Evidently the work of a superior and well-balanced mind, at once observant and meditative. It is no every day or every year publication. The prominent defect is, we saltam judice, in the style, i.e. that the metaphors constitute the web of the Cloth. The writer who habitually reason in metaphors will now and then reason by them. Besides the frequent (in the Latin as well as the English use of frequent) of the Figure[s] frustrates their purpose. To imitate the faults I am con-
demning [no unusual thing, by the bye] one cannot see one's way into the wood for the swarm of Fine flies in the Path.

A young Writer of full and stirring intellect likes to have his compositions all alive. But let him beware of the Mortis pediculums of Rhetoric - tho' the

Pediculi were as beautiful, each seen for itself on the object plate of the Microscope, as the gem beetle, still it is a Disease - tho' rare and there from except of Health at least of the Vitae vitalis, S.T.C.
often more than a tinge, of extravagance belongs to every word and action. And yet the exception is only apparent; for though these giants of human nature greatly surpass other men in force of mind, and courage, and activity, still the heroic extravagance, and the irregular and ungovernable power, which enables them to dare and to do so much, is, in fact, nothing more than a partial accumulation of strength, necessary because the utmost energies of human nature are so small, that, if equably distributed through the system, they would be inadequate to arduous labours. The very same task, which the human hero achieves in the fury and fever of a half-mad enthusiasm, would be performed by a seraph in the perfect serenity of reason. Although therefore these vigorous minds are strong when placed in comparison with others, their enthusiasm is in itself a weakness;—a weakness of the species, if not of the individual.

Unless a perpetual miracle were to intercept the natural operation of common causes, religion, not less than philosophy or poetry, will draw enthusiasts within its precincts. Nor, if we recollect on the one hand the fitness of the vast objects revealed in the Scriptures to affect the imagination, and on the other the wide diffusion of religious ideas, can it seem strange if it be found, in fact, that religious enthusiasts outnumber any other class. It is also quite natural that enthusiastic and genuine religious emotions
peril of awaking from his illusions when truth comes too late. The religious idealist, perhaps, sincerely believes himself to be eminently devout; and those who witness his abstraction, his elevation, his enjoyments, may reverence his piety; meanwhile this fictitious happiness creeps as a lethargy through the moral system, and is rendering him continually less and less susceptible of those emotions in which true religion consists.

Nor is this always the limit of the evil; for though religious enthusiasm may sometimes seem a harmless delusion, compatible with amiable feelings and virtuous conduct, it more often allies itself with the malign passions, and then produces the virulent mischiefs of fanaticism. Opportunity may be wanting, and habit may be wanting, but intrinsic qualification for the perpetration of the worst crimes is not wanting to the man whose bosom heaves with enthusiasm, inflamed by malignancy. If checks are removed, if incitements are presented, if the momentum of action and custom is acquired, he will soon learn to extirpate every emotion of kindness or of pity, as if it were a treason against heaven; and will make it his ambition to rival the achievements, not of heroes, but of fiends. The amenities that have been diffused through society in modern times forbid the overt acts and excesses of fanatical feeling; but the venom still lurks in the vicinity of enthusiasm, and may be quickened in a
animated by the same principles, fail not still to find place of indulgence, even amid the crowds of a city: and the recluse who lives in the world will, probably, be more sour in temper than the anchoret of the wilderness. An ardent temperament converts the enthusiast into a zealot, who, while he is laborious in winning proselytes, discharges common duties very remissly, and is found to be a more punctilious observer of his creed, than of his word. Or, if his imagination be fertile, he becomes a visionary, who lives on better terms with angels and with seraphs, than with his children, servants and neighbours: or he is one who, while he reverences the "thrones, dominions and powers" of the invisible world, vents his spleen in railing at all "dignities and powers" of earth.

Superstition—the creature of guilt and fear, is almost as ancient as the human family. But Enthusiasm, the child of hope, hardly appeared on earth until after the time when life and immortality had been brought to light by Christianity. Hitherto, a cloud of the thickest gloom had stretched itself out before the eye of man as he trod the sad path to the grave; and though poetry supplied its fictions, and philosophy its surmises, neither possessed any force or authentication; and therefore neither had power to awaken the soul. But the Christian revelation not only shed a sudden splendour upon the awful futurity, but brought its revelations to bear upon
and a layman is not a recognised functionary in the Church; he may, therefore, choose his style without violating any rules or proprieties of office.

The concluding sentiment approach nearer to the Shallow Man is quite allowable in so intelligible a writer. What is

— simplification of colloquial expression. Is it so! (The even of this I have noted.)

But why? Simply because the term and

beginning of the Theological Schools have

by their constant iteration from the Profit

become colloquial. The damsel of one

age became the common bane of its

successors. I can conceive no worse sin of

end of deprieving Christian faith of one

of its peculiar distinction that of subduing

and enhancing the mind, which it profays

and in the long run of purifying the

will and affection than the maxim

prescribed in the preceding page.

See Add. to Reflection p. 7-11 and the

Note, p. 252.
the Divine nature to meet the human, but a humbling of the human nature to a lower range than it might easily reach. The region of abstract conceptions—of lofty reasonings—of magnificent images, has an atmosphere too subtile to support the health of true piety; and in order that the warmth and vigour of life may be maintained in the heart, the common level of the natural affections is chosen as the scene of intercourse between Heaven and earth. In accordance with this plan of devotion, not only does the Supreme conceal Himself from our senses, but He reveals in His word barely a glimpse of His essential glories. By some naked affirmations we are indeed secured against false and grovelling notions of the Divine nature; but these hints are incidental, and so scanty, that every excursive mind goes far beyond them in its conceptions of the infinite attributes.

Nor is it only the brightness of the Eternal throne that is shrouded from the view of those who are invited to draw near to Him that "sitteth thereon," for the immeasurable distance that separates man from his Maker is carefully veiled by the concealment of the intervening orders of rational beings. Though the fact of such superior existences is clearly affirmed, nothing more than the bare fact is imparted; and we cannot misunderstand the reason and necessity of so much reserve; for without it those free and kindly movements of the heart in which genuine devotion consists, would be overborne
by impressions of a kind that belong to the imagination. Distance is understood only by the perception of intermediate objects. The traveller who, with weary steps, has passed from one extremity to the other of a continent, and whose memory is fraught with the recollection of the various scenes of the journey, is qualified to attach a distinct idea to the higher terms of measurement; but the notion of extended space, formed by those who have never passed the boundary of their native province, is vague and unreal. Such are the notions which, with all the aids of astronomy and arithmetic, we form of the distances even of the nearest of the heavenly bodies. But if the traveller, who has actually looked upon the ten thousand successive landscapes that lie between the farthest west and the remotest east, could, with a sustained effort of memory and imagination, hold all those scenes in recollection, and repeat the voluminous idea with distinct reiteration until the millions of millions were numbered that separate sun from sun; and if the notion thus laboriously obtained, could be vividly supported and transferred to the pathless spaces of the universe, then, that prospect of distant systems which night opens before us, instead of exciting mild and pleasurable emotions of admiration, would rather oppress the imagination under a painful sense of the measured interval. If the eye, when it fixes its gaze upon the vault of heaven, could
see, in fancy, a causeway arched across the void, and bordered in long series with the hills and plains of an earthly journey—repeated ten thousand and ten thousand times, until ages were spent in the pilgrimage, then would he, who possessed such a power of vision, hide himself in caverns rather than venture to look up to the terrible magnitude of the starry skies, thus set out in parts before him.

And yet the utmost distances of the material universe are finite; but the disparity of nature which separates man from his Maker is infinite; nor can the interval be filled up or brought under any process of measurement. Nevertheless, in the view of our feeble conceptions, an apparent measurement or filling up of the infinite void would take place, and so the idea of immense separation would be painfully enhanced, if distinct vision were obtained of the towering hierarchy of intelligences at the basement of which the human system is founded. Were it indeed permitted to man to gaze upward from step to step, and from range to range, of the vast edifice of rational existences, and could his eye attain its summit, and then perceive, at an infinite height beyond that highest platform of created beings, the lowest steps of the Eternal throne—what liberty of heart would afterwards be left to him in drawing near to the Father of spirits? How, after such a revelation of the upper world, could the affectionate cheerfulness of earthly worship again take place?—Or, how,
while contemplating the measured vastness of the interval between heaven and earth, could the dwellers thereon come familiarly, as before, to the Hearer of prayer, bringing with them the small requests of their petty interests of the present life? If introduction were had to the society of those beings whose wisdom has accumulated during ages which Time forgets to number, and who have lived to see, once and again, the mystery of the providence of God complete its cycle, would not the impression of created superiority oppress the spirit, and obstruct its access to the Being whose excellencies are absolute and infinite? Or what would be the feelings of the infirm child of earth, if, when about to present his supplications, he found himself standing in the theatre of heaven, and saw, ranged in a circle wider than the skies, the congregation of immortals? These spectacles of greatness, if laid open to perception, would present such an interminable perspective of glory, and so set out the immeasurable distance between ourselves and the Supreme Being with a long gradation of splendours, that we should henceforward feel as if thrust down to an extreme remoteness from the divine notice; and it would be hard or impossible to retain, with any comfortable conviction, the belief in the nearness of Him who is revealed as "a very present help in every time of trouble." But that our feeble spirits may not thus be overborne, or our faith and confidence baffled and perplexed, the Most
style distasteful. As the Hearer of prayer stoops to listen, so also must the suppliant stoop from the heights of philosophical or meditative abstractions, and either come in genuine simplicity of petition, as a son to a father, or be utterly excluded from the friendship of his Maker.

This scriptural system of devotion stands opposed then to all those false sublimities of an enthusiastic pietism which affect to lift man into a middle region between heaven and earth, ere he may think himself admitted to hold communion with God. While the inflated devotee is soaring into he knows not what vagueness of upper space, He whom “the heaven of heavens cannot contain,” has come down, and with benign condescension, has placed himself in the centre of the little circle of human ideas and affections. The man of imaginative, or of hyper-rational piety, is gone in contemplation where God is not; or where man shall never meet him: for “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, and who dwelleth in the high and holy place,” when he invites us to his friendship, holds the splendour of his natural perfections in abeyance, and proclaims that “He dwells with the man who is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Thus does the piety taught in the Scriptures make provision against the vain exaggerations of enthusiasm; and thus does it give free play to the affections of the
heart; while whatever might stimulate the imagination is enveloped in the thickest covering of obscurity.

The outward forms and observances of worship are manifestly intended to discourage and exclude the false refinements of an imaginative piety, and to give to the religious affections a mundane, rather than a transcendental character. The congregated worshippers come into "the house of God"—the hall or court of audience, on the terms of human association, and by explicit invitation from Him who declares that, "wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, there He is" to meet them. And being so assembled, as in the actual presence of the "King of saints," they give utterance to the emotions of love, veneration, hope, joy, penitence, in all those modes of outward expression, which are at once proper to the constitution of human nature, and proper to be addressed to a being of kindred character and sympathies. Worship is planned altogether in adaptation to the limitations of the inferior party, not in proportion to the infinitude of the superior:—even the worship of heaven must be framed on the same principle; for how high soever we ascend in the scale of created intelligence, still the finite can never surmount its boundaries, or at all adapt itself to the infinite. But the infinite may always bow to the finite. Those, therefore, who, blown up with the vapours of enthusiasm, contemn and neglect the modes

Creatures that they should, as the conditions, offering acceptable worship to him, wilfully blind themselves to the light whilost in himself had given them, and dragging...
and style of worship proper to humanity, must find that, though indulgence is given to their affectation on earth, there can be no room allowed it in heaven.

The dispensations of the divine providence towards the pious, have the same tendency to confine the devout affections within the circle of terrestrial ideas, and to make religion always an occupant of the homestead of common feelings. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” and wherefore, but to bring his religious belief and emotions in close contact with the humiliations of animal life, and to necessitate the use of prayer as a real and efficient means of obtaining needful assistance in distress? If vague speculations or delicious illusions have carried the Christian away from the realities of earth, urgent wants or piercing sorrows presently arouse him from his dreams, and oblige him to come back to the importunity of prayer, and to the simplicity of praise. A strange incongruity may seem to present itself, when the sons of God—the heirs of immortality—the destined princes of heaven, are seen implicated in sordid cares, and vexed and oppressed by the perplexities of a moment; but this incongruity is only perceived when the great facts of religion are viewed in the false light of the imagination; for the process of preparation, far from being incompatible with these apparent degradations, requires them; and it is by such means of humiliation that the hope of immortality
is bound down in the heart, and prevented from floating in the region of material images.

We have said, that when an important object is zealously pursued in the use of means proper for its attainment, a mere intensity or fervour of feeling does not constitute enthusiasm. If, therefore, prayer has a lawful object, whether temporal or spiritual, and is used in humble confidence of its efficiency as a means of obtaining the desired boon, or some equivalent blessing, there is nothing unreal in the employment; and, therefore, nothing enthusiastic. But there are devotional exercises which, though they assume the style and phrases of prayer, have no other object than to attain the immediate pleasures of excitement. The devotee is not in truth a petitioner; for his prayers terminate in themselves; and if he reaches the expected pitch of transient emotion, he desires nothing more. This appetite for feverish agitations naturally prompts a quest of whatever is exorbitant in expression or sentiment, and as naturally inspires a dread of all those subjects of meditation which tend to abate the pulse of the moral system. If the language of humiliation is at all admitted into the enthusiast's devotions, it must be so pointed with extravagance, and so blown out with exaggerations, that it serves much more to tickle the fancy than to affect the heart: it is a burlesque of penitence, very proper to amuse a mind that is destitute of real contrition. That such artificial humiliations do not spring
from the sorrow of repentance, is proved by their bringing with them no lowliness of temper. Genuine humility would shake the whole towering structure of this enthusiastic pietism; and, therefore, in the place of Christian humbleness of mind, there are cherished certain ineffable notions of self-annihilation, and self-renunciation, and we know not what other attempts at metaphysical suicide. If you receive the enthusiast’s description of himself, he has become, in his own esteem, by continued force of divine contemplation, infinitely less than an atom—a very negative quality—an incalculable fraction of positive entity: meanwhile the whole of his deportment betrays the sensitiveness of a self-importance ample enough for a god.

Minds of a superior order, and refined by culture, may be full fraught with enthusiasm without exhibiting any very reprehensible extravagances: for taste and intelligence conceal the offensiveness of error as well as of vice. But it will not be so with the gross and the uneducated. These, if they are taught to neglect the substantial purposes of prayer, and are encouraged to seek chiefly the gratifications of excitement, will hardly refrain from the utterance of discontent, when they fail of success. Whatever physical or accidental cause may oppress the animal spirits, and frustrate the attempt to reach the desired pitch of emotion, gives occasion to some sort of querulous altercation with the Supreme Being, or to some disguised imputations of caprice on the part of
Him who is supposed to have withheld the expected spiritual influence. Thus the divine condescension in holding intercourse with man on the level of friendship, is abused in this wantonness of irreverence; and the very same temper which impels a man of vulgar manners, when disappointed in his suit, to turn upon his superior with rude opprobriums, is, in its degree, indulged towards the Majesty of heaven. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," is a rebuke which belongs to those who thus affront the Most High with the familiarities of common companionship. We say not that flagrant abuses of this kind are of frequent occurrence, even among the uneducated; yet neither are they quite unknown. A perceptible tendency towards them always accompanies the enthusiastic notion that the principal part of piety is excitement.

The substitution of the transient and unreal, for the real and enduring objects of prayer, brings with it often that sort of ameliorated mysticism which consists in a solicitous dissection of the changing emotions of the religious life, and in a sickly sensitiveness, which serves only to divert attention from what is important in practical virtue. There are anatomists of piety who destroy all the freshness and vigour of faith and hope and charity, by immuring themselves, night and day, in the infected atmosphere of their own bosoms. Let a man of warm heart, who is
ENTHUSIASM IN DEVOTION.

happily surrounded with the dear objects of the social affections, try the effect of a parallel practice;—let him institute anxious scrutinies of his feelings towards those whom, hitherto, he has believed himself to regard with unfeigned love;—let him use in these inquiries all the fine distinctions of a casuist, and all the profound analyses of a metaphysician, and spend hours daily in pulling asunder every complex emotion of tenderness that has given grace to the domestic life; and, moreover, let him journalize these examinations, and note particularly, and with the scrupulosity of an accompant, how much of the mass of his kindly sentiments he has ascertained to consist of genuine love, and how much was selfishness in disguise; and let him, from time to time, solemnly resolve to be, in future, more disinterested and less hypocritical in his affection towards his family. What, at the end of a year, would be the result of such a process? What, but a wretched debility and dejection of the heart, and a strangeness and a sadness of the manners, and a suspension of the native expressions and ready offices of zealous affection? Meanwhile the hesitations and the musings, and the upbraidings of an introverted sensibility absorb the thoughts. Is it, then, reasonable to presume that similar practices in religion can have a tendency to promote the healthful vigour of piety?

By the constitution of the human mind, its emotions are strengthened in no other way than
temper, and the spirit of the formularies of the English church, all discourage the attempt to hold forth the subjects of evangelical teaching in the gorgeous colours of an artificial oratory. And if the evidence of facts were listened to, such attempts would never be made by men who honestly desire to discharge the momentous duties of the Christian ministry in the manner most conducive to the welfare of their hearers. A blaze of emotion, having the semblance of piety, may be kindled by descriptive and impassioned harangues, such as those that are heard on days of festival from French and Italian pulpits; but it will be found that the Divine Spirit, without whose agency the heart is never permanently affected, sternly refuses to become a party in any such theatric exercises: the emotions will therefore subside without leaving a vestige of salutary influence.

Yet is there perhaps a lawful range open, in the pulpit, to the powers of descriptive eloquence. The preacher may embellish all those subsidiary topics that are not included within the circle of the primary principles on which the religious affections are built; for in addressing the imagination on these accessory points, he does not incur the danger of founding piety altogether upon illusions. The great and beautiful in nature, and perhaps the natural attributes of the Deity, and the episodes of sacred history, and the diversities of human character, and the scenes of