

TOMMASO SALVINI.*



SALVINI AS OTHELLO.

TOMMASO SALVINI, the "Prince of the Stage," was born in Milan, January 1st, 1829. His father (the son of a Papal officer who had been banished from Rome on account of his liberalism) was professor of literature at Livorno, and had founded in that town a scientific institute, when he fell in love with the young actress who became his wife. For her sake Salvini's father abandoned his own career

and adopted the dramatic profession, but she died two years after the birth of Tommaso. The boy's genius manifesting itself at a very early age, his father intrusted his dramatic education to the celebrated Gustavo Modena. He soon attracted the attention of artists and public, and Modena was in the habit of saying, "Salvini is the only pupil of whom I can be proud." His reputation, however, was still

* For the brief biography of the Italian tragedian which I subjoin, I beg to acknowledge my indebtedness to a French pamphlet published by the firm of Tresse, of Paris, which has been furnished me by the kindness of Signor Salvini himself. I have also taken the liberty to incorporate, in my review of his rôles, a criticism of his *Hamlet*, which I wrote and published in a comparatively little known journal on the occasion of his first appearance in New York, in 1873.

confined to Italy when, in 1849, the revolution broke out, and Salvini's theatrical career was suddenly interrupted by his patriotism. He took an active part in the war of Italian independence, became the friend of Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Saffi, and together with them was taken prisoner at Genoa. He was rewarded for his courage and disinterestedness by a gold medal and the title of officer, and in the diploma given him by General Avezzana, received honorable mention for his patriotic zeal and valiant conduct. Retiring to Florence, he devoted a year to classic studies, preparing among others the rôles of *Othello*, *Saul*, *Hamlet*, and *Orosmane*. Having mastered these parts, he returned to the stage, and with the best troupes made the tour of Italy, Spain, and Portugal. His theatrical journeys were a series of ovations. He was presented by Victor Emmanuel with a ring from off the royal finger, the brevet of Officer of the Crown, and the title of Commander. In Spain the most illustrious men of Barcelona gave a *fête* in his honor, and requested from him an "Essay on Dramatic Art." Salvini wrote a masterly treatise on the subject, and was prevailed upon to leave the manuscript in the Library of the Athenians. In Portugal, King Luiz, who was always present at his performances, bestowed on him in person the insignia of a Commander of San Iago, together with his royal portrait and autograph. In 1872, Salvini visited South America, where he was hailed with equal enthusiasm; and when he left Buenos Ayres, the foreign ambassadors and most distinguished men of the country united with the people in escorting him to the harbor, where the ships of all nations were decked with flags, and he was saluted with cannon like a sovereign. From the Emperor of Brazil he received the decoration of Knight of the Rose. A pleasing incident is recorded of his visit to Montevideo, which evinces his popularity with all classes. Happening to lose the ring given him by the King of Italy, the citizens immediately procured him by general subscription a similar one in its place. After a short stay in his own country, Salvini returned to America in 1873, this time making his first tour in the United States. Notwithstanding the fact that it was a season of almost unexampled commercial depression, which very materially diminished the numbers of his audiences, he yet felt himself sufficiently appreciated to wish to repeat his visit under kindlier auspices. The accuracy of his discernment is proved by the *furor* which his recent tour has excited among press and public, despite every disadvantage occasioned by a grotesquely bad support from an English-speaking company. Since his former visit, he

has acted in England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Austria, and Hungary, producing everywhere the same overpowering impression, and has in the course of these few years been married and widowed. During his stay in London, in 1875, he met the young Englishwoman who became his wife. After but three years of domestic happiness, she died, and the great and gentle-hearted artist feels so keenly her loss, that he says of himself: "With her the larger part of my inspiration has vanished, and I fear that I must now always remain as I am, without the hope of improving in my art." This fear, touchingly as he expresses it, will not be shared as such by the world. His art leaves nothing to be desired; in its present phase of consummate development, one can only be grateful for the privilege of living in the same generation and being ennobled by its influence.

Among all the tributes he has received, whether from prince or people, perhaps the one which has afforded him the deepest satisfaction has been that of his fellow-artists. Both in London and New York he has responded to the unanimous request of the members of the theatrical profession to give them a special matinee performance. Their duties prevented their presence in the evening, and they would not willingly forego the opportunity of seeing their master, "the greatest actor of the age."

In social life, a great simplicity and gentleness of manner characterize this extraordinary artist. Genial and affable as he is with all, it is difficult to realize from the modest cordiality with which he receives the slightest word of sympathy or appreciation of his genius, that he has been the hero of a thousand *fêtes*, and has been applauded to the echo by every great city of both hemispheres.

No man could be more perfectly equipped by nature for the tragic stage than Tommaso Salvini. His physical gifts are a frame of massive and harmonious proportions, uniting an incomparable majesty of bearing with the utmost grace of movement, a handsome and singularly mobile face, and, most memorable of all, a voice of such depth and volume of tone, and such exquisite and infinitely varied modulations, that having been once heard, it haunts the sense like noble music. So extraordinary, indeed, is this organ, that some critics have ascribed to it alone the magnetic spell which he casts over his audience. The very word criticism implies to the popular mind a judicious discrimination of defects. People expect the critic to tell them not so much what to admire, as where and how to modify, in accordance with abstract



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canons of taste, their own less educated appreciation. In this sense, criticism of Salvini is an impossibility. His genius is so transcendent, his art so perfect in detail and so unparalleled in scope, that the critic's only duty, in considering him, is to indicate the splendid beauties and overwhelming effects of his impersonations.

In every branch of Art there have been one or two supreme names which shine out beyond and above criticism—names of men who represent the incarnate Genius of their vocation, and supply later ages with a standard of excellence. "Others abide our question—they are free, outtopping knowledge."

While bearing in mind the vast gulf that separates creative from interpreting art, I cannot but think that in the same way the Genius of Tragedy has taken up its abode in the person of Salvini. Once before, within the memory of our own generation, did Tragedy visit the earth—but it was the muse, not the god; and consuming prematurely with her intolerable flame the fragile woman-frame she had chosen for her dwelling-place, she vanished like a lightning flash in the very fullness of her glory. Upon one and the same dazzling pinnacle stand these alone—Rachel and Salvini; but the latter has over the former all the immense advantages of a physique perfectly proportioned to his intellectual endowments, of a maturity and virile energy of mind, together with an apparently unlimited scope and variety of power, altogether beyond the woman's range of equally intense passions.*

The difference between Salvini and other exponents of his own art is not a difference of degree, but of kind; the distinction in a given part between him and other actors may best be expressed by saying that he *is* *Othello*, *Hamlet*, the *Gladiator*, or whatever personage he represent, while others merely simulate them. He entralls his audience, carrying them with sudden electric transitions through every phase of emotion. And he is not one who has what the French call *de beaux moments*, separated and made more conspicuous, as were Kean's, by scenes of comparative weakness; each of his characterizations is a complete and flawless whole, maintaining a level of highest art between the bursts of passionate inspiration. But let us submit him to another test; let us study the text of his parts in the quiet of our own chamber, uninfluenced by the irresistible force of his personality; let us see whether his *Hamlet*, his *Othello*, his *Macbeth*, be justified by the language and spirit of Shakspeare.

The answer is, to my mind, no less clear and emphatic in its acquiescence. Logical, scholarly, intellectual, his interpretation of each part is borne out to the letter by the poet himself. Incredible as it sounds, his critics have accused him of being in *Othello* "brutal, coarse, and *un-Shakspearean*," for the very reason that he has had the audacity to retain Shakspeare's own words and explicit directions,—as, for instance, in the scene before the Venetian ambassadors where he strikes *Desdemona*. I find, on the contrary, that where he has in any degree modified the text, he has softened it in accordance with the refinements of modern taste. Thus he omits, among others, the scene with *Iago* which opens the fourth act, where *Othello* is made to speak in broken, hysterical sentences of half-articulate frenzy, and which concludes by his falling into a trance. Salvini represents to us, at the outset of this play, a loyal, fiery nature, reveals the fierce conflict of insane pride, jealousy, and vengeance, in which the noble qualities seem for a time completely extinguished, and ends by showing us "him that *was Othello*," broken by remorse, shattered with grief, but substantially the very same as at the beginning of the tragedy! He whose whole frame has just been quivering with affliction, who has been "shedding tears as fast as the Arabian tree her medicinal gum," suddenly nerves himself anew, starts up with the old majesty of carriage and commanding trumpet-tones, and, by the concluding six lines of the play, connects the *Othello* of *Desdemona's* love with the *Othello* who assassinated her. In divining and developing the central master-passion of a personage, he at the same time ignores none of the complex minor characteristics, but maintains throughout so perfect a sense of fitness and proportion that he is apt to make us think his conception an extremely simple one. Thus his *Othello* is not merely an embodiment of a single furious passion, but a rounded, many-sided human being, who anon compels our love, our admiration, our pity, our horror, and in the end our aching sympathy. After witnessing again and again this performance, the only impression that remained with me the same on every occasion was that of the artist's colossal power; each time a different phase of *Othello's* character stood out in fullest relief and flashed upon me like a new revelation. From the moment of his entrance upon the scene, with the effect of his bronzed and turbaned face and towering figure heightened by the long white *burnous* which falls in ample folds to his feet, in their curving Moorish shoes, the superb picturesqueness of his appearance and the

* Salvini's repertory includes two hundred rôles.

dignity of his gestures and movements fully bear out the magniloquent description which Shakspeare places in his mouth :

“ I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak, unbonneted, to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd.”

The key-note of his character is struck without delay :

“ For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused, free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's worth.”

In this opening speech, illuminated, as it is, by his frank and loyal smile, we have the noble Moor complete before us, with his pride, his heroism, and his profound passion. The indescribable accent with which he utters the very name of the “*divina Desdemona*” is in itself a revelation, and after the lurid horror of the final catastrophe the music of that first tone comes back to us with unforgettable pathos. “I do not wonder,” said one of the gentlest of women, apropos of Salvini's *Othello*,—“I do not wonder that *Desdemona* forgave his killing her, when she had his perfect love for a little while.”

Throughout the whole of the first act, he gives us a striking example of repose in art. It is well to insist upon this, because the frenzy of his awakened wrath in the last three acts overpowers, for some of his critics, the impression of his subtle art and grandeur of style in the earlier portions of the drama. His address to the Senate is a matchless masterpiece of elocution and a superb picture of oriental grace and majesty. Its effect may be surpassed by later moments of fiery impulse, but beyond this absolute command of voice and accent, this apparently unstudied simplicity of thrilling and unanswerable eloquence, combined with this dignity and expressiveness of gesture, Art cannot reach. The “*Gazette de France*” publishes an interesting comparison between Salvini's version of this scene and that of Rossi: “Salvini advances quietly, nobly; respecting the father's grief, but sure of the justice of his own claim, he pleads the cause of his love. He pleads it without moving a step, standing a short distance from the council. His hand scarcely emphasizes, from time to time, by an oratorical movement, his speech, which is imbued with the serenity of a proud conscience. To his face, his eyes, his lips, is intrusted the task of forcing conviction upon the mind of his judges, or rather it is these features which finish and complete the work of his words. To attain such a dramatic result with such a

studied sobriety of means, is a marvel to which we had long been unaccustomed. M. Rossi, who is, nevertheless, very fine, played this scene in exactly the opposite manner; while he argued, his gestures added the force of pantomime to his words; whilst he went on talking, he walked to and fro; there was no lack of nobility in his *Othello*, but there was also dexterity and subtlety; the Moor, although commander-in-chief and first soldier of the Republic of Venice, does not lose sight of the fact that he stands before a council of inflexible patricians, and that these patricians may easily refuse to admit the defense of love by divine right. Thus his *Othello* deemed it necessary at moments to summon to his aid a smile, irony, familiarity, affected simplicity. *Othello*, as enacted by Rossi, conquered as much by his cleverness as by his heart. *Othello*, as enacted by Salvini, disdains these subtleties; he does not even think of such fears, which he doubtless would consider unworthy of him.”

The growth in *Othello* of the fatal flower of jealousy from the seed implanted by *Iago*, rapid, gigantic, and luxuriant as the poisoned weeds of his own tropic soil, is delineated by Salvini with such nice and subtle gradations that it would be impossible to say at what particular moment the root has taken fixed hold upon his heart. In the first great scene with *Iago*, the peculiar merit of his acting may best be described by a painter's term—it is in the values of the picture that the artist's genius is revealed. After the charming interview with *Desdemona*, wherein the infinite tenderness of his half-amused, unsuspecting manner proves to us that he only delays the granting of her request for *Cassio*'s reinstatement in order to enjoy the luxury of hearing her sue, he seats himself at the table and begins to write his official documents. Then enters the tempter, hissing the fiendish lie in his ear, and from here to the end of the act Salvini sweeps the whole gamut of passion, from the frankest loyalty and simplicity of affection, through doubt, anguish, livid wrath, insensate jealousy, and blood-thirsty revenge to a sublime despair.

Step by step we trace the degradation of his nature under the devilish goadings of the tempter; rather, it is not so much a degradation as a necessary development of everything that is evil and brutal within him, by the crushing out of all that is good in an appeal to his worst passions. It is as if we were witnessing the laying of a torch to a superb edifice; no less natural, no less inevitable, no less rapid, no less horribly beautiful is the flaming ruin that ensues. Every one has noted the marvelous *tour de force* with which, in the height of his fury, Salvini turns upon

Iago, flings him to the ground, and is about to crush him under foot. This stroke of genius, which could never be attempted by an actor of less colossal physique and inimitable grace than Salvini, is invariably a turning-point for the enthusiasm of the audience, who break out into extravagant plaudits at the audacity, the spontaneity, and the terrific reality of the feat. But that after this climax he should rise without pause or respite to the still grander height of the passage beginning "Like to the Pontic sea,"—where he kneels and takes his vow of revenge to the marble heaven,—this is an achievement which not only defies criticism, but makes even praise seem impertinent.

A characteristic anecdote, reported by M. Jules Claretie, throws an interesting side-light upon Salvini's conception of *Othello*:

"One evening, among a party of friends, he was asked to recite the last monologue of *Othello*. He rose, meditated for a few moments, and began in his magnificent, resonant voice. Then suddenly stopping in the middle of a line, he exclaimed, with an impatient gesture: 'No, it is impossible. I am not in the situation. I am not prepared for this supreme anguish. In order to render the frantic despair of *Othello*, I need to have passed through all his tortures, I need to have played the whole part. But to enter thus the soul of a character, without having gradually penetrated into it—I cannot—it is impossible!' All this was said without any affectation, with the air of a man who reveals the secret of his power. Salvini moves because he is moved. He is in turn *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo*. He is no longer Salvini when he comes upon the stage."

The part of *Hamlet* reveals the purely intellectual and poetic side of Salvini's genius, and is therefore, to my mind, among all his creations, the noblest and loftiest. "Salvini possesses," says the "Figaro," "the supreme qualities without which any actor who presumes to play *Hamlet* succumbs, miserably crushed under the weight of his own audacity. His grand and subtle elocution, and the profound intelligence which enables him to discern and fathom every feature of this colossal rôle, carry him to the loftiest regions of his art." *Hamlet*, as we all know, is the thinker, as distinguished from the man of action. Salvini makes him a thinker in the highest and rarest sense of the word—not a philosopher, but a poet. His delivery of the great soliloquy—"To be or not to be," is that of a poet who thinks aloud; he neither recites nor declaims the words—he is apparently sincerely contemplating suicide, and deliberately weighing its promises and its terrors. Nothing could be more spontaneous, more natural, and more exquisitely beautiful. The delicacy and truth of his conception are perhaps most conspicuous in the scene where he bids *Ophelia* go to a nunnery, which is usually rendered by other actors with every variety of violent and ex-

travagant declamation. Salvini's manner is here marked by the most pathetic sadness and the utmost gentleness; the idea which he seizes and makes the central one of the scene is found in the words:

"Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I myself am indifferent honest, and yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. What should such fellows as I do, crawling between earth and heaven. We are arrant knaves all—believe none of us—get thy ways to a nunnery."

The words "*Al chiostro!*" are whispered, almost sighed forth, with unexampled tenderness and compassion. By his sincerity of belief in his own unworthiness he excites our sympathy for himself scarcely less than for her.

Salvini has a peculiar manner of repeating a simile, as when he says, "Like Niobe, all tears,"—or, "Swift as meditation or the thoughts of love, I'll sweep to my revenge." He pauses for an instant upon the conjunction, as if seeking the image exactly to correspond with the idea, and then delivers it with all the vivacity of a fresh inspiration. The airy grace of his action, which interprets his words to those who cannot understand his language, is strikingly apparent throughout the play. When *Horatio* relates the visitation of the ghost, Salvini's gesture with which he accompanies the word "*Armato?*"—waving his hands from head to feet—is as eloquently descriptive of the mailed figure as Shakspeare's lines. On the platform, when he first beholds his father's spirit, while his countenance is illumined with an awe-struck joy, he spontaneously, and one would almost say unconsciously, uncovers his head, exclaiming, neither loudly nor vehemently, but in the subdued, reverent tones of passionate prayer, "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!"

No one who has seen his *Hamlet* has failed to appreciate the genius with which he illustrates the passage, "Look here upon this picture and on this." Contrary to all tradition, he makes use of neither miniature nor portrait, but, kneeling at his mother's feet, he conjures up in imagination the figures of the two kings. Thus the extravagant epithets, "Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself," etc., seem merely the natural imagery of an exalted enthusiasm, and present a picture of ideal perfection, unmarred by the introduction of anything material or prosaic. In the remainder of this scene, he gradually reaches his highest eloquence of delivery, expression, and action. The climax of passion seems to be reached at the words, "A king of shreds and patches," but at that moment he beholds the apparition of his father, and we see that the

climax had been yet to come. The sudden break in his voice as he appeals to the "heavenly guards" to save and shield him, the attitude of awe and adoration which he instantaneously assumes, combine to produce an ineffaceable and utterly indescribable effect. Space forbids more than a suggestion of the princely dignity and classic repose of Salvini's bearing in the last act—most conspicuous when he receives the challenge from *Laertes*; the chivalrous courtesy with which, in fencing, he offers his own sword to his opponent, and thus converts what has hitherto been a clumsy device into a characteristic touch of refinement and poetry; and, lastly, the mournful resignation and majesty of his death.

Macbeth, the latest of Salvini's Shakspearean impersonations, is in every respect worthy to rank beside the companion portraits of *Othello* and *Hamlet*. Perhaps its most striking feature is its magnificent picturesqueness. Nothing of the Italian is visible in this tawny-bearded, tawny-haired, gigantic Thane. Salvini depicts *Macbeth* from beginning to end as absolutely devoid of conscience and incapable of remorse, with a consistency of blind selfishness and brutal force which leaves no trait nor deed unexplained. No tool is he of a stronger and more fiendishly cruel nature,—he is the mate, not the creature, of *Lady Macbeth*. It is difficult to decide which to dwell upon with most emphasis of praise,—the colossal proportions of his presentment of this character, or the minute beauties of detail with which every scene, every passage, every single word is illustrated. To such as have not heard him, it is impossible faintly to suggest the magic of his elocution in narrating the murder, and above all the piteous anguish of his voice at the words :

"I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say, 'God bless us.'
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat."

The variety of gesture, of vocal and facial expression, with which he illuminates the soliloquy, "If 'twere done, when 'tis done," etc., the terrible reality of the dagger scene, the overpowering effect of the banquet scene, unite to produce an artistic impression of horror and sublimity which can neither be effaced nor repeated in a life-time. One of the most striking minor points is his reception of the news of *Lady Macbeth's* death; there is a sincerity of grief in his delivery of the words, "She should have died hereafter," with which he drops into his chair and buries his face for a moment in his hands; then, with a sudden sense of the monotony and weariness

of his hateful career, he exclaims, "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow," etc.—with the fretful disgust of an insatiably selfish man, rather than the melancholy of an afflicted one. Perhaps the strongest idea of Salvini's versatility may be gained by seeing him appear, as he did on two successive evenings in New York, as *Macbeth* and the *Gladiator*. In Soumet's tragedy, the same man who had been on the previous night an embodiment of Saxon royalty, of imperious, grandiose power, revealed himself in every gesture, every inflection of his voice, the coarse Italian slave, brutalized by his terrible profession as well as by the extraordinary development of his physical strength, and yet elevated to tragic heights by the intensity of his sufferings and passion. The abundant and elaborate gesticulation, the vivacity of movement, the ever-present consciousness of his physical superiority and of his desperate, enslaved condition, left nothing lacking to complete the illusion of the Roman gladiator. His description of his wife's murder cannot be excelled as a piece of elocution. Contrast his manner throughout this long narrative with his delivery of the address to the Signory in "Othello," and one may form an idea of the vitality which he imparts to every rôle. There he scarcely made a gesture—here each word is illustrated by pantomime so eloquent as to convey the full passion and import of his speech even to those who do not understand his language. Who can fail to appreciate the anguish of the words :

"They bound me to a pillar,
Which in my struggles fell upon my head,
But did not break my chain"?

("Sul mio corpo crollò, ma non si franse la mia catena.") The spontaneous burst of applause which interrupted him at this point sufficiently proved the impossibility of misconceiving or remaining deaf to that superhuman despair. And after apparently exhausting every intonation and expression of mortal suffering, he concludes with an indescribable irony which forms the most astonishing and thrilling climax. "The heavens did not fall, they did not fall—and you talk to me of God!" ("Non cadde, non cadde il cielo, e tu di Dio mi parli!") The scene in the arena gives full scope to Salvini's most extraordinary powers: tenderness, ferocity, anguish, and despair, culminating in reckless and most pathetic joy, alternate without an instant's pause, and carry the audience from mood to mood with the force of absolute reality.

After his Shakspearean interpretations, the rôle in which Salvini has made the greatest sensation is perhaps that of *Conrad* in *Gia-*

commetti's drama, "Civil Death," which has gained eloquent appreciation from the press of America, England, Germany, and France. M. Silvestre, in "L'Estafette," writes:

"M. Salvini is here simply sublime. After his last scene, we leave the theater literally exhausted with emotion. In *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* he appeared to us a tragedian sure of his art; now we must recognize in him a temperament unprecedented for power and tenderness, an unparalleled gift of sensitiveness, a pathetic intensity which we have never before seen attained. We can only regret that he is not our compatriot. 'Nothing is lacking to his glory—he is lacking to ours.'"

It is no slight triumph for Salvini, the loftiest exponent of the idealism of Shakspeare, that, after having won the suffrages of the poets of all nations, he has been crowned in this rôle with the praise of the champion of modern realism—M. Zola. Such art as Salvini's belongs to no school, and is hampered by no theories; it is not realism, but truth; it is not romanticism, but beauty. Upon the question of naturalism and idealism he expressed himself very clearly in a recent conversation. "I consider it a mistake," he said, "and one which many artists make at the outset of their career, to adopt the standard of a party. It leads to a constantly increasing tendency toward exaggeration in the direction of their idea, at the expense of truth and real art. I belong neither to the '*veristi*' nor to

the '*idealisti*'; my aim is simply to unite truth with beauty. To succeed in such an aim would be the dream of a god!" (*il pensier d'un dio.*)

To some one who asked him what was his favorite rôle, he replied: "I love them all with equal passion; they have all cost me so many pains, and caused me such noble joys." On other occasions, however, he has expressed certain preferences. He considers himself best suited physically to the part of the *Gladiator*; he enjoys playing *Hamlet* because he has been very severely criticised in it, and having devoted to its study infinite care and research, his ambition makes him all the more anxious to enforce its success. He takes pleasure in *Macbeth*, because, being a recently adopted rôle, it has still the charm of freshness for him; and, strange as it may appear, he eagerly looks forward to the time, which he does not consider far distant, when the fatigues and excitements of his career will have sufficiently broken his robust physique to enable him to enact the part of *King Lear*. However magnificent and original this impersonation might prove, his world of admirers cannot on these terms share his impatience. They can only hope his present period of ripe, artistic perfection may be prolonged to its utmost limits, knowing well how many generations must elapse before the highest genius will again be united with the highest art.

IMPRESSIONS OF SOME SHAKSPEREAN CHARACTERS.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IF all men were alike and of the same mode of thinking, the world would be too monotonous and existence a burden. It is the variety we find everywhere in nature that gives to it interest and beauty. The same object observed by different minds affords new interest and pleasure by a comparison of these various opinions, many of which, however erroneous, may be justified by a particular form of character in the observer; others, more abstruse, may be verified by a finer process of reasoning or mode of feeling. Happy those who are favored by nature with that keen insight, that delicate and high perception, that enables them to perceive the truth in every object that presents itself to their view.

The man above all others who has called forth many and various opinions on his works

—on their literary merits as well as on the right interpretation of the different characters which he so wonderfully painted and sculptured—is William Shakspeare, a name at which my pen trembles in my hand, awed as I am by the reverence I feel for such transcendent genius. But I am encouraged by my great love for him, and for the sake of this I may be pardoned if I dare to make him the interpreter of my thoughts who is the inexhaustible analyst of the human heart, and the most complete illustrator of man, the noblest work of God.

The erroneous opinion is often expressed that foreigners, unacquainted with the English language, cannot rightly interpret the works of Shakspeare. Translations, doubtless, are always inferior to the originals; but at the same time they are generally sufficiently exact to afford the means of fully comprehending