Thread, needle, kerchief, dropt in ecstasy,—
Say, can one social pleasure equal this?
Yet still even here imperfect is the bliss.
For ah! how oft must awkward learning yield
To graceful dulness the unequal field
Of gallantry? What lady can endure
The shrug scholastic, or the bow demure?
Can the poor student hope that heart to gain
Which melts before the flutter of a cane?
Or, of two characters, which shall surpass,
Where one consults his books, and one his glass?
Ye fair, if aught these censures may apply,
'T is yours to effect the surest remedy;
Ne'er should a fop the sacred bond remove
Between the Aonian and the Paphian grove.
'T is yours to strengthen, polish, and secure
The lustre of the mind's rich garniture;
This is the robe that lends you heavenly charms,
And envy of its keenest sting disarms,
A robe whose grace and richness will outvie
The woof of Ormus, or the Tyrian dye.
To count one pleasure more, indulge my muse,—
'T is friendship's self,—what cynic will refuse?
O, I could tell how oft her joys we 've shared,
When mutual cares those mutual joys endeared,
How arm in arm we 've lingered through the vale,
Listening to many a time-beguiling tale.
How oft, relaxing from one common toil,
We 've found repose amid one common smile.
Yes, I could tell, but O, the task how vain!
'T would but increase our fast approaching pain;
The pain so thrilling to a student's heart,
Couched in that talisman of woe, we part.

XCI.

DISSERTATION.

A dissertation is a formal discourse intended to illustrate a subject, and the term is properly applied to performances of an argumentative nature.

Dissertations are principally employed on disputed points of literature and science.*

* See Bentley's "Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris" and De Pau's "Dissertations on the Egyptians and Chinese."

Example.

On the Causes which, independent of their Merit, have contributed to elevate the ancient Classics."

The ancient classics are elevated to a rank in the literature of the world, to which their intrinsic excellence cannot justify their claim. Admitting this position, which their most strenuous supporters will not deny, but unwilling to incur the imputation which a declaimer against classical learning must deservedly hazard among its admirers, I shall attempt to show some of the causes that have united to produce this elevation.

The standard to which every one primarily refers what he examines, is the measure of his own power. That work is not admired which he could equal or surpass. This standard, indeed, is soon extended, and similar efforts of genius of other ages are taken into the comparison. The barbarism in which the world was involved at the revival of learning, made the classics appear to its restorers in an unnaturally strong and dazzling light. Possessing themselves few of the advantages of progressive improvement, and destitute and ignorant of the resources of the ancient authors, they viewed their works as the efforts of transcendent genius, which had completely penetrated and exhausted the mines of nature, — which none could ever after approach, and only the most exalted minds comprehend. They applied themselves to the examination of the treasures they had discovered, and burst forth into unrestrained admiration of authors from whom they had learned to think and to speak.

All who have since justly appreciated the labors of these fathers of modern literature, have concurred in sentiments of gratitude and reverence to their instructors.

For a great part of the time since the revival of letters, those who aimed at the reputation of scholars have been obliged to establish their claim by a knowledge of the classics. The possessor of this knowledge obtained respect, and continued to cultivate it from the pride of displaying learning which was confined to a few, or from the ambition of excelling in what constituted his chief or only distinction. This was necessarily the case when little other than classical learning existed; and it long continued, like the respect for hereditary succession, from the habit of paying honor to what our predecessors deemed honorable. While prejudices were thus strong in favor of the classics, few ventured to appear without their support, and most that was written tended to preserve and strengthen their ascendancy. Regarded as having assisted the first literary efforts of the majority of the learned men of modern times, and being generally, by the nature of their subjects, better suited than most other books to the comprehension of the young, the classics have long been presented to the infant mind of the scholar, when in its most susceptible state. They have thus occupied the most powerful prepossessions, and been allowed to form and constitute the standard of intellectual beauty and excellence. They have intimately insinuated themselves into the mind, at a period when impressions received are most lasting and most forcible. They have been connected with the tenderest and most pleasing associations; with the memory of the sports and enjoyments of childhood, and the more affecting recollections of the attention of instructors and kindness of parents. Those whom the youth was first taught to respect have been men

devoted to these studies, and employed to point out their beauties, and to direct the yet unformed taste to their perception and just admiration.

It was under the guidance of such conductors, that the young imagination took its earliest flights. The first scenes of native simplicity and happiness it sketched, were amidst the classical vales of Thessaly. The first popular assemblies it regarded with interest, were those of Athens and Rome. The first battles it pictured to itself were fought under the banners of a Grecian or Roman general. Whenever, in after life and other books, pastoral scenery, or popular commotion, or the tumult of war, presented themselves, they brought back these impressions, were referred to these exemplars, and the justice and elegance of description were determined by the comparison.

To this may be added the undefined sense of the greatness of an object at first imperfectly comprehended, which continues to display beauties and higher excellences the more closely and attentively it is contemplated. This quality, common to every work of merit, must be particularly exhibited in those, which, like the classics, are sufficiently intelligible to interest minds not yet adequate to their complete comprehension.

I insist not on the respect that we pay to antiquity; the records of her wisdom, though for ages deemed sacred, have long since been exposed to the gaze and scrutiny of the profane. Her voice is no longer listened to as speaking the language of inspiration. The charm that riveted attention is dissolved. Men of modern times affect to reverence the dictates of reason alone. But the fact has not always been thus; there were times when the classics were respected merely because they contained the legacies of ancient days.

Inductive philosophy has, indeed, taught other precepts; but to those ignorant of these precepts, or impatient of the long and weary path which this philosophy pointed out, some of the Greek classics offered to show a pleasanter and far shorter way to universal science. Having once embraced the theories of the philosophers, they must have rejected with ridicule the pretensions of other books to competition with the works of such as genius has admitted to the secret councils of nature. The works of the Grecian philosophers constitute, indeed, but a small portion of the classics. But how often are we, by our admiration of a favorite author, prepossessed in favor of the whole nation to which he belongs!

But philosophy cannot boast herself; she is silent and contemplative and must borrow language to communicate her inventions. Philosophical science forms the solid distinction of modern times. Ambitious men may use science as an instrument, but will not pursue it as an end. It is the ostentatious and imposing knowledge of the language, and of the arts which orators and poets have employed to sway the judgment by rousing the passions, and will be sought after by these men; and this knowledge they will find in the classical relics of the days of imagination and enthusiasm.

But if these relics contain more of the fictions of a poetical age, of the playful wanderings of the youth of human society, than of sober reason and thoughtful experience, why do they still delight the wisest of our thinking race?

Our attention, on opening a volume of the classics, is immediately wor by the manly and striking manner in which every thing is expressed. Thoughts are pursued with ease as they present themselves in language full, forcible, and distinct. We ascribe wholly to intrinsic merit an excellence

owing, in a degree, to external circumstances. In a language that has been so many centuries written only, the ideas connected with each word have become long since determinately fixed. The attention is not diverted by the numerous indistinct images with which every word of a living language is necessarily associated; nor is the mind liable to be misled by allusions to subjects foreign to the one in view. The application of each word appears strikingly appropriate and peculiar.

In a living language it cannot be thus. Where philosophy must borrow the garb of ordinary life; when she must converse in the same dialect that is employed in the usual transactions of business, and which must present many images that are low and disgusting, and more that are common, though she may please by her familiarity, she cannot but lose the charm of novelty, and the dignity of elevation. Many of the thoughts that seem admirable in the original of the ancient classics, cease to strike in a modern translation. They lose their simple energy of expression, their innocence and delicacy of sentiment, and are debased by associations with the grossness of sensible, or the meanness of trivial objects. Hence it is, that though we may infuse into a translation from the classics all the sense, we cannot the grace and spirit of the original.

These are some of the causes to which the ancient classics owe their elevation. They are esteemed as having assisted the first efforts of reviving literature, and contributed to the highest distinction of modern scholars. They were venerated as the bequest of antiquity; they are still consecrated by their connexion with the pure enjoyments and tender affections of childhood. They are dignified by a lofty freedom from the imperfections of a fluctuating language, and from the analogies and associations that combine obscurity and vulgar coarseness in a language which still continues to be spoken.

XCII.

DISQUISITION.

A Disquisition is a formal or systematic inquiry into any subject by arguments, or discussion of the facts and circumstances that may elucidate truth.

A disquisition differs from a dissertation in its form and extent. A dissertation may be more diffuse in its character, and consequently is generally protracted to a greater length. A disquisition should be characterized by its unity. Nothing should be introduced but what is strictly to the point; while in a dissertation any collateral subjects may be introduced which have a bearing upon the point to be proved, or the subject to be elucidated.

Disquisitions may be ethical, political, scientific, or literary, according to the nature of their subjects.

AN ETHICAL DISQUISITION.

Example.

The strict Application of Moral Rules to the Policy of States.

We all hold to the strict confinement of individuals by the rules of morality; nations are but assemblages of individuals; why, then, should states be exempt from these rules?

Our rules of morality are laid down in the New Testament, as given by Jesus Christ; he appears to have made no distinction between man considered as a single being, or regarded collectively, as existing in states. The spirit, if not the letter, of his sayings, is in favor of the universal application of these principles; and it becomes all, who dispute this position, to take upon themselves the *onus probandi*. Let us spend a few moments in the survey of their objections.

They say, in the first place, that the magnitude of the interest at stake justifies them in resorting to chicanery, the rupture of treaties, the opening of ambassadors' letters, and many other honorable exploits. This interest is the welfare of the community in worldly matters. Can it be obtained by chicanery? No! in the language of a most eloquent writer, "personal and national morality, ever one and the same, dictate the same measures under the same circumstances."

Moreover, the opponents say, that expediency requires the deception commonly practised in national affairs, and laugh at the idea of any other system. "Let those laugh that win!" but remember that derision is no proof of the validity of one position, or the fallacy of another. Long enough has this world grovelled beneath pretended expediency, as if short-sighted man could better frame regulations for the future, than he who holds eternity within his grasp; let us, if no others will, rise as a nation and shake off the chain; let us stand forward in the pursuit of our best interests, for, till the influence of Christianity is combined with that of philosophy, no system of policy can be perfect.

The Holy Alliance is the only instance in which this union has been attempted, and although the title has been branded as deceptive, yet it affords the testimony of the most powerful princes, that its object was just. Having thus done away with the principal objections of our opponents, we come now to a consideration of the benefits to be derived from a strict application of these rules; time will only allow us to touch upon some of the most important, and point out their influence upon our condition.

The laws of the land first claim our attention; not, indeed, as they now are, based upon the narrow views of man, but fixed on the broad and sure foundation of morality. The Saviour has nowhere freed man from his obligation to attend to the interests of his fellow-man; on the contrary, his especial command was, "Do unto others as ye would that men should do unto you." If this precept were observed in all the laws, we should no longer see kings oppressing their subjects, or men of one

opinion rising to crush those of an opposite, in defiance of every principle implanted in the human breast.

There is a spirit abroad in the land, which would fain do right, but overdoes in its eagerness; men actuated by it do not wait to see if their fellow-men fully comprehend them, or their object. This is not the spirit of true morality, which makes its path as clear as the perfect day, and leads the good man to consider not merely his own benefit, but also to relieve, as far as possible, the situation of the poorer classes; he would secure their earthly happiness by the only sure means, firm and salutary laws. In these times it becomes every man to consider, that his influence is something; when the wagoner applied his shoulder to the wheel, the cart was dragged from the miry slough. Particularly in this country, where the poorest has an equal interest with the most wealthy, is it necessary for all to coöperate for the support of right views in regard to the power of laws over the governed. We have thus briefly adverted to the policy to be exerted by the state towards its own subjects; there is yet another point of view, the connexion existing between different governments.

In the first place, nations may be regarded as having the same feelings towards one another with individuals. The chicanery and fraud, practised by states towards each other, has already been adverted to; but after a consideration of the relation of state and subject, the matter is again forced upon our attention. Not only are these practices opposed to all morality, but they would not be tolerated between individuals; and the man whose suspicion induced him to open letters, or break the bonds he had voluntarily given to another, would be ejected from the lowest society.

In the whole system of international morality, there is perhaps nothing so unsettled as the rules for the construction of treaties, and yet the way seems clear. A treaty is neither more nor less than a promise between two or more nations, commonly for mutual benefit.

Mankind in a body have no higher interests than they have as individuals; each member of society is anxious only for certain natural rights, and to insure these privileges to posterity; these, we have shown, can best be secured by a strict conformity to moral rules. It is no argument against the introduction of this policy to say, it would not succeed; on the contrary, we have every reason to believe perfect success would crown the effort; the old reasons are vain and futile; let something new be tried; not a diplomatic, but a bold daring, based on the principles of divine justice. When this system of things is adopted, wars will be abolished; in the beautiful language of the prophet, "Men will turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more." These principles, properly carried out, would check the boundless ambition of mankind, and remove those petty jealousies which commonly give rise to the wanton destruction of God's creation; the poet could no longer exclaim with truth, "Devil with devil damned firm concord holds; men only disagree of creatures rational."

The common origin of war is from the pretended or real infringement of a treaty. How can this be remedied? First, by being careful before a treaty is formed. Second, by a firm yet respectful statement of the case when one has been broken. A man of sound common sense, guided by a Christian spirit, is far more likely to frame treaties that will endure, than the wily diplomatist, whose aim is merely to make as much money

as he can for his country, regardless of the injuries he may commit Such a man acts for a nation as he does for himself; he carries into practice the precept, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Many writers have touched upon war, and much has been said, both for and against it; those of the present day are, however, generally opposed; and the Congress of Nations, which, but a few years since, was ridiculed as an emanation from the brains of hot-headed fanatics, is already occupying the attention of the wisest legislators throughout the world.

What a blissful state of things, when all nations shall be at peace! when we shall see each pursuing its own interest with benefit to the rest! This shall be the consequence, and not the cause of the universal spread of Christianity. The situation of our own country is particularly favorable for the application of its rules. It may, indeed, be urged, that they would not yet be appreciated; let us then hasten the period, and not rest in the work of well-doing, till all tribes and nations shall be brought to know their God, and his law. Onward! should then be the cry of every moral man; our time of action here is but short at the most, yet much may be done, and is there one, who, with an immortal's happiness within his grasp, is too indolent to put forth his hand for it? No! that man is unworthy the name of republican, whose sole aim is self, who regards not his country, and his fellow-men throughout the world.

Let us, then, as a nation, stand forward for the introduction of moral precepts to direct our relations with foreign countries. The experiment is new, but does not the interest at stake warrant us in the risk, if there can be danger, in preferring the dictates of conscience and our God, to the precepts of short-sighted man.

XCIII.

A DISCUSSION.

A Discussion is the treating of a subject by argument, to clear it of difficulties, and to separate truth from falsehood. It is generally carried on between two or more persons, who take contrary sides, and defend them by arguments and illustrations.

Discussions are of several kinds, such as philosophical, literary, political, or moral, according to the subjects of which they treat; or colloquial and deliberative, according to the style in which they are written, or the occasion for which they are prepared.

Discussions serve for amusement, rather than for any solid purpose; the cause of truth seldom derives any immediate benefit from them, although the minds of men may become invigorated by a collision of sentiment.

PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION.

Example.

PART I.

On the Expediency of making Authorship a Profession.

In modern civilized communities, a certain opinion or maxim is often prevalent, which, would we strip it of the shroud of conceit and the glitter of cant, would appear unwarrantable prejudice. Of this description is the objection so constantly urged against the profession of the author: a man whom few will call their brother, the laughing-stock of the merchant's clerk, and a laborer poorly paid in the world's coin. The broker seldom meets him on the exchange; the usurer never chaffers with him on the mart; the old man clinks his bags and shrugs his shoulders at his prospects; the schoolmaster takes to trade, and presently rolls by him in his coach, and, perhaps, worst of all, the bright eye is turned away, and the fair hand withheld by one who can never be the wife of an author! This prejudice which I describe, was once common throughout the old world; now it is particularly confined to America. Still everywhere the man whose pen is to be his support is thought a visionary, or an idler The author's garret has long since passed into a by-word, and the gaping elbow has become the escutcheon of his family. His poverty is a kind of general butt, and his sensitiveness a fair subject of caricature. I am aware, that I shall not speak agreeably to the judgment of most who hear me; let us, however, examine fairly some of the errors which have led people to think authorship unprofitable and inexpedient.

There are many persons, who, having neither the vigor nor refinement of mind to distinguish between what is material and intellectual, would measure poetry by the yard, or fill a library by the bushel! To such, whatever yields the greatest amount of tangible, improvable product is the best producer; unless mind acts openly, as a machine, they suppose it to be dormant. Let such persons first comprehend the purpose of the author whom they censure; let them learn, that there possibly may be higher motives of action than gold or silver, — loftier contemplations than those of the counting-house or factory! And, although this is a working-day world, and man must labor for hire, let them thank God, that there are men, who find times of communion with better thoughts; and, but for whose speculations, and grasps at the infinite, these short-sighted cavillers would be as lifeless as the clods on which they tread! Coleridge says, with the enthusiasm of a genius, — "I expect neither profit nor general fame by my writings, and I consider myself as having been amply repaid without either. Poetry has been to me its own exceeding great reward; it has soothed my afflictions; it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude, and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the *good* and the *beautiful* in all that meets and surrounds me." Urge such a man, if you can, to convert his "Christabel" into an interest-table, and limit his peace of mind by the rise and fall of stocks!