

THE  
*PROGRESS of ROMANCE,*  
THROUGH  
TIMES, COUNTRIES, AND MANNERS;  
WITH  
REMARKS  
ON THE GOOD AND BAD EFFECTS OF  
IT, ON THEM RESPECTIVELY;  
IN A COURSE OF  
EVENING CONVERSATIONS.  
*Clara Reeve*  
BY C. R. AUTHOR OF  
THE ENGLISH BARON, THE TWO MENTORS, &c.  
IN TWO VOLUMES.  
VOL. I.

It hath bene through all ages ever scene,  
That with the praise of armes and chevalrie  
The prize of beautie still hath ioyned bene,  
And that for reasons speciall privitee,  
For either doth on other much relie:  
For he me seemes most fit the faire to serve,  
That can her best defend from villenie,  
And she most fit his service doth deserve,  
That fairest is, and from her faith will never swerve.

SPENSER'S Faery Queene. Book 4. Canto 5. Stanza 1.

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## P R E F A C E.

R O M A N C E S may not improperly be called the polite literature of early ages, and they have been the favourite amusements of later times. In rude and barbarous ages, they resided in the breath of oral tradition, in civilized nations they were of course committed to writing: and in still more polished periods, they have varied their forms, and have appeared either in prose or verse, according to the genius of the writers, or the taste of the times.

In the following pages, I have endeavoured to trace the progress of this species of composition, through all its successive stages and variations, to point out its most striking effects and influence upon the manners, and to assist according to my best judgment, the reader's choice, amidst the almost infinite variety it affords, in a selection of such as are most worthy of a place in the libraries of readers of every class, who seek either for information or entertainment.

How far I have succeeded in this attempt, must now be left to the decision of that tribunal which I have ever approached with the most respectful diffidence; and whose indulgence, I am perhaps in the present instance concerned more than ever to implore.

While many eminent writers have (if I may be permitted the allusion) skimmed over the surface of this subject, it  
seemed

seemed to me that none of them had sounded the depths of it.—Of metrical Romances they have treated largely, but with respect to those in prose, their informations have been scanty and imperfect.

When they approach that period of obscurity, which began with the spreading of Christianity over the western world, they drop entirely the latter and equally essential branch of the subject; nor do they resume it, till the sixteenth Century, when *Calprenede*, the *Scuderies*, *D'Urfé*, and other French writers, revived the taste for prose Romances, by their productions.

To fill up this chasm in the history of Romance, to rectify the mistakes that have been made by indiscriminate praise or blame, to methodise and arrange the works themselves, and to ascertain as many of the Authors, and the dates of

them as I could get information of, to mark the distinguishing characters of the Romance and the Novel, to point out the boundaries of both: and lastly to present to the reader's eye a selection of the best writings of both kinds.

These objects would I thought, have a fair claim to the attention of the public; and if executed with fidelity and judgment, would I hoped merit its approbation and encouragement.

While I was collecting materials for this work, I held many conversations with some ingenious friends upon the various subjects, which it offered to be investigated and explained. This circumstance naturally suggested to me the Idea of the dialogue form; in which opposite sentiments would admit of a more full and accurate examination, arguments and objections might be more clearly stated and discussed, than in a regular

regular series of Essays, or even letters, not to mention, that the variety and contrast which naturally arise out of the Dialogue, might enliven a work of rather dry deduction, and render it more entertaining to the reader, and not the less useful or instructive.—In this Idea I was confirmed by the great success of some late writers in this way, particularly of *Madame de Genlis*, in her excellent work called the *Theatre of Education*.

It was not till I had compleated my design, that I read either Dr. Beattie's *Dissertation on Fable and Romance*, or Mr. Warton's *History of English Poetry*.—To the perusal of these books, I was most strongly recommended by two friends, to whom I had shewn my own work, and to whose judgment I owe all possible respect and deference.—I obeyed their injunctions, and have additional



obligations to them for the entertainment afforded me by these excellent writers—I soon found that they neither interfered with my plan, nor had anticipated my subject, yet I own I was well pleased, that neither of these books had fallen in my way before I had finished my own work; as otherwise it might have been supposed that I had borrowed my lights from them, where ever there happened to be a concurrence of opinion, or of representation.

Dr. *Beattie* has walked over the ground, and marked out its boundaries, but he has paid little attention to its various produce, whether of flowers, herbs, or weeds; except a very few works of capital merit, (some of which he confesses he had not read through) he consigns all the rest to oblivion. Thus Genius thinks it enough to strike out the outline, and leaves to industry and inferior

inferior talents, the minuter parts, and more laborious task of detail and arrangement.

From Mr. *Warton's History of English Poetry*, I might indeed have derived considerable advantages, had I met with it sooner. I was happy however to find, that in many instances, my opinions were confirmed, and my arguments strengthened by this learned and judicious writer.

It had long been a received opinion, that Romances were communicated to the Western world by the Crusades.—Mr. *Warton* allows that they were introduced at a much earlier period, viz. by the Saracens; who came from Africa, and settled in Spain, about the beginning of the eighth Century.—From Spain he imagines, they found an easy passage into France and Italy.—He further examines the *Hypotheses* of Dr. *Percy* and Mr. *Mallet*;

*Mallet*; who derive these fictions from the ancient songs of the Gothic Bards and Scalds: this Idea he allows to be well founded, so far at least as it does not exclude his own System.—These fictions (he says) had taken deep root in Europe, and prepared the way for the *Arabian* fables which were introduced in the ninth Century, by which they were in a great measure superseded.

That Chivalry, which was the substance of Romance, existed among the Goths he allows, but adds, that under the Feudal establishment, it received new strength and vigour; and was invested with the formalities of a regular institution —Which *Dr. Percy* likewise acknowledges in his remarks on Chivalry; the passage is quoted in the body of this work.—*Mr. Warton* next proceeds to the Minstrels, Troubadours, and early poets of this country, which is his proper

per subject; it was entirely beside his plan to enter further into the subject of prose Romances.

It is remarkable, that among the many learned and ingenious writers who have treated this subject, few have taken proper notice of the Greek Romances, which may justly be deemed the parents of all the rest. The learned men of our own country, have in general affected a contempt for this kind of writing, and looked upon Romances, as proper furniture only for a lady's Library.—Not so the French and Italian writers, on the contrary they have not only deemed them worthy their own attention; but have laboured to make them deserving of ours.

I mean not however to include all the learned of our country under this observation.—The names of *Hurd*, *Beattie*, *Warton*, *Percy*, and *Mallet*, are an honourable

nourable exception, a subject that has been thought worthy of any portion of their time and attention, cannot be undeserving the notice and protection of the public. It is with sincere pleasure I add a name that will not disgrace the list, a writer of my own sex, Mrs. *Dobson* the elegant writer of the *History of the Troubadours* and the *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry*.

In answer to some objections, made by a learned writer, whose friendship does me honour, to my account of the antiquity of Romance-writing; I was led to ask him, why the fictions of the Egyptians and Arabians, of the Greeks and Romans, were not entitled to the appellations of Romances, as well as those of the middle ages, to which it was generally appropriated?—I was answered by another question.—What did I know of the Romances of those countries?

tries?—Had I ever seen an Egyptian Romance? I replied, yes, and I would shortly give him a proof of it. I accordingly compiled and methodised the *History of Charoba Queen of Egypt*.—My friend was surprised and puzzled, and answered me to this effect.

“ I return your Egyptian story with thanks; whence you took it, or how far it is your own I know not.”—As I think this piece a great literary curiosity, I shall give it to the public, at the end of this work.—That I may not appear to claim a right to the invention of this story, I shall inform my readers from whence it is taken.—It is extracted from a book called—*The History of Ancient Egypt, according to the Traditions of the Arabians*.—Written in Arabic, by the Reverend Doctor Murtadi, the Son of Gapiphus, the Son of Chatem, the Son of Mofsem the Macdesian.—Translated in-



*to French by M. Vattier, Arabic Professor to Louis 14th King of France.*

This translator in his Preface speaks of this story in high terms “ Were  
“ there nothing in this story (says he)  
“ worthy of our notice but the Fable  
“ of Gebirus and Charoba, with the  
“ Adventure of the Shepherd, and the  
“ Sea-nymph, I should not repent of  
“ my trouble in this Translation.—I  
“ little thought to find in an Arabian  
“ writer, a story so nearly resembling  
“ the fables of the Greek and Latin  
“ poets.—While I was writing, it frequently reminded me of the 4th book  
“ of the Odyssey, and of several parts  
“ of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

This story is mentioned in the ingenious Mrs. Rowe's *History of Joseph*, a poem not so much known and valued as it deserves to be.—I trust that my readers will not be displeased with a quotation from it.

When

When Totis by his death, the sole command  
Of Misraim left to fair Charoba's hand;  
The rich Gebirus from Chaldea came  
With foreign pomp to seek the royal dame.  
Chemis adorn'd his train, whose beauteous face  
Allur'd a goddess of the watery race;  
On Nilus' banks the young Chaldean stood,  
When lo Marina rising from the flood!  
Her chariot set with pearl, the wave divides,  
Softly along the silver stream she glides,  
Her robes with sparkling gems transparent shine,  
Her brighter Eyes express a light divine;  
Not from her humid bed the blooming day  
Has e'er ascended with a brighter ray.  
She leaves her Chrystal vaults and coral groves  
And o'er the grassy meads with Chemis roves.  
At parting gave him a celestial spell  
Which every good procures, and ills expel  
My mother from this pair derives her line  
And this she left me, as a gift divine,  
By all her Ancestors preserv'd with Care;  
One drop of this shall banish all despair.

Mrs. ROWE'S HIST. OF JOSEPH, Book 6th.

This curious story will sufficiently answer my purpose, if it only furnishes an additional proof that Romances are of universal growth, and not confined

to



to any particular period or countries. They were the delight of barbarous ages, and they have always kept their ground amongst the multiplied amusements of more refined and cultivated periods, containing like every other branch of human literature, both good and evil things. They are not to be put into the hands of young persons without distinction and reserve, but under proper restrictions and regulations they will afford much useful instruction, as well as rational and elegant amusement. In this view therefore they are equally entitled to our attention and respect, as any other works of Genius and literature.

## PROGRES

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## PROGRESS OF ROMANCE.

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### EVENING I.

*Hortensius, Sophronia, Euphrasia.*

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*Euph.* *HORTENSIUS*, I am proud of a visit from you, tho' I am ignorant of the motive to which I am indebted for it.

*Hort.* What Madam, do you think you can give a challenge, and go off with impunity?—I am come hither to demand an explanation of your behaviour last Thursday evening at *Sophronia's* house; and I have brought her with me to be a witness to our dispute—of the defeat of one of us,—or perhaps of our compromise, and reconciliation.

*Soph.* Or that *Euphrasia* shall make a convert to her own opinion.

VOL. I.

B

*Euph.*

*Euph.* I am obliged to the occasion that brings you both to spend an hour with me.—Pray be seated my friends, and let me understand your meaning.—Surely I was not so presumptuous as to challenge *Hortensius*?

*Hort.* I will not suffer you either by railery or compliment to evade my purpose.—In the course of our late conversation, you threw out several hints that struck me as either *new*, or *uncommon*, in respect to the works of the ancient and modern writers;—but what surprised me most of all, you seemed to degrade Epic poetry, and to place it on an equality with the old Romance. I wish you to explain your sentiments on this head, for I cannot account for your defence of a kind of writings that are generally exploded. I little expected to hear *Euphrasia* ridicule the works of the great Ancients.—(You smile)—Yes Madam, raillery was the only weapon you deigned to use, in opposition to my arguments.—Yet you told me you had better reasons in reserve, but you did not choose then to enter upon the subject, as it would engross too much of our time and attention.

*Euph.*

*Euph.* Your memory Sir, is very retentive, and there is no warding off your attack; perhaps I only seemed to degrade your favourites, and exalt the others, because I opposed opinions long received, and but little examined; while in reality I only meant to place each in their proper rank, both as to merit and utility.

*Hort.* To convince me of that, you must give me a full explanation of your opinions in respect to both, and also of the foundation of them.

*Soph.* I have promised in your behalf that you shall give *Hortensius* full satisfaction, and my honour is engaged for it—I know this is a subject you are not unprepared to speak upon.

*Euph.* Methinks you demand no trifling satisfaction for my Challenge, as it pleases you to call it. However I shall not refuse to comply with your request, if you can have patience to listen, while I investigate a subject of greater extent than perhaps you may suppose, and which though I am not quite unprepared for, I am afraid to begin.

B 2

*Soph.*

*Soph.* My dear friend, it is your patience and not ours that will be tried. I am very desirous to hear this subject discussed, and to be informed by the conversation of two such opponents. I expect from *Euphrasia's* reading and observation much advantage to myself.

*Hort.* My expectations Madam, do not fall short of yours.

*Euph.* No compliments my good friends! my reading and observations are very much at your service, I wish they may afford you information or entertainment. I will confess to you that I have considered this subject deeply, and that I have written some remarks upon it.—I have made many extracts from different Authors, and collected materials of various kinds; always intending to methodize them one time or other.—I will bring my papers before you, communicate my remarks, propose my opinions; and either be confirmed in them by your approbation, or be silenced by your better arguments on the contrary side;—perhaps I may be enabled to strike

strike out new lights upon the subject, when my imagination is corrected by the judgment of *Hortensius*.

*Hort.* No compliments I repeat. I wish I may be able to stand my ground. I find you are making great preparations against me, you are coming upon me armed with your papers and extracts.—Artillery and fire-arms against the small sword, the tongue.

*Euph.* A most warlike allusion! and the comparison holds good; for if I should come to a close engagement, the small sword will destroy what may escape the artillery.

*Hort.* Fairly replied.—The attack is begun, I have questioned you closely, it is your part to maintain your own opinions. You have said that Romances are neither so contemptible, nor so dangerous a kind of reading, as they are generally represented—you have compared them to Epic-poems.

*Euph.* Let me first entreat you my good friends to divest yourselves of common prejudices:—excuse the expression.—Mankind in general are more biased by names than



things; and what is yet stranger, they are biaſſed by names to which they have not affixed an abſolute and determinate meaning.—For inſtance—pray what do you underſtand by the word Romance?

*Hort.* By Romance I underſtand a wild, extravagant, fabulous Story.

*Euph.* *Sophronia*, favour me with an explanation of this word? It is not merely a queſtion of idle curioſity.

*Soph.* I underſtand it to mean all thoſe kind of ſto-ries that are built upon fiction, and have no foundation in truth.

*Euph.* You will pleaſe to reflect, that under this general denomination of Romance, a vaſt genus of compoſition is included, works of various kinds, merits, and tendencies. It is running ſome hazard, to praiſe or to de-cry in general terms, without being perfectly acquainted with the whole extent of the ſub-ject under conſideration.

*Hort.* What is it neceſſary to read all the trash contained in this Genus, as it pleaſes you to call it, in order to ſpeak of any part of it?

*Euph.*

*Euph.* By no means, I will explain this point preſently.—No writings are more different than the ancient *Romance* and modern *Novel*, yet they are frequently confounded together, and miſtaken for each other. There are likewiſe great diſtinctions to be made between the *old Greek Romances*, thoſe of the middle ages, and thoſe of the fifteenth and ſixteenth Centuries. Books of all theſe kinds have been enthuſiaſtically read and admired; of late years they have been as abſurdly cenſured and condemned. If read indifcrim-inately they are at beſt unprofitable, frequently productive of abſurdities in manners and ſentiments, ſometimes hurtful to good mo-rals; and yet from this Genus there may be ſelected books that are truly reſpectable, works of genius, taſte, and utility, capable of improving the morals and manners of mankind.

*Soph.* I am entirely of your opinion, and give my teſtimony to this truth.

*Euph.* It ſeems to me that this Genus of compoſition has never been properly diſtin-

guished or ascertained; that it wants to be methodized, to be separated, classed, und regulated; and that a work of this kind would be both entertaining and useful.

*Soph.* Doubtless it would, and you give us hopes of seeing this accomplished.

*Hort.* I perceive that you are laying a deep foundation, but what kind of building you will raise upon it, I am impatient to hear.

*Euph.* If you will honour me with your attention, and sometimes give me your assistance, we will at leisure hours pursue this subject together. Let me bespeak your favour, by assuring you that I mean to do something more than merely to investigate *names*:—we will afterwards proceed to consider the beauties and defects of these writings, of the uses and abuses, and of their effects upon the manners of the times in which they were written. I propose to trace Romance to its Origin, to follow its progress through the different periods to its declension, to shew how the modern Novel sprung up out of its ruins, to examine and compare the merits of both, and to remark upon the effects of them.

*Hort.*

*Hort.* Upon my word you do well to lay a deep foundation, the superstructure will require it: if it be well executed it will do you honour, and without a compliment, I think you equal to this undertaking.

*Euph.* You may be mistaken, and yet I may be entitled to your allowance,—the design may be good though the execution should fall short. I always mean more than I can express;—my materials increase upon me, in-somuch that I fear I may be encumbered by the number and variety of them. I shall depend upon your assistance, and since you have opened my mouth upon the subject, you are bound in honour to correct my redundancies, and to supply my deficiencies.

*Hort.* What to furnish you with weapons for my defeat?

*Euph.* Not so, but to assist me in the course of my progress through the land of Romance. I purpose to remark upon the most eminent works of the kind, and to pay the tribute of praise to works of Genius and morality.

*Hort.*

*Hort.* I respect both the motive and the end too much to discourage you, and you may depend upon every assistance in my power.

*Euph.* Let then the present conversation serve as an introduction to our progress, the next time we meet we will pursue the subject more closely.

*Hort.* Let it be at my house next Thursday ladies!

*Soph.* Agreed, and let the Thursday in every week be set apart for this purpose, till the progress is finished.

*Euph.* With all my heart.—I will readily attend you in turn.

*Hort.* I am much obliged to you, for your readiness to gratify my curiosity, and shall expect next Thursday with some impatience.—adieu Madam.

*Euph.* I shall depend upon you for encouragement when deserved,—correction where I am mistaken, and allowance where wanted.—adieu my friends.

EVENING

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## EVENING II.

*Hortensius, Sophronia, Euphrasia.*

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*Hort.* **L**ADIES, I rejoice to see you at my house on this occasion. Let us lay aside form and ceremony, and proceed to the business of our meeting.—I expect a pitch'd battle; for I see *Euphrasia* has brought her artillery and is placing them to advantage.

*Euph.* You know your advantages, and that a woman is your opponent.

*Hort.* Whether you mean me a compliment or reproof, is not clear.—But I will not reply to it, lest it should hinder business.—It lies upon you Madam to proceed with your investigation.

*Soph.*



*Soph.* You are to explain to us the word Romance, of which it seems we have no certain Idea.

*Euph.* Since our last meeting I have not been idle.—I have consulted all the Dictionary writers upon the subject, and I do not find that any of them are clear and certain in their definition of it.

*Ainsworth* and *Littleton* speak in the following terms :—*Narratio ficta*,—*fabulosa heroicorum facinorum historia*.—*Scriptum eroticum*—*splendida fabula*.

*Boyer* calls a Romance too concisely—*un fable*—*une conte*—*un mensonge*.

Old *Dyce* and *Bailey*—a fiction, or feigned Story.

*Dr. Johnson*—a military fable of the *middle ages*:—A tale of wild adventures of war and love.

With all respect to the Doctor's judgment,—I must affirm that this definition can only be proper to the Romances of the middle ages, but cannot extend to the whole Genus.

*Hort.*

*Hort.* A proper distinction—but what use will you make of it?

*Euph.* The Origin of Romance is of much higher date, as I hope to convince you,—but first let us speak of the name.

*Hort.* How then would you define it?

*Euph.* By fixing a clear and certain meaning to it, not as of my own invention or judgment; but borrowing the idea of the Latinists, I would call it simply an *Heroic fable*,—a fabulous Story of such actions as are commonly ascribed to heroes, or men of extraordinary courage and abilities.—Or if you would allow of it, I would say an Epic in prose.

*Hort.* I cannot allow of the last appellation, but to the first I make no objection. An Epic is a very superior composition.

*Euph.* We will speak of that hereafter. I do not despair of bringing you over to my definition; but let us first trace the Origin of our subject. Romances or Heroic fables are of very ancient, and I might say universal Origin. We find traces of them in all times,  
and

and in all countries: they have always been the favourite entertainment of the most savage, as well as the most civilized people. In the earliest accounts of all nations, we find they had traditional stories of their most eminent persons, that is of their *Heroes*, to which they listened in raptures, and found themselves excited to perform great actions, by hearing them recited;—they had their war-songs—and they had also their prose narratives.

*Hort.* This is indeed a truth that cannot be denied, I did not expect so ancient, nor so well authenticated an Origin, as you have given them.

*Soph.* I knew that *Euphrasia* would never advance, what she could not defend,—proceed Madam.

*Euph.* As a country became civilized, their narrations were methodized, and moderated to probability.—From the prose recitals sprung History,—from the war-songs Romance and Epic poetry.

*Hort.* History—Romance—and Epics all in a breath!

*Euph.*

*Euph.* Let us first distinguish History from the others.—When a nation became acquainted with letters, they could record facts, and this is the *Æra* of true History. Before that time a story, that at first was founded on facts, by length of time and passing through many hands, lost many real circumstances, and acquired many fictitious ones. The heathen Mythology is an unanswerable proof of this truth;—what at first was the History of mortal men, and their actions, was at length ascribed to deities; and the veil of Allegory concealed and altered facts, till they could no longer be traced, and at last were lost in fable and obscurity. These Stories, though no longer believed by wise men as truths, yet continued to please as agreeable fictions; and in more enlightened times, men of Genius and fancy, perceiving the pleasure they gave and how willingly they were received, imitated those antient fables, and in process of time composed others of different kinds, following the track of their talents, and the temper of the times in which they lived.

*Hort.*

*Hort.* All this I allow.—But will you involve History in this obscurity?

*Eupb.* By no means.—Let us now leave History to her own strength and evidence, as the noblest and most useful of all studies; and let us proceed to Romance, and the Epic poem.

*Hort.* Romance and Epic again!—do you affirm that they are the same?

*Eupb.* I do affirm it, and will endeavour to maintain it. They spring from the same root,—they describe the same actions and circumstances,—they produce the same effects, and they are continually mistaken for each other.

*Hort.* Your pardon Madam,—I must mention one material difference.—The Epic poem is always derived from some Historical fact, though perhaps remote and obscure.

*Eupb.* Remote and obscure indeed.—So perhaps are some of the stories in *Ovid's Metamorphoses*,—but I will bring a fairer comparison.—In the French Romances of the sixteenth Century, they had their foundation  
in

in real History; but the superstructure was pure fiction. I will not shelter myself under their authority, I will not speak of them as respectable works.—Let us con promise.—If you will permit me to go on in my own way, perhaps I may answer your objections when you least expect it, and I shall call upon you to make them, in due time.

*Hort.* I will hear you with attention and impartiality: but I wish you to come to the point directly.

*Soph.* The dispute waxes warm.—My dear *Euphrasia*, I expect you to answer all the scruples of *Hortensius*.

*Eupb.* Well then, I will come to the point you wish to bring me.—Mankind willingly adopt the prejudices of their ancestors, they embrace them with affection, they quit them with reluctance. One of them is to decry Romance, and venerate Epic Poetry. I believe *Hortensius* has as few prejudices as any man living; but I must think this to be a strong one, and as such I shall treat it, and endeavour to cure him of it.



*Hort.* I hope I am open to conviction, and ready to acknowledge truth, whether it makes for or against me.—Proceed Madam.

*Euph.* The Romances of all countries are derived from the bards. All countries have had their bards of early times, and their prose Romances afterwards.—Left my opinion should not be sufficient, I shall refer you to Dr. *Percy's* Essay on the old *Metrical Romances*, in which he has treated this subject, in so clear and judicious a manner, that nothing I can say is worthy to come after it.—You shall take it home with you, and it will prepare you for our next conversation. You will there find that Romances have been written both in prose and verse, and that according to the different circumstances of the Author's genius and situation, they became Epics or Romances.

*Hort.* I will certainly read it, but I will not promise to receive it implicitly.—I cannot with any patience see *Homer* and *Virgil* degraded into writers of Romances.

*Euph.*

*Euph.* I would not willingly degrade those great Poets: but I beg leave to distinguish them.——

*Homer* is universally acknowledged as the Prince of Epic poetry. If we may believe Dr. *Blackwell*, there was a wonderful concurrence of circumstances, that elevated him to this high station; circumstances unlikely, perhaps impossible, to happen again to any other Poet, or at least as improbable, as to find another Poet equally capable of using the same advantages:—but with all this eclat that surrounds him, *Homer* was the parent of Romance; where ever his works have been known, they have been imitated by the Poets and Romance writers.—I look upon *Virgil* as the most successful of his Imitators.

*Hort.* This is what I call degrading both these divine men, which I did not expect from you, whom I reckoned among their admirers.

*Euph.* I am so still, as much as possible, on this side Idolatry.—I venerate *Homer* as much as one unlearned in his own language can do. From *Pope's* admired translation I can discern

certain the strong paintings of his bold imagination, his knowledge and judgment in marking his characters; and above all things, the consideration that the world owes to him, in a great measure, the knowledge of the History and Manners of the times in which he wrote, and of some ages before him; on these and many other accounts, *Homer* must always claim our respect and even veneration.—But after all this can you forbear smiling at the extravagant fallies of his imagination, can you approve his violent machinery, in which he degrades his deities below his heroes, and makes deities of men. In a word, if you will not smile with me, I know many of his admirers that will; in spite of the labours of his commentators, who strive with all their strength, to allegorize away his absurdities.

*Hort.* Upon my word Madam, you have made a bold attack, I am not prepared to answer you of a sudden, but I shall do it hereafter.

*Euph.* In the mean time I am preparing to anticipate your answer, and to obviate your objections.

objections.—It is astonishing that men of sense, and of learning, should so strongly imbibe prejudices, and be so loth to part with them.—That they should despise and ridicule Romances, as the most contemptible of all kinds of writing, and yet expatiate in raptures, on the beauties of the fables of the old classic Poets,—on stories far more wild and extravagant, and infinitely more incredible.

*Hort.* It is because we pay due respect to works of true Genius, and disdain the comparison of such weak and paltry imitations, as those you have undertaken to support.

*Euph.* I am no stranger to the charms of Poetry, I have even felt a degree of its enthusiasm, yet I cannot sacrifice the convictions of truth at its shrine. I am of opinion that many of the fine old Historical ballads, are equally entitled to the name of Epic poems.

There are examples enough extant, of Romance in verse, and Epics in prose. I shall produce some of them in the course of our progress:—but at present I shall only mention the *Provencals*, or *Troubadours*,—and I refer you to Mrs. *Dobson's* account of them.



*Hort.* You would engage me in a new course of reading, but I had rather you would give me your own arguments.

*Euph.* I am afraid they should not be sufficient, but I will try a shorter way with you. You think the divine *Homer* degraded by my comparisons, yet I will shew you a striking resemblance of him, in a work of much lower estimation:—Did you never read a book called the Arabian Nights Entertainments?

*Hort.* You cannot be in earnest in this comparison?

*Euph.* Indeed I am.—If you will take the trouble to read the Story of *Sindbad* the Sailor, in the first volume, you will think that either the genius of *Homer* was transfused into the writer, or else that he was well acquainted with his works; for he certainly resembles *Homer* in many particulars.—In the boldness of his imagination,—in the variety of his characters,—and in the marvellous adventures he relates.—In the history of *Sindbad*, we have most of those that *Ulysses* meets with  
in

in the *Odyssey*: inasmuch that you must be convinced the likeness could not be accidental.

*Soph.* I can confirm your assertion by my testimony,—I have often been surprized at it.—But *Hortensius* must read the story in order to be convinced of the resemblance.

*Euph.* Above all other points the Arabian writer most resembles *Homer* in his Machinery: with this difference however, that he is by far the most modest in the use of it.—*Homer* takes the liberty of sending his deities perpetually on the most trifling errands,—it is true the Magicians of the Arabian perform very marvellous things, by the assistance of the good and evil Genii: but then they are all subordinate to the seal of the Sultan *Solomon* the son of *David*,—it is likewise worthy of observation; that throughout the whole work, the Supreme Being is never mentioned without the deepest marks of homage and veneration.

Give me leave to mention one more circumstance relating to this work.—That all



doubts of its Origin and Authenticity are removed, by the testimony of several writers well acquainted with the original language: particularly by Lady *M. W. Montague*, and by Mr. *Jones*; both of whom bear testimony to the fidelity of the English translation.

*Hort.* All that you have said, will only prove that this Arabian writer imitated *Homer* as many others have done.

*Euph.* If I am not mistaken, it will prove something more;—namely, that there is frequently a striking resemblance between works of high and low estimation, which prejudice only, hinders us from discerning, and which when seen, we do not care to acknowledge: for the defects of a favourite Author, are like those of a favourite friend; or perhaps still more like our own.

*Soph.* A palpable hit *Hortensius*!—confess it?

*Hort.* I confess that *Euphrasia* has thrown out many things that have surprized, if they have not convinced me, and that I am very desirous she should proceed.

*Soph*

*Soph.* You will then read the Story of *Sindbad* the Sailor, at our request.

*Hort.* I will,—but I will not promise to allow the comparison.

*Euph.* Not before you are convinced that it is just.

*Hort.* In what class will you place your Arabian writer?

*Euph.* In one of which he is the Original—Eastern Tales:—of which I shall say more in due time and place. In the mean time, I beg leave to lay down two points as certain; upon which I shall establish my system.

First, That Epic Poetry is the parent of Romance.

Secondly, That there is a certain degree of respect due to all the works of Genius, by whatever name distinguished.—Grant me these two postulata, and I shall proceed regularly.

*Hort.* I find you will take them for granted.—But I put in a caveat, in objection to your dogmas.

*Euph.*

*Eupb.* I will call upon you to make them, at a proper time.

*Hort.* Then I will not interrupt you unseasonably: but perhaps I may sometimes ask for explanation.

*Eupb.* I will most willingly hear and answer you, and I beg your assistance as we go forward.

*Soph.* It appears to me that *Euphrasia* has advanced nothing that she has not proved, and I expect as she proceeds that she will explain herself still further.

*Eupb.* You do me honour,—and I hope justice likewise.

*Hort.* Well *Euphrasia*,—I will follow you as closely as I can.

*Eupb.* Having traced Romance to its Origin, I shall proceed with the progress of it: but this shall be the subject of our next conversation, it is now time to put an end to this.

*Soph.* Let us then adjourn to next Thursday, at my house.

*Hort.* I will not fail to meet you there.

*Soph.*

*Soph.* What would your neighbour *Ergastus* say, if he should hear that you met weekly two women, to talk of Romances?

*Hort.* He would certainly indulge his splenetic humour at my expence.

*Eupb.* If you are afraid of him, it will be best to give over our meetings, for I am meditating to tell the subject of them to all the world.

*Hort.* That is indeed enough to alarm one. I find I must take care of what I say before you.

*Eupb.* Take courage my friend.—I promise you never to make our conversation public, without your consent and approbation.

*Hort.* On these conditions, I am satisfied; I dare say you will do nothing rashly, nor without due consideration.

*Eupb.* I am honoured by your friendship and confidence.—Adieu 'till next Thursday.

*Soph.* I shall reckon the hours 'till our next meeting.—Adieu!

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It hath bene through all ages ever scene,  
That with the praise of armes and chevalrie  
The prize of beautie fill hath ioyned bene,  
And that for reasons speciall privite;  
For either doth on other much relie:  
For he me seemes moft fit the faire to serve,  
That can her best defend from villenie,  
And she moft fit his service doth deserve,  
That fairest is, and from her faith will never swerve.

SPENSER'S Faery Queene. Book 4. Canto 5. Stanza 4.

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## EVENING XI.

*Hortensius, Sophronia, Euphrasia.*

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*Hort.* EVER since our last meeting I have been reflecting upon several things you said at that time; and I beg leave to make some remarks.

*Euph.* I will hear them most willingly, and endeavour to profit by them.

*Hort.* You excepted against compilations very justly, and you advised a method to prevent them. You wished to prevent long extracts of books being inserted in periodical publications:—did you mean that this prohibition should extend to the Reviewers?

*Euph.* By no means.—As the Censors of literature they ought to have an exclusive right to give extracts of every publication  
that

that deserves their recommendation: but I could wish this sovereign power were restrained within certain bounds.

*Hort.* In what respect?—You must depend upon their judgement and candour.

*Euph.* Certainly;—and you may appeal from their Sentence to the public at large.—I wish they could confine and limit their extracts to the compass of one *Monthly Review*; for it is not fair to skim off the cream of an Author's dairy, and leave only the dregs behind: or in other words, to gratify the reader's curiosity, and prevent his purchasing the book; and thus intercepting the reward of the Author's labours, which I believe happens frequently.

*Hort.* What you now say is very just, you would leave them perfectly free and unrestrained in their judgement, and only limit their extracts.

*Euph.* That is my wish in favour of all writers; whose property in their own works is already too much abridged by an arbitrary

decision of power, over literature and her offspring.

*Soph.* These remarks lead us from the prosecution of our subject.

*Hort.* Not entirely.—I must ask another question:—why should you finish your progress and retrospect here?—I see no reason why it should not be continued down to the present year.

*Euph.* I gave you my reasons at our Ninth meeting, and as we come nearer to the present time, they grow stronger.—I have brought my progress down to the close of the year 1770, which is just ten years lower than I at first intended.—It would be an invidious task to speak of the writers of the present day; let us leave them to the Reviewers, it is their province.—If they do not all the justice the Authors may think they deserve, let them appeal to the *public*, and to *time*, and trust to their impartiality, for their sentence will be just, and irreverfible.

*Hort.* You will not then fuffer your late publications to be mentioned, though they belong to your proper fubject?

*Euph.*

*Euph.* No certainly.—If they deferve to be remembered, I have no doubt they will furvive me: and if not, let them be forgotten.—You will now give me leave to read you my lift of Novels and Stories Original and uncommon. I have already enlarged upon fome of them.

*Tale of a Tub.*  
*Gulliver's Travels.* } by *Swift*.

*Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.*

*Patrick's Pilgrim.*

*Don Quixote*, by *Cervantes*.

*Modern Don Quixote*, by *Marivaux*.

*Robinson Crusoe*, by *Deſoe*.

*Gaudenzio di Lucca*, by *Bifhop Berkeley*.

*Peter Wilkins*.

*Voyage to the Moon*.

*Chryſal—or Adventures of a Guinea*.

*Reverie—or flight to the Paradife of Fools*.

*Arſaces, Prince of Betlis*.

These three laſt by the ſame Author, and all of the ſatyric kind.

*Life of John Buncke, Eſq.*

*John Buncke, jun. Eſq.*

D 3

*Triſtram*

*Tristram Shandy, Gent.*

*Life and Adventures of Common Sense.*

*Citizen of the World.*

*Pilgrim of China.*

*The Spiritual Quixote, an Antidote to Methodism.*

*The Castle of Otranto*—printed at Strawberry-Hill.—I have spoken largely of this work in a former publication of mine.

These are all of great merit in their kind, and of moral tendency.

*Soph.* You abridge now indeed, as you threatened to do.

*Euph.* It is time that I should bring my progress to a period, I have enlarged upon the most eminent works of the kind, and have given a general character of those last mentioned.

I shall next introduce another species of the same Genus of writing, which will make some variety in our progress.—I will lead you into enchanted palaces,—delicious gardens,—and endless labyrinths.—We will put ourselves under the protection of the good genii,  
and

and they will conduct us out of them by an invisible gate, where we shall find ourselves much forwarder, and have in view the place where we shall finish our journey.

*Soph.* I am pleased with the excursion of your fancy, I hope you will permit us to stop sometimes, and take a view of the curiosities of the places we pass through.

*Euph.* You must not tarry a long while any where, and there are very few of these places that will bear a close inspection.

*Hort.* I shall follow you as *Aeneas* did the *Sybil*, with the same confidence, that you will guide me through in safety.

*Euph.* The allusion is not amiss.—Oh that you could realize the golden bough!

*Hort.* I am afraid the tree does not grow in this country.

*Euph.* Yes it does, but is guarded by Hesperian dragons, and there are a thousand dangers and vexations in the way of those who adventure for the prize.—But this is trifling away time.



*Hort.* Let us then advance, and may you obtain the golden prize!

*Euph.* Here is my list and a few notes upon it.

TALES and FABLES ancient and modern.

You have doubtless read the fables of *Æsop*, *Pilpay*, and *Locman*—and imitations of them without end.—There is an opinion lately gone forth, that fables are improper for children. I shall not now investigate this subject, but it does not appear to me that those ages that were instructed by Fable and Allegory, were less virtuous than the present times are; and this *Criterion* will apply to many other kinds of writing besides that before us.

*Hort.* This is taking a short way of deciding an important question.

*Euph.* If it be a *certain* one, the shorter the better; if not it shall give place to a better.—Will you be the person to give it?

*Hort.* Not in this place,—it would interfere with our present business,—we will postpone the subject for the present, and beg of you to proceed with your allegorical fables.

*Euph.*

*Euph.* I do not presume to assert that they are absolutely the best, or the only method of instruction, but that they do not deserve to be despised or exploded.

Who spoke in *Parables* I need not say;—

But sure he knew it was a pleasant way,

Sound sense by plain examples to convey. DRYDEN.

There are many works of this kind, that are excellent and instructive, both in prose and verse.—I will mention briefly, *Gay's Fables*,—*Cotton's Visions*,—*Moore's Fables for the Female Sex*, &c.—But it requires a skilful hand to select books of this kind for youth, because there are many professedly written for this purpose that are very improper; and if books for youth are ill chosen they will do more harm than good. *Mr. Doddsley's Collection of Fables ancient and modern*, is the best that I know.

*Hort.* I agree with you in this point, and indeed in most others; and when I seem to oppose you, it is only to give you a *fillup*, and to make you exert yourself.—Nevertheless, I intend to have another contest with you before

I

I quit the field.—In the mean time I beg you to proceed.

*Euph.* Let us then take a brief survey of *Eastern Tales*, a class of no small extent. I have spoken largely of the *Arabian Nights Entertainment* as a work of Originality and Authenticity, and let me add of amusement. The great demand for this book, raised a swarm of imitations, most of which are of the French manufactory, as the *Persian Tales*—*Turkish Tales*—*Tartarian Tales*—*Chinese Tales*—*Peruvian Tales*—*Mogul Tales*—&c.

The stories of this kind are all wild and extravagant to the highest degree; they are indeed so far out of the bounds of Nature and probability, that it is difficult to judge of them by rules drawn from these sources.—It cannot be denied that some of them are amusing, and catch hold of the readers attention.

*Soph.* They do more than catch the attention, for they retain it.—There is a kind of fascination in them,—when once we begin a volume, we cannot lay it aside, but drive through

through to the end of it, and yet upon reflexion we despise and reject them.

*Hort.* They are certainly dangerous books for youth,—they create and encourage the wildest excursions of imagination, which it is, or ought to be, the care of parents and preceptors to restrain, and to give them a just and true representation of human nature, and of the duties and practice of common life.

*Euph.* You speak as if it was the general study of parents and teachers in our days to educate our youth to wisdom and virtue.—Is it not their ambition to make them knowing rather than wise, and fashionable rather than virtuous?—thus they are hackney'd in the ways of the world, and though ignorant of every thing that is really good and estimable, they are *old* before their days are half spent.

*Soph.* The books that are put into the hands of youth, do in a great measure direct their pursuits and determine their characters; it is therefore of the first consequence that they should be well chosen.—After the character



rafter is formed, books of entertainment may be recommended, and read with safety, and sometimes with advantage.

*Hort.* You do not mean to recommend any of the books last named?

*Euph.* I do not; and yet it will be well if young people read nothing worse.—The *Eastern Tales* have raised a vast number of imitations, and many readers are extremely fond of them.—Madame *D'Anois* was a famous composer of *Fairy Tales*,—she likewise wrote a Romance called *Hyppolitus Earl of Douglas*, which had then, and even now has its admirers, though it is as wild and improbable as the *Fairy Tales*, or *Eastern Fables*.—The *Count de Gabalis* may be reckoned among these excursions of a raised imagination.

I shall read you a list of some more modern works of the same kind.

*Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*—Dr. Johnson.

*Almorán and Hamet*—Hawkesworth.

*Soliman and Alméná*—Langborne

*Nourjabad*—Mrs. Sheridan.

*Mirza and Fatima, an Indian Tale.*

*Tales*

*Tales of the Genii.*

*The Persian Tales of Inatulla.*

*Miscellany of Eastern Learning.*

*Chinese Anecdotes.*

*Lessings Fables.*

*Abassai, an Eastern Story.*

*Loves of Othniel and Achsah.*—I do not pretend to give an opinion whether this strange book be ancient or modern, but there is reason to think it was written by a Jew.

*The Triumph of Reason over Fancy*—a fanciful story.

*The Visions, or enchanted Labyrinth*—of the same kind.

There are many other books of this class, but these are all within my knowledge that are worthy of mention.

There would be no end of reciting the names of these Tales.

*Hort.* There is something very pleasing in *Eastern Stories* well told. There was a passion at all times for story-telling in all the countries beyond the Levant.—I remember an incident in a book of travels that is a proof of the continuance of this custom.

The



The traveller had engaged himself to make a journey into Upper Egypt, without the knowledge and consent of his friends, in search of antiquities, and to carry on a traffic privately for precious stones.—The dangerous circumstances attending this negociation, and the other hazards he run of perishing in a barbarous country, affected his mind and disturbed his rest; he confessed to his friend and patron, that he suffered much from his inward agitations. His patron rallied him upon his want of resolution, and asked him if he had not yet learned the Turkish method of calming his mind?—The traveller thought he meant the use of opium or some drug of that kind, but he soon after called for a young man his servant, and ordered him to take up a book and read where he left off the night before,—the youth did as he was directed, and read a very pleasant story, to which the traveller was attentive, and found his mind relieved and comforted.—When the lad had done reading, his master raised many questions, and

and made remarks upon the story, and then spoke to his guest as follows:—"You see my friend, that we are not such Barbarians as many of the Franks believe us,—your people are extremely vain and conceited of their own customs, and yet provoked to see others tenacious of theirs; they laugh at our Turkish stories, and at this method of soothing our cares; yet I conceive that it is as natural and as innocent as gaming, or drinking great quantities of wine, which are your common diversions."—The traveller could not help admitting the truth of what he said, and observed, that it was strange that writers of Travels should censure the Turks and Moors for their passion for hearing Tales and Stories, when at the same time if this inclination did not prevail among Christians, their books could not be read at all."

*Eupb.* We are much obliged for your Story, which illustrates our subject,—I will produce another of the same kind. *M. de Guys* in his *Sentimental Journey through Greece*, takes notice of the same passion for tales and stories.

stories.—When a party of women met together they frequently entertained each other with telling a story in turn, which amusement is called *Paramythia*.—He describes some young girls at their needle-work, one of them says, “Come, let us have a party at the *Paramythia*, these pretty amusements will lighten our work.—I will tell you the fine Persian story my father taught me.”

*Soph.* In short the passion for tales and stories is common to all times, and all countries, and varies only according to the customs and manners of different people; and those who most affect to despise them under one form, will receive and admire them in another.

*Euph.* Nothing is more true, it is the selection of them, that makes them an innocent or a pernicious amusement.

I have now done with *Eastern Tales* and *Stories*.

*Hort.* May I then ask a question or two?

*Euph.* As many as you please.—We are now at a proper resting place.

*Hort.*

*Hort.* What is your opinion of *Offian's* works, and the *Erse* poetry?

*Euph.* You could not have asked me a more difficult question. I read Dr. *Johnson's* sentiments on this head, and was satisfied with his decision: but I have since read Mr. *Mc Nichol's Remarks upon Johnson's Tour*, and that overset all that the Doctor had said. There is something imperious and dogmatical in his manner of criticizing, and in the present case he seems to have wanted both judgment and candour.—On the other hand, *Mc Nichol* shews too much of bitterness and acrimony, and of the same national pride as he condemns in *Johnson*, but he appeals to facts and to living persons of character and veracity, and such evidence is not easily set aside.

*Hort.* I wish you would leave Dr. *Johnson* and Mr. *Mc Nichol* to settle their disputes between themselves, and give us your own opinion.

*Euph.* I ought first to shew you the grounds of my opinion, and to do that I must relate another curious circumstance.

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