Lord Macaulay’s strong partisan feeling and manifold deficiencies in judgment and temper naturally prepared us for some characteristic exhibitions in the revelations from his diary which his biographer has favoured us with, in the very interesting Life just published. Thus we find, without much surprise, amongst the ancients, Diodorus Siculus styled “a stupid, credulous, prosing old ass,” and that “there is an immense quantity of rant in Velleius Paterculus”; amongst the moderns, that Joseph Milner was “a stupid beast,” John Whitaker “a dirty cur,” Bishop Burgess “an impenetrable dunce,” Hugh Blair “a poor creature”; the Life of him “a stupid book, by a stupid man, of a stupid man”; Haydon “as poor, commonplace a creature as any in the world”; Wordsworth’s Prelude “an endless wilderness of dull, flat, prosaic twaddle”; Chateaubriand “simply a great humbug”; Dr Wordsworth, Master of Trinity, charged with “unutterable baseness and dirtiness”; and John Wilson Croker, one of the original pillars of Notes and Queries, styled “a bad, a very bad man, a scandal to politics and to letters.” All this from Lord Macaulay does not astonish us, considering who the parties were to whom he refers, and that he was emphatically a good hater. But surely, if not Defoe’s genius and sufferings, his loyalty to William III and political merits might have entitled him, as a writer and a man, to fairer and more impartial treatment than he has received in the extract given in page 455 of Volume II of the Life. I can imagine Macaulay, in a colloquial conflict across the table, giving vent to such petulant and unworthy criticisms in the heat of discussion, according to his habit of depressing the scale on the one side in the same proportion as he thought it was unduly exalted on the other; and I can imagine the tones in which they would be uttered, and, in all probability, the party against whom they would be launched; but it is quite a different matter when they assume the form of his deliberate opinions. This is, however, not the place to examine Lord Macaulay’s criticisms in detail if indeed they are worth examination, as they go into the whole question of Defoe’s works and character. I merely wish at present to propound a query on what his lordship states not as an opinion only, but as a fact : “Some of his tracts are worse than immoral, quite beastly.” Now, what tracts are these? I think I have given as much time and attention to Defoe’s works as most people, but I know of no such pieces of his. Has not the critic mistaken Ned Ward for Defoe, in whose writings I never understood him to be thoroughly versed? He can scarcely mean to refer to the treatise - not a tract, but a book - on the marriage bed, which, saving the peculiarity of the title, has nothing in it which can disgust or offend the feelings of any honest man or sincere Christian.

James Crossley