

of honor, and consists in ornaments of silver and gold, in the stars and grand crosses of nobility, or in the amusements by which men are charmed into submission. We may, then, say, though in a different sense from the original, "Amusement is the happiness of those who cannot think." But in what does the strength of liberal governments consist? In something of far higher authority than the will of any mortal; in something more ennobling than all other honor; in the only true divine right of sovereignty, the virtue of the people.

This is a strong foundation; but is it not one which is more to be desired than expected? It is little to the honor of human nature that the principle of fear has been found to have a more powerful influence than the principle of virtue. Such has been the case; and liberal principles, from the want of power to preserve them in their purity, have too often produced effects which it seemed contrary to their nature to produce. Though they may be beneficial to themselves, they will be corrupted, unless there is that degree of intellectual and moral cultivation in the community which we are not justified in expecting. It is true, that there is little hope of virtue and learning among a people without liberal principles to encourage and support them. Some portion of freedom is certainly necessary before virtue can be expected to display herself, and exert her influence openly, and before the mind can exercise to advantage the faculties with which it is gifted. But does it follow that this liberty will always reform a community? Liberal principles may be adopted too suddenly, before the character of a people is prepared for them, and then, while they produce not the happiness which they otherwise would produce, will create anarchy or oppression.

Thus it appears that some information and virtue are required for the protection of liberty. But, when free principles are established, and they are producing contentment, virtue may not be secured, may not be preserved. All the effect which fear has over the mind is removed, and the faculties are roused to life and exertion from a state of tranquillity, but a tranquillity like that of the tombs. To escape from the terror of despotism, is a blessing; but there is danger of the slavery of vice. Virtue is, indeed, encouraged by liberty to come forward to the light, and to exercise herself for the benefit of man; but vice meets with like encouragement, and will readily seize its opportunity to gratify itself, and to exert its corrupting influence.

The unfortunate terminations of many revolutions in favor of liberty, are to be found in the want of virtue and knowledge among the people, who are consequently incapable of governing themselves.

Since, then, liberal principles have been so constantly abused, unless the people are, in a high degree, virtuous and enlightened, we must look for strength to the checks provided against the abuse of power in the separate departments of government; not to the agreeable, though poisonous principles of liberty, but to the antidote which is constantly administered against their dangerous effects.

## XCIV

## DISPUTATIONS.

Disputations are exercises in which parties reason in opposition to each other on some question proposed. They are verbal contests respecting the truth of some fact, opinion, proposition, or argument.

As literary exercises, they are principally of two kinds, Philosophical, and Forensic Disputations.

Philosophical Disputations are those in which some philosophical fact, principle or theory is discussed.

Forensic Disputations are those in which some legal, moral or political subject is argued.

*Example 1.*

## OF A FORENSIC DISPUTATION.

## PART I.

*Whether Popular Superstitions or Enlightened Opinion, be most favorable to the growth of Poetical Literature.*

Fable and superstition form so large a part of the ground-work of ancient poetry, and are so intimately connected with that of all succeeding ages, that a partial investigation of this subject might lead us to very erroneous conclusions. From the bare consideration of this fact, we might be induced to give assent to that opinion, which would make superstition indispensable to the production of poetry, and which would thereby confine its progress to a certain period in the civilization of the world. We might as well, however, consider the dross as a constituent of the virgin gold, as suppose that the imperfections and errors connected with poetry were essential to the divine art.

Homer has left a monument of genius which will be read and admired by remote ages yet to come; but will it be looked upon as one of those prodigies of former times, the history of which alone remains to them, for which, in their time, they can find no parallel or counterpart? Will, then, his poetry be viewed as the production of an art peculiar to former ages, but in those times unknown; a shadow, an illusion, which has vanished before the increasing light of civilization; or will it not rather be admired and venerated, as one of the earliest fountains to which posterity can trace the magnificent stream, which, in their age, may be extending its healthy and invigorating influence through all the channels of society? Yet the idea that superstitious opinions are essentially important to the production of poetry, would exclude the possibility of any great progress in the art. Since error must gradually disappear before knowledge and civilization, and since superstition must vanish wherever Christianity sheds its blessed

influence, it follows, that poetry must, some day, in the progress of the world, be seen in the decline. The possibility of this, we should be unwilling for a moment to admit. Poetry is not the peculiar characteristic of a rude and imperfect state of society; it is not a plant which can thrive only in the soil of ignorance; on the contrary, an art, which I do not say, keeps pace with the improvement of society, but is destined rather to precede it; to be, as it were, man's GUIDE to indefinite advancement. In proof of our position, we need only refer to the elevating influence of poetry itself, an influence admitted by all, and one which every breast has more or less experienced. The poet's influence is through the feelings, and, as man kind in their nature have been, and always will be, essentially the same the true poet, in the exercise of his profession, has the key to the sensibilities and affections of his fellow-men; when he touches the strings of his lyre, it is only to produce those notes with which every bosom throbs in unison. It becomes, then, an easy task for him to instruct and to elevate, to call man away from the absorbing influence of worldly passions and pursuits, to a view of what is most elevated in his own nature, and most noble in the creation around him, to wean him from the present, and fit him for the future. This exertion of a refining and elevating influence is a prerogative of the poet *admitted by all*; but must, we also believe, that, when he is most successful in his glorious office, he is at the same time diminishing the power and will in his fellow-men to appreciate or countenance his works.

The poet's peculiar liberty and privilege is to give free wing to his imagination; a liberty allowed by every one. In poetry, indeed, we look for fiction, though its legitimate object be truth. Popular superstitions, therefore, afford an easy and ample subject for the poet's pen, and always must, to some degree, enhance the beauty and attraction of his works. For what are popular superstitions but the dreams of the imagination—perhaps the fantasies of the poet's own brain? It is asserted by some writers, that the Greeks were indebted for their mythology to the writings of Hesiod and Homer; that their religious notions were vague and unsettled until the fertile imagination of their poets devised for them a system of worship. Indeed, we may safely believe, that a great proportion, if not most of the superstitions, which have prevailed in the world, have sprung into existence at the poet's calling. When this is not the case, they owe their origin to the disordered imagination of some less-gifted mind. From the wonders and beauties of nature, then, one of the poet's most fertile themes, he can no longer receive inspiration, when the floating visions of superstition no longer surround them; when belief in that which ignorance, or the fancy of former poets, has generated, has been resigned for more rational opinions. The genius of poetry forbids such a sentiment. Does the flower which has blossomed and faded from the creation become destitute, in the poet's eye, of poetical associations, because he cannot credit the imaginative belief of ancient bards, that Flora has it in her care, while the sporting Zephyrus fans its petals, parched by the mid-day sun? Is the distant planet less worthy a place in the poet's thought, because its secret influence, whether good or evil, can no more be credited? Does "old ocean" lose any of its sublimity, because it is no longer, even in the poet's mind, peopled by the Tritons, Nereids, and father Neptune? Such, and like notions, were the theme of *ancient* poets and their countrymen gave willing credence to their tales. The *modern* bard might as well stalk the streets in the toga and the buskin, as bring

into his lines the dreams of heathen mythology. Yet he is not circumscribed by narrow bounds, because he may not follow, in the regions of imagination, the wild excursions of the ancients, or because his own light fancy may soar no higher than less active reason can accompany her.

The true poet, so far from requiring, will decline the guidance or dictation of his predecessor. It is his office and his pride to present his subject in a novel and interesting view; to shed upon it new light, and invest it with additional attractions. If we admit this, we need have no apprehensions that the muse will be invoked in vain, though she may not be courted, as in former days.

We would not willingly detract from the merits of ancient poetry, or that of any bard that has yet dawned upon the world; but as we would not limit the progress of any art or science by the advancement which they may have reached in former times, so we would not circumscribe the "divinest of all arts" within the narrow boundary of a few centuries in the world's infancy.

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PART II.

*Whether Popular Superstitions or Enlightened Opinion be most favorable to the growth of Poetical Literature.*

"Good sense," says Coleridge, "is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life, and imagination its soul,"—and it is the remark of one who had learned to analyze with exactness the feelings of the poet. Let us see how well examination justifies the definition. We may consider the subject under two heads:—1st. Do superstition and enlightened opinion united promote poetical literature? 2d. If they are not capable of being thus united, do our ordinary occupations promote that literature?

The first point we shall not strive to establish. Popular superstitions are very few at the present day. Intelligence is widely diffused; books and readers are multiplying, and enlightened opinion is setting up a very wide dominion. It is now thought impossible for superstition and education to exist together. Then are our ordinary occupations, in the second place, favorable to poetical literature? Admitting that enlightened opinion is gaining the ascendancy, let us see whether it favors the imagination,—whether a prevailing shrewdness, and the common affairs of life, are sufficient, without the aid of superstition, for poets and novelists.

Life is made up of realities; our wants, though continually supplied, are continually to be supplied. The atmosphere of the world is the chilling atmosphere of reality, exertion, and disappointment. There is little poetry in common life; little poetry in unrewarded exertion, or unrewarded oppression, or disappointed ambition. Yet these make an essential part of life, and they are precisely what give such a matter-of-fact, unpoetical tone to most minds. How many feel, as they follow where their duties direct them, any thing of poetry or romance? Are not all disheartened at times by the plain realities of their lot? Notwithstanding many happy connexions, we sometimes feel ourselves, both as individuals and nations, too much fettered, and want something to delight and enoble, as well as keep us alive. This deficiency is supplied by the emotions springing from popular delusion; which, stealing like a mist over

the picture before us, softens the whole landscape. The restraints of society may fetter poetic genius, but the vision and the faculty divine circumstances cannot entirely repress; whenever it is curbed by the world popular superstition frees it from its bondage, and kindles again the trampled spark.

What we degrade as superstition, is, in truth, the very soul of poetry, and no more separable from it than soul from body. It may fail of its object, and make gross what ought to be pure, but the spirit that would condemn superstition on such grounds, would spurn a picture of the Madonna because the same pencil might have delineated a vixen. Superstition springs from the imagination and fancy; poetical literature is directly addressed to these powers of mind, and cannot flourish without them. Philosophy and history are not dependent on them; if they state facts, and draw just conclusions, their ends are attained. Superstition, or the contrary, is an embodying of the grand, the tender, the terrific, as suits the mind, — the creating, as it were, a world of passions and perceptions too spiritual for common life, and yet too natural not to be exercised. Now, is not all this poetry in its true sense?

Every imaginative or superstitious nation has abounded in poetical literature. Their peculiarities of thought assist the author, besides cultivating the taste and exercising the imagination of the reader. The success of modern poetic literature, notwithstanding our want of superstition, is not unfavorable to this view. A change has been effected in this kind of writing corresponding to the extension of education. The novelist now draws from human nature rather than superstition; formerly materials were abundant and fanciful, but they were not employed with discretion. Perhaps the magnificence of Milton will be adduced as an instance of no superstition in the author, and requiring none in the reader. But Miltons adorn every age. Milton's poetry has been compared to the ocean; and although the ocean is sublime in its own native grandeur, yet the beauty of the inland stream — the lesser poetic strain — is increased when it sounds through the hidden ravine, and is overshadowed by the dark foliage of superstition.

Observe the untutored inhabitants of the mountain, — where the link is shortest between nature and nature's God, — where every cliff is invested with some popular legend, and every valley and lake and hill-top may tell some tale of fancy, some dreaming of speculation, — observe these, as they pay there the vows of a wild superstition, and do you not contemplate the very essence of poetry? Is there no poetry in superstition? Then bid Macbeth and Hamlet be forgotten, and consign "the Wizard of the North" to an unheeded tomb. Call the dreams of his fancy the follies of disease, and pity them. If we deny the poetical nature of superstition, what shall be said of those places where the genius of Scott has revelled till it has hallowed the very traditions of ignorance? Can we make powerless the wand which, in Shakspeare's hand, called the murdered to the banquet, harassed the guilty conscience, and urged the ir- resolute to revenge?

A good proof that mere enlightenment does little for imaginative writers, may be found in this country. We are wanting in popular legends, and, be it said with deference to wise opponents, wanting in poetical literature. Our poets and novelists are few, and feel too little the inspiration of an American home. Our national character may be the better for this; but our pursuits have made us, as a people, vasily unpo-

etical. This is readily accounted for. We have been accustomed from childhood, and still continue, to regard chiefly what is necessary in life. Interest and thrift are graven on every thing in America; the waves and the winds are unwelcome without the expected gain; and the cliff and stream, however beautiful, are unconnected with superstitious legends. Do not the words of one of our poets apply to many of his countrymen?

"The churl who holds it heresy to think,  
Who loves no music but the dollar's clink,  
Who laughs to scorn the wisdom of the schools,  
And deems the first of poets first of fools,  
Who never found what good from science grew,  
Save the grand truth that one and one are two,  
And marvels Bowditch o'er a book should pore,  
Unless to make those two turn into four:  
Who, placed where Catskill's forehean greets the sky,  
Grieves that such quarries all unhewn should lie,  
Or, gazing where Niagara's torrents thrill,  
Exclaims, 'A monstrous stream to turn a mill!'"

Yes, even at this moment is the demon of utilitarianism throwing his bonds around the cataract of Niagara, — to scoop with a clam-shell the wicked, waste water, and substitute for the torrent's roar, the soul thrilling music of the clapper to a grist-mill! If this is plain common-sense it is not poetry. True, a few of the red man's race remain to wonder at the taste which can so misuse their country; but their spirit has been broken, and they are strangers in the land.

What, then, is the use of popular superstition? Not to bind man to a reverence of folly, nor to exact undeserved admiration, but to soften his nature, by exercising some of his higher powers and sensibilities, and thus make mind minister to happiness.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL DISPUTATION.

##### *Example.*

[One side only is presented.]

*Whether Intellectual Improvement be favorable to the Productions of Imagination.*

Every age and every nation has its distinguished men. It has had its heroes, poets, orators, philosophers, and statesmen. Whether we go to the abodes of civilization, or to the haunts of savages, we shall find men who are properly the master spirits of their age, and who are destined to give direction to the opinions and actions of their fellow men. This arises from the very constitution of society, and each of the several classes of which it is composed are in some degree dependent on each other. The fame of the hero depends on the historian and poet, and, in return, the achievements of the former afford the most fertile themes for the latter. Some periods, however, are more favorable than others for the development of a particular kind of talent. The ancients recognized an iron, a bronze, and a golden age, and no impartial reader of history can doubt the justness of such a classification. The golden age was the age when literature and the arts flourished, when civilization had gained the ascendancy over barbarism, and when the rights of the individual had begun to be respected.

There is, undoubtedly, an opinion prevalent, that intellectual improvement is unfavorable to the imagination, — that the reasoning power cannot be cultivated without impairing it. But such an opinion has no foundation in fact, and is entitled to no more respect than a thousand other notions that are handed down from age to age, and are regarded as true. The enemies of free government tell us, that learning cannot flourish where all are acknowledged free and equal; that learned men cannot grow up except in the sunshine of royal favor; and that religion cannot work its benign effects except on an ignorant community, and under the guidance of an established church. The different relative progress of the sciences and works of imagination can be accounted for without having recourse to the theory above mentioned. A science is nothing more than the combined experiments and discoveries of men in all ages, while a work of imagination is, to a certain extent, the work of a single person. The philosopher can begin where Bacon and Newton left off; but the poet must begin where Homer began.

There is another cause for the prevalence of this opinion, in the erroneous view taken of the works of an uncultivated people. That wild, figurative language, which arises from its barrenness, is often thought to be conclusive evidence of a lively imagination. As civilization advances, that wildness and extravagance disappear; as language becomes more copious and fixed, those bold figures are no longer used. But does it follow, that the imagination is less lively? That that faculty, on which our happiness so essentially depends, is thus impaired by the very means by which our good is promoted? It cannot be. The God of nature, who made "wisdom's ways ways of pleasantness," did never decree that the improvement of the intellectual should darken that faculty which is truly the mind's eye, and through which the past as well as the future, and the absent as well as the present can be scanned. Imagination does not confine itself to earth, but

"Tired of it  
And this diurnal scene, she springs aloft  
Through fields of air, pursues the flying storm,  
Rides on the volleyed lightning through the heavens,  
Or, yoked with whirlwinds and the northern blast,  
Sweeps the long track of day."

Should we grant that intellectual improvement was unfavorable to productions of the imagination, then we should no longer look for the best works of that character among a civilized people, but should seek them among our native Indians, or the Tartars of Siberia. We should apply the same rules to individuals as to nations. The least cultivated minds would be the most imaginative. We should look to them for bolder flights than to Milton, Pope, or Byron; the absurdity of which is seen by the mere statement of it, and the principle is unworthy of serious argument. History as well as common sense refutes it. Who of those bards whose works are as immortal as the spirits which produced them had not a cultivated mind? Which of them did not find their imaginative powers increased by intellectual improvement? Though the age of Homer was an age of comparative darkness, yet the sun of literature must have shone on Greece, or the inspired fountains of poetry would have been frozen up. He never would have sung of the heroism of his countrymen had not their feelings responded to his. He never would have written with that correct taste which all succeeding poets have de-

lighted to imitate, had not reason already under her control the wildness and extravagance of the untutored mind.

Our own age bears ample testimony that intellectual improvement does not destroy genius to produce, nor diminish desire to read works of imagination; for there never was a time when so much fiction is written and read as at the present. Poetry is no longer the language of history and oratory, but it is what it ought to be, the language of imagination, clothing in its various dress human passions and affections. In proof of this we need only refer to that giant mind whose powers have been so successfully employed in the world of fiction, making an almost entire revolution in that department of literature. He has shown that the boldest flights of the imagination are not in the darkness of night, but in the clear sunshine of day; that as civilization advances, and the human mind makes progress, so will all its powers be strengthened, and all its faculties be enlarged. Science offers to us new realms, and the astronomer, as well as the poet, may picture to himself worlds moving round in one harmonious whole far beyond the reach of mortal view.

The obscure and the uncertain may be necessary for a full exercise of the imaginative powers, but of this there will always be enough until the whole field of knowledge is explored. In truth, with the advance of knowledge and science, mystery does not diminish. New wonders are continually unfolding themselves, and as the field of vision is enlarged, other views are presented; there still remains beyond the visible and the certain, the invisible and mysterious.

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## XCV.

### ORATION.

An Oration is a speech or discourse composed according to the rules of oratory, and spoken in public; or, it may be defined a popular address on some interesting and important subject. The term is now applied chiefly to speeches or discourses pronounced on special occasions, as a funeral oration, an oration on some anniversary, &c., and to academic declamations.

The term oration is derived from the Latin *oro*, to beg or entreat, and properly signifies that which is said by way of entreaty.

A speech is in general that which is addressed in a formal manner to one person or more. A harangue is a noisy, tumultuous speech, addressed to many; an oration is a sol-