

generically one; masters, each in his own sphere, not simply of the art of exhibiting character in the truth of nature, — for that a Hume or a Tacitus may possess, — but of the rarer and more difficult *dramatic* art of making characters exhibit themselves. It is not uninteresting to remark how the peculiar ability of portraying character in this form is so exactly proportioned to the general intellectual power of the writer who possesses it. No dramatist, whatever he may attempt, ever draws taller men than himself: as water in a bent tube rises to exactly the same height in the two limbs, so intellect in the character produced rises to but the level of the intellect of the producer. Milton's fiends, with all their terrible strength and sublimity, are but duplicates of the Miltonic intellect united to vitiated moral natures; nor does that august and adorable Being, who perhaps should not have been *dramatically* introduced into even the "Paradise Lost," excel as an intelligence the too daring poet by whom he is exhibited. Viewed with reference to this simple rule, the higher characters of Scott, Dickens, and Shakspeare, curiously indicate the intellectual stature of the men who produced them. Scott's higher characters possess massive good sense, great shrewdness, much intelligence: they are always very superior, if not always great men; and by a careful arrangement of drapery, and much study of position and attitude, they play their parts wonderfully well. The higher characters of Dickens do not stand by any means so high; the fluid in the original tube rests at a lower level: and no one seems better aware of the fact than Dickens himself. He knows his proper walk; and, content with expatiating in a comparatively humble province of human life and character, rarely stands on tiptoe, in the vain attempt to portray an intellect taller than his own. The intellectual stature of Shakspeare rises, on the other hand, to the highest level of