakened at home. Many of the nations journeying towards the Holy Land met together in Italy, where civilisation had never been wholly destroyed, where the attempt of Crescentius had already suggested the idea of union, and where Venice, Pisa, and Genoa already extended their commerce over the Adriatic and Mediterranean. From Italy they proceeded to Constantinople, where the lamp of science and literature, though more dimly burning, was not extinguished; and thence to the East, where they lingered long, renewing their intercourse with the Arabs, whose works and discoveries they carried away with them, returning to their own countries to teach something like an uniformity of manners, customs, and opinions.

Such were the results upon Europe of an enter-
prise directed towards a widely different aim. When Peter the Hermit raised the cry of *War to the infidel!* he little dreamed that that cry would prove the cause of an universal resurrection. But the hour had come. The human mind was aroused to a consciousness of the weight of the chains by which it had been fettered. An electric thrill appeared to run through the whole district between the Mediterranean and the Pole. . . . The spirit of liberty, which is the life and soul of modern civilisation, now first manifested itself in Europe, vaster and more sublime than the sentiment of independence which had been the characteristic of the ancient world, because founded upon human nature itself, while the other is based merely upon the idea of citizenship.

Then began the struggle between brute force and intelligence; between inertia and the law of progress; between all the forces opposed to civilisation and the yearning of mankind towards improvement: a struggle which still endures after the lapse of eight centuries.

The peoples had all of them undergone similar conditions of servitude and degradation, and all now arose in assertion of their rights. Italy gave the signal by her ever-memorable Lombard League, and her cities vied with one another in acquiring new privileges and superior institutions. The great towns of France and Spain followed the example, and in Germany the citizens of the various towns combined to keep armed watch over their liberties, threatened
by the abuses and encroachments of the emperors and nobles. The Rhenish confederation was formed, in which sixty cities took part, and the ports of the Baltic and North Sea were opened to the commerce of Italy by the Hanseatic League.

A short time before this the foundations of regular government had been laid in England by the Magna-Charta, and not long afterwards the signal of Swiss independence was given by the arrow of Tell, and the flag of liberty floated upon the mountain-peaks of Uri, Schweitz, and Unterwalden.

The intellectual development of the nations, which had been so long interrupted, was renewed with their political regeneration, and the character of the first poetic essays of each was very similar. The Arabs had communicated to the Europeans their taste, their descriptive power, and their inclination towards the fanciful and mystic—an inclination which the Platonism transfused into Christianity tended to increase. The chivalric element was revived by the invasions of the Normans—a people carrying the love of adventure to excess.

All these causes contributed to the diffusion throughout all lands of the Gaie Science of the troubadours. It was as if an universal song of joy arose to hail the dawn of a new existence. Transplanted by the Normans into Sicily and England, it soon became common property, and in every land the lays of love and chivalry appear to have sprung from one and the same root. In the North and in the South,
on the lyre of the troubadour and on the harp of min- 
strel and Minnesänger, we find the "Gaie Science" 
resplendent with the same hues, assuming the same 
forms, and revealing the same beauties and defects. 
In all countries it was marked by a chivalric spirit, 
a leaning towards the marvellous, a tint of idealism, 
and an imaginative style, fertile in comparison 
and conceits; similarity of circumstances, me-

mories, and desires, everywhere impressed it with 
similar characteristics, amid climates the most 
diverse.

Thus the literature of Italy was at that time 
more spiritual and meditative in character than it 
has since been, while the German revealed none of 
that tendency to abstractions and indefinite phantasy 
which were the results of the imitation of Southern 
types, consequent upon the frequent Teutonic eru-
tions into Italy, and which continued to prevail 
until German literature underwent the powerful im-
press of the Reformation.

[Mazzini goes on to show how Italian intellect, 
fostered by the above-mentioned causes, soon 
left the rest of Europe behind, but the immense 
benefits conferred upon Italian literature by Dante, 
Petrarch, and Boccaccio, were not lost upon other 
nations, the inventions of paper and the print-
ing-press affording a new means of enlightenment, 
and a new link of union among the peoples. The 
increase of moral energy, which was the result of
these discoveries, was naturally first expended upon religion—the basis of all things, civil and political—and the Reformation, the first important fruit of the labours of four centuries, may be considered to have concluded the fourth period of civilisation.

Failing in the South, but striking deep root in the North, the Reformation appears at first to have created an insuperable barrier between the two; but in fact the new impulse which it gave to intelligence in the North restored it to intellectual equality with the South, where literature had already become corrupted by the pernicious influence of princely persecution or protection, causing the writer to devote the whole energies of his mind to the perfection of those external elegances and graces of language which characterise the too much vaunted ages of Charles V., Leo X., and Louis XIV., and which degenerated into the extravagant conceits and inflation of style which distinguish the Gongoristi of Spain, Dubartas in France, and Marini in Italy.

The very intolerance that banished the adherents to the Reformed doctrine from the South also contributed to draw closer the bonds of union among the peoples; the exiles carried with them the knowledge of many new forms of industry, and while commerce benefited largely by the increased contact of nations, the press spread the discoveries of Galileo, the ideas of Thomas More, and the historic sketches of Macchiavelli from one end of Europe to the other. Grotius taught the necessity of an universal law
of nations; Descartes abolished the dogma of authority.

A crowd of writers followed in their steps, all of whom addressed themselves to Europe at large, and appeared to have set themselves to prove the truth proclaimed by Bacon, that the knowledge of all things worthy to be known can never be the achievement of a single man, a single nation, or a single age. The treasure of universal knowledge can only be obtained by the union and concord of all the human faculties.]

Thus the struggle between truth and error, excited by the spirit of liberty in the preceding epoch, was perpetuated in a thousand shapes during this fifth period of civilisation, with various success, in the different countries of Europe.

While the creative genius of Peter the Great added Russia to the list of civilised nations; while the Netherlands achieved their independence with their blood, and England raised herself upon her triple basis of civil, political, and religious liberty—all glory, wealth, and energy were lost to Spain, crushed beneath the rod of an oppression as stupid as ferocious; dismembered Poland was struck off the roll of nations; and Italy, which had given learning and civilisation to a world whose every province is blessed by nature, whose every city is enriched by works of every form of genius, whose every sod covers the dust of a hero—Italy, torn by foreign and
domestic wars, cast down and degraded by her own children, lost union, political existence, courage, and virtue—all, save her great memories and a hope.

But is not that hope the pledge of resurrection given by God to the fallen?

[Assuming that the progress achieved, and the firm basis already laid for a complete accord among the peoples, must now be evident to all, Mazzini passes on to days nearer to our own.]

The last forty years have brought mankind through a series of dangers, sorrows, and transformations, to a point from which, in future, they can only advance united. They are so already in attachment to the same ideas and principles.

The gigantic apparition that arose to oppress the South with one hand, while it extended the other towards the North, threatened to stifle the aspiration of Europe; but civilisation, though it sometimes advances upon circuitous paths, never in fact recedes.

The colossus fell, overthrown by the union of the peoples far more than by that of the princes; but in the meantime, two-thirds of Europe had passed ten years under the influence of uniform circumstances, laws, and government; and those diversities of character which had held the nations asunder had been gradually worn away by the moral friction occasioned by these causes, and the vicissitudes of constant war: and invasion. The sons of the North
had once more issued from their wild ravines to pluck the fruits of civilisation. Thus while their princes were signing treaties and compacts among themselves, an alliance of the peoples, destined to be more lasting and inviolable, was sworn upon the altar of liberty. They looked back upon ages past. The nations had attacked and oppressed each other in turn, rivers of blood had watered the earth, their common mother, and for what reason? A prejudice, a caprice, at times a single word, appeared to have given rise to strife so deplorable. And what had been the results? The peoples had consumed their own strength while thus unconsciously serving the ambitious dreams or the arts of those whose sole aim was to secure their own dominion.

They looked to the future and asked themselves, Why should we thus hate one another? What benefit have we derived from this mutual hatred? Have we not sprung from a common root? Are not our wants and faculties the same? Is not the sign of brotherhood stamped upon the brow of each? Has not nature inspired us all with the same yearning towards higher things? Let us love one another! Human creatures are born to love. Let us unite: united, we shall be stronger.

A community of desires and wants does then exist in Europe; a common thought, an universal mind, is leading the nations through different paths to one and the same goal. Literature, therefore—if
it be not to sink into triviality—must identify itself with this general tendency; must express, assist, and direct it; must become European.

And the impulse is already given. The literature of the various peoples no longer presents that partial character and exclusive taste, unfitting it to obtain the rights of citizenship among foreign nations.

. . . . Ideas of an universal character more frequently occur, and a wider arena is laid open to intelligence. This has been the work of a few great men. His acute sensibility, intellectual independence, profound thought, and giant soul, would have fitted Lord Byron to become the model of an European poet, had not calumny, envy, and the lack of all response to his own aspirations among the men of his time, driven him into the isolation of despair, and caused him more frequently to depict his own mind, than to become the interpreter of humanity. Nevertheless, as every truly great mind is a reflection, an image of universal nature, he not seldom earned the laurels that are of every age and nation, and his works have deeply moved and influenced the whole of Europe.

His great philosophic power, endless variety of fancy, and breadth of vision, render Göthe the master mind of the epoch; although the struggle between good and evil, symbolised in his creations, assumes an aspect rather ideological and appertaining to the past, than real and applicable to the present day.

Our own Monti might have taken his place be-
tween the two, had the depth and earnestness of his mind been equal to his powers of expression and brilliancy of imagination.

These three great men derived their inspiration from the master-works of all nations: they sought the beautiful wheresoever it was to be found, and transfused a portion of the universal harmony into their verse.

The results of their efforts have been immense. The study of foreign languages and literature is now pursued with ardour, and is fostered both in France and England by numerous journals and reviews devoted to the examination of foreign works. Voyages and travels are multiplied; and henceforward no generous voice can be raised in Europe without awakening a responding thrill in the hearts of millions.

The edifice which pedantry had raised upon the opinions and mythology of the ancients has fallen to rise no more; and a young generation, full of fervent hope and life, bounds over its ruins in search of a higher and nobler goal.

This yearning after a higher aim is revealed even in the writings of many, from the Neva to the Ebro, to whom the free utterance of the heart's language is forbidden; while it shines forth its full radiance in the hymns of Delavigne, the melodies of Thomas Moore, the dramatic works of Martinez de la Rosa, and the writings of Nicolini. The need of a purer religion is revealed in the works of Manzoni, Lamar-
tine, Wordsworth, Oehlenschläger, and others. Even in Spain the special taste of the nation is merging into one more universal; the poetical compositions of Melendez, Ariazza, and Quintana are a proof of this. Russia herself, so lately emerged from barbarism, reveals the European tendency in the poems of Koslov, Pozharsky, and Pouchkine.

[Here Mazzini again indignantly protests against the accusation of want of patriotism brought against those who urge the Italians to bear their part in the formation of the new European literature. He maintains that Italy has long ceased to possess a literature of her own, and that she must reform her laws of taste by meditation upon the essence of the beautiful, and a careful comparison of the multiple forms it assumes, and their effect upon the human mind, in order to create a literature which shall represent and express every application of the one universal principle guiding the progress of the human family.]

And in order to found this new literature, the Italians must study the literature of other nations, not for purposes of imitation, but in order to know the various shapes in which nature reveals herself to her children; to learn how various are the paths by which to reach the heart; how numerous the harmonies of the soul and the sources of the passions; even as the master's hand, wandering in prelude over the chords of the harp, modulates through each in
turn, in order to select the one most fitted to give utterance to the hidden sentiment vibrating in his own bosom.

What will be the form assumed by this new literature; what the opinions, rules, and principles, which should direct those aspiring to reach this aim? I know not. Rules and precepts do but suffocate true genius, and all that can be usefully done in this wise must be to excite, purify, or touch the soul, and then leave it perfect freedom in its flight.

I know not even by what paths this intellectual renovation must be first approached; but I do know that the phenomena of moral nature and the inner man, will be its chosen domain; and that it will regard physical nature and the outward man but as their outward symbol and manifestation. I know that social man in action—that is to say, in the organised development of his faculties towards a given aim—will be its subject; and I know that this development depends upon the action and effect of certain passions universally and truly felt, and that the mission of literature must therefore be to cultivate and direct them towards that aim.

I know that intellect and enthusiasm must no longer be divided; that the secret of the universe can only be divined by one uniting both these faculties in the highest degree; and that the truly European writer must be a philosopher holding in his hand the poet's lyre.
I know that the universal order and inward force whence life and motion spring are manifested in every object, even as the sun is reflected entire in every drop of dew; that typical beauty is everywhere one, and affects all mankind, but that the elements of the beautiful are scattered and diffused throughout all nature, and all human things, even in those wherein we see them degraded or disfigured by interest, vice, or sensual habit.

And I know that the most certain means of comprehending and realising the beautiful is the constant and intelligent study of nature undisguised; and the readiest method of efficiently reproducing it is a profound, psychological, and historical study of mankind; and the fittest temple for the revelation of the truth is an ardent, ingenuous, pure, and untiring spirit.

These few principles should, I think, be set before the writer. Genius will do the rest in its own fashion.

Young men, who aspire to benefit your fellow-men, an important mission is confided to you by humanity. In former days the nation entrusted the sacred volume in which the laws and religion of its fathers were inscribed into the keeping of the poet, saying to him: "Be it yours to see that this deposit remain inviolate in the hearts of your fellow-citizens; your inspirations are sanctified and revered only within the walls of your country." But you will have a whole world for the theatre of your glory; every vibration of your lyre is the patrimony of the
human race; every chord you touch will resound beyond the extremest limits of the ocean. The spirit of love appeals to the hearts of all the inhabitants of this our Europe, but confusedly, and with unequal power. Many centuries of error have worn away the impress of our common origin, but heaven has given us poetry wherewith to reunite the scattered and divided brethren. It is yours to awaken and diffuse that spirit of love on every side; to break down every barrier to human brotherhood, and to sing the passions that are universal, and the truths that are eternal.

Therefore you must study the works of all the nations. He who is acquainted with but one literature has read but one page of the book wherein the mysteries of genius are inscribed. Unite in tacit communion with those who suffer the same sorrows, rejoice in the same joys, and strive towards the same goal. What matter whether the sun dart his rays through the azure or through a veil of clouds? The hearts of all men beat more quickly at the breath of beauty; all men have a tear and a word of consolation for the cry of the unhappy; and lives there one whose soul is not renewed within him at the name of liberty?

Let these be the sources of your inspiration, and your poems will be an utterance of the voice of the universe.

The palm of immortality blooms at the end of the career before you; the peoples will plant it in
reverence upon the tomb of him who first shall reach the goal, and eternity will inscribe upon his sepulchre, *Here sleeps the Poet of Nature, the Benefactor of Humanity.*

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**ON THE HISTORICAL DRAMA.**

*(From the *Antologia* of Florence, July 1830.)*

When the adversaries of a new idea, which has given rise to fierce disputes and long debates, change their ground and cease to attack the elementary principle in order to combat its consequences and modes of application, we may safely assert that the day of agreement is not far distant, and that the triumph of the contested idea is infallible.

No new ideas have arisen in any age without exciting the opposition of those who have either grown old under the influence of the former opinion, or who are not gifted with sufficient manliness of intellect to enable them to overcome the errors of a superstitious education. Strong in the authority of long possession of the ground, they first assail the bases and fundamental principles of the new idea, compelling them to pass through the preliminary and most severe ordeal upon the field of generalisation. If it issue victorious from these first attacks, its adversaries descend to details.