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Book Review of The Great Metropolis

Lucian Minor

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THE GREAT METROPOLIS:

By the author of "Random Recollections of the House of Commons."

This amusing book is presented to the American public in the cheap form of less than five weekly numbers of Mr. Theodore Foster's "Cabinet Miscellany"—at 12½ cents a number: thus reducing to little more than 50 cents, a work of which the English price, we believe, is about two dollars.

"*The Great Metropolis*," every body knows, can be no other than London: and most minutely diversified are the particulars; in which Mr. Grant has ministered to the craving curiosity of all who speak and read the English language, with regard to that great heart of English life, manners, fashions, and literature. His descriptions, however, are not topographical: it is with the *moral* aspects and attributes—not the *physical*—of London, that he has to do. He does not give the dimensions of streets or buildings; or describe the gorgeousness, or the relative positions, of palaces, or churches, or Tower, or Monument, or squares. But, after a rapid and graphic view of those visible circumstances which would soonest catch an observant and philosophic eye upon a general survey of the city from some aerial station above it—were such a stand attainable—he carries his reader to the Theatres; introduces him (without danger of his being black-balled) into the Clubs; plunges with him into the Gaming Houses, and shews him the fiends who tenant those "Hells;" chaperones him then, through the three classes of Metropolitan Society—the Higher, Middling, and Lower; and lastly, details (too minutely perhaps, but very entertainingly) the condition and statistics of the newspaper and periodical Press.

It is in this last one of his walks, that we (from professional sympathy, perhaps) accompany him with most pleasure: and we shall give, in a condensed form, a few of the many particulars which have so interested us.

The whole number of periodical publications in London, from quarterly Reviews down to daily newspapers, is *fifty nine*; every one of which, Mr. Grant mentions by name,—describing its moral, intellectual, and political (or religious) character, its age, price, editor, chief contributors, and extent of circulation. The daily papers are *eleven*; weekly papers *thirty*,—viz. five literary, and twenty five political or religious; quarterly reviews, *five*; monthly Reviews or Magazines, *thirteen*.

There is a remarkable preponderance, of the Press, in favor of *liberal* principles, in politics. On the liberal side are seven *daily*, and thirteen *weekly* papers; namely, 'The Morning Chronicle,'—'The Morning Advertiser,'—'The Constitutional,'—'The Globe,'—'Courier,'—'Sun,'—and 'True Sun;'—'The Examiner,'—'The Spectator,'—'The Observer,'—'Bell's Life in London,'—'The Weekly Dispatch'—'Bell's New Weekly Messenger'—'The Atlas'—'The Satirist'—'The Weekly True Sun'—'The News'—'The Sunday Times'—'The Patriot'—and 'The Christian Advocate;' making twenty in all: while the *Conservatives*, or *Tories*, have but four *daily*, and seven *weekly* papers; viz: 'The Times'—'The Herald'—'The Post'—and 'The Standard,'—'Bell's Weekly Messenger'—'The John Bull'—'The Age'—'The Watchman'—'The Weekly

Post"—The United Service Gazette;—and 'The London Weekly Journal.'

In point of circulation, the liberal journals have a still greater, proportional superiority. "The 'Dispatch,' alone," says Mr. Grant, "has a greater circulation than that of all the Tory Weeklies put together." That paper circulates, steadily, nearly 32000 copies: a greater number than any other in England, or, probably, in the world. 'The Observer,' and 'Bell's Life in London,' both owned by one proprietor, circulate, unitedly, more than 18000. 'Bell's Weekly Messenger,' nearly 13000. 'Bell's New Weekly Messenger,' above 5000. 'The Sunday Times,' about an equal number. 'The John Bull,' 4500.

'The Observer' obtains its items of intelligence, on terms that may well make American Editors stare. Besides keeping in regular pay, a strong corps of news-reporters, it pays other persons *three pence a line*, for all they furnish, worthy of publication. The usual rate, with other papers, is but half that sum.

To the gentlemen of our newspaper press, who often themselves observe and deplore the uncontrolled bitterness that sometimes reigns in their encounters, pervades all society, and sets neighbor against neighbor, friend against friend,—we commend the following traits in 'The Observer' and 'The Examiner,' as at once becoming the dignity of the press, and calculated to preserve peace, and diffuse true light, among the people. 'The former

"is conducted with much gentlemanly feeling. Anything in the shape of coarseness or virulence never finds its way into its columns. . . . Every thing in it is previously examined, often re-written with the greatest care, both with the view of guarding against any impropriety of expression, and insuring a condensed accuracy in its statements of facts."

'The Examiner's' original articles

"are always full of wit and argument. You never read one of them without being struck with the brilliancy of some of the writer's ideas or illustrations. There is, too, a vein of quiet subdued sarcasm pervading the whole of Mr. Fonblanque's articles, which possess the rare good fortune of being equally perceived and admired by the most intellectual and the least informed readers of newspapers. Hence there is, perhaps, no weekly journal whose readers are in such equal proportions among the higher and lower classes. 'The Examiner' never indulges in declamation. This is somewhat surprising, when every one knows that Mr. Fonblanque's attachment to his principles is not exceeded by that of any man. He feels strongly on all great questions: he is the uncompromising advocate of the most liberal principles; he is incessant in his attacks on a Tory oligarchy, and a most strenuous assertor of the rights of the people, and yet he never betrays the least warmth or violence of manner. 'The Globe,' when twitted some time ago by 'The Times,' on an alleged loss of temper, took credit to itself for being "as cool as a cucumber." If ever one journalist was entitled more than another to claim this credit for himself, that journalist is Mr. Albany Fonblanque. How he would behave—whether he would take matters as coolly, were his house on fire, I know not; but amidst the sound of trumpets and the clash of arms, in the political conflict, he retains the most perfect composure. Many persons, when looking on the agitation and excitement and ardor of feeling, evinced by all its contemporaries on both sides of the question, have felt 'The Examiner's' coolness to be provoking. How much more annoying must Mr. Fonblanque's frigidity of manner prove to his brother journalists, when they see themselves worked up to what I once heard a coalheaver somewhat happily characterize as a "jolly good passion." But though Mr. Fonblanque never suffers himself to lose his temper, and consequently guards against that coarse abuse, in dealing with an opponent, which is the usual accompaniment of undue ardor of feeling, his wit and irony are felt more sensibly by a delicate mind, than would be the most abusive language which it were possible to employ.

"One great beauty of 'The Examiner's' articles is the singular ease with which they are manifestly written. There is no appearance of effort about them: they seem to proceed quite naturally from the writer's pen; as easily, indeed, as if he were unconscious at the time his most ingenious arguments and happiest illustrations are following each other in rapid succession, that he was giving expression to any thoughts at all."

This sketch really exhibits our *beau ideal* of a newspaper: an assemblage of all that is admirable and praiseworthy.

The following will remind the reader of many a "splendid failure" among the newspaper enterprises of the United States:

"It is amusing to contrast the lofty pretensions and prodigal promises made in the prospectuses or first numbers of some papers, with the fate to which they are doomed. Not long since a weekly paper started on Conservative principles. Never was a journal ushered into the world amidst a greater flourish of trumpets. It was started for the purpose of rescuing the Constitution from the clutches of the Radicals, and of saving the Church from the destruction with which it was threatened by infidels. It was not the worst part of the joke, that the two editors engaged to conduct it were actually, in their private opinions, both Radicals and Infidels. The crisis to the country which this Conservative hebdomadal pledged itself to avert, by timely arresting the progress of Radicalism and Infidelity, speedily, alas! happened to itself. It only lived six weeks, and during that time the average of the number sold—a good many copies were given away gratis—did not amount to thirty."

After comparing, or rather contrasting, the newspapers of France with those of England; assigning to the English an immeasurable superiority both in the quantity, and in the character, of their contents;—Mr. Grant says—

"It is curious to compare an English newspaper of the present day, with what it was at the commencement of the last century. Then, it only consisted of one leaf, or two pages, of the quarto size, each page divided into two columns. There was not then anything in the shape of reports of the proceedings in Parliament, in the courts of law, or at public meetings. All the intelligence the newspapers of that day contained, was given in a few general paragraphs. Anything in the shape of original remarks or disquisitions, there was none. Indeed it was not until 1758, that the practice of making original observations in a paper, was resorted to. Even then it was rather in the shape of an essay on some literary or moral topic, than a discussion of any political question. The first original article that ever appeared in any newspaper, was an essay by Dr. Johnson in 'The Universal Chronicle and Weekly Gazette,' published by Mr. John Newberry, of St. Paul's Churchyard. This was in the year I have just mentioned. 'The Universal Chronicle' was a paper of four folio pages, printed with a large type; and Mr. Newberry, the proprietor, in order to add a novel feature to his journal, engaged Dr. Johnson to furnish original articles for it, in consideration of which the great lexicographer was to have a share in the work. The essays which Dr. Johnson furnished to 'The Universal Chronicle,' were afterwards republished in 'The Idler.'"

We have heard some eminent men speak contemptuously of the practice of "scribbling for newspapers," as a practice which they deemed far beneath them: and some of these, too, were men not unable to shine in a political essay,—had they been so disposed. Such has not been the opinion of many Minds in this country, whose talents and virtues would go far to sanctify almost any usage. Wirt, Turnbull, (William) Livingston, Ames, Giles, Jay, Hamilton, Madison, and Franklin,—not to mention great living names,—were voluminous and powerful contributors to newspapers. If we look to Great Britain (besides the instances mentioned in the paragraph we are going to quote), we find Brougham, Jeffrey, Southey, Campbell, Moore, Sidney Smith, McCauley, and a host of others not equal, in-

deed, yet not far inferior to them in power,—furnishing articles to Reviews, magazines, and newspapers. Mr. Grant says:

“The character of the newspaper press of the metropolis, has been greatly raised within the last quarter of a century. Before that time no man of any standing either in the political or literary world, would condescend to write in a newspaper; or if he did, he took special care to keep the circumstance as great a secret as if he had committed some penal offence of the first magnitude. Now, the most distinguished persons in the country, not only often contribute to newspapers, but are ready to admit it, except where there may be accidental reasons for concealment. Many of our Peers, and still more of our representatives in the House of Commons, write for the London newspaper press. In speaking of the daily papers, I have mentioned some of the distinguished persons in the habit of writing for the London journals. Mr. Canoin and Sir James Mackintosh, were both connected with the newspaper press, for a considerable time.”

From the enthusiasm with which our author asserts the superiority of newspapers over other periodicals, we incline to suspect that he was himself once editor of one. Yet we do not know that we should differ with him in his preference; especially, if newspapers were always conducted in the spirit which he ascribes to *The Examiner and Observer*.

“The newspaper,” says he, “is incomparably the noblest and most useful purpose to which the invention of printing has been turned. It is by far the most glorious of the triumphs which typography, in all probability, is destined to achieve. The newspaper preeminently comes home to the business and bosoms of men. Talk of the varied information and utility of the cyclo-pædias and almanacks! Why, these publications are not to be mentioned in the same breath with the newspaper; it addresses itself to our immediate wants; affords you that information, without which you could not spend even the day on which you have entered, with a degree of comfort. Deprive us of our newspapers, and a greater calamity could not befall us. Life without them would be scarcely worth the having. What to the man accustomed to his morning paper, along with his rolls and butter, would be his breakfast without one? Speak to this point, ye subscribers to the morning journals, who have occasionally, through heavy debates in Parliament, important expresses received at a late hour, or other causes,—been deprived of your paper until eleven o’clock,—say, have you not, in such cases, spent a most miserable morning? Has not your breakfast been deprived of its usual relish? Have not even the smiling faces of the members of your family, supposing you to be married, lost the charm which they possess at all other times? The newspaper is now become a necessary of life. Its uses are innumerable; it addresses itself to its readers as intellectual men, as members of the body politic, and as private individuals. It is the first to inform them of any new discovery of importance in the science of mind. It points out, by its reviews, its reports of the proceedings of literary and scientific societies, its advertisements, &c. every thing of interest which transpires in the republic of letters. As to politics, again, it is preeminently its province to communicate the amplest information regarding them. Whatever bears, either directly or indirectly, on the destinies of the nation, is to be found in the columns of the newspaper. To all such matters it has an eagle eye; and not to the politics of this country only, but to those of the whole civilized world.

“Read your newspaper carefully, and it is your own fault if you have not a clear view, without rising off your chair, of the state of matters in all parts of the globe. I was much struck with an observation which a pious Baptist minister made some years ago to a friend of mine, when on a visit in the north of Scotland. A newspaper having been brought into the room, he held out his hand to receive it, saying, “Be kind enough to let me have it for a few minutes, till I see how the Supreme Being is governing the world!” A more forcible or felicitous expression, as applied to a newspaper, could not be employed.”

One of the most amusing chapters in the book is filled with an account of the Parliamentary Reporters; who have been jocularly called “*The Fourth Estate*,” a joke, says Mr. G., “in which there is much more truth than is generally supposed. The influence which

they exercise on public opinion, is incalculably great.” Of the talents, and the laborious processes, by which this influence is earned and maintained—of the nature of the art of reporting—of the ludicrous inconveniences of *verbatim* reports—and the comparative advantages of stenography and of *long-hand*, in taking down speeches,—much is said, and entertainingly. There is a judicious suggestion, that if reporters could and would curtail the long, rambling speeches of members, so as to present only the main points,—these great advantages would be gained: A greater number of speeches could be inserted in every newspaper, and read by its readers; every speech would be more easily understood,—its fallacies discerned, and its sound arguments appreciated; and the speakers themselves would abandon the tedious impertinences into which they now run,—if their vanity were no longer gratified by seeing them blazoned in print.

Verbatim reports have been vehemently insisted on, by some orators in Parliament. “Pretty speeches, in that case,” as Mr. G. says, “would some of their orations appear!” To exemplify this, he tells a diverting anecdote of an Irish member, Sir Frederick Flood, ‘a great stickler for *verbatim* reports.’ A waggish reporter, desirous to shew him how little he would gain by having his wish, presented one morning in a newspaper, the following effusion, uttered by Sir F. in the House, the evening before:

“Mr. Spaker,—As I was coming down to this House to perform my duty to the country and old Ireland, I was brutally attacked, Sir, by a mob, Mr. Spaker, of ragamuffins, Sir. If, Sir, any honorable gintlemin is to be assaulted, Mr. Spaker, by such a parcel of spalpeens, Sir, as were after attacking me, Mr. Spaker, then I say, Mr. Spaker,” &c. &c.

“This,” says Mr. Grant, “proved a complete extinguisher to Sir Frederick Flood’s penchant for *verbatim* reporting. He went, the day on which his oration appeared, to the editors of all the morning papers, and said he would thereafter leave his speeches to ‘the discretion of the reporters.’”

Many are the orators in the Congress and State Legislatures of our Union, who owe as much to the reporters as Sir Frederick Flood did. We have known at least one confess, ingenuously, his obligations to them. They are great *levellers*, it is true: raising up or pulling down every speaker, to their own intellectual height: but they raise up, many more than they pull down.

One good story which Mr. G. tells of Jack Finnarty, a noted Irish reporter in Parliament, may more justly claim the equally famous Mark Supple, as its hero. It runs, according to our recollection, to this effect:

The House was waiting for some tedious form or other to be gone through; perhaps the signing of bills. The orators were mute—the clerks were writing—the reporters had mended their pens, but were waiting, vainly, for something to do with them—the Speaker, (Addington) a tall, prim, starched personage, remarkable for his appearance of dignity, sat uneasily in his chair, as near *fidgelling* as one so dignified could be. Mark Supple (a professed wag, and a general favorite), overcome by weariness, and potently stimulated with liquor,—at length broke the silence by yawning out, “A song from Mr. Speaker!” After a momentary stare of amazement, a universal roar of laughter shook the House. An officer forthwith entered the gallery, and inquired who was the offender. Mark silently pointed to a little, demure Quaker, sitting before him. (We tell the rest in Mr. G.’s words)—

"The officer immediately seized the unoffending little man by the breast of his collarless coat, and without condescending to give a why or wherefore, dragged him down stairs, and transferred him to the care of the sergeant-at-arms. The latter, after keeping him in safe custody during the night, and compelling him to pay nearly 30*l.* for his lodgings, set him at liberty on the following day."

We would gladly extract several other choice and laughable anecdotes of the reporter's gallery; but space would fail us. We pass to the closing subject—the Reviews, and other literary periodicals, of London.

There are five quarterly reviews: *THE QUARTERLY*,—*THE LONDON AND WESTMINSTER*,—*THE FOREIGN QUARTERLY*,—*THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN*,—and *THE DUBLIN*. Of these, the first is notoriously *Conservative* in its politics: the last was established to advocate the claims of the Catholics,—is edited by three gentlemen of that persuasion,—and therefore, can hardly be very much devoted to free principles in government or religion: the other three are decidedly *liberal*. The *Quarterly Review* has a circulation of 9000; being by far greater than that of any other in Great Britain, except the *Edinburg*,—which circulated once, and probably still circulates, the enormous number of 18 or 20 thousand! The other Reviews are comparatively stunted. The *London and Westminster*, (the most successful of them) circulates only 1500. The *Foreign Quarterly*, 1200.

The present flourishing state of periodical literature does not contrast more strikingly with its feeble condition half a century ago, than its improved intellectual character *now*, contrasts with its deficiencies *then*. Formerly, an author of reputation seldom wrote, even anonymously, for the magazines and reviews. Now, as Mr. Grant remarks, there is hardly "a single individual of any distinction in our current literature, who has not enriched them by occasional articles. Many of our most gifted and successful literati, are regular contributors to our periodical literature." Possibly, he may be right, when he ascribes this great improvement in the character of periodicals, to the modern practice of *paying for contributions*. After quoting, and approving, the remark of Dr. Johnson,—that "none but a blockhead would think of writing, unless he were paid for his labor;" Mr. G. says—"It will generally be found, that persons of talent will not rack their brains for nothing. If first rate matter is to be procured, a corresponding price must be paid for it." Mr. Gifford received a yearly salary of 900*l.* for editing the "*Quarterly*;" and Mr. Lockhart is said to receive 1400*l.*: the same sum which Mr. Jeffrey had for editing the "*Edinburg*." Besides salaries to the editors, each of those great reviews pays an average rate of 20 guineas for every 16 pages of printed matter; and for articles of extraordinary merit, or from very eminent authors, still higher prices. Southey has often received fifty guineas for fewer than 30 pages: and Sir James Mackintosh was once paid, by Mr. Constable, of '*the Edinburg*,' 100 guineas for an article of but forty pages,—on the '*Partitions of Poland*.' The other reviews allow but a guinea a page. Assuredly, no Muse, at all susceptible of mercenary influences, could fail to be stimulated by such rewards.

We like, on the whole, the following character given of Mr. Lockhart, as a critic; though we fear it bespeaks him more prompt to draw the sword, than to

adjust nicely the scales, of his literary judgment seat. At all events, it is as *right*, as it is difficult, for a reviewer to be unbiassed by any personal, local, or party considerations, in the sentence he pronounces upon an author.

"As a critic, he knows no private friendship. He will overpower you with his hospitality and kindness in his own house, and in the very next number of '*The Quarterly*,' make melancholy havoc with your literary character. A marked instance of this occurred a short time since in the case of a Frenchman of distinguished reputation in his own country. As Monsieur had every reason to believe a work which he had just then finished would be noticed in '*The Quarterly*,' and as he trembled at the very idea of its being "cut up," he thought the best way to guard against such a calamity would be to procure letters of introduction to Mr. Lockhart, and come over to London to make his friendship. He did so; and, to his ineffable delight, was received by the '*Quarterly*' critic with every mark of the most cordial friendship. They dined and "drank wine" together day after day during the Frenchman's stay in London. In the course of their conversation Mr. Lockhart mentioned that an elaborate notice had been drawn up of his guest's work, but did not throw out any hint as to the strain in which it was written; of course the latter did not put the question whether it was favorable or otherwise; that would have been to a certain extent an infringement of the rules of good breeding. He assumed, however, that the review would be commendatory, from the marked attentions which the editor of '*The Quarterly*' paid him. At last the hour of departure from the hospitable abode of Mr. Lockhart arrived, and away the Frenchman went back to Paris, in raptures at the thought of the English popularity which the forthcoming number of '*The Quarterly*' was to confer on him. On reaching Paris, he mentioned the circumstance to all his friends. Judge then of his horror, when, in less than a fortnight afterwards, '*The Quarterly*' contained an article on his book, which, as a specimen of literary butchery, has scarcely ever been equalled."

We, and others, have doubted whether frequent *review-reading* had not some ill effects upon the mind. It tends (we have thought) to puff up the reader with an *imagination* that he is master of all that the criticised work contains, when in truth, he knows little more than is told by its title page. Thus he becomes at once shallow and vain. He is satisfied with the reviewer's (often garbled) abstract of the book; and is unconsciously led to adopt *his opinions* of it, with all the unquestioning reverence that a pious heathen used to feel, for the response of an oracle. When the critic is able and sarcastic, his aim, too generally, is 'not to aid his readers in entering more easily, or better prepared, into the thoughts, feelings, or truths, which his author endeavors to teach or illustrate; but, to make the author look foolish: and he prostitutes his talents to enable the common herd of his readers to suppose themselves looking down from the vantage ground of superior intellect, upon the poor, blundering poet or philosopher, who is the subject of review.' [We quote, substantially, from that saucy but most amusing book, "*Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*,"—written by no other than Mr. Lockhart himself. He afterwards proceeds thus]:

"The most vulgar blockhead who takes up and reads an article in the *Edinburg Review*, imagines for the time that *he himself* is quizzing the man of genius, whose labors are there sported with. His opaque features are illuminated with triumph; and, holding the journal fast in his hand, he pursues his fantastic victory to the last extremities. Month after month, or quarter after quarter, this most airy species of gratification is renewed, till, by long habit, our blockhead at last becomes *bona fide* convinced, that he is quite superior to any thing the age can produce. Now and then, to be sure, some passing circumstance may dart a momentary disturbance into the sanctuary of his self-complacency: but this will only make him long the more fervently for the next number of the *Review*, to convince him that he was all in the right,—to rekindle the fluttering lamp of his vanity, and make

his conceit as bright a thing as ever. Meantime, whatever share of understanding or feeling has been allowed him by nature, remains wholly uncultivated; and the faculties of his mind are lost and sunk in one blind, brute wish to see every thing levelled before his self-love.*

In all this, we fear, there is much truth; not as respects the *Edinburg Review* in particular—for that is not less impartial, and certainly far abler, than the *Quarterly* or any other existing *Review*;—but as respects *all criticism*, which is not actuated exclusively by the desire to present, candidly and fully, the true character and a faithful summary of the works criticised. Some of the objections which we have made or borrowed, are perhaps successfully answered by Mr. Grant, in a passage which, though rather long, will so amply repay the trouble of perusal, that we quote it entire:

“It has been objected to the prevalence of periodical literature among us, that it has generated a taste for light or superficial reading, to the neglect of works containing solid information and of established reputation. The assumption that standard works are neglected at the present day, is altogether groundless. They are, on the contrary, purchased and read to a much greater extent than ever. Ask a bookseller—the best possible authority in such a case—how the fact stands, and he will tell you at once, that the demand for the works of Shakspeare, Milton, Pope, Addison, Hume, Gibbon, Johnson, Robertson, &c. has kept pace with the increased demand for periodical literature. But why put the question to any one, when we have the evidence of our own ears and eyes on the subject? Are not new editions, in every variety of form, and at every price, announced every day, of the works of the authors I have mentioned? And do not we find those works in every house we have occasion to visit? Better proof still—do we not find them in the heads of every one with whom we happen to converse?”

“So far from periodical literature, when, like ours, of a respectable character, exerting an injurious influence on works of merit, it must, in the nature of things, produce a quite contrary effect. It is one of the leading objects of almost every leading journal, and it is the only one of many, to bring before the public those works which display the greatest talent, and to consign to oblivion those which are worthless. It will hardly be disputed that those journalists who discharge their duty in this respect with judgment and impartiality, are most effective auxiliaries in the cause of general literature. That there are some periodicals, which, being the property, are prostituted to serve the purposes, of particular individuals, is not to be denied. The cases of this kind, however, are comparatively few. In the majority of cases, our periodicals are conducted on most honorable principles.

“It is an acknowledged fact, that, but for the assistance of our periodicals, many of the most talented authors which this country has produced, would never have been known to public fame, but would, like the violet of the wilderness, have

‘Been born to blush unseen,
And waste their fragrance on the desert air.’

“Even the most stupendous literary work to which the creative powers of human genius ever gave birth—‘The *Paradise Lost*’ of Milton—was suffered for many years to linger in obscurity, until Addison, in his periodical ‘*Spectator*,’ pointed out its innumerable and matchless beauties. There is nothing impossible in the supposition, that but for the recommendatory criticism of Addison, the ‘*Paradise Lost*’ would never have had the moderate fortune of reaching even a second edition: * indeed, its very existence might have been unknown at the present day.

“In more modern times, the instances are innumerable, in which our greatest authors owe their deserved popularity entirely to the influence of our periodical literature. I could name many instances of writers themselves being perfectly conscious, and willing to acknowledge, that but for the assistance which periodical literature has extended to them, their names and their works would have been equally unknown. There are others, again, among the popular authors of the present time who, in consequence of other adventitious circumstances, would, perhaps, have attained to a certain degree of eminence without the aids

* [Milton's great poem was in its fourth edition before Addison's notice of it.]—*Am. Editor.*

of periodical literature, but who are, nevertheless, indebted to it for the far greater portion of their fame. The novels of Sir Walter Scott, for example, might have been read and admired to a certain extent, had there been no periodical in existence during the term of his literary career; but I appeal to those who are acquainted with the literary fortunes of that singular man, whether, in such a case, his works would have attained a tenth part of the circulation of which they can boast, or himself a tenth part of the laurels which were weaved around his brow. The same observations apply with equal truth to many others of our most popular authors.

“There is another sense in which our periodicals have been of signal benefit to literature in general. I allude to the facilities they afford to men of genius for developing their talents. I referred in a previous chapter to the just observation of Quintilian, that the greatest geniuses often lie concealed. There is infinitely less chance of this now than when the observation was originally made. Periodical literature, in the sense in which the terms are now generally understood, was then wholly unknown. The person who then published—if the word be applicable to the written works of Quintilian's time—must have done so at so enormous an expense, as to frighten most men from becoming authors. The greatest geniuses must consequently, in many instances, have passed through life unnoticed and unknown. The case is quite otherwise now. Any man, however humble his station in life, possessed of literary talents of a superior order, has abundant opportunities furnished him of benefitting himself and gratifying the world, by displaying his abilities in the pages of our magazines and reviews. They are open to him, without subjecting him to any trouble or expense. Nor is this all. Should he feel that dissidence, which is usually the accompaniment of genius, and personally shrink from the public gaze, he can publish his articles anonymously, and thus ascertain what the public opinion is regarding his writings, without any one knowing whose those writings are.

“Such are some of the advantages of periodical literature.”

However just these remarks may be (and we concur in most of them), there are *three cautions* which we would impress upon all readers of reviews; and with these cautions duly observed, we believe that the utmost of Mr. G.'s encomium upon that sort of reading, is true:

1. Never rely implicitly on the reviewer's judgment upon the merits of the book reviewed, if it relates to any very important topic, or if the author, or his subject, be one likely to excite any bias whatsoever in the reviewer's mind: but appeal to the book itself, or to some review of a different party-complexion; or to both.

2. Be in like manner guarded against taking the reviewer's summary of what the book contains, as a *salisfaction* in full of your curiosity respecting it; if it be evidently a profound and solid work, not wholly foreign to your pre-determined course of study.

3. Do not let reviews (and far less, the lighter parts of periodical literature), which, after all, are for the most part comparatively trashy and ephemeral,—prevent you from devoting your chief attentions to the established, standard authors of the language; Shakspeare, Bacon, Locke, Milton, Swift, Pope, Addison, Goldsmith, Hume, Robertson, Gibbon, Johnson, Cowper, Burke, Stewart, &c. These are the mines of thought, the classic models of style, to be most deeply and curiously scanned. THESE

“*exemplaria Græca*
Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.”

Mr. Grant states a most serious accusation against Sir Walter Scott—that, before he was known as the author of the *Waverly Novels*, he furnished a favorable Review of one of them (“*Tales of my Landlord*”) to ‘*The Quarterly Review*.’ Sir Walter, however, is

vindicated by the American Editor, who affirms that his article, carefully avoiding the utterance of any opinion upon the work, merely *illustrated* it; and that some obviously misplaced censures, which Mr. Grant alleges to have been designed as a stratagem, to attract the public sympathy and favor, were in reality meant but to keep up the author's whimsical *incognito*. We gladly embrace this latter construction, as most in keeping with the high integrity, which belongs to the consciousness of exalted talents; and which conspicuously characterized the favorite writer of the present age. Mr. G. offers the following refutation of a common suspicion *float* against authors:

"I know there is an impression abroad that it is quite a common thing for authors to review their own works. I may be pardoned for digressing for a moment while I state that the impression is altogether unfounded. My acquaintance with periodical literature generally, and especially with that of London, enables me to speak on this point in the most positive terms. Authors as a body, and the great majority of the editors of our periodicals, are men of too high a sense of honor to be guilty of such conduct. Two instances only of an author reviewing his own works have come to my knowledge, out of nearly a thousand reviews which I have known to be furnished to the London press."

There is much that we wished to quote from Mr. G.'s book, respecting the *thirteen monthly*, and the *five weekly*, literary periodicals—the Gentleman's Magazine, which has now attained the venerable age of 104 years (having been established in 1733), and for which Johnson used to write; the 'Monthly Review,' established in 1749, and numbering among its contributors, Smollet, Goldsmith, Johnson, Hume, Sterne, and Hawkesworth; the "Monthly Magazine," begun in 1786; and others, less ancient but at present more ably conducted. But we have filled out our allotted space; and with one more extract, displaying in a lively manner the fallibility of human judgments, we shall end, for the present, our pleasant sojourn in "THE GREAT METROPOLIS."

"On going through 'The Monthly Review' (says Mr. Grant) I have been often amused with the erroneous estimates which the writers formed, of the merits of the works they noticed. Many authors, whose names are as unknown to us as to the inhabitants of Timbuctoo, were represented in that Review 60 or 70 years ago, as geniuses of the first magnitude: and a popularity wild as the civilized world, and lasting as time itself, was confidently predicted to them. Others, again, who were unceremoniously and at once consigned to everlasting oblivion, are now, and will continue to be for generations to come, popular in no ordinary degree."

In one form or another, the same truth, so mortifying to those who account FAME a divinity worthy to have health, peace, and life sacrificed at her shrine, has been reiterated times innumerable: but by none so impressively, as Byron,* with whose exquisite lines we seize the pretext of a timely occasion, to beautify our page:

"Yet what avails the sanguine poet's hope?
To conquer ages, and with Time to cope!
New eras spread their wings, new nations rise,
And other victors† fill the' applauding skies.
A few brief generations fleet along,
Whose sons forget the poet and his song:
E'en now, what once loved Minstrels scarce may claim
The transient mention of a dubious name!
When Fame's loud trump hath blown its noblest blast,
Though long the sound, the echo sleeps at last;
And glory, like the Phœnix midst her fires,
Exhales her odors, blazes, and expires."

* English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.

† In allusion to Virgil's

"Tentanda via est, qua me quoque possim
Tollere humo, victorque virum voltare per ora."