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Compiled by MRS. WILLIAM SHARP (In two volumes)

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

PAPERS CRITICAL & REMINISCENT

BY WILLIAM SHARP

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MRS. WILLIAM SHARP

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ON MATTHEW ARNOLD

WHEN Matthew Arnold died, one of the greatest of his contemporaries said of him, "There goes our last Greek."

In the sense in which it was uttered, the saying was singularly apt. The most English of Englishmen was, in his genius recognisably, in his temperament distinctively, and in his natural outlook upon the essential aspects, conditions, and facts of life, Hellenic. Nevertheless, Arnold is, in the narrow interpretation, pre-eminently the typical English writer of our century. There are three great groups into which British authors segregate: the distinctively Anglo-Saxon, the distinctively Anglo-Celtic, and the distinctively English. The third is but the parochial part of the first: the disengaged, the national in the strictly local and limited sense. In our own day Matthew Arnold is its foremost representative. Robert Browning, William Morris, and Thomas Hardy are typical exponents of the first; Alfred Tennyson, Algernon Charles

Swinburne, and George Meredith, of the second. Of the third there are few eminent, though innumerable minor, exemplars. The point of view is here of less importance than the approach. No one could have a saner, a more serene, a wider outlook than Arnold had. It was in the method of his approach to his subjects that he displayed how merely temperamental was his Hellenism, how accidental his inclination towards the poles of Athens and Paris, how saturated with nationality his nature.

The poet, the high-priest of Culture, the interpreter, the critic of literature and thought, the educationist, the politician: Matthew Arnold was all these. As a politician, in other than the parliamentary sense, and as an interested observer in the science of contemporary sociology, his insight was notably deficient and his point of view parochial rather than imperial. In all his best work the poet in him came to the rescue of "the son of Dr. Arnold": as, in his life as a man, the innate Matthew Arnold habitually revealed itself through his crust of caste-prejudice and family-pride. He was made up of contradictions as are all strongly individual natures. It would be difficult, for example, to indicate

any great writer of our time less likely to understand the depth and potency of the Celtic element in our national life. Yet, we are confronted by the fact that it was Matthew Arnold who first disclosed to his countrymen not only the beauty and the charm of Celtic literature, but the need of a more intimate understanding of, a livelier sympathy with, Celtic life and thought. Here we have the poet: whose functions, as ever, are those of the seer and interpreter as well as of the singer. It was not the outer, the accidental Matthew Arnold, but the man of genius—child of the land where there is no nationality—who saw in a flash, from a leading article in the *Times* in disparagement of the Celtic idea, that here, in the prevalent unimaginative insularity of mind and judgment, lies our real difficulty in the government of Ireland.

The time has not yet come for a proper estimate of the prose writings and influence of Matthew Arnold. It is more than likely that much of his argumentative work will be found to be of its time and for its time only: and that of his many critical and interpretative studies only those which deal with literature *per se*, and pre-eminently the Celtic Essay, will survive. He was, above

all else—that is, as an essayist—an illumin ator. In this respect he was more akin to Renan than to his acknowledged master, Sainte-Beuve. Sainte-Beuve's strength lies in analysis and exposition. Renan's in synthesis and illumination. It was to Renan, moreover, that he owed his sudden and vivid interest in Celtic literature: so that, indirectly, it is to Ernest Renan we are indebted for the famous Celtic Essay, that unmistakable offspring of *La Poésie des Races Celtiques*. Renan's essay in France and Germany, and Matthew Arnold's in this country and in America, were the torches which have lit so many Celtic brands, or, let us say, were the two winds which fanned the Celtic flame which is now one of the most potent influences in contemporary literature. The mainsprings of contemporary Celticism (apart from philology) are in Macpherson's Ossian and in the Mabinogion of Lady Charlotte Guest; but the influence of these was waning, along with the great romantic movement which they had helped to inspire or sustain, when, in France, *La Poésie des Races Celtiques* appeared, and, about ten years later, in England, Matthew Arnold's famous essay.

Arnold's prose writings are familiar to all

lovers of literature for their lucidity of thought, their pure and limpid style, and their distinctive charm. Whether or not they become part of enduring literature, this is certain: that their influence has been, and probably will continue to be, one of profound value. Arnold's moderation, sanity, reticence, and dignity, with his sunny geniality, render him an invaluable model. He will, for his fellow-craftsmen at any rate, and indeed for all who love literature, remain one of the most tonic writers of the Victorian age.

The Celtic essay, however, is of particular interest: for here is the prose-bridge which leads us to the poetry of Matthew Arnold. All lovers of poetry know the remoteness of Arnold from "that diviner air that poets breathe," in his appreciations of Keats and Shelley: but here, certainly, we recognise in what Dryden calls "the other harmony," the voice which we listen to with so much pleasure when it comes vivid in music and light—the voice that began with the haunting strains of *The Strayed Reveller* and closed in the anthem-tones of a noble ode.

The news of Matthew Arnold's death caused a thrill of poignant regret, not only throughout these islands, but among all

English-speaking peoples. As a literary and philosophical critic he had so long been one of the most familiar figures in our midst, he had so greatly moulded and influenced the finer minds of two generations, and he had so identified himself with the great conservative movement—for such it really was—of culture *versus* radically democratic tendencies, that to many it seemed as if the helmsman had left the vessel which he, and he alone, had been able skilfully to pilot. And yet Matthew Arnold was not in the truest sense a popular man. He did not influence, and never could have influenced, the mass of the people. He wished to be a social regenerator, but, consciously or unconsciously, he always stood aloof from, always showed his superiority to, those whom he wished to help and uplift. Two or three years before his death he received a letter from a working man, in which it was pointed out to him that the reason why his words received so little attention among the masses, the reason why his gospel of "sweetness and light" was so much ignored, was that both man and gospel seemed too far removed from common humanity. The author of *Culture and Anarchy* could not see this. He had always been so keenly

interested in everything appertaining to the welfare of his species that to be told he was a mere *doctrinaire* was something he did not at all relish. But he wrote to his correspondent, and assured him that he was mistaken, adding for himself that the longer he lived, and the more he thought over the problems of life, the more fully he recognised that the aims of democracy were futile and its methods harmful, and that the only hope of the elevation of the masses, as the hackneyed phrase runs, lay in a gradual growth of culture. Arnold omitted to explain what he meant by culture, and probably his correspondent remained as much in the dark as before. This omission was very characteristic of the man. He was ever addicted to over-confidence in, to self-satisfaction with, words which he stamped more or less with a special significance of his own—"culture," "sweetness," "light," "Philistine," and the like. He was unable, latterly at any rate, to perceive that "Culture" was a mere empty shibboleth to many people. He hoped and believed that it had all the magic properties of "Open Sesame." To him it meant so much, embraced so much, that he could not understand how it could to some signify nothing

in particular—perhaps at most a good general education. It was this intellectual aloofness, combined with the always perceptible keenly critical spirit, and the prevailing conception of him as a serene but unenthusiastic mentor, that made him admired more than loved. Henry James, however, has given expression (I think while Matthew Arnold was alive) to the views of his more ardent admirers. "They owe," he says—and by "they" he means all discreet and discriminating lovers of contemporary literature—"they owe a debt of gratitude for his admirable example, for having placed the standard of successful expression, of literary feeling and good manners, so high. They never tire of him—they read him again and again. They think the wit and humour of *Friendship's Garland* the most delicate possible, the luminosity of *Culture and Anarchy* almost dazzling, the eloquence of such a paper as the article on Lord Falkland in the *Mixed Essays* irresistible. They find him, in a word, more than any one else, the happily proportioned, the truly distinguished man of letters. When there is a question of his efficacy, his influence, it seems to me enough to ask one's self what we should have done without him,

to think how much we should have missed him, and how he has salted and seasoned our public conversation. In his absence the whole tone of discussion would have seemed more stupid, more literal. Without his irony to play over its surface, to clip it here and there of its occasional fustiness, the life of our Anglo-Saxon race would present a much greater appearance of insensibility."

Having quoted from Henry James, I am tempted to quote further, and select this fine and just estimate of Arnold as a poet :

"Splendour, music, passion, breadth of movement and rhythm, we find in him in no great abundance ; what we do find is high distinction of feeling (to use his own word), a temperance, a kind of modesty of expression, which is at the same time an artistic resource—the complexion of his work ; and a remarkable faculty for touching the chords which connect our feelings with the things that others have done and spoken. In other words, though there is in Mr. Arnold's poems a constant reference to nature, or to Wordsworth, which is almost the same thing (*sic !*), there is even a more implicit reference to civilisation, literature, and the intellectual experience of man. He is the

poet of the man of culture, that accomplished being whom he long ago held up for our consideration. Above all, he is the poet of his age, of the moment in which we live, of our "modernity," as the new school of criticism in France gives us perhaps licence to say. When he speaks of the past, it is with the knowledge which only our own time has of it. With its cultivated simplicity, its aversion to cheap ornament, its slight abuse of meagreness for distinction's sake, his verse has a kind of minor magic and always goes to the point—the particular ache, or regret, or conjecture, to which poetry is supposed to address itself. It rests the mind, after a good deal of the other poetical work of the day—it rests the mind, and I think I may add that it nourishes it."

Certainly, his indirect influence—generally in the instance of great writers, more potent than a more immediate one—has been almost incalculable. Through other intellects, by channels innumerable, he materially helped to mould contemporary thought, not only in matters literary, but in social ethics and religion. No other critic, and perhaps few poets save Wordsworth and Coleridge, have so fully realised and endorsed the observation of Aristotle, that "the superiority of

poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness."

"The breath and finer spirit of all knowledge": that is what Wordsworth called poetry, and what Matthew Arnold quotes with keen appreciation, in a famous essay. But Arnold speaks even more emphatically than Wordsworth: he claims for poetry a supreme destiny as well as a high function —"the spirit of comfort for the coming generations." The future of poetry, he wrote, is immense,* "because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry. . . .

* In his General Introduction to Ward's *English Poets.*

Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry 'the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science,' and what is a countenance without its expression? . . . The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize 'the breath and finer spirit of knowledge' offered to us by poetry."

Again, in his beautiful essay on *Maurice de Guérin*, he remarks: "Poetry interprets in two ways: it interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outer world, and it interprets by expressing, with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature. In other words, poetry is interpretative both by having natural magic in it, and by having moral profundity."

Broadly speaking, Matthew Arnold is an interpreter of the moral order rather than of the outer beauty of the world. His poetry

does not wholly lack natural magic: on the contrary it lives and will live by its magic, its "minor magic," as Henry James calls it—but it is the magic of a brain mirroring a perfect flame, rather than itself aflame. There are times when he is all poet; when the thought in the mind, and the atmosphere of the thought, and the expression of the thought, are at once rhythmic and irradiate in that white light of the mind wherein the misapprehended realities of the commonplace become the glowing and convincing realities of the imagination. On the whole, however, Arnold's kinship is not with Keats, with Coleridge, or with Shelley, but with Wordsworth. He is of those who are informed by the wonder and the mystery of life, rather than of those who transform the physiognomy of common life to an expression of mystery and wonder. But throughout all his work in verse a noble spirit pervades: a spirit that loves measure and reserve, and prefers cool words to words of flame. If, sometimes; if, often, we miss the fire, and are dazzled only by a brilliant and wonderful reflection, we are seldom if ever misled by mere artificial blaze. Not his, to quote Dryden's fine line, a "manhood long misled by wandering fires."

Dignity, serenity; a quiet music, an occasional poignant cry, a rare sudden break into magical indeliberate song, all this we find in his poetry. He is of the great ones of our time, but by virtue of his lofty poetic sanity rather than by his music or his natural magic. Needless to recall the many passages in his poems which seem to controvert this. All lovers of his poetry can adduce example after example. It is high praise of any poet to say that we cannot imagine the concert of the singers of his age complete without him: and this, certainly, may be said of Arnold. We cannot now, in the realm of the imagination, conceive the Victorian epoch, without the author of some of the deepest and most beautiful utterances of any poet of our time. He is, however, rather an impassioned Marcus Aurelius than a Catullus or a Heine, than a Keats or a Shelley or a Burns. And, after all, Matthew Arnold would certainly have chosen to be a Marcus Aurelius, wrought by poetic vision and emotion to poetic music, rather than to be a Heine or a Shelley or a Burns. Nor is there any disparagement in this: it is simply a statement, which he would have been the first to accept. For with him the moral basis of poetry was an inalienable

necessity : to sing out of ecstasy of joy or pain was not enough : not only must moral law be the central fire, but the poet himself must be innately attuned to his own high music. Alas, he found Keats, and Shelley, and Burns wanting : not discerning, for all his wisdom and apostolic serenity, that these " faithful failures " came nearer, both as men and poets, to the Burning Bush wherefrom leaps to genius the immortal flame, than all the strenuous and wise folk whose feet have gone not astray. If, oftener, he had himself been a strayed reveller ! Then, oftener, we should have had the wilder, sweeter note we hear in

Not here, O Apollo,
Are haunts meet for thee :
But, where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea——

Yet it is needful to remember that in the sphere of poetry, as in the domain of the spiritual, " in my Father's house are many mansions." It is Matthew Arnold's distinction, that his is one of the most vigorous and beautiful minds that, finding expression in rhythmic beauty, have confronted the narrowing horizons of life : that he confronts them with fearlesss outlook, with noble resignation, with an austere hopefulness

which, to many scarce worth the sacrificial pain wherewith that remnant is won or maintained, is at least sanely measured and sanely controlled.

Distinction ; that is the paramount quality of the poetry of Matthew Arnold. By virtue of this rarest essence his work will live, when, mayhap, the more flamboyant, the more impulsive, the more perilously alive work of some of his greatest contemporaries shall slowly pass into a long sleep wherein the once quick pulse shall seem fainter and fainter, and at last the heart-throb be no longer audible.

Of this quality, as he remarks in his essay on Eugénie de Guérin, the world is impatient. " It chafes against it, rails at it, insults it, hates it ;—it ends by receiving its influence, and by undergoing its law. This quality at last inexorably corrects the world's blunders, and fixes the world's ideals. It procures that the popular poet shall not finally pass for a Pindar, nor the popular historian for a Tacitus, nor the popular preacher for a Bossuet. To the circle of spirits marked by this rare quality, Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin belong ; they will ake their place in the sky which these

inhabit, and shine close to one another, *lucida sidera*." Among these shining stars, set where the constellations flame with a whiter light, is the rare and fine spirit who wrote these lines.

1896

ROBERT BROWNING

On the night of Browning's death a new star suddenly appeared in Orion. The coincidence is suggestive if we like to indulge in the fancy that in that constellation—

> *No more subjected to the change or chance*
> *Of the unsteady planets——*

gleam those other "abodes where the Immortals are." Certainly, a wandering fire has passed away from us. Is the flame of genius quenched by death, or does it burn elsewhere? Does it live still in the myriad conflagrations it has litten?

Such questions cannot meanwhile be solved. Our eyes are still confused with the light, with that ardent flame, as we knew it here. But this we know, it was indeed "a central fire descending upon many altars." These, though touched with but a spark of the immortal principle, bear enduring testimony. And what testimony! How heartfelt: happily also how widespread, how stimulative!

But the time must come when the poet's personality will have the remoteness of tradition: when our perplexed judgments will be as a tale of sound and fury, signifying nothing. It is impossible for any student of literature, for any interested reader, not to indulge in some forecast as to what rank in the poetic hierarchy Robert Browning will ultimately occupy. The commonplace as to the impossibility of prognosticating the ultimate slow decadence, or slower rise, or, it may be, sustained suspension, of a poet's fame, is often insincere, and but an excuse of indolence. To dogmatise were the height of presumption as well as of folly: but to forego speculation, based upon complete present knowledge, for an idle contentment with narrow horizons, were perhaps foolisher still. But assuredly each must perforce be content with his own prevision. None can answer yet for the generality, whose decisive franchise will elect a fit arbiter in due time.

When Browning's enormous influence upon the spiritual and mental life of our day—an influence ever shaping itself to wise and beautiful issues—shall have lost much of its immediate import, there surely always will be discerned in his work a formative energy

whose resultant is pure poetic gain. It is as the poet he will live: not merely as the "novel thinker in verse." Logically, his attitude as "thinker" is unimpressive. It is the attitude, as I think some one has pointed out, of acquiescence with codified morality. In one of his *Causeries*, the keen French critic Sainte-Beuve has a remark upon the great Bossuet, which may with singular aptness be repeated of Browning: "His is the Hebrew genius extended, fecundated by Christianity, and open to all the acquisitions of the understanding, but retaining some degree of sovereign interdiction, and closing its vast horizon precisely where its light ceases." Browning cannot, or will not, face the problem of the future except from the basis of assured continuity of individual existence. He is so much in love with life, for life's sake, that he cannot even credit the possibility of incontinuity; his assurance of eternity in another world is at least in part due to his despair at not being eternal in this. He is so sure, that the intellectually scrupulous detect the odours of hypotheses amid the sweet savour of indestructible assurance. Schopenhauer says, in one of those recently found Annotations of his which are so

characteristic and so acute, "that which is called 'mathematical certainty' is the cane of a blind man without a dog, or equilibrium in darkness." Browning would sometimes have us accept the evidence of his "cane" as all-sufficient. He does not entrench himself among conventions: for he already finds himself within the fortified lines of convention, and remains there. Thus is true what Mr. Mortimer says in an admirable critique: "His position in regard to the thought of the age is paradoxical, if not inconsistent. He is in advance of it in every respect but one, the most important of all, the matter of fundamental principles; in these he is behind it. His processes of thought are often scientific in their precision of analysis; the sudden conclusion which he imposes upon them is transcendental and inept." Browning's conclusions, which harmonise so well with our haphazard previsionings, are sometimes so disastrously facile that they exercise an insurrectionary influence. They occasionally suggest that wisdom of Gotham which is ever ready to postulate the certainty of a fulfilment because of the existence of a desire. It is this that vitiates so much of his poetic reasoning.

Truth may ring regnant in the lines of Abt Vogler :

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days ?

but, unfortunately, the conclusion is, in itself, illogical.

Most fervently Browning believed that

Haply for us the ideal dawn shall break . . .
And set our pulse in tune with moods divine—

though co-equally, in the necessity of "making man sole sponsor of himself." He had that profound inquietude which Sainte-Beuve says "attests a moral nature of high rank, and a mental nature stamped with the zeal of an archangel" ; but he saw, believed in, held to nothing short of the return movement, for one and all, "towards an illustrious origin."

It seems but a day or two ago that the present writer heard from the lips of the dead poet a mockery of death's vanity—a brave assertion of the glory of life. "Death, death ! It is this harping on death I despise so much," he remarked with emphasis of gesture as well as of speech,—"this idle and often cowardly as well as ignorant harping ! Why should we not change like

everything else? In fiction, in poetry, in so much of both, French as well as English, and, I am told, in American art and literature, the shadow of death—call it what you will, despair, negation, indifference—is upon us. But what fools who talk thus! Why, *amico mio*, you know as well as I that death is life, just as our daily, our momentarily dying body is none the less alive and ever recruiting new forces of existence. Without death, which is our crapy, churchyardy word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of that which we call life. Pshaw! it is foolish to argue upon such a thing even. For myself I deny death as an end of everything. Never say of me that I am dead!"

Browning's habitual outlook towards Death as the Gate of Life is not a novel one. The attitude is not so much that of the daring pioneer as the sedate assurance of "the oldest inhabitant." It is of good hap, of welcome significance: none the less there is an aspect of our mortality of which the poet's evasion is uncompromising and absolute. I cannot do better than quote Mr. Mortimer's noteworthy words hereupon, in connection, moreover, with Browning's artistic relation to Sex, that other great Protagonist in the

relentless duel of Humanity with Circumstance. "The final inductive hazard he declines for himself; his readers may take it if they will. It is part of the insistent and perverse ingenuity which we display in masking with illusion the more disturbing elements of life. Veil after veil is torn down, but seldom before another has been slipped behind it, until we acquiesce without a murmur in the concealment that we ourselves have made. Two facts thus carefully shrouded from full vision by elaborate illusion conspicuously round in our lives—the life-giving and life-destroying elements, Sex and Death. We are compelled to occasional physiologic and economic discussion of the one, but we shrink from recognising the full extent to which it bases the whole social fabric, carefully concealing its insurrections, and ignoring or misreading their lessons. The other, in certain aspects, we are compelled to face, but to do it we tipple on illusions, from our cradle upwards, in dread of the coming grave, purchasing a drug for our poltroonery at the expense of our sanity. We uphold our wayward steps with the promises and the commandments for crutches, but on either side of us trudge the shadow Death and the bacchanal Sex,

and we mumble prayers against the one, while we scourge ourselves for leering at the other. On one only of these can Browning be said to have spoken with novel force—the relations of sex, which he has treated with a subtlety and freedom, and often with a beauty, unapproached since Goethe. On the problem of Death, except in masquerade of robes and wings, his eupeptic temperament never allowed him to dwell. He sentimentalised where Shakespeare thought." Browning's whole attitude to the Hereafter is different from that of Tennyson only in that the latter "faintly," while he strenuously "trusts the larger hope." To him all credit, that, standing upon the frontiers of the Past, he can implicitly trust the Future.

High-hearted surely he ;
But bolder they who first off-cast
Their moorings from the habitable Past.

The teacher may be forgotten, the prophet may be hearkened to no more, but a great poet's utterance is never temporal, having that in it which conserves it against the antagonism of time, and the ebb and flow of literary ideals. What range, what extent of genius! As Frederick Wedmore has

well said, "Browning is not a book—he is a literature."

But that he will "stand out gigantic" in *mass* of imperishable work, in that far-off day, is not so readily credible. His poetic shortcomings seem too essential to permit of this. That fatal excess of cold over emotive thought, of thought that, however profound, incisive, or scrupulously clear, is not yet impassioned, is a fundamental defect of his. It is the very impetuosity of this mental energy to which is due the miscalled obscurity of much of Browning's work—miscalled, because, however remote in his allusions, however pedantic even, he is never obscure in his thought. His is that "palace infinite which darkens with excess of light." But mere excess in itself is nothing more than symptomatic. Browning has suffered more from intellectual exploitation than any writer. It is a ruinous process—for the poet. "He so well repays intelligent study." That is it, unfortunately. There are many, like the old Scotch lady who attempted to read Carlyle's *French Revolution*, who think they have become "daft" when they encounter a passage such as, for example,

Rivals, who . . .
Turned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
'As knops that stud some almug to the pith
'Prickèd for gum, wry thence, and crinklèd worse
'Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse
'Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breeze—
Gad-fly, *that is.*

The old lady persevered with Carlyle, and, after a few days, found "she was nae sae daft, but that she had tackled a varra dee-fee-cult author." What would even that indomitable student have said to the above quotation, and to the poem whence it comes? To many it is not the poetry, but the difficulties, that are the attraction. They rejoice, after long and frequent dippings, to find their plummet, almost lost in remote depths, touch bottom. Enough "meaning" has been educed from *Childe Roland*, to cite but one instance, to start a School of Philosophy with: though it happens that the poem is an imaginative fantasy, written in one day. Worse still, it was not inspired by the mystery of existence, but by "a red horse with a glaring eye standing behind a dun one on a piece of tapestry that used to hang in the poet's

drawing-room." * Of all his faults, however, the worst is that jugglery, that inferior legerdemain, with the elements of the beautiful in verse; most obvious in *Sordello*, in portions of *The Ring and the Book*, and in so many of the later poems. There are, in poetry, in any art, faults which are like the larvæ within certain vegetable growths: soon or late they will destroy their environment, before they perish themselves. Browning, though so pre-eminent in that science of the percipient in the allied arts of painting and music, wherein he found the unconventional Shelley so missuaded by convention, seemed ever more alert to the substance than to the manner of poetry. In a letter of Mrs. Browning's she alludes to a friend's "melodious feeling" for poetry. Possibly the phrase was accidental, but it is significant. To inhale the vital air of poetry we must love it, not merely find it "interesting," "suggestive," "soothing," "stimulative": in a word, we must have a "melodious feeling" for poetry before we can deeply

* One account says *Childe Roland* was written in three days; another, that it was composed in one. Browning's rapidity in composition was extraordinary. *The Return of the Druses* was written in five days, an act a day; so, also, was the *Blot on the 'Scutcheon.*

enjoy it. Browning, who has so often compelled from his lyre melodies and harmonies of transcendent, though novel, beauty, was too frequently, during composition, without this melodious feeling of which his wife speaks. The distinction between literary types such as Browning or Balzac on the one hand, and Keats or Gustave Flaubert on the other, is that with the former there exists a reverence for the vocation and a relative indifference to the means, in themselves—and, with the latter, a scrupulous respect for the mere means as well as for that to which they conduce. The poet who does not love words for themselves, as an artist loves any chance colour upon his palette, or as the musician any vagrant tone evoked by a sudden touch in idleness or reverie, has not entered into the full inheritance of the sons of Apollo. The writer cannot aim at beauty, that which makes literature and art, without this heed—without, rather, this creative anxiety: for it is certainly not enough, as some one has said, that language should be used merely for the transportation of intelligence, as a wheelbarrow carries brick. Of course, Browning is not persistently neglectful of this fundamental necessity for

the literary artist. He is often as masterly in this as in other respects. But he is not always, not often enough, alive to the paramount need. He writes with "the verse being as the mood it paints": but, unfortunately, the mood is often poetically unformative. He had no passion for the quest for seductive forms. Too much of his poetry has been born prematurely. Too much of it, indeed, has not died and been born again—for all immortal verse is a poetic resurrection. Perfect poetry is the deathless part of mortal beauty. The great artists never perpetuate gross actualities, though they are the supreme realists. It is Schiller, I think, who says, in effect, that to live again in the serene beauty of art, it is needful that things should first die in reality. Thus Browning's dramatic method, even, is sometimes disastrous in its untruth, as in Caliban's analytical reasoning—an initial absurdity, as Mr. Berdoe has pointed out, adding epigrammatically, "Caliban is a savage, with the introspective powers of a Hamlet, and the theology of an evangelical Churchman." Not only Caliban, but several other of Browning's personages (Aprile, Eglamour, &c.) are what Goethe calls *schwankende Gestalten*, mere "wavering images."

Montaigne, in one of his essays, says that to stop gracefully is sure proof of high race in a horse: certainly to stop in time is imperative upon the poet. Of Browning may be said what Poe wrote of another, that his genius was too impetuous for the minuter technicalities of that elaborate *art* so needful in the building up of monuments for immortality. But has not a greater than Poe declared that "what distinguishes the artist from the amateur is *architectonikê* in the highest sense; that power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration." Assuredly, no "new definition" can be an effective one which conflicts with Goethe's incontrovertible dictum.

But this much having been admitted, I am only too willing to protest against the uncritical outcry against Browning's musical incapacity.

A deficiency is not incapacity, otherwise Coleridge, at his highest the most perfect of our poets, would be lowly estimated.

Bid shine what would, dismiss into the shade
What should not be—and there triumphs the paramount
Surprise o' the master. . . .

Browning's music is oftener harmonic than melodic: and musicians know how the general ear, charmed with immediate appellant melodies, resents, wearies of, or is deaf to the harmonies of a more remote, a more complex, and above all a more novel creative method. He is, among poets, what Wagner is among musicians; as Shakespeare may be likened to Beethoven, or Shelley to Chopin. The common assertion as to his incapacity for metric music is on the level of those affirmations as to his not being widely accepted of the people, when the people have the chance; or as to the indifference of the public to poetry generally —and this in an age when poetry has never been so widely understood, loved, and valued, and wherein it is yearly growing more acceptable and more potent!

A great writer is to be adjudged by his triumphs, not by his failures: as, to take up Montaigne's simile again, a famous racehorse is remembered for its successes and not for the races which it lost. The tendency with certain critics is to reverse the process. Instead of saying with the archbishop in Horne's *Gregory VII.*, "He owes it all to his Memnonian voice! He has no genius:" or of declaring, as Prospero says of Caliban

in *The Tempest*, "He is as disproportioned in his manners as in his shape:" how much better to affirm of him what Ben Jonson wrote of Shakespeare: "Hee redeemed his vices with his vertues: there was ever more in him to bee praysed than to bee pardoned." In the balance of triumphs and failures, however, is to be sought the relative measure of genius—whose equipoise should be the first matter of ascertainment in comparative criticism.

For those who would discriminate between what Mr. Traill succinctly terms his *generic* greatness as thinker and man of letters, and his *specific* power as poet, it is necessary to disabuse the mind of Browning's "message." The question is not one of weighty message, but of artistic presentation. To praise a poem because of its optimism is like commending a peach because it loves the sunshine, rather than because of its distinguishing bloom and savour. The primary concern of the artist must be with his vehicle of expression. In the instance of a poet, this vehicle is language emotioned to the white-heat of rhythmic music by impassioned thought or sensation. Schopenhauer declares it is all a question of style how with poetry; that everything has been

sung, that everything has been duly cursed, that there is nothing left for poetry but to be the glowing forge of words. He forgets that in quintessential art there is nothing of the past, nothing old: even the future has part therein only in that the present is always encroaching upon, becoming, the future. The famous pessimistic philosopher has, in common with other critics, made, in effect, the same remark—that Style exhales the odour of the soul: yet he himself has indicated that the strength of Shakespeare lay in the fact that "he had no taste," that "he was not a man of letters." Whenever genius has displayed epic force it has established a new order. In the general disintegration and reconstruction of literary ideals thus involved, it is easier to be confused by the novel flashing of strange lights than to discern the central vivifying altar-flame. It may prove that what seem to us the regrettable accidents of Browning's genius are no malfortunate flaws, but as germane thereto as his Herculean ruggednesses are to Shakespeare, as the laboured inversions of his blank verse are to Milton, as his austere concision is to Dante. Meanwhile, to the more exigent among us at any rate, the flaws seem flaws, and in nowise essential.

But when we find weighty message and noble utterance in union, as we do in the magnificent remainder after even the severest ablation of the poor and mediocre portion of of Browning's life-work, how beneficent seem the generous gods ! Of this remainder most aptly may be quoted these lines from *The Ring and the Book,*

> *Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore ;*
> *Prime nature with an added artistry.*

How gladly, in this dubious hour—when, as an eminent writer has phrased it, a lossal Hand, which some call the hand Destiny and others that of Humanity, putting out the lights of Heaven one by ıe, like candles after a feast—how gladly ′e listen to this poet with his serene faith ın God, and immortal life, and the soul's unending development ! " Hope hard in the subtle thing that's Spirit," he cries in the Prologue to *Pacchiarotto ;* and this, in manifold phrasing, is his *leit-motif,* his fundamental idea, in unbroken line from the *Pauline* of his twenty-first to the *Asolando* of his seventy-sixth year. This superb phalanx of faith—what shall prevail against it ?

How winsome it is, moreover : this, and

how winsome the humanity of his song. Profoundly he realised that there is no more significant study than the human heart. "The development of a soul: little else is worth study," he wrote in his preface to *Sordello;* so in his old age, in his last *Reverie:*

As the record from youth to age
Of my own, the single soul—
So the world's wide book: one page
Deciphered explains the whole
Of our common heritage.

He had faith also that "the record from youth to age" of his own soul would outl[a]st any present indifference or neglect—th[at] whatever tide might bear him away fro[m] our regard for a time would ere long flo[w] again. The reaction must come: it i[s] indeed, already at hand. But one almos[t] fancies one can hear the gathering of the remote waters once more. We may, with Strafford,

feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
That Time will do me right. . . .

Indeed, Browning has the grand manner for all it is more that of the Scandinavi[an]

Jarl than of the Italian count or Spanish grandee.

And ever, below all the stress and failure, below all the triumph of his toil, is the beauty of his dream. It was "a surpassing Spirit" that went from out our midst:

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

1890

ROSSETTI IN PROSE AND VERSE

THE most objective author is certain, somewhere or other throughout his writings, to afford at least a glimpse of self-portraiture to the reader—some illuminative "aside" which, whether as from the writer himself or uttered by some fictitious personage, is all-revealing. In a sense, certain poets are independent of biographies, which in some instances merely serve the purpose of anecdotal narratives. Shelley, Byron, Alfred de Musset, Leopardi, Omar Khayyam, Horace—in a lesser degree Keats, Heine, and Victor Hugo—stand revealed to us in their own writings. And pre-eminently to this order of poets does Rossetti belong. Not one of his biographers will lead us so deeply into his secret as he does himself. What any appreciative friend or critic may say of this writer's nature and temperament, we are fairly sure to find already plainly manifest in his own words. Herein lies one of the most attractive characteristics of the poetry of the author

of *The House of Life.* In it we are brought face to face with a fascinating personality, a man who is not of the common order, a visionary yet no mere dreamer, a man born out of due time, and yet on the forefront of one of the chief intellectual movements of latter days; an observer with exceptional capacities for action; a recluse, yet "a force of central fire descending consciously and unconsciously on many altars." His weaknesses, his shortcomings, as a poet, are as emphatic revelations as are his powers and excellences. Natures that run to excess are the richest.

While the poetry of Rossetti everywhere more or less strikingly reveals the man behind it, here and there we come across lines peculiarly suggestive. One such utterance is to be found among the hitherto unpublished matter brought together in the collected works. The prose sketch for a poem to be called *The Orchard Pit* commences thus: "Men tell me that sleep has many dreams; but all my life I have dreamt one dream alone." This is as directly personal a statement as if it had occurred in an autobiography. Veritably, all his life Rossetti dreamt one dream. He was from the days of his boyhood onward

haunted by the vision of Beauty; the love of Beauty became a passion; this passion became his very being:

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand spake still—long known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

And like all lovers—those lovers, above all, who in the words of Mérimée, *se passionnent pour la passion*—he became a slave to this tyrant Love, this wonderful abstract Beauty, and in his enthralling, and even bewildering bondage, he again and again gropes vainly towards the living sunshine of reality, at times even losing himself in phantasmal obscurities. It is not that he can be accused of vagueness, mere nebulosity. Even when most subject to the poetic *mania*, his lines vibrate with the passionate emotion which inspires them; but his inspiration is ne[ve]r unfrequently so remote from those emo[tio]- tional resources which affect the generalit[y] of mankind that he seems to have hearkenn[ed] at the portals of some house of dreams, rather than to the more urgent whispers [of] the world of reality. And yet no greate[r]

injustice can be done—alike to the man and to the poet—than to say that he was a dreamer only. His was a nature too keenly susceptible to the urgency of life to surrender itself in brooding inaction. He dreamt one dream—he lived one dream—he worked with the pen of the poet and the brush of the painter towards the realisation of one dream; but, more than most men, life was to him a thing of ceaseless wonder and absorbing attraction. He had pre-eminently that wonder-faculty which is a characteristic of great poets. An eminent critic has written of him that where his true importance in the history of literature lies is in the fact that (or with Coleridge) Rossetti is the chief exponent of that renascence of wonder—the renascence of the temper of wonder, mystery, and awe—which is the most thrilling and momentous thing in the history of latter-day civilisation. But more than thirty years before Theodore Watts-Dunton wrote to this effect, Rossetti himself had written of "that indefinable sense of rest and wonder which, when childhood is once gone, poetry alone can recall." To those minds, indeed, to whom Rossetti appeals most, just because of his exponency of this temper of wonder and

mystery, he must take rank as one of the greatest English poets since Coleridge and Keats. With both the latter he had sympathies arising from sources deeper than appreciative admiration simply: he was at one with them in their power, their instinctive faculty rather, of looking at the qualities and apparent unrealities of life through the purely poetic atmosphere. Those possessed by the mania of poetry look forth upon the world through a transmuting mist: an indefinable glamour glorifies their vision. But with this supremely poetic temper, with this mystic glamour, Rossetti had certain faults of so radical a nature that no inconsiderable portion of his poetry suffered irremediably. The greatest colourist of modern times, he at one period of his artistic career found his colour-sense intoxicated, or, perhaps, he believed with Blake that "exuberance is beauty": and so in verse we find him at times revelling in an extravagant luxuriousness of diction calculated to cloy rather than to gratify. His verse became overloaded with gorgeous images, with ingenious combinations, with mere resonances. He delighted in the roll of a line, in the rhythmic strength of a decasyllabic verse, in the sonorous music

of polysyllabic words, with an intensity of enjoyment which occasionally blinded him to the fact that the line had no essential relevancy, the verse nought save sound, the words more sonority than suitability. He regarded Lord Tennyson as the greatest artist in verse in modern times, but he failed to see that one reason of this was the Laureate's simplicity of diction, his instinctive as well as cultivated preference for Saxon over Anglo-Latin words. There are poems of his, particularly certain sonnets, which contain lines almost in mongrel English: one sonnet, for example, commences with "Like multiform circumfluence manifold."

Again, through having—in his own words—long mentally cartooned a poem before committing it to paper, and through much brooding upon it, he frequently made his meaning obscure to his readers when to him it was as manifest as daylight. Partly from this, partly from an occasionally exaggerated æsthetic sense, he imprisoned the spirit of poetry in a network of words; and this defect becomes most noticeable when he is dealing with facts of nature. It is a relief, after reading such poetic phraseology as

The embowered throstle's urgent wood-notes soar,

to turn to the unlaboured and impulsive strain of the Scottish singer:

The mavis sings fu blithely
On ilka leafy bough;

or to the English poet's:

Hark! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture.

This inability to approach nature as a lover is in curious contradistinction to Rossetti's instinctive faculty for the apprehension of the beautiful. Scattered throughout his poetry there are many most exquisite descriptions, but these are scenic glimpses described by the painter rather than the poet. It is, of course, difficult to realise this when we come across some beautiful lines here and there in a poem; fascinating, haunting, suggestive lines, such as those, for instance, to be found in *Rose Mary*. But whenever we discover Rossetti making a direct transcript or study from nature, for its own sake, we are almost certain to discern the difference between the

purely literary method and that of the nature-lover. Take, for example, the fine sonnet on Spring. The octave is admirable, and might have been written by Burroughs or Richard Jefferies in so far as vivid portrayal of nature is concerned; but let us read the sestet:

Chill are the gusts to which the pastures cower,
And chill the current where the young reeds stand
As green and close as the young wheat on land:
Yet here the cuckoo and the cuckoo-flower
Plight to the heart spring's perfect imminent hour
Whose breath shall soothe you like your dear one's hand.

In the second tercet the poet lapses from nature into literary effect; can we imagine Wordsworth or Burns, Keats or Shelley or Chaucer having written these lines? Even the simplicity of form and diction incidental to the ballad did not restrain Rossetti from passing in a single line from energetic and vivid directness to a remote and subtle conception entirely foreign to his artistic aim. In the stirring ballad of *The White Ship*—the personal record, it must be borne in mind, of Berold, a butcher of Rouen—we encounter at least one extraordinary incongruity:

The king was 'ware
Of a little boy with golden hair,
As bright as the golden poppy is
That the beach breeds for the surf to kiss.

It is certainly not the Rouen butcher who speaks in the last line: but Rossetti, and Rossetti not at his best.

But if Rossetti has not magically interpreted external nature, if the literary instinct in him occasionally too markedly dominates the purely poetic, there is one point wherein he excels any contemporary writer. In the domain of the supernatural he is the sole worthy inheritor of Coleridge. This note of what is known as supernaturalism—this note of the mysterious, of the weird—is of modern emphasis; it is the sign of the projection of the soul, stifled with the conventionalities and growing materialism of civilisation, into the region of romance. The romantic spirit is the wind that unfolds the loveliest efflorescence of the human mind. The *great* poets are of necessity romanticists, for they are as Æolian harps to the breath of Poetry, which is sublimated romance. Lesser men are writers of poems, of verse. A man is not an artist because he paints pictures, a poet because he writes poems; the maker, the inventor, the seer,

he and he only is the poet, the artist. A wider gulf divides Pope and Keats than separates the pure Saxon and the pure Celt. And it is because Rossetti is the foremost figure in the latest renascence of romanticism that he ranks so high, that he is placed by many on a pedestal which to the majority of people, perhaps, seems a blasphemous usurpation of the high places of the popular gods. This wind of romance blew through every day of his life, whether in his hand he held the brush or the pen:

> *To him bringing*
> *Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing*
> *From out the middle air.*

But it was the vital essence of romance which permeated his nature, and no merely skin-deep or spurious romantic sentimentalism. I do not think that Rossetti (whose love for Keats equalled if it did not exceed that which he felt for Shakespeare and Coleridge) at all agreed with his favourite poet that:

> *They shall be accounted poet-kings*
> *Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.*

And he certainly used to indulge in kindly

mockery of Keats' boyish and immature outcry:

O for an age so sheltered from annoy,
That I may never know how change the moons,
Or hear the voice of busy common-sense.

In a word, Rossetti—so it invariably seemed to the present writer, at any rate—had too robust an intellect to imagine that science and poetry were fundamentally antagonistic. As an artist—in the narrow and common sense of the word—he was, however, at the opposite pole to that of Science: a fact which he at once admitted and approved. No poet was ever more anti-scientific than himself, but he had that deeper vision which recognised, even while it perhaps did not sympathise with, the greatness of the idea of unity underlying all things. With Keats, he would have preferred the world not to have known the woof and texture of the rainbow, so that when the wondrous bow appeared in the heavens it might be with all the mystery and awe of ancient days; yet, withal, he would not have it relegated to "the dull catalogue of common things." The woof, the texture, might be explicable; the beauty, even the mystery of it, might be different in effect from that produced of

old; but, nevertheless, mysterious and beautiful it must ever remain. Some accounts of Rossetti have represented the poet-painter as a morbid dreamer, a curse to himself and a burden to his friends; a hater of the common interests of mankind, a selfish devotee at the shrine of abstract Beauty, an enemy to the widening of man's intellectual horizon. Others, who knew him intimately, and saw him continuously through several years of his least propitious period—can only say that they found him none of these things. In sweetness of temper, in graciousness of manner, in healthy and energetic, if not very comprehensive sympathy with the little things of life, in ready interest in everything intellectual, in quick willingness to see the humorous aspect of things, in urgent sympathy with and desire to share vicariously the troubles of his friends, in deep and broad insight into the fundamental principles and subtlest beauties of art and poetry—in one and all of these they found him the opposite of what he has sometimes been portrayed. Of course, it is not to be denied that he dwelt in the shadow of a great melancholy; that on occasions, when suffering from nervous prostration, and other effects of insomnia,

he spoke, and even acted, like a man bereft of absolute moral control, and that a certain morbid sensitiveness created difficulties not always easy of explanation ; but these were the incidental, and not the prevailing, aspects of his later life. The profound sadness which cast its gloom over him did not make itself perpetually evident. Melancholy, moreover, is the invariable shadow of high genius. Again, much of this extreme despondency was due to purely physical causes ; insomnia, unwitting excess in the use of chloral, the habits of a recluse, all conduced towards emphasising and perpetuating the inborn and poetic sentiment of melancholy. This was evident in the rapid transition whereby he would frequently pass from a mood of dire despondency into one of alert interest, his eyes glistening with keen appreciation, his mouth twitching sensitively. Friends would arrive on an afternoon (it would not "heighten the effect" to say "on a dull," or "gloomy," or "wintry" afternoon, for to summer and winter, gloomy and bright days, Rossetti was—save in so far as these interfered with or assisted him in the prosecution of his painting—mostly indifferent) and find him in the depths of fathomless despair. By dinner-time he

would be in shallower seas of despondency; an hour or so later he would be on the high-tide of conversational cheerfulness; and between the hours of ten and three—when he was at his best—many a jest and hearty laugh, keen criticism and pungent remark, recondite reminiscence and poetic quotation, would make the lurking blue devils depart altogether from the studio—to await their victim when, in the sleepless morning-hours, he should be alone once more with his sufferings and unquiet thoughts. Even in the last year of his life, when his resolute and dominant nature had become emasculated through the use of chloral, he would, not infrequently—by an imperious effort of the will—rally from a very hell of despairful despondency. In the firelit studio—from the walls of which gleamed fitfully the strange brooding eyes of some of those mystically beautiful women to whom he gave the names of Mnemosyne, Astarte Syriaca, Cassandra, Pandora, Proserpine: in the large gloomy bed-chamber, with its heavy hangings and haunting shadows: in the panelled sitting-room at Birchington, with the sea-wind moaning and shrieking round the house—in each, the present writer has seen Rossetti struggle like a drowning mariner with an

overwhelming tide of deepest dejection, struggle manfully, and triumph. Again, though he was no poet of nature, Nature at times had for him, too, her message, her solace.

One day, not very long before his death, we stood together on the cliff at Birchington, looking seaward. The sky was a cloudless blue, and the emulation and exultation of at least a score of larks was something wonderful to listen to; the sweet scents of early spring everywhere prevailed, blent with the odour of the sea-wrack from below; the sea, of purple-shaded azure, was beautiful beyond words. At first I thought Rossetti was as heedless of his environment as he was in general; but in reply to some remark of mine he replied: "It *is* beautiful—the world, the life itself. I am glad I have lived; I am glad I yet shall live." Insensibly thereafter his dejection lifted from off his spirit, and for the rest of that day and evening he was almost his old self again. Yet the shadow of death was even then upon him, and a weakness nigh intolerable. Those who knew him well have ever been convinced that his genius (which up to the end grew more intense and dominant, instead of diminishing) would have produced poems and pictures—poems more especially—equal

to, if not surpassing, his highest published achievements. I always think of him as having died young.

Der Aberglaube ist die Poesie des Lebens, said Goethe; and if we translate this "over-belief," this "superstition," into "supernatural," we proclaim a fundamental truth. At the base of the highest imaginative poetry lies what we call the supernatural element. Among the poets of the Victorian era, there is none who has touched a higher note of imaginative supernaturalism than Rossetti. It is this quality which raises to its supreme level of imagination *The King's Tragedy*, a poem surcharged with the supernatural, as a thunder-cloud with electricity.

More than any poet of our generation, Rossetti carried personification to excess. This particularity affords the most striking index to his spiritual nature, but it is often a source of weakness. Instances will crowd upon all students of his poems:—Memory, Death, Sleep, Oblivion, Youth, Love's Hour, Dead Hours, Vain Virtues, Lost Days, and so forth:

Nay, why
Name the dead hours? I mind them well;
Their ghosts in many darkened doorways dwell
With desolate eyes to know them by.

* * * *

Here doth memory sit * * *
While hopes and aims, long lost with her,
Stand round her image side by side.
* * * *
One flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player;
Then said my lady : "Thou art Passion of Love,
And this Love's worship."
* * * *
Song, whose hair
Blew like a flame, and blossomed like a wreath.
* * * *
There the dreams are multitudes :
Some that will not wait for sleep
Deep within the August woods.
* * * *
Then, too, let all hopes of mine,
All vain hopes by night and day,
Slowly at thy summoning sign
Rise up pallid and obey.

In the two bulky volumes published by Messrs. Ellis and Scrutton—comprising in all more than a thousand pages—we have, to all intents, the complete life-work of Rossetti in literature. With his great and steadily growing fame and influence as a painter we have here nothing to do ; but I may quote the emphatic opinion of an eminent critic : "These moral qualities, guiding an artistic temperament as exquisite as was ever bestowed on man, made him what he was, the greatest inventor of abstract beauty, both in form and colour,

perhaps that the world has ever seen." Poems, translations, prose pieces, critical papers, and various highly interesting memoranda—all are here. It is not an easy task for a brother to write critically and judicially of a brother, and no small credit is due to William Michael Rossetti for his prefatory remarks, at once impartial and adequate, reserved and appreciative. The additions which go to make these two volumes the "complete works" are variously valuable and are all interesting, though no one of them seems to the present writer so pre-eminently fine as to add materially to Rossetti's reputation.

Hand and Soul is familiar to most students of Rossetti. This beautiful prose fantasy or prose-poem appeared first in that exceedingly scarce magazine *The Germ;* it was afterwards reprinted in *The Fortnightly Review*, and finally had a limited private circulation in pamphlet form. Rossetti valued it highly, regarding it as important an imaginative achievement as any of his poems, with a few super-excellent exceptions. It was written at white heat between the hours of 2 A.M. and 7, one winter night (or morning) in December 1849, that is, when the author was only in his twenty-

first year. It bears the evidence of this fervid emotional impulse in its absolutely sustained impressiveness, and its exquisite diction seems to have gained rather than to have lost by the breathless haste of the young visionary. But fine and nobly suggestive as *Hand and Soul* is, it is surpassed by the strange tale *Saint Agnes of Intercession*, to which so many readers will turn with vivid interest. The latter is more concrete, and thus more surely captivates the imaginative sympathy of the reader. Although a fragment in the sense that it is unfinished, it is not difficult to forecast the conclusion it would have reached had the author been enabled to complete it. Mr. William Rossetti thinks that it must have been begun before *Hand and Soul*, and worked upon at intervals. When making a transcript of it in 1870, Rossetti gave it its present title, but he does not seem, then or later, to have added much to the original reading. As it stands, the tale constitutes less than half of the projected whole. It is inferior to *Hand and Soul* in imperative spiritual significance, nor in style has it the same subtlety and curious beauty as the mystic record of Chiaro dell' Erma, but it is not less characteristically or ably written, and

has—to use an expressive term—more *grip*. Apart from its literary, it has something of an autobiographical value—in the opening passages, at any rate.

The story is of a young artist upon whom is strangely forced the conviction of antenatal existence. Four hundred years ago he and the girl whom he loves as Buccio Angiolieri and Blanzifiore dall' Ambra, lived and suffered! Henceforward his life is as a dream. The tale ends abruptly, but we have a clue to the intended *finale* in an etching by Millais made in or about 1850, an etching which would have appeared in *The Germ* had that magazine not come to an untimely end. As Angiolieri painted his beloved Blanzifiore (as "Saint Agnes") during her mortal illness, so—in this etching —we see the hero of the story painting the portrait of his betrothed when upon her is the shadow of imminent death. It cannot, of course, be claimed that the central idea of this story is original: in its evolution it is entirely so. Both it and *Hand and Soul* owed something in point of style to Charles Wells's *Stories after Nature*. Wells had always a great attraction for Rossetti, and I have often wondered why the latter never painted a picture founded on some passage

in these practically unknown tales. *The Maid of Provence* was, I think, his favourite, and there are at least two scenes therein especially calculated to fascinate the poet-painter's imagination—one where the disguised heroine holds the torch for her own slaying ; another as outlined in the following eminently Keatsian sentence, "as a wizard sitteth at a moonlight casement by a magic torch, knitting a vexed brow, and sweating at the discovery of some webbed problem of enchantment."

The Orchard Pit is nominally the prose-projection of a long poem ; it is, in fact, a complete and impressive prose-poem. It is short, yet not only is it entitled to rank among the positive creative efforts of its author, but has, it may prove, a permanent impressiveness superior to either *St. Agnes* or *Hand and Soul*. *The Doom of the Sirens*, a finished outline-sketch for a lyrical tragedy, is of no literary value ; but *The Cup of Water* and *Michael's Scott's Wooing*, contain the living germs of poetry, and we realise how much we have lost from the non-fruition of these schemes. Of the literary papers—all more or less *pièces d'occasion*—the longest is the collective one on Blake ; the most literary, those on Dr. Gordon Hake's

poems ; the most biographically interesting, that on *The Stealthy School of Criticism.* The last is a reprint of Rossetti's reply in *The Athenæum* (1871) to the criticism on him by Robert Buchanan ; its republication, at this date, seems to me a mistake. No man has ever made a franker admission of having been in the wrong, than has Buchanan—in whose latest volume, it may be added, there is a paper upon Rossetti full of the warmest appreciation and of generous praise. No sane critic, no reasonable reader of his poems, would now discern anything in the poetry of Rossetti calculated to support the charge of sensuality. Sensuous in the best sense Rossetti as a poet is ; so in art are Titian and Tintoretto and Turner ; so in poetry are Shakespeare and Milton. However, the honourableness of the word "sensuous" is likely to remain as enigmatic to our countrymen in general as the idea of republican fraternity. It would have been more dignified, and more politic, to have omitted from the Collected Works this wrathful and not very potent diatribe against the wanton but powerful attack of one who has long since laid down the lance and made loyal obeisance.

Among the "Sentences and Notes," "picked out *passim* from my brother's note-book"—ranging from 1866 till towards the close of Rossetti's life—are various interesting and suggestive *dicta;* sometimes more interesting and suggestive than strictly original. This of poetry is good—"Poetry should seem to the hearer to have been always present to his thought, but never before heard"; and of great interest is this note concerning colours. "Thinking in what order I love colours, found the following:

"1. Pure light warm green. 2. Deep gold-colour. 3. Certain tints of grey. 4. Shadowy, or steel-blue. 5. Brown, with crimson tinge. 6. Scarlet."

To Volume II., that containing all Rossetti's admirable work in translation, the main addition, as already stated, is *Henry the Leper*—the English version of the Suabian miracle-play *Der Arme Heinrich.* It was while still in his teens that he translated (besides Burger's *Lenore,* and a portion of the *Nibelungenlied;* neither, unfortunately, extant), Hartmann Von Auë's famous poem; so that those who might be inclined to think he had followed the lead of Longfellow, who re-adapted the

original in his *Golden Legend*, will find that Rossetti had the start of the American poet by four or five years.

It is needless, at this late date, to emphasise the beauty and value of Rossetti's translations. None has surpassed him as an interpreter of Dante and the early Italian poets. In his versions not a breath of the volatile spirit of poetry escapes ; and for exquisite subtlety and ingenuity, there is nothing to excel his rendering of Villon's *Dead Ladies*. At times, when as a poet greatly superior to the writer whom he sought to interpret, he does the fortunate singer too much honour.

Concerning the poetical additions to the first volume a few words must be said. Several of these miscellaneous poems have " already appeared in some outlying form " ; of some others it must be admitted that they do not tend to add to the author's reputation ; while, again, there are a few which no lover of Rossetti's poetry would willingly lose. The longest of these new poems is *A Trip to Belgium and France*—in decasyllabic blank-verse as inefficiently as that of *A Last Confession* is worthily sustained. It is a traveller's diary in verse, somewhat in the manner of a wearied Wordsworth.

There are one or two noteworthy lines, some good descriptive passages, occasional bathos, and a fair amount of execrable prose such as the passage beginning (p. 228), "Now, very likely he who did the job."

Among the several beautiful short pieces, mention should be made of *During Music*, lines which Shelley might have written; *Near Brussels;* and the haunting melancholy *Autumn Song:*

Know'st thou not at the fall of the leaf
How the heart feels a languid grief
Laid on it for a covering,
And how sleep seems a goodly thing
In autumn at the fall of the leaf?

And how the swift beat of the brain
Falters because it is in vain,
In autumn at the fall of the leaf
Knowest thou not? And how the chief
Of joys seems—not to suffer pain?

Know'st thou not at the fall of the leaf
How the soul feels like a dried sheaf
Bound up at length for harvesting,
And how death seems a comely thing
In autumn at the fall of the leaf?

For the rest, they are neither potent to add to, nor to detract from, any estimate of the value of Rossetti's work in poetry.

When all is said for and against the poetry of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, there remains this substantial basis for a permanent fame ; he has written the *House of Life*, one of the three great sonnet-sequences in our language ; *The Blessed Damozel*, the most spiritual, most imaginative, most exquisitely beautiful sustained lyric of our time ; and *The King's Tragedy*, a poem of imaginative force and sheer poetic power, in itself sufficient to ensure for its author a lasting reputation. No one can read the last-named without realising the high position of Rossetti as a poet, for it is of the universal order of poetry.

A popular poet in the sense of being a poet understood and loved by the average reading public I do not believe he will ever become ; but he is pre-eminently a poet for poets, for all lovers of fine literature as literature, and those for whom the veil of extreme refinement is as necessary for adequate enjoyment as to others it is only a cloudy mist, a hindrance. As the poet of *The King's Tragedy* he will have the wider and perhaps truer fame ; as the poet of *The House of Life* he will have an endless charm for the few whose ears are as delicately attuned to the music of verse as of instru-

ments, and to whom his sometimes over-subtle and over-elaborate style will be a permanent and satisfying attraction. Rossetti's cardinal fault as a poet, more especially as a sonnet-writer, is to become too literary; he often strikes one as being unable to act on the poetic impulse as it comes, and rather to accept it and play with it as a cat does with a mouse. Many sonnets which would otherwise have taken very high rank are far too elaborately expressed, a not infrequent result being a rather wearisome obscurity. Nor had Rossetti much sympathy with or knowledge of nature. The outer world of things appealed to him but slightly, finding indeed as he did his world of imagination sufficient and ever present, a world most enchanted and full of dreams, where Beauty sat enthroned, and where the present realities of the mind were of infinitely greater import than matters of deep significance to the many. "I do not wrap myself up in my own imaginings," he said to me once, "it is *they* that envelop *me* from the outer world whether I will or no." If this literary in contradistinction to more poetically impulsive treatment of his subjects is his cardinal fault, a powerful and magnetic

imagination is his highest characteristic; and there are passages in *The King's Tragedy* and elsewhere which it would be difficult to find surpassed for mind imaginativeness and spiritual insight. The supernatural was as sympathetic to the genius of Rossetti as Greek mythology was to that of Keats.

Of Rossetti, may be aptly quoted that fine phrase in *Cain:* "Sorrow seems half of his immortality." And much as we may welcome the poets of the joy and the beauty of the world, it is not questionable that sorrow has been a motive influence of incalculable value in the literature of all countries. But in Rossetti there is no mere wailing of grief. His is that serious sorrow, almost indefinite when hidden behind the laughter of children and the first beauty of spring, sternly grand when visible in the presence of death and in the winter of our fair hopes. In his noblest poems, in the words of Mr. Walter Pater, "one seems to hear a really new kind of poetic utterance, with effects which have nothing else like them; as there is nothing else, for instance, like the narrative of *Jacob's Dream*, or Blake's design of the *Singing of the Morning Stars*, or Addison's *Nineteenth Psalm*."

1887.

SOME REMINISCENCES OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

ONE of the saintliest of women, as well as one of our finest poets, passed away into that rest which she craved so long, when Christina Rossetti died. Her life was a song of praise. This song had two strains. Both were ever present, but the austerer was the dominant and the more prolonged. For the last twenty years her voice had been cloistral; but all the time the pain of the world lay at her heart. When she was a girl, and when she was a woman old in suffering, in experience, and relatively old in years, she wrote in the same strain. A child-woman at sixteen she already felt, with something of pain and much bitterness, the poignancy of that old world cry "Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity!" An extraordinary lyric utterance from one so young and in externals so happily circumstanced is this sonnet, written before the author was seventeen:

Ah, woe is me for pleasure that is vain,
Ah, woe is me for glory that is past;
Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,
Glory that at the last bringeth no gain!
So saith the sinking heart; and so again
It shall say till the mighty angel-blast
Is blown, making the sun and moon aghast,
And showering down the stars like sudden rain.
And evermore men shall go fearfully
Bending beneath their weight of heaviness;
And ancient men shall lie down wearily,
And strong men shall rise up in weariness;
Yea, even the young shall answer sighingly
Saying one to another: "How vain it is!"

I have no record of the exact date when I met Miss Rossetti for the first time; but as it was not more than a few months after I had come to know Frederick Shields, the artist with whom Rossetti was wont to declare, lay the hopes of religious art in England, it must have been in the autumn of 1880.*

* Though a painter and decorative artist of remarkable individuality and distinction in the *genre* of Religious Art, Frederick Shields' name is still relatively unfamiliar in England. His earliest adequate recognition, beyond that of Rossetti and the limited Rossettian circle, was in a paper published in *The Atlantic Monthly* for October 1882, entitled *An English Interpreter.* He is best known by his decorations in fresco and stained glass in the chapel of Eaton Hall, Cheshire, and by his decorations in oil on the walls and entrance of the Chapel of Rest, in the Bayswater Road, London.

I recall easily the particulars of that first meeting. I had called upon some friends in Bloomsbury, and found there members of the family, and two guests, seated before a (for the moment) flameless fire. Neither gas nor lamp illumined the room; I was not surprised at the gloom, for this "shadow-time," as it was called in that house, was a luxury habitual there. The appearance of a caller who was not a stranger caused only a momentary interruption in what had been an animated conversation; and almost immediately the lady, whose voice was audible as I entered, resumed the rapid course of an extraordinarily fluent diction. She was giving a vivid account of her experiences with slum children in the country. "Moreover," she continued, "I am convinced that it is not possible for any one to live a happy life unless he or she has at least a brief sojourn in the country every year."

At this point a singularly clear rippling laugh interrupted the speaker. I noticed at once its quality as well as its spontaneity and winsomeness. This was followed by a few words, and, pleased as I was by the laugh, I was more pleased by the tone in which the words were spoken. The voice

had a bell-like sound, like that of a resonant crystal. The pronunciation was unusually distinct, and the words came away from the mouth and lips as cleanly as a trill from a bird. Though so exquisitely distinct the voice was not in the least mannered or affected, and except for a peculiar lift in the intonation, there was no reason to suppose it was not that of an Englishwoman. "Ah," she said, "there comes in the delightful enthusiast. But, Mrs. ——, I assure you that your good heart is mistaken. There are hundreds and thousands of us who, for one reason or another, never escape from London. I may speak for myself, alas, who am not only as confirmed a Londoner as was Charles Lamb, but really doubt if it would be good for me, now, to sojourn often or long in the country ; and you must remember that there are more Lambs and Wordsworths among us townfolk, and that as we are bred so we live."

"But," broke in the lady to whom she was speaking, "you yourself must admit that you would be far happier in the peace and the beauty of the country, which is so infinitely more poetic, in every way so much more beautiful, than the town ! "

How cool and quiet the bell-like voice

sounded, after the impetuous utterance which had interrupted it! "I am of those who think with Bacon that the Souls of the living are the Beauty of the World!"

"That is a beautiful saying; but now let me ask, do not you yourself find your best inspiration in the country?"

"I?" with a low deprecating laugh. "Oh dear, no! I know it *ought* to be so. But I don't derive my inspiration, as you call it—though if you will allow me to say so, I think the word quite inapposite, and to be used of very few, and then only in a most literal sense—I don't derive anything from the country at first hand! Why, my knowledge of what is called nature is that of the town sparrow, or, at most, that of the pigeon which makes an excursion occasionally from its home in Regent's Park or Kensington Gardens. And, what is more, I am fairly sure that I am in the place that suits me best. After all, we may enjoy the majesty and mystery of the ocean without ever adventuring upon it; and I, and thousands of other Londoners, from the penniless to those who are as relatively poor as I am, are in the position of those who love the sea, and understand too, in a way,

its beauty and wonder, even though we reside in Bloomsbury or Whitechapel."

I forget what followed, but a minute or two later a servant lighted the lamp. As she did so I caught a glimpse of my sweet-voiced neighbour, a short plain woman, apparently advanced in middle age, with, as the most striking feature at first glance, long heavy eyelids over strangely protruding eyes. I noticed that she veiled herself abruptly as she rose and said good-bye. As she moved away it was with what I can describe only as an awkward grace.

One thing after another interfered with the question that was on my lips, and the outcome was that I left without knowing who the lady was whose words and voice had impressed me so much. Two things remained with me beyond that day; not, strangely enough, primarily, the memory of the delicate precision and natural rhythm of her speech or the peculiar quality of her voice, but the rapid, almost furtive, way in which she had drawn her veil over her too conspicuous eyes, as soon as the room was lighted, and her concurrent haste to begone—this, and the quotation from Bacon, "The Souls of the Living are the Beauty of the World." It is a noble saying, and its

significance would then have been enhanced for me if I had known that I heard it for the first time from the lips of Christina Rossetti.

Ultimately I came to know her through Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Before this I had been misled as to her attributes and idiosyncrasies. My informant would have it that Miss Rossetti was a gloomy and even bigoted religionist; that, recluse as she was socially, she was correspondingly morose in herself, that she was morbidly sensitive to her appearance, having at one time been comely, and even in her youth, beautiful; in a word, she was now unable to reconcile herself to her altered looks, a change due to an illness which had affected the eyeballs.

One night, when Rossetti was narrating some anecdotes of *The Germ* days, he began to speak of his sister Christina. Noting my interest he added further particulars not only concerning "the genius of the family," as he called her, but also about his other sister, Maria Francesca, his brother, and his parents—details then unknown to me, though in the main now so familiar to all lovers of the poetry of Gabriel and Christina Rossetti.

He had a great admiration for his elder

sister. "*She* was the Dante of our family," he said incidentally. "Christina," he added, "was the daughter of what was noblest in our father and beautiful in our mother. But no one was ever afraid of Christina. Maria was a born leader; Christina a born apostle. In my boyhood I loved Maria better than any one in the world. I don't think she ever came into her proper inheritance. She might have topped us all, though of course she hadn't Christina's genius. She used to be pitiful to her younger sister, who was delicate and rather demure; and Christina simply worshipped her. I remember how shocked they were when, both having expressed their envy of their martyred sisters of olden days, I said they had more than their share of martyrdom in having such a vagabond brother to look after."

When she was still a child (not more than twelve, if Rossetti was right) Christina became poignantly melancholy whenever alone. About this time she had a great wish to write the most beautiful hymns of modern days. Her earnest efforts, however, were absolutely commonplace, till one memorable Sunday afternoon when she composed some lines that were good enough to make Maria

prophesy that the young writer would be the poet of the family! A native shyness was enhanced by the habitual self-disparagement with which she treated herself, in contrast to her sister. Her intellectual development, however, was rapid. How, indeed, could it have been other than precocious? The Rossetti household was, probably, the most remarkable in London. Gabriel Rossetti, patriot, exile, poet, philosopher, mystic, student, artist, and most genial and winsome man of strong character, was "a father in a million," as his elder son loved to speak of him.

Mrs. Frances Mary Lavinia Rossetti, though English by birth and maternal parentage, was daughter of an Italian gentleman, well known in his day, Gaetano Polidori, the translator of the poetry of Milton into sympathetic, if not majestic or masterly, Italian. Many distinguished people came to the Rossetti household, and divers eddies of new thought of the age circulated through that little society. Then, were there ever four such children in one family as Maria, Gabriel, William and Christina? Two were endowed with high as well as rare and distinctive genius, and all four moved in an atmosphere pregnant with stirring ideals, deep

emotions of strong minds, and vivid aspirations.

Christina's childhood was spent almost wholly in London. Her first real excitement, she declared once, her first real excitement away from home-life and the familiar aspects of the streets of Western London, was afforded by a visit she paid with Gabriel to the Zoological Gardens. The two amused themselves, after their first vivid interest, by imagining the thoughts of the caged animals. Christina thought the birds should be honoured by plaintive verses, but Gabriel narrated such whimsical biographies of the birds and beasts that poetry gave way to fun. Distinct as the impression was, it was not so durably vivid as that of the walk of the two children, hand in hand, across the solitudes of Regent's Park, "with a magnificent sunset, which Gabriel declared he could see setting fire to the distant trees and roof ridges."

Despite his interest in animals, which became a freakish fad with him in later life, Rossetti never really observed lovingly and closely, except from the artist's point of view. He would notice the effect of light on leaves, or the white gleam on windy grass; but he could never tell

whether the leaves were those of the oak or the elm, the beech or the chestnut. If he cared for birds and bird-music, it was without heed of distinctions, with no knowledge of the individuality of lilt in the song of thrush or blackbird, robin or linnet. But sometimes, his sister told me, he would come home with a spray of blossom, "it was always 'blossom' merely, not pear, or apple, or cherry blossom," and once or twice with a bird or small animal in a wicker cage, and would be as earnest and closely observant of all details as any naturalist would be.

It was about this time Christina had a dream, which Gabriel promised to depict and "send to the Academy." (This was before *The Germ* days.) She dreamed that she was walking in Regent's Park at dawn, and that, just as the sun rose, she saw what looked like a wave of yellow light sweep from the trees. This "wave" was a multitude of canaries. Thousands of them rose, circled in a gleaming mass, and then dispersed in every direction. In her dream it was borne in upon her that all the canaries in London had met, and were now returning to their cages! Rossetti was delighted with the idea. He projected some pictorial presentment of the dream in which the

visionary was to be clad in yellow, and that the ground underfoot was to be covered with primroses. But either the impulse waned or he did not feel able to do justice to the subject then, and so postponed it, or, most likely, other matters of moment dissipated the intention.

When she told me this episode Miss Rossetti added that Gabriel had an idea of writing a poem on the motive, so had she, but she did not write, as she was always waiting for the promised poem from him. "He declared the 'motive' was symbolical, and had some strange personal significance; but he never explained the one or the other, and I don't believe there was anything but whim behind his words. He was always like that as far back as I can remember, though less whimsical and more moody as a youth than as a boy or man. In this respect he was very different from William, who was invariably simple, direct, and as quietly cordial as he is now. In fact *I* was the ill-tempered one of the family; my dear sister used to say that *she* had the good sense, William the good-nature, Gabriel the good heart, and I the bad temper of our much beloved father and mother."

It is quite true that Christina Rossetti

had to cope with an irritable temper, due to physical ailment. For myself I never saw a trace of it, but no doubt this tendency had been subdued long before I knew her. An old friend of hers told me that she changed completely in this respect after the death of her sister in 1876, to whom she was passionately attached, and for whose strong and saintly character she had an admiration that was almost extreme. Christina was wont to declare that if Maria had been the younger instead of the elder sister, she would have become famous, but that her home duties and yearly intensifying religious scruples and exercises prevented her. Certainly the elder Miss Rossetti shared in that precocity which distinguished the whole family.

Christina began to compose at the age of eleven ; Gabriel was in his teens when he wrote a poem which has become a classic, and stands as one of the most remarkable lyric achievements in English literature ; and William wrote verse of high quality before he was twenty. It was in her fourteenth year, when Gabriel was either an idle, or else a feverishly active boy, " a born rapscallion, as our father sometimes called him," that Maria Rossetti translated into

blank verse the greater part of an ode by the Cavaliere Campana on the *Death of Lady Gwendoline Talbot, Princess Borghese.* In her early womanhood she began the work by which she is known to the public, though *A Shadow of Dante* was not published till her forty-fourth year; that is about five years before her death. Referring to this, Christina once exclaimed, "I wish I too could have done something for Dante in England! Maria wrote her fine and helpful book; William's translation of the *Divina Commedia* is the best we have; and Gabriel's *Dante and his Circle* is a monument of loving labour that will outlast either. But I, alas, have neither the requisite knowledge nor ability."

I remember Gabriel Rossetti telling me that he always looked upon his father's study as a haunted room wherein for a long time he found himself, if alone, beset with a strange asset; and that the very books had a conscious and external life of their own. There was, in particular, a *Vita Nuova* round which he often imagined he saw a faint light, which "filled him with a happy terror." As a child he long held the idea that Dante was not only a friend of his father's, but a sacred and benign

though mysteriously invisible visitor to, if not indeed inmate of, the Charlotte Street household. So real was this veritable family spirit that the little Gabriel sometimes feared to meet the tall gaunt figure of 'Mr. Dante' on the dark stairway: "As soon as I could toddle, I used to be rather afraid o' nights of meeting Mr. Dante in a horribly shadowy corner of the second landing; and as for venturing into my father's room in twilight if no one was there, and there was no fire, I believe I should as soon have said 'Damn Dante!' if my infant mind had known the use and meaning of the expletive."

The elder Miss Rossetti had also something of her elder brother's artistic faculty. Two or three designs in *A Shadow of Dante* were her own work. In addition to this book there is one imaginative essay by her which is practically unknown. It is very scarce indeed; possibly not half a dozen copies are extant. I have seen one copy only, that which was lent me by Miss Christina Rossetti. It was printed privately in 1846, when the authoress was in her nineteenth year. The title is *The Rivulet; a Dream not all a Dream*, and the matter is an allegory of life and religion, where the

personalities are introduced as Liebe (Love), Selbsucht (Selfishness), Eigendunkel (Presumption), and Faule (Indolence). The "rivulets" represent the natural heart of man; the "serpents" who are for ever fouling the waters, the devil; the fruit and flowers overhanging the banks and poisonous when they fall into streams, the grosser and less palpably sinful allurements of the world; the crystal mirror which the guardian of each rivulet has in keeping represents the Scriptures; the vases of perfume, prayer; and the healing water, baptism. The booklet is animated by the same extreme religious sentiment of renunciation that many years later prompted the authoress to enter the All Saints' sisterhood.

It is, of course, generally known that the exiled Gabriele Rossetti was a poet, though it is not commonly understood how great was his reputation. Christina Rossetti was wont to speak with gratified pleasure of the wish of the citizens of Vasto (Abruzzi) to see a suitable memorial in their chief piazza, of the poet patriot and fellow-citizen, "who was hatched in little Vasto, but whose flight extended throughout Italy," as his Italian biographer says. It is not commonly known that the poetic strain in

the family was shared also by others of the same generation. In 1763 Nicola Rossetti, a student, a man of standing in Vasto d'Æmmone, married a girl of the same town, Maria Francesca Pietrocola. Of their several children four achieved distinction. Andrea, born 1765, became known as a canonical orator and poet; five years later was born Antonio, a poet also; next, in 1772, came Domenico, who, as poet and journalist and medical writer, filled well his comparatively short lease of life; and then, youngest of the family (1783) and most famous, Gabriele.

One day I heard some one speak of this to Christina Rossetti. She replied, that far from stimulating her, the knowledge was something of the nature of a wet blanket. "I feel that we—I, at least—ought to be far worthier after so much pioneering on the part of our relatives. I am afraid they would look upon us as mere appendices to the Rossetti Chapter!"

It was not long after my first, though ignorant, meeting with her that her brother spoke to me about *The Germ*, and in particular about Christina's poetry. He told me of the little book of hers printed privately in 1847 by her grandfather, Mr.

Polidori—not, as often stated, Byron's Polidori, who was Mrs. Gabriele Rossetti's brother, but Gaetano Polidori, who had been secretary to Alfieri. The poetry comprised in this slim booklet was composed between the young poet's twelfth and seventeenth years. Rossetti enlarged upon the significance of this collection. He recited the poem called *The Dead City*, and indicated the premonitions shown there of Miss Rossetti's best-known long poem—actual premonitions of now familiar passages, though the formative motive of *The Dead City* is quite distinct from that of *The Goblin Market*. It was he who pointed out that Blake might have written the four verses called *Mother and Child*. The powerful and remarkable sonnet quoted on the second page of this article appeared in the little book before it saw the light (this was Rossetti's phrase, and he added, "or, rather, twilight") in *The Germ*.

Much impressed by *The Dead City* I asked Rossetti to lend me his copy of the booklet. He, however, had no copy. It was then he suggested I should ask the loan of Christina's, and added, on my reply that I did not know her, "Well, you certainly ought to know her. She is the finest woman poet

since Mrs. Browning, by a long way; and in artless art, if not in an intellectual impulse, is greatly Mrs. Browning's superior. She couldn't write, or have written *The Sonnets from the Portuguese*, but neither could Mrs. Browning have composed some of the flawless lyrics which Christina has written. Go and call upon her. I'll write to her about you. And be sure you see my mother."

Of course I went. When early one afternoon I reached the dull quiet house in "Torrington Oblong" as Rossetti humorously called Torrington Square, on account of its shape—one of the many drowsy, faded, ebb-tide squares of central London—I recognised in Miss Christina Rossetti not only the lady I had met at a friend's house, but the Christina of Gabriel's portrait. Sufficient likeness lingered in the placid, rather stout face before me to prove that Rossetti's crayon drawing must have been as I had always understood in outward similitude as well as in expressional veracity.

"I am pleased to see you and have been expecting you, for I have heard from my brother Gabriel of your promised visit. Ah," she added, with a quick little gesture, an uplift of the right hand, in the manner

of a musician recalling some fugitive strain, "but I have seen you before surely?"

Meanwhile I was unconsciously noting the speaker's appearance. In some ways she reminded me of Mrs. Craik, author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, that is in the quaker-like simplicity of her dress, and the extreme and almost demure plainness of the material, with in her mien something of that serene passivity which has always a charm of its own. She was very pale, though there was a bright and alert look in her large and expressive azure-grey eyes, a colour which often deepened to a dark velvety shadowy grey, and though many lines were imprinted on her face, the contours were smooth and young. Her hair, once a rich brown now looked dark, and was thickly threaded with solitary white hairs rather than sheaves of grey. She was about the medium height of women, though at the time I thought her considerably shorter. With her quietude of manner and self-possession there was a certain perturbation from this meeting with a stranger, though one so young and unknown. I noted the quick, alighting glance, its swift withdrawal, also the restless intermittent fingering of the long thin double watch-guard of linked gold which hung from

below the one piece of colour she wore, a quaint old-fashioned bow of mauve or pale purple ribbon, fastening a white frill at the neck.

"Now where *have* I seen you?" she resumed with pretended provoked perplexity.

"Though I did not know who you were, Miss Rossetti," I replied, "the occasion was made memorable to me by something you said, 'The Souls of the Living are the Beauty of the World!'"

"Ah, now I remember! Of course! But, oh, it was not I who said that, you know. I merely repeated it. Strangely enough I cannot remember where it occurs in Bacon. Do you know? No? Then you must help me to find out. Do you know Richard Garnett, Dr. Garnett of the British Museum? He knows everything, I am told, fortunate man! and he will help us out of our dilemma."

Thus chatting, she led me upstairs to the small drawing-room. I recollect noticing the delicate courtesy of the "us," and also my surprise at the blithe cheerfulness of voice and manner, so utterly unlike the description given to me by one who professed to know her, but whose knowledge must have been at sight only. She was laughing at

Gabriel's name for Torrington Square, a nickname which seemed to be new to her, when she opened the door of the sitting-room where she had been reading to Mrs. Rossetti.

The dear old lady—one of the most winsome and delightful women of advanced age I have ever met, I *can* say, and who ever lived, I *would* say—won my allegiance at once. She insisted on rising, held my hand in hers, looked benignly, but keenly, into my eyes, and said, "So you are a young friend of Gabriel's. That alone makes you welcome. How is he? When did you see him last? So late as last week? And is he well? I am glad. Ah, Christina," she added, looking at her daughter, as she reseated herself, "I am afraid our young friend is repeating one of Gabriel's kindly fibs when he says that Gabriel is sleeping well and is in much better health."

After tea Mrs. Rossetti asked me if I had ever read Southwell's poetry; and on my reply that I had not, she added, "My dear Christina was reading a wonderful little poem of his just as your visit was announced. I am sure you would like to hear it. My dear, do read it again." It was thus I came to know that wonderful Elizabethan

precursor of "The Songs of Innocence," "The Burning Babe." The poem is in itself strangely moving; how much more impressive, then, when recited by one of the chief Victorian poets in her own home and during the auditor's first visit!

I can see that small and rather gloomy room with Mrs. Rossetti sitting back with a white Shetland shawl across her shoulders and the lamplight falling on her white hair and clear-cut, ivory-hued features, as she waited with closed eyes the better to listen; at the table Miss Rossetti, leaning her head on her right hand, with her right elbow on the table and with her left hand turning over the leaves of the book—if I remember rightly, a new edition of F. T. Palgrave's *Children's Treasury of Lyrical Poetry*.

With an exquisitely clear and vibrant voice, though with a singular rise and fall, correspondent to Gabriel Rossetti's moving and sonorous organ music, Miss Rossetti read, with infinite feeling, the lines beginning, "As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow." Occasionally she prolonged the music of a line into a slow rhythm, with a strange suspiration that, I imagine, was characteristic, particularly when she was strongly moved. It was in

this way that late in 1885 or early in 1886 I heard her read the lyric beginning:

Heaven's chimes are slow, but sure to strike at last,
Earth's sands are slow, but surely dropping through;
And much we have to suffer, much to do,
Before the time be past,

with, I recollect, an unexpected and haunting iterance of the line:

Chimes that keep time are neither slow nor fast;

each word as complete and separate in enunciation as notes of music struck slowly.

There was one line of Southwell's in particular which she read with communicative emotion—an emotion felt by Mrs. Rossetti, who opened her eyes, glanced at her daughter, and with murmuring lips reclosed her eyes. It was the line:

Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorn.

During that visit, again, I had cause to note how scrupulous, if at the same time reticent, Christina Rossetti was in any matter where conscience impelled her to a protest, though always one gentle, or at least courteous. Nor did the rigour of her views involve

her in any narrowness of judgment, much less in bigotry.

I may quote aptly here one or two letters from among those she wrote to me on several occasions. At the beginning of May 1884 I called to see Miss Rossetti, and to leave her a just published volume of verse, but failed to find her at home. The poem I most cared for was the Epilogue *Madre Natura*, but instinct told me Miss Rossetti would neither like nor approve so pagan an utterance and surmise was correct.

"30 TORRINGTON SQUARE,

"*May* 3, 1884.

". . . I might say, 'Why do you call just when we are out?' only that you might retort, 'Why are you out just when I call?'

"Thank you very much for your new volume and yet more for the kindness which enriches the gift. You know how my mother and I hold you in friendly remembrance." (Then follow some kindly words of discrimination and praise; and finally this:)

"Shall I or shall I not say anything about *Madre Natura?* I daresay without my taking the liberty of expressing myself you can (if you think it worth while) put my regret into words. . . ."

Though I cannot recall what I wrote, write I did evidently; and obviously, also, with eagerness to prove that, while I accepted her gentle reproof in the spirit she advanced it, I held the point of view immaterial; and no doubt a very crude epistle it was, in both thought and diction.

"*May*, 5, 1884.

". . . Your friendliness and courtesy invite mine; pray believe in mine whatever I say, as I believe in yours in spite of what you say.

"Will you not, on consideration, agree with me that it is out of the question for a Christian really to believe what every Christian professes to believe, and yet to congratulate a friend on believing something contrary? On your having passed from a cruder form of negation I do heartily congratulate you. And now . . . nothing but goodwill and the desire to do right move my pen . . . "

I quote these extracts from personal letters only because of their inherent interest, as illustrative of a distinctive trait in the character of Christina Rossetti. From one more, written in 1886, is a point of interest,

concerning Christina Rossetti the poet : "I heartily agree in setting the essence of poetry above the form." This point she extended on a later occasion, when she said that the whole question of the relative value of the poetic spirit of a poem and the form of that poem lay in this : that the spirit could exist without form, whereas the form was an impossibility without the spirit, of which it was the lovely body.

More than ever after the death of Mrs. Rossetti, with broken health and a deep seated ill that was wearing her away, Christina Rossetti turned her face to that world of soul, which indeed had always been to her a near and living reality. The rumour of other waters was ever in her ears. The breath of another air was upon her brow. The assertion, sometimes made, that, in later life, she was a Roman Catholic, is incorrect. From her girlhood to her death she was strictly a member of the Anglican Church. Naturally, she had much sympathy with the Church of Rome, and had a great admiration for its ordered majesty of organisation ; but, strangely enough, the rock which she took to be a beacon of wreck was Mariolatry. This, at all times, seemed to her to be the cardinal error in Roman

Catholicism. It is interesting to note that Gabriel Rossetti was more attracted by the spiritual and human significance of Mary than by any other dogma of Rome. He told me once that the world would come to see that the lasting grit in the Romish faith —"a 'grit' which would probably make it survive all other Christian sects"—was based upon this idealisation of humanity, through the mother-idea, in the person of Mary; and that, whatever potent development the Protestant sects might have, "they would always, lacking the exalted recognition of Mary, be like Church services without music wherein all can join." On the other hand, it must be admitted that Christina's belief was a profoundly felt and lifelong conviction, while that of Gabriel was, if not intermittent or accidental, more an expression of the opining temperament than of the convinced intellect.

In one place explicitly, as in a hundred places indirectly, Miss Rossetti has affirmed her faith. In one of the little known prose books she wrote in later life (which as she said once, smiling rather sadly the while, the literary world that praised her so much studiously ignored) there is this significant passage: "To myself it is in the beloved

Anglican Church of my Baptism that these things are testified, a living Branch of that Holy One, Catholic and Apostolic Church which is authoritatively commended and endeared to me by the Word of God. Christ, Whose mystical body She is, is her over-ruling Will and Power ! "

I think it was in January of 1886 that, for the last time, I heard Miss Rossetti read anything of her own. It was not long—some months, perhaps—since she had published one of the least known of her books, though one most characteristic and strangely fascinating, for all its Daily Companion appearance, and, in a sense, style. I am inclined to believe that *Time Flies* gave her more pleasure in contemplation than was afforded by any other book of hers. It is, of course, a religious " daily companion," and is occupied largely with strictly religious comments ; but it has many delightful (and to those who knew Miss Rossetti, most characteristic) passages and anecdotes. Above all, however, it is notable for its lovely lyrics, interspersed throughout the volume like white and purple lilac-bushes in a lawned and gravelled convent garden. Sometimes there are lines of extraordinary poignancy and beauty, straight from the

lyric emotion wrought from the ecstasy in heart and brain, as, for example, these lines, so appealing as well as so idiosyncratic :

Turn, transfigured Pain
Sweetheart, turn again,
For fair Thou art as moonrise after rain.

But indeed the whole poem should be quoted :

Joy is but sorrow
While we know
It ends to-morrow—
Even so !
Joy with lifted veil
Shows a face as pale
As the fair changing moon so fair and frail.

Pain is but pleasure,
If we know
It heaps up treasure :—
Even so !
Turn, transfigured Pain
Sweetheart, turn again
For fair Thou art as moonrise after rain.

In some of these lyrics there is a strange note of impassioned mysticism, as in the short rondeau for January 16, exemplified in these three lines :

Love weighs the event, the long pre-history
Measures the depth beneath, the height above,
The mystery with the ante-mystery.

In the lyric for March 7 there is a music like that of Gabriel Rossetti's *Sea-Limits*, a haunting ululation such as that of Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar :*

Earth has clear call of daily bells,
A rapture where the anthems are,
A chancel vault of gloom and star,
A thunder where the organ swells :
Alas, man's daily life—what else ?—
Is out of tune with daily bells.

While Paradise accords the chimes
Of Earth and Heaven : its patient pause
Is rest fulfilling music's laws.
Saints sit and gaze, where oftentimes
Precursive flush of morning climbs
And air vibrates with coming chimes.

Of those she read me I am haunted most, because of the exquisite cadence of her intonation, by the memory of one (that for March 5) beginning:

Where shall I find a white rose blowing ?
Out in the garden where all sweets be.
But out in my garden the snow was snowing,
And never a white rose opened for me,
Naught but snow and wind were blowing
And snowing.

How well, too, I remember that February 11, *No More*; and this for March 3, a dialogue of *Life and Death*, with the Soul as protagonist

—an actual protagonist, though here rather a ball between two players, dumb and passive in all its blind bafflings to and fro :

Laughing Life cries at the feast,—
Craving Death cries at the door,—
" Fish or fowl, or fatted beast ?
Come with me, thy feast is o'er !
Wreathe the violets." " Watch them fade."
" I am sunlight. I am shade :
I am the sun-burying west. I am rest :
Come with me, for I am best."

Since then how often I have recalled that marvellous yet so simple and obvious line, as Shakespearean as Gabriel Rossetti's " The sunrise blooms and withers on the hill, Like any hill-flower,"

the sun-burying west !

There were other fragmentary lines or couplets which impressed themselves keenly on the memory : for example,

All through this race of life which shelves
Downward to death ;

and

Lo, the Hope we buried with sighs
Alive in Death's eyes !

Time Flies is dedicated " To my Beloved Example, Friend, Mother."

After the death of Mrs. Rossetti her daughter devoted herself to her old aunts: Miss Charlotte Lydia Polidori who died in 1890 at the age of eighty-seven, and Miss Eliza Harriet Polidori at the age of eighty-four. There is now in Christ Church, Woburn Square, the pendant with star and crescent in diamonds which his Imperial Majesty the Sultan presented to Miss Harriet Polidori, in recognition of her distinguished services as a nurse in the Crimean campaign.

In these sad and lonely last years Christina Rossetti published two books: a volume of *Collected Devotional Poems* (1883) and one of prose, consisting of keen and vivid commentaries on the Revelation of St. John, entitled, with characteristic humility, *The Face of the Deep*, for these she thought were but an individual ripple on the surface of revealed truth.

One of my most cherished memories is of a night at Birchington, on the Kentish coast, in March 1892. It had been a lovely day. Rossetti asked me to come out with him on the cliff for a stroll; and though he leaned heavily, and dragged his limbs wearily as if in pain, he grew more cheerful as the sunlight warmed him. The sky was a cloudless blue, and the singing of at least

a score of larks was wonderful to listen to. Everywhere spring odours prevailed, with an added pungency from the sea-wrack below. Beyond, the sea reached to far horizons of purple-shaded azure. At first I thought Rossetti was indifferent: the larks made merely a confused noise; the sunglare spoilt the pleasure of the eyes; the sea-breath carried with it a damp chill. But this mood gave way. He let go my arm, and stood staring seaward silently; then, still in a low and tired voice, but with a new tone in it, he murmured, "It *is* beautiful—the world, and life itself. I am glad I have lived." Insensibly, thereafter, the dejection lifted from off his spirit, and for the rest of that day and evening he was noticeably less despondent.

The previous evening Christina Rossetti—then at Birchington on a nursing visit—Rossetti, and myself, were seated in semi-twilight in the long, low-roofed sitting-room of the Bungalow. She had been reading to him, but he had grown weary and somewhat fretful. Not wishing to disturb him, Miss Rossetti made a sign to me to come over to the window, and there drew my attention to a quiet-hued but very beautiful sunset. While we were gazing at it,

Rossetti, having overheard an exclamation of almost rapturous delight from Christina, rose from his great armchair before the fire and walked feebly to the window. Thence he stared blankly upon the dove-tones and pale amethyst of the sky. I saw him glance curiously at his sister, and then look again long and earnestly. But at last, with a voice full of chagrin, he turned away indifferently, with the remark that he could not see what it was we admired so much. He projected his moods upon nature; nature did not induce them in him. "It is all grey and gloom," he added; nor would he hear a word to the contrary, so ignorant was he of the havoc wrought upon his optic nerve by the chloral poison which did so much to shorten his life.

After he had gone to bed, Miss Rossetti spoke sadly of this dulling of his sensitiveness, and feared that it was indeed the beginning of the end. "Poor Gabriel," she added, "I wish he could have at least one hopeful hour again." It was with pleasure, therefore, that next day she heard what he had said upon the cliff, and how he had brightened.

The evening that followed was a happy one, for, as already narrated, Rossetti

grew so cheerful, relatively, that it seemed as though the shadow of death had lifted. What makes the episode so doubly memorable to me is that, when I opened the door for Miss Rossetti when she bade me good-night, she turned, took my hand again, and said in a whisper, "I am so glad about Gabriel, and grateful."

After the death of Miss Harriet Polidori, Christina became almost a recluse. Of the burden of life she had long been weary and for surcease therefrom she longed without ceasing. Her death, at the festival of the Epiphany, a season which she herself has chronicled in lovely verse, must have come to her as the floodtide of a long-delayed happiness.

The weight of the pain of the world, the sorrow of life, had long made hard the blithe cheerfulness which she wore so passing well, though it was no garment chosen for its comeliness, but because of its refreshment for others. An ordered grace was hers in all things, and in this matter of cheerfulness she created what she did not inherit; rather she gained by prayer and renunciation and long control, a sunlit serenity which made her mind, for others, a delectable Eden, and her soul a paradise of fragrance and song.

Cheerfulness became a need of spiritual growth, as well as a thing seemly and delightful in itself. She had ever, in truth at least in later life—and my acquaintance with her extended over a period of twelve years—a gracious sweetness that was all her own. An exquisite taciturnity alternated with a not less exquisite courtesy of self-abandonment. She was too humble to speak much opinionatively, unless directly challenged, or skilfully allured; while it seemed natural in her to consider that the centre of interest was in her companion of the moment and not in herself. Habitually she preferred the gold-glooms of silence; but she would, at the word of appeal, or even at the shyer lure which can express itself only through the eyes, come into the more garish light, or as it might be, the dusk of another's grief. It was impossible to have with her even the slightest degree of intimacy and not experience this quietude of charm—a quality that made her so remote of approach, but so near when reached. How often, thinking of her, I have considered those lines of Herbert;

Welcome heare feast of Lent. Who loves not thee
He loves not Temperance, or Authoritie.

* * * *

Beside the cleaninesse of sweet abstinence,
Quick thoughts and motions at a small expense,
A face not fearing light.

This "cleanness of sweet abstinence" was characteristic of the poetic inheritor of Herbert and Crashaw, whom most she resembles in quality of her genius, though she had more of fire and heal than the one, and less of sensuous exuberance than the other.

This is not the occasion for any critical analysis of her beautiful poetry. Its delicate music, its exquisite charm, are its proper ambassadors. Of her marvellous spontaneous art scarce anything better could be said by the most discriminating and authoritative critic than is expressed in these lines of Shakespeare (*The Winter's Tale*):

This is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature.

1895.

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON

"In this life calamity follows calamity by no apparent law of cause and effect. In the web that destiny spins there is a terrible and a cruel symmetry, which no theory of 'circumstance' can explain. When once the pattern of their tapestry is sombre, the Fates never leave it incomplete." To no one could these words by the author of *Aylwin* be more applicable than to Philip Bourke Marston, whose death brought him the surcease for which he had long yearned with an intensity which had in it no shadow of affectation or superficial emotion. He dwelt continually in the shadow of a great gloom, for in addition to the physical affliction which in the most literal sense darkened his whole life, the evil mischances of Fate sorely wrought against him. "If one were not too insignificant for the metaphor," he once remarked, "I could with bitter truth assert that the stars in their courses have ever fought against me." It is not given to many men of letters to

experience so much sorrow with such little alloy of the common pleasures of life. Those who are most cruelly afflicted are not those who make loudest wail; hence the misapprehension of some among the casual acquaintances of "the blind poet" who believed that Marston's compensations must have been numerous to enable him to bear the brave front before the world which was his characteristic attitude. But till fatal illness overcame him he could laugh with or take keen interest in the affairs of a friend, as if for him life had but the same significance as for the majority of men.

Philip Bourke Marston was the third child and only son of the well-known dramatist and poet, Dr. Westland Marston. His mother was a woman of as great charm of mind as of body, and endeared herself to her son by her penetrative sympathy and tenderness. Philip was born in London on August 13, in the year 1850; his first name was given to him out of Dr. Marston's affectionate regard for his friend, Philip James Bailey, the author of *Festus*. Miss Dinah Muloch (Mrs. Craik) became godmother to the little boy, and it was for him that the popular authoress of *John Halifax*,

Gentleman, wrote the familiar and lovely lyric entitled *Philip, my King*. An unconscious prophecy was uttered in one of the stanzas of this poem, a prophecy to be only too adequately realised;

One day,
Philip, my king,
Thou too must tread, as we trod, a way
Thorny and cruel and cold and grey.

Philip had two sisters; the elder, Eleanor (Nellie), who afterwards became the wife of Arthur O'Shaughnessy, author of *The Epic of Women* and of other volumes of poetry; and the younger, Ciceley, who in days to come was to prove to him a second self. While in his fourth year, his sister Nellie was prostrated by scarlatina, and in order to render Philip as secure as practicable from the insidious disease he was given quantities of belladonna, probably an excellent remedy, but one which proved overpotent in the case of Dr. Marston's delicate and sensitive little boy. The eyes are supposed to have suffered from the action of the medicine; but further, and probably more irremediable, harm was endowed by a blow which the child received during play with some boisterous companions. It was soon after

this that it became evident his sight was seriously affected. Some years later an operation was performed, and a measure of temporary relief was thus afforded; but in a brief while it became plain that a doom of hopeless blindness was in store for him. The best oculists were consulted, and everything that loving anxiety suggested was done, but unavailably.

Marston's mental powers began to exert themselves at a very early period, although of necessity his opportunities towards intellectual development were sadly modified by his blindness. As it was, he produced while yet in his teens some very noteworthy poetry. Poems such as *A Christmas Vigil*, lyrics like *The Rose and the Wind*, do not read as if they were immature efforts. The latter is perhaps unsurpassed by any poem in our modern literature written in an author's nonage. Marston was then not wholly blind—that is to say, he not only easily distinguished night and day, and even sunshine and cloud-gloom, but could discern the difference between men and women by their relative sizes and the shape of their garments: the morning, during his boyhood and early youth, was not wholly deprived of its beauty, and moonlight

evenings were a source of infinite solace and delight. For the sea he early conceived a passion. It afforded him an ecstasy of enjoyment—wherein pain almost as largely prevailed as pleasure—and, taking his blindness into account, there have been few more daring swimmers than he. He would listen to the shingly roar upon the beach, or to the strange rhythmical tumult of the seaward waves, innumerably marching in vast battalions, or to the murmur of the fretful surge where the sea swept against the shell-strewn sand, with an expression so rapt, so intensely absorbed, that for the time his soul seemed to look through his shadowy eyes and to animate his face with the glow of its spiritual presence. If throughout his weary latter years he yearned for anything more than for death, it was for the neighbourhood of the sea—its ultimate silence to be about him, its moving music to be his requiem. And thus it was that among the most treasured reminiscences of his desolate years of darkness were those of broad spaces of moonlight and of the deep lustrous green of seawater.

To a dear friend, Mrs. Moulton, he once energetically stated, "No! I was *not* blind, then. I couldn't read, of course, or see

the faces of people; but I could see the tree-boughs waving in the wind, and I could see the pageant of sunset in the west, and the glimmer of a fire upon the hearth, and oh, it was such a different thing from the days that came afterwards, when I could not see anything!"

Philip Marston's first and not least loving amanuensis was his mother, who not only wrote out for her blind boy his early attempts in prose and verse, but also acted delicately and wisely the part of critic. To her love he owed much, nor was he ever chary of acknowledgment of his indebtedness. But partly as cares accumulated upon Mrs. Marston, thus preventing her from such ceaseless devotion to her son as she would fain have given, and partly from purely natural reasons, Philip's most incessant and most loving companion was his sister Ciceley, who may without exaggeration be said to have devoted her whole life to her afflicted brother. A touching tribute to her ceaseless sympathy and love was given by the latter in the pathetic verses inscribed to Ciceley Narney Marston, two stanzas of which I may here appropriately quote:

Oh, in what things have we not been as one?
Oh, more than any sister ever was
To any brother! Ere my days be done,
And this my little strength of singing pass,
I would these failing lines of mine might show
All thou hast been, as well as all thou art.
And yet what need? for all who meet thee, know
Thy queenliness of intellect and heart.

Oh, dear companion in the land of thought,
How often hast thou led me by thy voice
Through paths where men not all in vain have sought
For consolation, when their cherished joys
Lie dead before them. . . .
* * * *
Thy love to me is as thy precious hand
Might be upon my forehead if it burned
In hell, of some last fever: hold me fast,
Oh thou to whom in joy's full noon I turned,
As now I turn, the glory being past.

If it had not been for his blindness, Philip Marston's youth would have been fortunate beyond comparison with that of almost any other young poet of whom there is record. Dr. Westland Marston was not only a successful dramatist, but one of the most popular literary men in London. There were few houses in London where were frequent *réunions* more enjoyable than those in the hospitable abode near Chalk Farm. There, occasionally, would be Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his brother William, Dr.

Gordon Hake, William Morris, Swinburne, and many other celebrities and "coming men." Philip turned as naturally towards those benign intellectual influences as the heliotrope to the sun: his poetic development was rapid, and before he had emerged from his teens he had written—as has already been said—some eminently noteworthy poetry.

While he was putting together the poems which were to make up his first volume (a few of which, it may be mentioned here, had already appeared in the *Cornhill* and other magazines) his mother was prostrated by what proved to be a fatal illness. All who knew Mrs. Marston loved her, but to no one was her loss a greater blow than to that son whom she had so lovingly tended.

But the elasticity of youth and the quick succession of new and vivid interests overcame his despair, and it still seemed as if his coming years were not to be devoid of happiness and prosperity.

It was about this time that he won the love of Miss Nesbit. Perhaps if his eyes had not been dimmed he would have foreseen the shadow of a new and irremediable disaster. Miss Nesbit was far from robust, but only a few friends knew that she had devoloped

symptoms of consumption. She bore her unseen crown of sorrow bravely, and only when it became certain that her life was no longer secure for any length of time did she endeavour to warn her lover of the inevitable. But love had blinded his inner vision, and he either did not realise or else refused to allow himself to believe what was with infinite gentleness hinted to him.

Before I pass away from the record of his youth—for with the next and most terrible calamity he became old beyond the warrant of his years—I may quote a few passages from an obituary notice by one of Marston's most intimate and most loyal friends, Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, American poet and novelist, prefixing to these passages an excerpt describing her first meeting with the young poet when in his twenty-sixth year:

"I first met him," wrote Mrs. Moulton, "at a literary evening—a sort of authors' night—at a well-known London house, and I knew the blind poet would be among the guests; the one, indeed, whom I felt most interest in meeting. I soon perceived him, standing beside his sister Ciceley—a slight, rather tall man of twenty-six, very young-looking even for his age. He had a

wonderfully fine brow. His brown eyes were still beautiful in shape and colour. His dark-brown hair and beard had glints of chestnut; and all his colouring was rich and warm. His was a singularly refined face, with a beautiful expression when in repose—keenly sensitive, but with full, pleasure-loving lips, that made one understand how hard his limitations must be for him to whom beauty and pleasure were so dear. At that time the colour came and went in his cheeks as in those of a sensitive girl. . . . How many tales he has told me of his darkened, dream-haunted childhood! He began very early to feel the full pain of his loss of vision. He fell in love, when he was not more than ten years old, with a beautiful young lady, and went through all a lover's gamut of joys and pains; and sometimes the torture of not being able to behold the beauty of his adored was so extreme that he used to dash his head against the wall in a sudden mad longing to be done at once with life and sorrow. Yet the love of life was keen in him, and his earliest childhood was haunted by visions of future fame, which should make people acknowledge that though blind his soul yet saw unshared visions. His *life* was his education.

His father's house was the resort of many of the intellectual giants of that time; and every day's guests were his unconscious teachers. He was fourteen, I think, when he first met Swinburne, who was just then the idol of his boyish worship. At that time—so wonderful was his memory—he actually knew by heart the whole of the first series of *Poems and Ballads*. He was taken to see his demi-god, and entered the sacred presence with a heart beating almost to suffocation; and went home feeling that his hopes and dreams had been, for once, fulfilled. To the very end of his days Swinburne's friendship was a pride and joy to him."

In 1871 a great event occurred. *Song-Tide*, the first fruits of the young poet's genius, was published, and instantaneously received a warm and unmistakably genuine welcome. The leading literary journals hailed the advent of a new poet, and that cultivated section of the public which is ever alert for a new thing of promise speculated with interest as to the possibilities of the new singer.

While there was still hope that Miss Nesbit might recover—and by this time the lover's heart was often sore beset with terrible forebodings — the young poet

was gladdened by the receipt of the first copy of the book over which he had long been lovingly engaged. In it he had enshrined his love in many a beautiful sonnet and lyric, and in the delight of placing the first copy in the hands of his betrothed he almost overlooked what to every one else was becoming too evident. In the autumn of that year the life of the girl he so passionately loved flickered to a close.

With this great sorrow the youth of Philip Marston died an early death. Simultaneously, the faint, glimmering light deserted the dimmed eyes; bitter tears, tears of many hopeless days and sleepless nights, of unavailing regret and speechless yearning, quenched the flickering flame. Thenceforth darkness settled down upon his life. Verily, it seemed as if indeed, in his own words, "the gods derided him."

More and more Ciceley devoted herself to her unhappy brother, alleviating much of his grief, endlessly helping, amusing, suggesting to and acting for him. She became to him almost a necessity of life; without her he did not consider it possible he could endure the infinite weariness and sorrow which encompassed him.

Brother and sister went to live together

in lodgings, firstly at Notting Hill, and later in the Euston Road. They had sufficient means between them to enable them to live comfortably, and Philip was entering upon that sustained intellectual drudgery which brought him such bitterly inadequate monetary recompense, but which continually extended his sympathies and won for him new friends and admirers. Henceforth, except for an interval when Ciceley stayed with the Madox Browns, the two lived together in their London lodgings, save when they went into the country, or to the seaside, to France, and once to Italy. For certain golden weeks, a "sovereign season," Philip Marston revelled, sightless as he was, in the manifold delights of Italy; Florence and Venice especially enthralled him, and throughout his life the memory of this happy time remained unseared. He was wont to speak of his experiences in a manner that puzzled new acquaintances. He would dwell longingly on the splendour of the view from Fiesole or Bellosguardo, of the glory of light and shade athwart the slopes of Vallombrosa, of the joyous aspects of Florence itself, of the transmuting glamour of the scirocco, of sunset and moonrise upon the Venetian lagunes. Still more would he puzzle people

by such remarks as "I don't like So-and-so's appearance: he has a look on his face which I mistrust," or "London looks so sombre; I like to see a place looking as if it were aware of such things as sunlight and flowers." In this there was nothing of affectation, although it is undeniable that Marston was always very sensitive to any reference to his blindness: his sister Ciceley had become his second sight. Through her he saw and understood, and had pleasure in those things which otherwise would have been for him more or less sealed mysteries.

After this happy experience—too short, alas! and clouded with sad memories—Marston settled down to a regular literary life. His means, he used to say half-humorously, were children of Mercury: every note, every sovereign was winged, and departed from his possession with an expedition which was at once mysterious and alarming. In fact, then as always, his generosity and hospitality knew no limits. As these means gradually began to disappear, and as the struggle for existence became keener, his open-handedness knew no difference, and to the end he practised the same liberality.

While never tired of the company of that well-loved sister, naturally he also formed new and valued friendships. From first to last, however, no one ever quite usurped the place of Ciceley Narney Marston. Dr. Gordon Hake, an old friend of the Marstons, and as a poet the possessor of Philip's admiring regard, has, in his beautiful poem, *The Blind Boy*, perpetuated the significance of the love of this brother and sister—two exquisite stanzas from which I am tempted to quote:

She tells him how the mountains swell,
How rocks and forests touch the skies;
He tells her how the shadows dwell
In purple dimness on his eyes,
Whose tremulous orbs the while he lifts,
As round his smile their spirit drifts.

More close around his heart to wind,
She shuts her eyes in childish glee,
"To share," she said, "his peace of mind;
To sit beneath his shadow-tree."
So, half in play, the sister tries
To find his soul within her eyes.

The friend of his own age and sex whose companionship he most cherished at this time (1872), was the late Oliver Madox Brown. An acquaintanceship, much appreciated on either side, developed into

a friendship which, to the blind poet especially, meant much. The two young men saw each other regularly ; innumerable literary schemes were talked over ; poems, stories, studies from life were discussed and criticised in Marston's rooms. There one evening Oliver Brown withdrew a bulky MS. from his pocket, informed his friend that an acquaintance had sent him the manuscript of a romance for his perusal and suggestions, and forthwith began to read the strange and thrilling story of one Gabriel Denver. Once or twice Philip's suspicions were aroused, chiefly on account of the emotion which the reader could not refrain from exhibiting, but still he was unprepared for what followed. The tale excited at once his astonishment and his admiration, and on its conclusion he expressed what he felt in the most emphatic manner.

" What did you say was the name of that story ? " he asked.

" *The Black Swan*," was the reply, in a voice husky with emotion.

" And its author ? Tell me at once the author's name."

" Oliver Madox Brown."

Sincere were the congratulations, and

genuine the mutual joy and pride: that night Oliver went home with a foretaste of fame making his heart beat wildly, while Philip sat awhile in his darkness, and indulged in many a fair visionary dream for his loved friend's future.

When the two were apart, each wrote to the other: in a word their comradeship was complete, and to the older of the twain it meant more than anything else, save the devotion of his sister Ciceley. A deep and all-embracing humour was one of the chief characteristics of Oliver Brown, and he was a delightful *raconteur;* he was thus just the right companion for his blind friend. The latter had of course other friends, among whom may be mentioned his brother-in-law, the late Arthur O'Shaughnessy: indeed, Philip Marston was one of those men possessed of an occult, magnetic quality of attraction which few people could resist. Wherever he went he made would-be friends, and without any apparent effort to please he seemed to exercise a pleasant fascination over all who came in contact with him. And down to his last days he was, in company, cheerful and animated, often merry, and always genial. He never wore his heart upon his sleeve, and even to fairly intimate

friends he so rarely betrayed his secret desolation that many of them have been quite unable to realise what depths of wretchedness his forlorn spirit was wont to dwell within. Perhaps there is only one living friend of the dead poet who ever fully knew how dire was the grief and despair which gnawed at his life.

Suddenly Oliver Brown became unwell. Philip was anxious but never looked for any permanent ill-result. When, all unexpectedly, he was told that Oliver Madox Brown was dead, the shock was so great that years elapsed before he could speak calmly of his loss. Of another bereavement, soon to follow, he never spoke at all. Apart from his keen personal sorrow he deplored the untimely passing away of a young writer of such extraordinarily brilliant promise, believing as he did that no one of such precocious mental powers had appeared since Chatterton.

The young painter-romancist died in 1874. The poems comprised in Marston's volume, *All in All*, had been read *seriatim* to Oliver Brown, but the book was not actually published till after his death. At best it was a volume of sad memories, and now one of the expected pleasures attendant upon

its publication was not to be realised. *All in All* had only a limited success: its sadness was too extreme for the majority of readers, and though, in point of workmanship, it was superior to its predecessor, it was practically voted too gloomy. Some critics went the length of complaining that such a sombre tone as prevailed throughout this volume was either morbid or affected: it is almost needless to say that neither surmise was correct. Irremediable grief, as distinct from more or less placid sorrow, is so rarely experienced by men that it is not strange there should be a tendency to consider it a symptom of weakness or affectation; but if those of this bent of mind will put themselves in the place of Philip Marston—unhappy, often lonely, smitten cruelly by adverse fate, and dwelling continually in blank and terrible darkness—they will not, in all probability, find themselves strongly impelled towards the composition of very joyous verse. We are at best waifs and strays before the wind of circumstance, but when one is whirled hither and thither in absolute darkness the outlook does not become enlivening.

Marston's second volume was dedicated to his father "with profoundest love and

admiration." The greater portion of it was occupied by poems in sonnet-form, a fact which possibly conduced towards the book's limited popularity. That the author's attitude was not one of absolute despair is manifest from his prefatory words : " In the present volume," he says, " I show how the love, so longed for and despaired of, is at last vouchsafed with all attendant peace and blessedness, until the beloved one is withdrawn, and the mourner is left but a memory, under the inspiration of which he still aspires to some great and far-off good ; but is met at every turn by tempters who would mislead, and enemies who would drive back." The author's intention was that *All in All* should form a connecting link between *Song-Tide* and the final division of the series of love-poems to be entitled *A Pilgrimage*. The scheme in its entirety was never carried out, though, it may be added, many of the sonnets in *Wind Voices* were originally intended for the last-named work.

Throughout this second volume it is easy to note how frequently the poet recurs to the theme of irretrievable loss : passing years had blunted the extremity of his pain, but, keen and vital, the old agony was only more

subdued, not vanquished. Again, there is to be noted a loving hope that in the days to come, if he be remembered at all, it may be in union with her whom he had so early lost and so deeply loved :

When I, at last, with life and love break trust ;
When the soul's yearning and the body's lust
Are ended wholly as a tune out-played ;
If then, men name my name, and from these lays
The depth and glory of thy soul divine,
Shall not, beloved, my memory live in thine ?
Our memories moveless 'mid the moving days,
Intense and sad like changeless stars that shine
On ruined towers of a predestined race.

In this volume also there occurs one of the noblest and most simply direct of Marston's sonnets ; one which to all who love and have loved must be of strong and permanent appeal.

NOT THOU BUT I.

It must have been for one of us, my own,
To drink this cup and eat this bitter bread.
Had not my tears upon thy face been shed,
Thy tears had dropped on mine ; if I alone
Did not walk now, thy spirit would have known
My loneliness, and did my feet not tread
This weary path and steep, thy feet had bled
For mine, and thy mouth had for mine made moan ;
And so it comforts me, yea, not in vain,
To think of thy eternity of sleep,

To know thine eyes are tearless though mine weep;
And when this cup's last bitterness I drain,
One thought shall still its primal sweetness keep—
Thou hadst the peace and I the undying pain.

The saddest life is not without compensations: at least, this stereotyped saying may pass as a generalisation. Few men have ever had more friends than the blind poet of whom I write; men and women of the most opposite tastes and sympathies were at one in their regard and love for Philip Marston.

"There *is* a kind of compensation," he remarked to me once, "in the way that new friendships arise to brighten my life as soon as I am bowled over by some great loss. But one's capacities for friendship get worn out, and it is impossible that I can ever be to new friends that which I was to those who are gone and am still to the one or two who are left."

About this time Philip came to know Dante Gabriel Rossetti with something like intimacy. No man ever obtained from him more fervent, it may without exaggeration be said, more worshipful regard. As a poet he considered Rossetti foremost among those of the Victorian age, and his love for him as a man was deep and abiding. Nothing

prejudiced a stranger quicker in his view than disparagement of Rossetti : admiration of the author of *The House of Life*, on the other hand, was a bond of immediate union. An appreciative letter from this source would give him more joy and stimulus than would anything else. For Swinburne, also, he always entertained emphatic admiration and strong personal regard, and among his few most treasured friendships was that with Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton. None of these, however, he saw with any frequency ; hence, after the death of Oliver Madox Brown, he found himself in growing solitude.

It was subsequently to the publication of *All in All* that Marston began to write for the American magazines; his first acceptance came from the editor of *Scribner's Magazine*. From this time forth he more and more devoted himself to production for the American public, with the result that he is now far more widely known as a poet and writer of fiction in the United States than in Great Britain. He would fain have had it otherwise, but his poems and stories met with almost invariable rejection in this country, and he became wearied of what appeared to be a hopeless attempt. Moreover, he had to live, for his means had

become straitened. Therefore, it came to pass that nine-tenths of his prose-writings and the great proportion of his short poems appeared in American journals and magazines; and that this clever story-teller and and writer of exquisite verse experienced nothing but disappointment on this side of the Atlantic.

In 1876, as has already been recorded, Marston made the acquaintance of Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton. The friendship arose from and was sustained by a keen literary and intellectual sympathy. Mrs. Moulton was interested from the outset in the young poet and his work, and Marston was soon attracted to one who evinced such kindly interest and consideration. The affectionate devotion of this most loyal and helpful of his friends did more than anything else to cheer his remaining years. In Mrs. Moulton, he not only found the most perfect intellectual sympathy; her broad and cultured taste, her wide experience of the world of men and women and of the world of books, and the charm of her society, all helped—as he said himself—to make life endurable. Every spring Mrs. Moulton came to London for the season: during her visits the blind poet forgot much of his

weary sadness, and even the long months of absence were relieved by continuous correspondence.

This friendship was formed opportunely, for it was not long afterward that Philip Marston endured another great loss—one of the most deeply felt afflictions of his life. Mrs. Moulton, as will be seen, has best right to speak of this event, so I shall let the narration be in her words. "I had known him and his sister but a few days more than two years when, on July 28, 1878, Ciceley called upon me at my rooms. Dr. Marston and Philip were away in France, and she spoke of them very tenderly that morning. She complained, when she came in, of an intense headache, and after a little I made her lie down to see what rest would do for her. She grew worse, and when the doctor came he pronounced her illness apoplexy. My name was the last words on her faithful lips; and in the mid-afternoon of that long July day she died. Quite unaware of her death—since we did not know where to find them with a telegram—and while she was still awaiting burial, her father and brother returned. On this crushing sorrow I cannot linger. I think it was the cruellest bereavement that had ever come to our poet. When

his mother, his betrothed, and his friend died, he still—as he used often to say—had Ciceley; but when she left him there remained for him no such constant and consoling presence. His other sister was married, and therefore was not in his daily life at all; and at that time she, moreover, was a chronic invalid. His father was his one closest tie; but many sorrows had saddened Dr. Marston and broken his health; and there was no one to be to Philip what Ciceley had been, as reader, amanuensis, and constant untiring companion."

Although those sea-coast and inland voyages wherein he was wont to take such keen pleasure were still indulged in, they were no longer the same. In his own pathetic words, when he spoke to me on the subject some years ago, he had undergone the horrible experience of twice becoming blind. His own sight waned in childhood and was drowned in tears in his early manhood; his second sight, his sister Ciceley, was snatched from him with more terrible suddenness.

It was at the beginning of 1880 that I came to know Philip Marston. In the autumn of the preceding year I was spending an evening with Rossetti, and I chanced to make

some reference to Marston's poetry. Finding that I did not know the blind poet and that I was anxious to meet him, Rossetti promised to bring us together ; one thing and another, however, intervened to prevent our speedy meeting. At last, one day in January, I reminded Rossetti of his promise, and the result was a line of introduction posted direct to Marston. I remember that I was fascinated by him at once—his manner, his personality, his conversation. On his part he gave a generous reception to one who had no claim to his regard save acquaintanceship with the poet for whom we had in common the most genuine love and reverence. Our friendship grew steadily—but I need not say more of it here than that with his death I have lost a very dear and valued friend.

A year had not passed since the decease of Ciceley, when fresh sorrows came in the guise of the deaths of his sister Nellie (Mrs. O'Shaughnessy) and her two children. Philip now saw more of Arthur O'Shaughnessy. One day in 1881 I was sitting with the former, when O'Shaughnessy ran into the room, reminded me of a promise to go to his house and hear him read the proof-sheets of his new book, and asked his brother-in-law

to come also. In less than a week, poor O'Shaughnessy was dead: sudden inflammation of the lungs had put an end to all his hopes and dreams.

At Eastertide in the ensuing year Rossetti's death came upon Marston with a great shock. I had been staying at Birchington shortly before the end came, and not foreseeing the imminent disaster, had brought back not unhopeful news; and, at Rossetti's request, I also planned to go down to Kent again with Philip. We did indeed journey thither shortly, but it was to attend the funeral of him whom we both so loved and revered. Now, more than ever, he began to believe that a malign fate had foredoomed all his most cherished friendships to disastrous endings. Looking through the letters which, during periods of absence, he addressed to me, I find that note of apprehension ever recurring. He had a belief, which was not altogether fanciful, that he had lived the human life on earth before. This idea is embodied in the following sonnet which he addressed to me in the first year of our friendship, the publication of which in this place may on this illustrative account be excused.

MET BEFORE.

Not surely now for the first time we meet :
So seems it to me, rather I believe
That in some vanished state one had to grieve
For loss of other, and with weary feet
Went on his way finding no sweet thing sweet,
Listless and sad, unwilling to reprieve
His thought from pain by joys that but deceive,
Nor trusting to a friendship less complete :
At length through death into new life he passed ;
And there he joined his friend, then hand clasp'd hand,
Then soul cried out to soul, re-met at last :
So seemeth it to us, who understand
Each other perfectly, and know right well
How much there is on either side to tell.

It was in 1882, also, that another friend, to whom Marston had become much attached —attracted in the first instance by the common bond of unhappiness—died under peculiarly distressing circumstances. The public who are interested in that strange and sombre poem, *The City of Dreadful Night*, know vaguely that James Thomson died in poverty and in some obscure fashion. Philip Marston and myself were, if I am not mistaken, the last of his acquaintances who saw him alive. Thomson had suffered such misery and endured such hopelessness, that he had yielded to intemperate habits,

including a frequent excess in the use of opium. He had come back from a prolonged visit to the country, where all had been well with him, but through over-confidence he fell a victim again immediately on his return. For a few weeks his record is almost a blank. When the direst straits were reached, he so far reconquered his control that he felt himself able to visit one whose sympathy and regard had withstood all tests. The latter soon realised that his friend was mentally distraught, and endured a harrowing experience, into the narration of which I do not care to enter. I arrived in the late afternoon, and found Marston in a state of nervous perturbation. Thomson was lying down on the bed in the adjoining room: stooping, I caught his whispered words to the effect that he was dying; upon which I lit a match, and in the sudden glare beheld his white face on the blood-stained pillow. He had burst a blood-vessel, and the hæmorrhage was dreadful. Some time had to elapse before anything could be done, but ultimately, with the help of a friend who came in opportunely, poor Thomson was carried downstairs and, having been placed in a cab, was driven to the adjoining University Hospital. He did not die that

night, nor when Philip Marston and I went to see him in the ward the next day was he perceptibly worse, but a few hours after our visit —when his farewell consisted of a startling prophecy, which came true—he passed away. Thus came to an end the saddest life with which I have ever come in contact, sadder even than that of Philip Marston, though *his* existence was oftentimes bitter enough to endure.

Thomson's death, and the manner of it, affected Marston very deeply. To a man of his sensitive nature, the very room where his friend had lain when his death-stroke came upon him was haunted by something inexplicable, but tragic and oppressive. This sense of haunted rooms—in a somewhat vaguer, yet not less genuine significance than the adjective generally bears—was a very real thing to him. It was for this reason that one of his supreme favourites among Rossetti's sonnets was that entitled *Memorial Thresholds*. Readers of *All in All* and *Wind Voices* will find numerous passages which give expression to it: indeed, some of his most pathetic poems were evolved from this motive:

Must this not be, that one then dwelling here,
Where one man and his sorrows dwelt so long,
Shall feel the pressure of a ghostly throng,

And shall upon some desolate midnight hear
A sound more sad than is the pine-trees' song,
And thrill with great, inexplicable fear?

Probably no one has ever felt more grateful to the inventor of the "type-writer" than did Philip Marston. When he purchased and learned the method of working one of those invaluable machines, he found himself to a great extent independent of an amanuensis. By this means he wrote all his stories and poems, and also his extensive correspondence, without assistance from any one. It was, naturally, a matter of no little moment to him to be able to write, enfold, and address private letters without having to place expressions meant for one person within view of another. For a considerable period he spelt for the most part phonetically, but in course of time he came to write fairly correctly. Dr. Westland Marston generally revised the type-written sheets intended for publication.

He also became proficient in the Braille system, but was unable to gain much satisfaction therefrom, owing to the fact that few of his friends at a distance could bring themselves to learn it sufficiently for correspondence.

As each year elapsed Marston found his reputation in America more and more assured. His stories and poems not only gained acceptance at the hands of editors, but procured for him many friends. After Mrs. Moulton, the friend of oversea whom he most valued was the " Poet of the South," Paul Hamilton Hayne ; for E. C. Stedman, R. W. Gilder, Whittier, and others, he had a sincere regard.

During the spring months of 1884 I was residing at Dover, and in April (if I remember aright) Philip came down from London to spend a week or so with me. The weather was perfect, and our walks by shore and cliff were full of delight to us both : once or twice we crossed to Calais for the sake of the sail, spent a few hours in the old French port, and returned by the afternoon boat. In the evenings, after dinner, we invariably adjourned to the beach, either under the eastern bluffs or along the base of Shakespeare's Cliff. The music of the sea, in calm or tidal turbulence or tempest, had an unfailing fascination for him. To rest upon the edge of the cliff, and hear the fretful murmur of the surge far below ; to lie at full length and listen to " the long withdrawing roar " down the shelving shingly strand ; to sit

in some sheltered place among the rocks, and hearken to the tumult of stormy waters as they surged before the gale and dashed themselves into clouds of foam and flying spray almost at our feet ; such experiences as these afforded him, for the time being, an exhilaration or, again, a solace which to him meant much.

He took keen pleasure in learning how to distinguish the songs of the different birds, and all spring's sounds and scents were exquisite pleasures to him. How well I remember the rapt expression of puzzled delight which animated his face, as one day we crossed some downs to the westward of Folkestone.

" Oh, what is that ? " he cried, eagerly ; and, to my surprise, I found that what had so excited him was the crying of the young lambs as they stumbled or frisked about their mothers. He had so seldom been out of London in the early spring that so common an incident as this had all the charm of newness to him. A frisky youngster was easily enticed alongside, and Philip's almost childlike happiness in playing with the woolly little creature was something delightful to witness. A little later I espied one which had only been a few hours in the world,

and speedily placed it in his arms. He would fain have carried it away with him ; in his tender solicitude for it he was like a young mother over her firstborn.

As we turned to walk homeward we met a boy holding a young starling in his hand. Its feeble, strident cries, its funny little beak closing upon his finger under the impression it was a gigantic worm, delighted him almost as much as the lambkin.

"A day of days!" was his expressive commentary, as tired and hungry we reached home and sat down to dinner, with the deep boom of the sea clearly audible through the open window.

Marston had a subtle sympathy with nature which amounted almost to a new sense. A cloud would rise upon the horizon, and he would be the first to portend some change in the weather ; it was as if his sightless eyes yet conveyed some message to his mind, or as if his ears heard an ominous murmur of far-off wind and rain inaudible to senses less acute. Sunset, a solemn moon-rise, the company of cloud-drifts passing westward and glowing with delicate and gorgeous tones and hues, to these he was never insensitive, even if no friend referred to them ; in some occult fashion

he seemed to be aware that these things were making earth and heaven beautiful.

And because to him the sea and the wind were always among the most wonderful things in nature, endlessly suggestive, endlessly beautiful to eye and ear and spirit, his love for them never grew less. But in the growing sadness of his last years one of his most abiding sorrows was the loss, in great part, of the old passionate love and yearning for nature. But for his blindness this would not have been so, for to men and women who have anything in them of spiritual life, nature is the source of their most sacred comfort. On a mountain-slope, on a wide plain, by the margin of the sea, the keenest grief becomes rarefied till it attains to a higher and nobler plane of sorrow.

Far more deeply than some of his friends guessed did he feel this passing away of the old worship. It was a genuine sorrow to him, a deep and cruel disappointment. "It is as though one were parting with one's last hope—one's sole remaining consolation," he once remarked to me bitterly. In the sonnet called *Youth and Nature* he has given expression to this sense of estrangement:

Is this the sky, and this the very earth
I had such pleasure in when I was young?
And can this be the identical sea-song,
Heard once within the storm-cloud's awful girth,
When a great storm from silence burst to birth,
And winds to whom it seemed I did belong
Made the keen blood in me run swift and strong
With irresistible, tempestuous mirth?
Are these the forests loved of old so well,
Where on May nights enchanted music was?
Are these the fields of soft, delicious grass,
These the old hills with secret things to tell?
O my dead Youth, was this inevitable,
That with thy passing, Nature, too, should pass?

The last-quoted sonnet is from the third of Philip Marston's published volumes of poetry. In 1883-84 this book was issued by Mr. Elliot Stock, with the poetic title *Wind Voices*. Its success was immediate and emphatic. Messrs. Roberts Bros., of Boston, speedily disposed of every copy of the American edition, and the London publisher sold the last few score at a considerable premium. The book is consequently almost as difficult to obtain as *Song Tide*, for it was not stereotyped.

In addition to a further instalment of his exquisite flower-lyrics, grouped under the title *Garden Secrets*, there are touching poems in memory of Oliver Madox Brown, Arthur O'Shaughnessy, James Thomson,

and Rossetti, and several sonnets addressed to C. N. M. (his sister Ciceley.) Among the more ambitious poems are *Caedmon*, where the Saxon poet relates before the Abbess Hilda that famous dream which resulted in the Song of Creation; *Caught in the Nets*, a merman story founded on a passage in Sir Richard Baker's *Chronicle*, wherein is described the capture of a strange, half-human creature of the deep, on the Suffolk coast in the twelfth century, and its ultimate escape to the "dear waves" and "some sea-girl's damp and salt caresses"; *The Ballad of the Monk Julius*, based on the familiar legend of the demon-tempted monk; the *Ballad of Brave Women*, a record of two heroic Swansea fishermen's wives, which, however, is too markedly Rossettian; and *Nightshade*, founded on the conclusion of Oliver Madox Brown's *Dwale Bluth*, as designed though not completed by its author.

His health henceforth steadily declined. His power of concentration lessened, and all labour became a weariness to him. "It is impossible I can live long," he was wont to exclaim, impatiently—"how unutterably thankful I would be for the end, if only—if only—I *knew* what lay beyond!"

Until the summer of 1886, however, he still wrote industriously, though rarely in verse. In August he and his father were at Brighton for rest and change of air. Every autumn for some years past, the two solitary men, father and son, went away somewhere together; neither was wont to tire of the other's companionship, for the friendship between them was almost as brotherly and amicable as paternal and filial. One hot day, while bareheaded in the glare of the sun, Philip was prostrated by a heat stroke, which was followed by serious illness of an epileptic nature. Mind and body suffered from the strain, and the derangement foretold death.

Throughout the winter his letters were full of foreboding and weariness. "You will miss me, perhaps, when I am gone, but you must not mourn for me. I think few lives have been so deeply sad as mine, though I do not forget those who have blessed it." This was the keynote of each infinitely sad letter.

Serious illness and months of tardy convalescence prevented my seeing anything of Philip Marston from the spring of 1886 until December. On Christmas forenoon I went to see and spend an hour or so with him.

He was in bed, and I found the alteration in him only too evident.

On the last day of January paralysis set in. Until his death fourteen days later he lay speechless, as well as sightless. His efforts to make himself understood were at times most harrowing. Certain desires he managed to convey, but latterly his will-power was insufficient even for the tremulous raising of his poor wasted hand in sign of acquiescence or negation. To another friend and myself I know that he consciously said farewell: blind though he was he saw the shadow of death coming very near.

Looking at his serene face on the day ere the coffin-lid enclosed it, where something lovelier than mortal sleep subtly dwelt, there was one at least of his friends who forgot all sorrow in a great gladness for the blind poet—now no longer blind, if he be not overwhelmed in a sleep beyond our ken. At such a moment the infinite satisfaction of Death seems bountiful largess for the unrestful turmoil of a few "dark, disastrous years."

1888.

SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES

POSSIBLY, even now, after more than forty years of continuous toil of spirit and labour of hand in that quest which is the highest quest of man—the quest of beauty—Edward Burne-Jones must await till a much later day, an adequate judgment of his great achievement, and of his, it may well be incalculable, influence.

The man is so lately gone from us, with so tragical suddenness, while he was yet at work and with mind set upon unaccomplished dreams, that though we may be familiar with every great or significant thing he has done, from his first *tempera* experiment, the *Merlin and Nimue* of 1858, to the *Dream of Launcelot at the Door of the Chapel of the San Grael*, of 1896, we may be unable to realise, if not what was so obvious, the nobility of the man, at least the greatness of his achievement. There is a spiritual revelation that is unique—the revelation of a man in the strange auroral light which pertains to the first hours of

death. In that brief season of insight we discern the reality disengaged from the accident, the perdurable from the perishable. Of all men I have known I can think of none who, in that unique hour, stood forth so like in the immortal part to that which had been the mortal. But one cannot distinguish, cannot in a moment appreciate the work, thus. Time is needed; mental perspective, spiritual vista. I recall some words written by Burne-Jones himself, in the year when he left Oxford to devote himself to the one life, though until then unforeseen, to which he felt impelled: "Some interval of time must always pass before we can take in all the magnitude of a man, or cycle, or event, just as interspace is needed by the eye before it can see proportion in visible objects; so that we never recognise in the slowly heaving sides of a great mountain, as we walk over it, what seemed in the distance so abrupt, terrible, and majestic."

In time we shall better be able to distinguish between that in his work which is on the hither side of genius and that which is "owre the hills and far away." But of the man, as the personal tradition wanes, how little shall be left of the memory

of that sweet winsomeness, that ready fellowship, that nimble sympathy, that entire and admirable lovableness; in a word, how little shall be left wherewith to create a semblance, to fashion a living portrait, of one whose achievement has been so high, so distinctive, and, in its influence, so potent.

To others better qualified I must leave the task of the limner. Some notes I have given elsewhere, hints and memoranda for some portraitist of more knowledge as well as skill. Therefore, here, I must content myself with this, that the man himself was so great, so lovable, so admirable, that there have been moments since his death when many who knew him must have regarded the long and splendid achievement of his genius as merely the beautiful accident in the life of a man of lovely and noble nature. But, of course, there is the truer vision which cannot see the one apart from the other; which discerns in the man everything of nobility and beauty that is in the work; and in the work perceives everywhere the expression of those spiritual ideas which were the man.

What others better qualified may do in biography, others better qualified may do

in criticism. Frankly, it is a matter of indifference to me, at this moment, when one is so much the more concerned with a great loss than with a weighing of merits and demerits, whether he be accounted less great than the great, or below these again, or be but a sinner of art barely redeemed by dignity and individuality. That Sir Edward Burne-Jones was not impeccable; that his noble manner was sometimes, and particularly of late, clouded by a less noble mannerism; that his drawing was sometimes in accord with an arbitrary conception of proportion rather than with the exigent right or wrong of actuality; that sometimes the achievement lags overmuch behind the creative emotion; in a word, that he had with his high and rare qualities the defects of these qualities, is, I take it, sufficiently self-evident. Nor has the time come, even for those with some claim to speak with authority, to say what place he is to take, or where he is to be uplifted, or where set down. Again, it is not as if the wonder and beauty of his work were a new thing to us in the sense of a recent revelation. For many years it has been discussed from every possible standpoint; it has known every vicissitude of praise and dispraise; it has

been adjudged by the noble and the ignoble ; it has filled imaginative minds with beauty and unimaginative minds with bewilderment, and small minds with mocking laughter ; it has drawn from the myriad commonplace of *Punch* the "criticism," "Yes, burn Jones" ; it is exercising at this moment a permanent and incalculable effect in the development of a nobler ideal of the beautiful in art, and to this day it is derided when not abhorred of those who bow down before the Academical Scarlet Woman who sitteth at Burlington House. We are all, perhaps, a little weary of the futile and the obvious ; and in art is there anything more obvious than that many are called, few chosen ; anything more futile than to persuade the many against its own indifference ?

The day will come when a fit judgment can be made ; and, meanwhile, many acute and suggestive appreciations will help to that end. But just as here I relinquish biographical detail and all personal reminiscence save that which has direct interpretative bearing, so I forbear from taking the achievement of Burne-Jones *seriatim*, and, in so doing, from attempting a critical estimate of where he has succeeded

and where apparently failed. As for a descriptive catalogue of his pictures, that would not only be mere iteration of what is commonly known, but would in every sense be superfluous. Readers who wish details of this kind will find them in the excellent biography of the great artist, by Mr. Malcolm Bell, or in the more concentrated, but not less excellent monograph by Mrs. Ady.

All I wish to do here is to interpret, as best I can, what was essential and inevitable in the genius of Edward Burne-Jones.

Already one or two able critics have expressed clearly certain essential points, beyond the sea-line of the endless tidal ebb and flow of public opinion. Thus, one defines him with true apprehension as the Painter of Otherworldliness. Recalling Swift's affirmation that "whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together," he adds, "that what there is of truth in this famous saying may be applied to the things of the spirit, no less than to those of the earth; and that

whoever adds a new window into the world of the imagination, and puts before us new lights of wonder and beauty, does an essential service to his country." Another and exceptionally subtle and acute critic has, in his eloquent obituary of the great painter, one phrase which adequately presents the best standpoint for the moment: "How all this will appear to new generations it is not we who can say, though two periods of unjust depreciation may be thought to have paid its debt to mortality. For each band of youth there is some wizard who opens the gates of the dream-world, and youth itself, its desires, the spirit's fashion of the moment conspire to make the vision glorious. After, when the mood changes and another spell is cast, these conspiring forces fall away, the art is judged, and the fashion is judged."

Well, the conspiring forces have not yet fallen away, and the dreamer has only now passed from the lesser to the greater dream.

In that early essay of his in literature, of which so much has been said since his death, there occur words so apposite that I may well give them here: "Behold we know nothing of him henceforth for ever; that hour revealed him in silence; hence-

forward he is locked up and sealed against a time to come."

Yet, just because there is often something of revelation in even the most meagre personal detail, I should like to say a word of Edward Burne-Jones as last I saw him, a few weeks before that weakening seizure of influenza which preceded, and no doubt immediately induced, his death.

It seems only a few weeks ago that I was walking with him through a crowded western thoroughfare. We met in Trafalgar Square, and before we spoke I noticed how much older he looked than when I had seen him a few months before; how worn; and apparently how more than ever given over to that interior life whose spiritual reflection revealed itself in the visionary eyes. These strange luminous eyes always impressed people who met the great painter for the first time; and even old acquaintances, coming suddenly upon him unawares, when the reality of dreams was much more to him than outward actuality, could not fail to realise anew how much of the man was in that curiously lit gaze, as though entranced spiritual reverie were shining there. Of late years, when walking alone, he was often seen with moving lips, as though in silent

speech or recalling some of those lines of a remote beauty, ancient or modern, in which he took so great a delight; but generally he was descried walking swiftly, with head slightly thrown forward, and with intent, dreaming eyes.

On this day when I saw him for the last time I noticed that he was murmuring to himself as he came along. Something in his rapt expression persuaded me to avoid him, but just as he passed he turned and held out a hand with winsome cordiality.

"I was thinking," he added, after we had walked a short way, "of a large picture I have long had in my mind to paint; an *Ave Maria!* I have pondered this in a hundred ways for years past; but ever since dear Morris died I have thought of it much more, for we had talked about it not long before his death. Still, I have not been able to get at it. Something brought it into my mind to-day, and what I was recalling to myself when we met was a strange little poem that 'Topsy' wrote when we were both undergraduates at Oxford more than forty years ago.* You will find it in a lovely little tale that has

* "Topsy" was a favourite nickname of William Morris among his intimate friends.

never been reprinted since it was published in *The Oxford and Cambridge,** called *The Hollow Land.* This is how it goes :

Queen Mary's crown was gold,
King Joseph's crown was red,
But Jesus' crown was diamond,
That lit up all the bed

Mariæ Virginis.

Ships sail through the Heaven,
With red banners dress'd,
Carrying the planets seven,
To see the white breast

Mariæ Virginis.

Then, abruptly, and with a petulance foreign to his singularly sweet and courteous disposition, he exclaimed : " But there, you don't expect a spent horse to win a race. Let us say no more about my work. I have done what I could. As for what I have told you, well, we all love to live among our dreams." When I rallied him upon this (very characteristic) mood of depression, he insisted that he knew he had but a brief time in which to work. " Do you remember," he added abruptly, " what Rossetti used to say about the fatal month of May ? " And when I said I did, but

* The (now exceedingly rare) *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* for 1856.

reminded him that after all Rossetti died in April, he exclaimed—"A few days one way or another means little."

A day or two before his death I was looking at some reproductions of drawings of his, and, recalling what Sir Edward had said, was glad to think that the fatal month of May, so dreaded by the great painter, was safely over; and, as it chanced, I was near the Grange, in North End Road, on June 16, and heard from a friend, met in that quiet thoroughfare, that Burne-Jones was hard at work, and would be painting as long as the light lasted. At dawn, on the 17th, he became suddenly ill, and shortly after succumbed to that most fugitive and treacherous of organic troubles, *angina pectoris*. He had, thus, the sudden death for which he had always hoped, and fulfilled another ideal, in that he was at work to the end. If he had lived till August 28 he would have completed his sixty-fifth year.

The first impression, and it is a durable one, given by any adequate consideration of the achievement in art of Edward Burne-Jones, is that of a singular continuity. A continuity of inspiration; a singular continuity in aim and effort; and, with all

allowance for development from immaturity to maturity, as, later, for the artifice of a mannerism distinct from that shaping art which was an inevitable development from within, a singular continuity in the work itself. No one can look at the earliest drawings of Burne-Jones and not discern in them the shaping mind and fulfilling hand of the artist who, it may well be, has bequeathed to us in the last quarter of a century a greater heritage of beauty than any other English painter has done. There is no æsthetic, only a technical, difference between the *Annunciation* of 1860 and the *Star of Bethlehem* of 1890; the first oil-picture, *The Prioress's Tale* (1858), may be laid by the side of *The Heart of the Rose* or *Love among the Ruins*, painted in the nineties; and in the lovely *Sponsa di Libano*, of a year or two ago, is the same revealing touch as in the youthful pen-drawing of *Alice la Belle Pèlerine*, or that strange water-colour, *Sidonia Von Bork*, with its hint of fantastic mediæval beauty.

It is rare that an artist enters at once upon his inheritance, or, having entered into possession, that he is able to see clearly the aim and end in the first tentatives of adolescence. But, almost from the day when, in

company with his fellow-undergraduate at Oxford, William Morris, his artistic self was quickened into active life through a drawing by a then little-known artist, in a then already defunct magazine,* Edward Burne-Jones recognised that, for him, the line of imagination lay along the beautiful and mysterious borderland of actuality and dreamland: that actuality, so infinitely more stronge and alluring, because irradiated by the remote glow and rainbow-light of the land of the imagination; and that dream-land, so much the less an exquisite figment, so much the more a genuine revelation of spiritual reality, because habited with the familiar white clouds, the pastoral meadows, the winding ways, with rock and tree, valley and upland, and with men mortal as ourselves and women no more divine than their kindred of Arden—because habited with those happy commonplace things. From the outset he saw life symbolically. Thus spiritual ideas took on a new pictorial raiment; the flowing line and interwoven colour, which we recognise as the raiment woven from the loom of his individual imagination, being but the beautiful accident

* Rossetti's drawing, *The Maids of Elfinmere*, which appeared first in *The Germ*, 1850.

of a fresh and exquisite apparition of spiritual truths. To all of us to whom the interpretations, the revelations, of the imagination mean so infinitely more than anything else the human mind can reveal, Burne-Jones is no remote dreamer, but only a comrade who has fared further, who has seen beyond our horizons, whose spiritual outlook is deeper and wider. "When we think," he wrote, as a young man, in that early essay already alluded to, "when we think upon heroic men, conquerors, prophets, poets, painters, musicians, it is for the most part *in the light of difference*, . . . seldom, if ever, *in the light of unity*." It is because, in the truest sense, Burne-Jones is a profound realist—only his realism is not that aggregating observation of the detective intelligence, but the perceiving and unifying vision of the imagination—that to those of us who are in any sense his kindred, however remote, he is real and near to us in the light, not of difference, but of unity.

In this essay, now again alluded to, immature in expression as it is, there is ample proof that the man is revealed in hints, of which life-long literary work would only have been an expansion. It was thus with his painting. His intellectual scrupu-

lousness is disclosed in a remark such as this: "Alas, those brilliant formulas in which we sometimes fold our criticisms and condemnations, and suffer them to pass from mouth to mouth without question or gainsay, how are they not the cause of infinite injustice to others, and to ourselves of loss irreparable." His intellectual and artistic singleheartedness is even more conspicuously unveiled in—"Our work, whatever it be, must be the best of its kind, the noblest we can offer." The Burne-Jones who had not yet begun his lifework, wrote this; and over the tomb of the great painter who has just passed from among us, the same words might aptly be inscribed, or the same in effect: "His work, whatever it was, was the best of its kind, the noblest he had to offer."

The formative influences in the youth of this great painter were intellectually so important that it would have been strange if he had shown no ability or inclination for literary expression. The subtle voices of *The Germ* were still the alluring echoes from a haunted land. The exquisite art of Tennyson, the strenuous rhetoric of Carlyle, the new strange beauty of the genius of the young Rossetti, the urgent intensity of Browning,

the superb prose of Ruskin—these were the flames in that day at which the torches of eager youth were lit. And as for Edward Burne-Jones, who had come to Exeter College with an imagination already quickened with Hellenic mythology and Pagan dreams of beauty, and had there at once found an ideal (as well, as it proved, a lifelong) friend in a young Oxonian, also newly arrived at the University, also a Welshman, and also come with the intention ultimately to enter the church—for Burne-Jones it could hardly have been possible that he should not have developed mentally with eager swiftness. Through William Morris he tasted of the sweet hydromel of Chaucer, of the wild honey of Arthurian romance. In art, a prophet, though disguised as an "Oxford Graduate," had preached a new gospel, and with the speech of those who dwell in high places. In its practice, the painter who drew the wistful faces of the *Maids of Elfinmere*, and the poet who had written *The Blessed Damozel*, was already a leader, young, and, in a sense, unknown as he was. Holman Hunt, Millais, and other young men were conveying to their elders and preceptors the bitter lesson that these preceptors and elders knew very

little that was worth knowing. In a word, the spirit of intellectual and spiritual revolt was in the air, as it had been earlier in the century. Only, instead of the insincerities of Byron and the futilities of insurgents in art such as Haydon the calling voices were those of Carlyle and Ruskin; while in the arts of silent beauty, Turner had just ceased from his revelations of natural splendour, and Rossetti and Millais and Holman Hunt had begun that union of intense spiritual emotion with emotional intensity in expression—which, as much in whim as in earnest, dubbed pre-Raphaelitism—was already mistrusted and disparaged by all who spoke glibly of art and had but the dimmest idea of what the word means, and none at all of the aim, spirit, and achievement of those mediæval dreamers in line and colour who preceded the master-craftsman of Urbino.

And, as a matter of fact, Burne-Jones did at one time think of devoting himself to literature. Rossetti, who was ever ready with generous encouragement, admitted he might succeed; though, as Burne-Jones told me himself, the poet-painter doubted if his pupil could attain to the same detachment, with the pen, instead of the brush as

his medium—" that detachment which is so imperative for the creative mind in any art, as I've often heard him say." But Morris, young as he was, proved a wiser counsellor. " You would always be losing yourself in the idea," he would say, " as long as you wrote in prose; and as for verse, you haven't got the true faculty, and, after all, I would far rather see you a good parson than a second-rate poet."

It is generally averred, and I think both Sir Edward's biographers, Mr. Malcolm Bell and Mrs. Ady, confirm the statement, that he published only one paper in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine.* I am not sure if Mr. Fulford (who edited it) is still living, or if any one can settle the point definitely; but I have always understood that both the Thackeray essays in that one-year magazine—that in the January and that in the June numbers—were by Burne-Jones; indeed, that they were one rather ill-constructed essay severed into two sections on account of length. Internal evidence, too, certainly seems to indicate this. The style is the same, in its demerits as well as its merits; and there are many phrases which are not only in conformity with others of a kindred nature in the earlier paper, but

might readily have fallen from Burne-Jones' lips at any time of his life. Here, for example, are a few representative, and, as I believe, idiosyncratic sentences. "If nobody ever went beyond the tether of a rule, we should all stand still, and the state of the world be stereotyped in imperfection." . . . . "Why should we not all have as much, instead of as little, happiness as we may." . . . . "Ore implies dross; refining, refuse; labour, some degree of waste; but so long as there is a healthy preponderance of gold, refinement, and effort after excellence, so long may we be well satisfied that we are not at a standstill." . . . "Men are not made for rules, but rules for men." . . . "What is Principle? Principle to me is feeling regulated; to you, feeling suppressed." The same crudities occur, too, as in the passage about respectability, beginning, "All is not gold that glitters; all is not respectable that bears the name, &c. &c."; which has its counterpart in the *Newcomes* essay in "Of all marvels in this same universe that pass our poor philosophy I doubt not this of marriage is the very strangest, seeing to what end it has arrived at last, and from what beginning——" or in this strangely crude intellectual judg-

ment, "I protest that in the *Waverley Novels* and in the whole historical romance school which followed them, one looks in vain for anything to sympathise with."

But, further than this, it is quite possible that more than the Thackeray articles in the *Oxford and Cambridge* are due to Burne-Jones. I do not remember ever having asked the painter himself, though I have a vague recollection of his having alluded, on one occasion, to his having "once had a spurt at literary work which kept me going for some months." But I do recall a remark of William Morris's one day at Ford Madox Brown's studio, in reply either to M. Destrée, or some other foreign art writer who chanced to be there, and had been inquiring as to the authorship of certain contributions to *The Germ* and the *Oxford and Cambridge*, that "Jones wrote two or three review articles" for the latter. Again, and more definitively, I took up one day, at Walter Pater's rooms in Brasenose, a copy of the *Oxford and Cambridge*, which had names pencilled after most or all of the contributions. It was not Pater's own copy, but one lent him by a friend, and so he could not lend it to me; but, at his suggestion, I copied the pencilled indications, and afterwards transferred them

to my own incomplete set of the magazine. Of course there might well have been no authenticity in these suggested authorships, for at that time (early in the eighties) there was much discussion and speculation in Oxford concerning everything to do with Rossetti, and indirectly with those associated with him, and, as an outcome, a good deal of surmise about the *Ox and Cam*, as it was called for short. Moreover, one at least of the pencillings was wrong, for while the lovely story of *Gertha's Lovers* was rightly attributed to William Morris, his other romance, *The Hollow Land*, was attributed to "Rossetti, who also wrote *Hand and Soul* in *The Germ*."

If authentic, Burne-Jones would thus also be the author of the long and interesting article on Ruskin, opposite to the publication of the third volume of *Modern Painters*; and of that *On Two Pictures*, Ford Madox Brown's *The Last of England*, and Rossetti's *Dante and the Dead Beatrice* (the early water-colour, not to be confused with the great oil-picture now in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool). It is difficult, indeed, not to credit the second paper at least to Burne-Jones; for the youth in his twenties spoke with the same spiritual accent and

with much the same verbal phrasing as the man in his sixties. Who does not recognise Burne-Jones, the man, in this (written of one of his idols)—" you will not suffer this man, being such, and much more than I can express, to go on his way, witnessed against by lying spirits, obscured for you, and darkened by critics, whose pitiful revenge would sacrifice truth, and conscience, and fair name, and anything and everything, to wreck its little monthly vengeance." Yet, lest there should be any misapprehension as to the bitterness in this sentence, whether authentic or merely characteristic, it should be added that Sir Edward Burne-Jones would never have spoken thus in relation to himself, to his own work. In the defence of others, above all of Ruskin, of Rossetti, of Morris, of Mr. Swinburne, he was ever swift in indignation against the malice or impertinence of petty minds, against " the long-necked geese of the world that are for ever hissing dispraise, because their natures are little."

If, as I take it, the Ruskin essay is also his, it may be worth while to excerpt two or three, in any case, characteristic sentences. . . . " Is the sun ever so conservative of the old type that it cannot find a language

for itself each new morning?" "In us also there are mines of measureless wealth, if we would rise up and work them: 'for, rightly, every man is a channel through which heaven floweth.'" . . . "Whatever is noble in art and nature, may not be comprehended without vigilance: what part soever of it commends itself at once to the senses, is the least and lowest. . . . It is quite possible to hear a thing every day, and not to know it, and see a thing every day, and not observe it." . . . "I have heard [a rare and fine work of the imagination] called vulgar—and by people whose combined minds set to work upon a thought, could produce nothing from it that would not be hopelessly and ineffably vulgar. Remember once for all, the noblest things in the hands of the ignoble man are vulgar, and the meanest things in the hands of the great man are noble. . . . To us his work [that of the great poet or painter] is ideal, to himself, real, and verily existence."

"To us his work is ideal; to himself, real, verily existent." In that may be heard the keynote. From youth to fulfilling manhood, from early to late maturity, Edward Burne-Jones dwelled, in spirit and imagination, with beautiful dreams, visions

and ideas, which to us, as he has represented them, are ideal, but were to him the most important reality, the *vraie vérité* of life.

It has been averred that his achievement is not of the greatest, because that from first to last, it is, if not invariably sad, at least characterised by a beauty that is ever strange, remote, and melancholy. But that is a question of approach. All great art, like all great beauty, however revealed, is in a sense melancholy. How could it be otherwise ? We discern a loveliness beyond individual attainment : and the vision must leave one either insensate, and therefore it may well be blithely indifferent, or intimately reached, and therefore made alive to the pathos of divergence between the beautiful and harmonious realities of the imagination, and the less beautiful and inharmonious, or at best fragmentary, realities of common life. Before great beauty, whether wrought by nature or by man, whether of man himself or of that which is beyond and about him, we are either as children spiritually awakened, and touched to tears, by strange and exquisite music ; or as old people, with all the once-alert senses in disarray, striving with failing memories to recall the Edens

of youth, the skies that to remembrance were so cloudless, or lovely with sunhued aerial palaces and drifting spans of marvellous bows, the vivid excitements of far-off days, the hills that were ever dim and blue and wonderful, the mysterious pools in mysterious forests where beautiful shy figures of youth and maid were wont to meet, whisperings in the twilight—twilights long passed away like smoke beneath the love-star in the west—and the beating of hearts exquisitely tormented with fears only less lovely than rainbow hopes.

For when we are deeply touched by beauty, we are always baffled by some remembrance that evades us. Whether we are as children who look wonderingly outward, or as the aged who look wonderingly backward, the same wonder confronts us: and, with the wonder, mystery, the mystery of all beauty; and, with the mystery, melancholy, the melancholy of all beauty. Yet this does not mean, and Sir Edward Burne-Jones himself would have been the last to affirm it, that joyousness is not to be found; is not to be sought, in great and beautiful art. Joyousness is not necessarily a condition of amusement, as we understand the word, a happy state of

innocent laughters, not even only a conscious delight in happy things, in fortunate vicissitudes, the union of a glad mind with a glad body ; but is also, or can be, a grave ecstasy. And a grave ecstasy is the ideal of the highest art. For, after all, as has been truly said by a critic of rare insight : " l'imagination humaine est, au fond, triste et sérieuse." Moreover, the plastic arts demand not only supreme reticence, but the utmost austerity in selection. And how shall a man, seeing beyond the near horizons, however winsome or lovely these may be, not limn that which he discerns beyond ? Yet, if he does, he is warned that he is remote, that he is sad, that his visions are too lovely to be dissociate from melancholy : that this spiritual outlook, after all, is morbid and falsely aristocratical, and that a breath of the homely humour of a Wilkie or even of the buffoonery of a Jan Steen would be welcome. Those who argue thus, and they prevail—as concerning literature they swarm, with the parrot-cry that no work is great unless it contains humour, which generally means simply making a mock at something ; and oblivious of the supreme dramatic art of Greece, of *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, of Milton—do not see

that these things are not necessarily congruous. In a word, they do not see that it is possible to write of the stars without the alleviations of farce. In what conceivable way would Burne-Jones be the greater if he had alternately, or even occasionally, "painted life as we see it, you know": if he had chosen the *Village ale-house*, instead of the *Brazen Tower of Danae*, or depicted a *Harlot's Progress* instead of a *Chant D'Amour*, or emulated Morland with a farmer staring at his pigs instead of representing Dante stooping in rapt ecstasy before his *Dead Beatrice*, or painted the *Derby Day* instead of the *Mirror of Venus* or the *Quest of the Grael?* All such questionings are vanities, and worse than vanities. He answered them when he was still a youth, glad and bewildered with a new, almost hieratic, vision of beauty: "our work must not only be the best of its kind, but the noblest we have to offer." He could, at the close, as at any time during his life, have given an answer similar to that of his friend (and enthusiastic admirer) Puvis de Chavannes, who, when addressed once by an admirer, thus: "You have worked a little like the gods, alone and apart, but of all artists you have been most fortunate, you have

never had to make your ideas bend one centimetre" :—replied, smiling gravely, "I don't know how the gods work; but I could never have given anything but the best that was in me."

As for the complaint of remoteness, of strangeness, in the work of Burne-Jones, it is clear that here again the question is one of approach. To the unimaginative, all imaginative work must inevitably present a closed door. They may knock, but none will open. If they stare in at the windows they will see nothing but faded tapestries, fantastic furniture, obsolete weapons, old silence, the dust of ancient dreams. All beautiful art, all beauty, is remote: and as much when it is wed to familiar and commonplace things as when it relates to the dreams and visions of a lovelier life. The very essence of beauty is its fugitiveness, its remoteness, as though for ever unattainable; so that the light of the evening star in a sky of green and purple, the face of a beautiful woman, the Narcissus of the unknown Greek sculptor forever holding silence in thrall, the drop of dew in the moonshine, the frail bubble filled with rainbow glory, are one and all of a beauty inevitably remote and fugitive, the star of æons as the bubble of a second.

And in beauty, is it not now more than ever recognised that strangeness is what fragrance is to the loveliness of a flower, or what a subtle and foreign loveliness is to that which exhales a poignant and intoxicating odour? Walter Pater has spoken, of not beauty alone, but the element of strangeness in beauty, as the inmost spirit of romantic art: and one earlier than he, the wise and deep-seeing Bacon, wrote: "There is no Excellent Beauty, that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."

I think of Burne-Jones as having from the first been like no one else. It is true that he owed much to others; all great artists do; and that in particular he owed much to Rossetti. But he never borrowed more than a formula. In his very earliest drawings, *Alice La Belle Pèlerine* or *Sidonia Von Bork*, for instance, he displayed a genuine and unmistakable originality. That singular raptness in vision was his, which may be discerned pre-eminently in certain masters, widely differing in kind: as Lionardo, Dürer, William Blake. It is characteristic of him that one of his favourite passages in modern literature was that fine saying of Newman's: "Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect

is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven." And remembering how sacred a thing with him beauty was, and not beauty only but all beautiful things, and how for him even the commonplace relinquished often an air of something wonderful and symbolical, I am reminded of that fine saying of Pater's: "All the acts and accidents of daily life borrow a sacred colour and significance." "I recognise so much of myself in this book," Burne-Jones said once, speaking of *Marius the Epicurean*, "that at times it is almost too personal to me to read without disquietude." Like Marius, too, he knew his vocation from the first, and, discerning it, delivered himself to the worthiest that was in him to fulfil, both in aim and power. Like Marius, again, he accepted his mission with grave circumspection. I recall one summer afternoon in his studio at The Grange, when the small company of three was joined by a well-known connoisseur, whose discretion in social courtesies was not equal to his real, if commercially ordered, taste in art, Burne-Jones was painting one of the Perseus series, and had been showing some of those marvellous drawings of faces, limbs, armour,

and other details, than which, surely, there have been none more masterly since Lionardo; and, speaking for myself, I account Burne-Jones' studies as the most perfect things of their kind accomplished by any English artist, and consider them as destined to become not less profoundly admired and sought after than the pencil and silver-point drawings of Lionardo, Mantegna, Raphael, and other princes of art. The visitor to whom I have alluded remarked, after expressing his regret that some years had elapsed since he had met the painter whom he now visited, that he "couldn't make out why he and Rossetti and the rest don't consider the public a little more," adding, half apologetically, "Of course, I don't mean you should qualify for the Academy, though, after all, you might do worse; but there's no need to take your art as though you were Christian martyrs and couldn't compromise a bit. Look at Millais, for instance: no one has achieved so big a success as he has. Yet if he had stuck to his early principles like you and Rossetti and Hunt and Morris and the rest, do you think for a moment he would have become the successful man he is?"

Sir Edward (then Mr.) turned and looked

at the speaker. "Perhaps not," he said slowly, "but he might have become a greater artist."

To this, when he had recovered from the effect of a statement involving so impracticable a view of art, the collector replied that the greatest artist was he who achieved the greatest success.

Burne-Jones, like all men of an imaginative nature, disliked argument with those whose approach to any subject of discussion can never be along an avenue of the imagination. But on this occasion his impatience with a view so foreign to his own high ideal overbore his reticence. I cannot, of course, recall his exact words, and he spoke with swift and eager emphasis for some time: but the gist of what he said is as follows:

"If the greatest artist is the man who achieves the greatest success—if the greatest because of this—that author is the greatest whose books have the largest sale. Take this book, for instance (*Marius the Epicurean*). I don't suppose its sale will exceed a couple of thousand copies. But Mr. So-and-So's romance of the impossible in Africa, or Miss So-and So's romance of the intolerable nearer home, runs to tens of thousands.

Therefore, according to you, the shallow and essentially ephemeral work of a person with inventive mind and a certain literary faculty is greater than a book like this, the deeply considered and exquisitely wrought work of a true literary artist, any single page of which is literature. But the matter is really not worth arguing. There are too few who care for beauty in any art. The very name of a great writer like Pater is unknown to the vast Mudie world. Yet what writer, truly moved and actuated by the quest of beauty, but would rather be Walter Pater than (leaving aside Meredith and Hardy) all the popular novelists of the day concentrated in one gigantic 'success,' as you would call him. What poet would not rather be Keats, and read by a few hundred, than be Tupper read by a million—or even than so good and true a writer in verse as Longfellow. I remember Rossetti's saying that it had taken centuries to prepare for the brain whose shaping imagination wrought the Ode on a Grecian Urn. A thousand ingenious Longfellows, ten thousand imperturbable Tuppers, come with every age; but there is only one Keats, And so it is in art. A thousand men exhibit pictures at the Royal Academy, and

of these men, perhaps, not one is a painter. For to be a painter is not merely to apply pigments according to academical formulas and conventions; is not even to illustrate past or present, real or imaginary events or scenes so well that a charming object-lesson is given—the magic-lantern corroborations (for they are not illusions) of talent; no, is not even to become a great success, and paint anything or anybody according to the law of supply and demand, and to have the proud knowledge of being at the top of the tree, in the eyes of fifty dealers and five hundred thousand picture-gallery goers. To be a painter is to be an impassioned votary of truth, whether that truth be a spiritual idea or an historical circumstance, or an external fact: and to be so wrought by the need of recreating what has moved him, that whatever else he has to do in life must be subservient to this end; and to see this new persuading aspect of actual or symbolical truth, in the atmosphere of colour with the contours and horizons of line, to see it to the point of adequate and convincing reproduction within the boundaries of line and the just and beautiful relation of colour. But to be a great painter a man must also have a great spirit. He

must be a dreamer, and not be ashamed of his dreams; must, indeed, account them of paramount worth; he must be prepared for both indifference and hostility; he must be so continent of his faith that he will not barter the least portion of it in order to win a worthless approval; he must be so proud that he will disdain to prostitute his genius to a public use; he must be so single-hearted that, like Sir Galahad, there can be for him only one San Grael, beauty; and only one quest, the lifelong insistent effort to discern and to interpret in beauty that Loveliness, that Beauty, which is at once his inspiration, his dream, his despair and his eternal hope."

Thus Sir Edward Burne-Jones: so far as, helped by a few notes, I can recall his words.

When the visitor had left he turned to us with a deprecatory shrug. "The good fellow means so well," he said, "and is really a shrewd judge of art in its relation to commercial value; but he is a type of that vast mass, 'the general public,' who cannot understand the unselfish devotion of the creative artist to his art; who can understand success and can understand failure, but cannot understand how sometimes

success may be undesirable and even disastrous, or how relative failure may be a great and far-reaching triumph. As for what I said about Millais, I feel that deeply, though I could not say more than I did before our friend who has just left, who would repeat my words to all and sundry, and probably to Millais himself. But at nearly all his later work I look with bewildered pain. He might have been so great; but just when his noble powers had reached maturity the artist died in him and left only the splendid craftsman. And this was because he listened to that fatal siren-song of the ignorant and spiritually vulgar multitude, who love to look at pictures but who are distrustful of—when they are not actually resentful against—art, unless it be as old (and foreign) as Rembrandt, or as old (and foreign) as Titian or Raphael. As a younger man Millais set himself to interpret noble things nobly, beautiful things beautifully. Are not his *Autumn Leaves* and his *Vale of Rest* worth leagues of work such as he has been doing of late? And I for one do not hesitate to aver that Rossetti, in his splendid failure in art, was far greater both in achievement and influence than Millais is in his brilliant success. A man is to be

measured by his soul's reach as well as by that of his hands. What is a man's outlook is as important in art as it is in life. Many an artist is redeemed from failure by the power of the spirit within him. Take Leighton: Millais is an incomparably stronger painter, but Leighton is dominated by the sense of beauty of idea as well as beauty of pictorial colour, and so his work has a loveliness, a grace, above all a distinction which lifts it to a level not warranted by its inherent quality as painting pure and simple. In a word, his outlook upon life is towards that in it which is most worthy to survive in beauty. Millais', now, is towards that which most conduces to his own well-being. The two may go together, when the lesser is controlled and directed by the greater; but not otherwise. If Millais had Leighton's sense of beauty and distinction, or Leighton had Millais' magnificent painting power, the result would be a painter of genius of the supreme few. More and more I am convinced that Rossetti was right when he declared that all art should be amusing, but that the artist should follow his art with the passionate sincerity and unworldly devotion of a man such as Fra Angelico: though by 'amusing,' Rossetti

meant something else than entertainment; as in his allusion to Fra Angelico he meant rather that inward spirit of which the great pre-Raphaelite is but a noble and recognised symbol. You know . . . . and how he is exercised in spirit before he can paint a new picture, and how he cannot attain adequate expressional power until he has prayed, just as Angelico was wont to pray. Well, I do not pray thus; and the worse for me, perhaps; but I, too, never paint a new picture till after infinite searching of the spirit for the—for me—ultimate and inevitable expression, any more than I would dream of beginning a new picture without making complete and satisfying preliminary studies of every detail, often at the expense of days and even weeks I can ill afford, and of incalculable labour."

To this effect, then, Burne-Jones spoke, and I quote the gist of his remarks because they have so intimate a relation to himself, to his own art. To know the man is to know the art of the man; though the knowledge must be of the inward life and shaping spirit, and not that of the arbitrary and accidental part. Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues, as Bacon has said; and, it may be added, spirits are

not finely known but to those akin to them.

In all the long range of his beautiful work, Edward Burne-Jones displays the unwavering outlook of a rare and noble imagination. Some who do not care for his work, or for any art of its kind, admit that he is a great decorative artist; that in stained glass and in purely decorative design he takes very high rank. But he was far more than this; far more, too, than the mere beautiful dreamer of impossible dreams which so many have held him to be. For he was a man moved by the great forces of life, moved so strongly that, by the same instinct as impelled Tennyson to write anew the Arthurian legends, as moved William Morris to create the *Earthly Paradise*, as moved Dante Gabriel Rossetti to build the *House of Life*, he in turn made his own art an interior criticism of exterior circumstances, laws, and issues, and so wrought for us *Laus Veneris*, with its symbolical tapestry background—the passion of love, which some one has called the bass note in the diapason of life, against the strange the often fantastically incongruous background of actuality; or *The Mirror of Venus*, wherein those in love with love, and wrought

strangely by the passion of passion, look into the mysterious waters of life to read the riddle of their deep emotion, while behind them is a lovely and remote background of exquisite innocences, desires, and dreams; or *Pan and Psyche*, where the old bewilderment that for ever divides soul and body, and is now, in our late day, more than ever a poignant and baffling incertitude, is painted with an insight so absolute, and a beauty so unfathomable, that this small painting may well be accounted as perfect in its kind in English art as another small picture, the *Ariadne and Bacchus* of Tintoretto, in the Ducal Palace at Venice, is in Venetian art; or *The Beguiling of Merlin*, where the eternal duel between the desiring flesh and the withholding spirit is interpreted anew through the air of lovely old-world romance; *Pygmalion and Galatea*, where the ecstasy of dream, the passion of effort, the rapture of attainment, are unfolded as in a scroll for every dreaming mind; *Perseus and Andromeda*, where, again, is revealed the high dream of divine justice; *St. George and the Dragon*, where lives before us the vision of the inevitable triumph of indomitable good over vanquishable evil; *The Sleepers of the Briar*

Rose, where, as in a mirror, we discern those sons of God within us which we call dreams, hopes, aspirations, faiths, desires, spell-bound in terrible and beautiful silence—Sleepers, these, against the awakening hour, against the quickening breath of the delivering thought, the delivering vision, the deliverance through the long-baffled but invincible, and so in the end achieving quest of the soul for treasures hidden behind entangling thickets, among impenetrable woods, for a heritage beyond the dust of crowns and the void wind that blows where empires have been; or, once more, *The Days of Creation*, wherein the Word is made manifest in new beauty, the mystery of the professional order of the Divine evocation symbolically shown as it were in the very ideograms of heaven.

Of all spiritual forces in our time there is none so great as that of pity, with the cognate passionate sense of the redeeming power of love. It is this element which gives its rarest bloom and fragrance to the rarest and finest and noblest, in a word to the most spiritual art of to-day, whether expressed in words or in colour and form. In the prose of such an one as Maeterlinck, in the poetry of such as one as W. B. Yeats,

in the fiction of such an one as Thomas Hardy, in music such as that of Greig, in pictorial art such as that of Edward Burne-Jones, we are arrested by the lovelier interpretations of this deep and poignant sense of the tragic piteousness of life, of the imperative need to interpret through beauty its spiritual correspondence.

The art of Burne-Jones, in its noblest manifestation, seems to me, then, a new and individual revelation, in new and convincing beauty, of those spiritual ideas which are shaping the deepest and most distinctive thought of to-day. What has come to him in the common light of day, he has transmuted into the light of romance: what impelled his thought by its nearness and exigency, his imagination has compelled into a still and remote beauty, whence all of fret and fever is gone, whence all that is incongruous, all that is superfluous, is disengaged; where the confused and variegated vision of the many is resolved into the controlled and directed vision of the seer. It is not imagination that achieves: imagintion only uplifts: it is controlled imagination that achieves. And it is by virtue of his controlled and directed imagination that Burne-Jones, since he was twenty-five till

at sixty-five he ceased working to dream the last dream, has given to us a more incalculable and enduring treasure of beauty, with an influence for good even more incalculable—and, so far as we dare foresee, even more enduring—as no other genius of our time has done with the exception of Rossetti, whose primary greatness is that he was and has been, to adapt his own words, a central flame descending upon many altars.

1898.

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF WALTER PATER

I FIRST met Walter Pater fourteen years ago, at the house of Mr. George T. Robinson in Gower Street, at that time a meeting-place for poets, novelists, dramatists, writers of all kinds, painters, sculptors, musicians, and all manner of folk, pilgrims from or to the only veritable Bohemia. The host and hostess had the rare faculty of keeping as well as of winning friends, and were held in affectionate esteem by all who knew them ; but the delightfully promiscuous gatherings, where all amalgamated so well, were due in great part to the brilliant young scholar-poet, Miss A. Mary F. Robinson (Madame Darmesteter), and to her sister, now the well-known novelist, Miss Mabel Robinson. Among the many avocations into which Miss Mary Robinson allowed herself to be allured from her true vocation was that of *soror consolatrix* to all young fellow-poets in difficulty or distress ; and of these, none had better cause to realise her goodness of heart

and illumining sympathy than the blind poet, Philip Bourke Marston. In 1880 and 1881, it was rare that a week elapsed throughout nine months of the year when Miss Robinson did not give up at least an hour or two one afternoon for reading to and talking with the friend whom she so much admired and so much pitied. It was within a week after Dante Gabriel Rossetti had sent me with a special letter of introduction to Marston that he, in turn, took me to the house of the only friend in London who in any adequate degree filled for him the void created by the loss of his comrade, Oliver Madox Brown; and though I went with pleasure, having read with keen appreciation *A Handful of Honeysuckle*, I had no idea how much, and in how many ways, my entry into that friendly circle was to mean to me.

One afternoon, Philip Marston surprised me with the suggestion that we should make a formal call at Gower Street. As he had been there, and I with him, for a long "confab," the previous day, and as I knew his dislike of "afternoons," there seemed something perverse in his proposal; but when he added oracularly, "Do come; you won't regret it," there was nothing more to

be said. When we entered the drawing-room, at that happy moment when the last day-dusk and the fire-glow are uninvaded by any more garish light, I saw that there were a few visitors, all common acquaintances with one exception. The exception was a man of medium height, rather heavily built, with a peculiar though slight stoop. His face was pale, and perhaps a dark and very thick mustache made it seem even more so. There was a singular impassiveness about him, which I noted with vague interest—aroused, I remember, because of what appeared to me a remarkable resemblance to Bismarck, or rather to a possible Bismarck, a Bismarck who had ceased to be a *Junker*, and had become a dreamer and profound student. He stood by the piano, listening to something said, laughingly, by Miss Robinson, though his face had not even that grave smile that afterwards became so familiar to me, and his eyes were fixed steadfastly on the fire. The glow fell right across them, and I could see how deep-set they were, and of what a peculiar grey; a variable hue, but wherein the inner light was always vivid, and sometimes strangely keen and penetrating. With one hand he stroked a long-haired cat that had furtively

crept towards him, along the piano, from a high chair at the narrow end.

When he spoke I could not distinguish what he said, but I was aware of a low, pleasant voice, altogether unBismarckian. I heard Miss Robinson say something about Philip Marston; but, with the abruptness which later I found to be characteristic, her companion shook hands with her and his hostess and bade them good-bye. As he neared the door he passed Marston and myself. He did not look in our direction, yet he had hardly gained the threshold before he turned, came to Marston's side, and, taking his hand in his, pressed it cordially, saying: "I am very glad to meet you. Your poetry has given me great pleasure." Then, with the same quiet abruptness with which he had left Miss Robinson, he made his way from the room.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"It must be Walter Pater," replied Marston, almost in a whisper, for he did not know whether the visitor was still near or in the room at all.

"Surely not," I urged, having in mind a description of the author of the book that was a kind of gospel of joy to me—a description ludicrously inexact and inapt,

hough given by a member of the college of which Mr. Pater was a Fellow.

"Yes, it must have been Pater. I knew he was to be here. That was why I urged you to come. If only we'd come earlier we might have met him properly. I know every other voice in the room; and I am sure *that* was no other than the voice of Mr. Rose."

This allusion to Mr. Mallock's parody was apt to irritate me then, and I was about to jump to that red rag when Miss Robinson came up, seriously reproachful because of the lateness of our arrival. But when she saw how sorry I was not even to have known at whom I was looking, she promised that a more fortunate opportunity should soon occur.

Three days later I received an invitation to dine with my friends in Gower Street, with those welcome words added, "to meet Mr. Walter Pater."

On the second occasion, I saw Pater in a different aspect. He was suave, polite, with that courteous deference he showed to the young as well as to his equals and elders. I have never forgotten my first impression of him, when he appeared in that austere if not almost sombre aspect which, though

more rarely seen, was as characteristic as the reserved cordiality which won him so many friends.

Even at that early period of our acquaintance I noticed how swiftly responsive he was to youth as youth. When he spoke to one of the daughters of his hostess, or to any young man or woman, his face grew more winsome, and a serene, almost a blithe light came into his eyes. He looked so alert, standing by a tall lamp which gave a warmer glow to his complexion than its wont, that he seemed hardly the same man I had met before. I remember the attitude and look well, for it flashed upon me that I had seen, in an old city of Brabant, a portrait of a Flemish gentleman which, but for the accidental differences in dress and the ornamentation of the lamp, might have been painted from him there and then. I suppose he noted my intent look, for, though we had not yet been introduced, he came over to me, held out his hand, and asked how Philip Marston was, saying that he was glad to see him the other day. I was, of course, surprised that he had recognised me; for, as I have said, so far as I was aware he had not looked our way, on the afternoon in question, until he made his abrupt and brief

advance to Marston. Gravely smiling, and with eyes filled with a kind and friendly light, he added: "I recognised you at once. I am accustomed to seeing, and noting, young faces; and when once I note, I never forget. But not only do I recognise you; I know who you are."

At this complimentary remark my heart sank, for at that time I was absolutely unknown as a writer, and was sure that nothing of my youthful scribbling could have come to Mr. Pater's knowledge, or, having come, could have attracted his attention. I feared, therefore, he had mistaken me for some notable young poet or novelist, and that when he learned I was a "nobody" his interest would be less cordial. But his ensuing words set me at ease. This meeting happened at a time when I had begun to see a good deal of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, then so much a recluse that almost no strangers, and few even of friends and acquaintances, penetrated the isolation in which he lived.

With a kind touch on my shoulder Pater repeated my name, and then asked about Rossetti, and told me that after dinner he wanted to have a chat with me about the poet-painter, "the greatest man we have

among us, in point of influence upon poetry, and perhaps painting."

I had been told that Walter Pater was too reticent, too reserved, perhaps too self-absorbed to be a good or even an interesting conversationalist at a dinner-party. Then, and later, I had opportunity to note that if he was self-absorbed he did not betray it, and that he was neither reserved in manner nor reticent of speech. That evening he was possessed by a happy gaiety. Humour was never Pater's strong point, but on that occasion he was both humorous and witty, though with the quiet wit and humour of the Hollander, rather than of the Frenchman. From the first, I never took Walter Pater for an Englishman. In appearance, in manner, he suggested the Fleming or the Hollander ; in the mien and carriage of his mind, so to say, he was a Frenchman of that old northern type which had its meditative and quiet extreme in Maurice de Guérin, and its intensely actual extreme in Guy de Maupassant. Neither mentally nor physically could I discern anything British in him, save in his appreciations ; and he had traits which affiliated him to those old Huguenot bearers of his name who no doubt had a strong Flemish strain in their French blood.

After the ladies had gone, we found ourselves next each other. At once he began to speak to me about Rossetti, asking first many questions as to his health, his way of life, and what he was doing with brush and pen.

"Of the six men now living," he said, "who are certain to be famous in days to come—Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Rossetti, and Swinburne—one is, in my judgment, the most significant as well as the most fascinating. Of these, Ruskin has had by far the most influence over the sentiment of people; Arnold has exercised the most potent influence on intellectual manners, and probably on intellectual method; and Tennyson has imposed a new and exigent conception of poetic art, and has profoundly affected the technique not only of contemporary poetry, but of that which is yet unwritten. As for Browning, he is, and perhaps long will be, the greatest stimulus to hopeful endeavour. He is the finest representative of workable optimism whom England has given us. I am convinced that hundreds of people who delight in his writings are primarily attracted by his robust, happy-go-lucky, hail-fellow-well-met

attitude towards what he himself prefers to call Providence, and to the tragic uncertainties and certain tragicalities of life. How often one hears the remark, given with conclusive emphasis, " Ah, but how hopeful he is of every one and everything ! No one can admire Browning at his best more than I do ; but I do not think his genius is so wedded to his conscious and often tyrannical optimism as is commonly supposed."

" Then Robert Browning is not the one of the six to whom you refer so specially ? "

" No ; certainly not. Browning is a great poet, perhaps a greater than any of us know. Unquestionably, he, and he only, can be thought of as the successor to the Laureateship, if, as is likely, he survive Tennyson. I think of him sometimes as a superb god of poetry, so proudly heedless or reckless that he never notices the loss of his winged sandals, and that he is stumbling clumsily where he might well lightly be lifting his steps against the sunway where his eyes are set. But I do think he will be much read in the future, as he is now, chiefly as a stimulant to high-heartedness, to high hope and a robust self-assurance. I remember Matthew Arnold saying that he would admire Browning still more but

for his depressing optimism. —— of Balliol, who had never met Browning, was wont to say that the poet must be, or have been, a very unhappy man. 'Such a robust flouting of probabilities,' he would urge, 'could be due only to the inevitable law of reaction —the same that made Keats enjoy a beef-steak after the most sentimental deliverances in *Endymion*, or that made Byron go off with La Guiccioli after he had extolled the beauty of virtue.' But this attitude towards Browning is rare. To most people he is an inexhaustible spring of hope. And hope, I need hardly say, is to most people more vitally near and dear than poetry; or, if you will, let me say that it *is* poetry, the poetry many of us can feel in the twilight rather than in any poem, or in the day, at daybreak or sunset, rather than in any painting by old master or new."

"Then was your particular allusion to Rossetti?"

"Yes. To my mind he is the most significant man among us. More torches will be lit from his flame—or from torches lit at his flame—than perhaps even enthusiasts like yourself imagine."

At this point a well-known critic intervened, with somewhat obtrusive asperity,

to the effect that Arnold would be read when Rossetti was forgotten, that Browning would be read when Arnold was forgotten, and that Tennyson would still be familiar to all lovers of poetry when Browning would be known only of students and readers curious in past vogues and ideals.

Pater did not often laugh, but when he did it was always with a catching geniality. His laugh at this juncture prevented a heated argument, and enabled him to waive the subject without any appearance of discourtesy. Smilingly he remarked : " We have all drifted into the Future. Posthumous conversation is unsatisfactory. Besides, prophets never think much of other people's prophecies. Talking of prophets, how delightfully cocksure Arnold is when he is in the grand vein, as in that last paper of his ! Do you not think "— And so the breakers were safely weathered, and " the wide vague " safely gained again.

Before we parted that night, Walter Pater had made me promise to visit him in Oxford—a promise given only too gladly, though without an over-sanguine hope of its fulfilment, a possibility that at that time seemed too good to be realisable. I could not then understand why Pater

should take so genuine an interest in a young man who had "done nothing," and of whose possibilities he knew little save by vague and friendly hearsay; but later I understood better. I was young and full of hope and eager energy, and had travelled much and far, and experienced not a few strange vicissitudes. This of itself was enough to interest Pater; indeed, I have known him profoundly interested in an undergraduate simply because the young man was joyously youthful, and had an Etonian reputation as a daredevil scapegrace. Shortly before I first came to London in 1879, I had returned from a long and eventful voyage in the Pacific and Antarctic; and on that first night, and on many nights thereafter, it seemed to give my new and much-revered friend a singular pleasure to listen to my haphazard narrative of strange sights I had seen and experiences I had undergone. The reason of this extreme interest in all youthful, unconventional, or unusual life was that Pater himself had never been joyously young, and that he lacked the inborn need as well as the physical energy for adventurous life, whether upon the cricket field and the river, or on the high seas and in remote lands.

My first visit to Walter Pater was my first visit to Oxford. I leave to enthusiasts for that fair city of towers and spires, who may also be admirers of one of the worthiest of her sons, to imagine with what eager pleasure I went, with what keen pleasure I drank deep during a few happy days at this new fount, so full of fresh and delightful fascination.

Pater then lived, with his two sisters, in a pretty house a short way out of the actual town. He had, moreover, his Fellow's rooms at Brasenose, where sometimes he preferred to stay when much preoccupied with his work, and where occasionally he put up an invited guest. I came to know these rooms well later, but I have not forgotten my first impression of them. The sitting-room, or study, was in a projection of Brasenose: looking out upon the picturesque, narrow public way. There was a snug, inset, cushioned corner, much loved and frequented by its owner—always thereafter to me a haunted corner in a haunted room. My first impression then of the *tout-ensemble* was of its delicate austerity. There was a quiet simplicity everywhere, eminently characteristic of the dweller; but one could see at a glance that this austerity was due

to an imperious refinement, to a scrupulous selection. There were low-set bookshelves, filled with volumes which were the quintessential part of the library Pater might have had if he had cared for the mere accumulation of books. Most of them were the Greek and Latin classics, German and French works on æsthetics, and the treasures of French and English imaginative literature. To my surprise, I noticed, in one section, several volumes of distinctly minor contemporary poetry; but these proved to be presentation copies, for which Pater always had a tender heart. "To part with a book containing an inscription of personal regard, affection, or homage," he said to me once, "is to me like throwing on to the high-road rare blooms brought from a distance by kind or loving friends."

While I was examining some of these volumes, that evening, he took a leather portfolio from a cabinet.

"Here is what delights me. This portfolio contains only manuscript poems. Some are manuscript copies of poems that the world already possesses; others are copies of verses which are to appear in due course; and a few are the actual originals, in even the most immature of which I have a rare

pleasure. If it were practicable, I would read all poetry, for the first time, in the handwriting of the poet. There is always, to me, an added charm when I can do so, an atmosphere. The poem gains, and my insight or sympathy is swifter and sure. I am conscious of this also in prose, though perhaps not so keenly, and certainly not so frequently. Of course there is one exception—every one, surely, must feel the same here ; that is, in the instance of letters. Imagine the pleasure of reading the intimate letters of Michael Angelo, of Giorgione, of Lionardo, of Dante, of Spenser, of Shakespeare, of Goethe, in the originals ! It would be like looking on a landscape in clear sunlight or moonlight, after having viewed it only through mist or haze."

" Several young writers," he continued, " have sent their manuscript to me to look over ; and at this moment I have two small manuscript books by undergraduates of exceptional promise. But I will show you what will interest you more. Here is a copy of *The Sea-Limits* in Rossetti's own writing. He made the copy at a friend's request. Here is a page of *Atalanta in Calydon*, which was given to me as the original, though very likely it is only a copy

made by Swinburne. I must find out from him some day. Matthew Arnold gave me this original, or first copy, of the first three stanzas of his *Morality*. All these others, here, are autograph poems, or part poems, or prose passages, by Ruskin, Tennyson, Browning, Meredith, Victor Hugo; though, alas, few of these are my own, but have been lent to me. Even this vicarious ownership is a joy."

I asked him if he had ever written verse himself. He said he had, and that before his twenty-fifth year he had written a good deal in verse, and had made many metrical translations from the Greek anthology, from Goethe, and from Alfred de Musset and other French poets.

"At twenty-five I destroyed all, or nearly all—everything in verse which had survived. In none of my original efforts was there any distinction. Not one had that atmosphere of its own which there is no mistaking. But I learned much through the writing of verse, and still more through metrical translation. I have great faith in scrupulous and sympathetic translation as a training in English composition. At one time I was in the habit of translating a page from some ancient or modern prose writer every day:

Tacitus or Livy, Plato or Aristotle, Goethe or Lessing or Winckelmann, and once, month after month, Flaubert and Sainte-Beuve."

But though the books in Walter Pater's rooms were a special attraction, the first thing to catch the eye was a large and fine *alto-rilievo*, a Madonna by Luca della Robbia, the exquisite delicacy and soft cream-white tone of which not only harmonised with, but seemed to focus the other things in the room—the few etchings against the dull yellow wall-paper, one or two old Italian bronze ornaments that caught the sheen of sunlight or lamplight, a low, wide piece of Wedgewood full of white flowers, a slim gold-brown vase on the broad sill, containing wall-flowers, or flowering lavender, or chrysanthemums, or winter aconites, as the season went.

The afternoon sunlight pervaded the room with a quiet beauty. The interior looked to me like an old picture, with something of the home charm of the finest Dutch art, and more of the remote grace, the haven-like serenity, so beloved of the early Italians. I noticed a long ray of sunlight slant across the flowers and waver into a shadowy corner, where it moved like

a golden finger, and seemed to point out or lead forth unexpected vagaries of light and shade. When I glanced at my companion, I saw that his gaze was arrested by the same vagrant sunbeam. He began to speak in a low voice about gold: the gold of nature; above all, the chemic action of golden light; and how it was "the primary colour of delight" throughout nature and in nearly all art.

"Through all writing, too, that is rare and distinctive and beautiful," he said, "there is a golden thread. Perhaps the most skilful weavers are those who so disguise it in the weft that its charm is felt though its presence is undetected, or at least unobtruded."

Later, when the lamp was lit, he read, at my request, the revised version of his then unpublished (in book form) essay, entitled *The School of Giorgione*: chosen because of the allusions in it to that very alchemy of gold light of which he had spoken: "*colouring*, that weaving as of just perceptible gold threads of light through the dress, the flesh, the atmosphere, in Titian's *Lace-Girl*—the staining of the whole fabric of the thing with a new, delightful physical quality;" "the accidental play

of sunlight and shadow for a moment on the wall or floor;" "this particular effect of light, this sudden inweaving of gold thread through the texture of the haystack, and the poplars, and the grass." "Only, in Italy all natural things are, as it were, woven through and through with gold thread, even the cypress revealing it among the folds of its blackness. And it is with gold dust, or gold thread, that these Venetian painters seem to work, spinning its fine filaments through the solemn human flesh, away into the white plastered walls of the thatched huts."

How well I remember that first lesson in the way rightly to apprehend art; how "to estimate the degree in which a given work of art fulfils its responsibilities to its special material; to note in a picture that true pictorial charm, which is neither a mere poetical thought or sentiment on the one hand, nor a mere result of communicable technical skill in colour or design on the other; to define in a poem that true poetical quality, which is neither descriptive nor meditative merely, but comes of an inventive handling of rhythmical language—the element of song in the singing; to note in music the musical charm—that essential

music, which presents no words, no definable matter of sentiment or thought, separable from the special form in which it is conveyed to us."

When he read, Pater spoke in a low voice, rather hesitatingly at first, and sometimes almost constrainedly. Soon, however, he became absorbed; then his face would light up as with an inner glow, he would lean forward, and though his voice neither quickened nor intensified there was in it a new vibration. Occasionally, he would move his right hand slowly, with an undulating motion.

For three or four days he was my guide in Oxford, but my happiest recollections are of our walks in Christ Church meadows and by the banks of the Cherwell. He walked heavily, and, particularly when tired, with a halting step that suggested partial lameness. He was singularly observant of certain natural objects, aspects, and conditions, more especially of the movement of light in grass and among leaves, of all fragrances, of flowing water; but with this he was, I presume wilfully, blind to human passers-by. Often I have seen some fellow-don wave a greeting to him, which either he did not see or pretended

not to see, and it was rare that his eyes rested on any undergraduate who saluted him, unless the evasion would be too obviously discourteous. On the other hand, he would now and again go out of his way to hail and speak cordially to some young fellow in whom he felt a genuine interest.

Although I saw Walter Pater occasionally after this date, I did not stay with him again in Oxford until the late spring of 1884. In the autumn of 1882, I wrote to him telling him that I believed I had discovered and recovered each article he had published, and had had them separately bound ; and at the same time eagerly urged upon him that the time had come when he should no longer delay the collection in book form of these essays on literature and art. At the date in question, I was writing that chapter in my Record of Dante Gabriel Rossetti which deals with his prose, and had made particular allusion to and quotation from Pater—an unimportant fact which I appear to have considered worthy of communication to him. On November 5, he wrote with over-generous words of praise, as was his kindly wont with young writers (beginning informally, and adding;

"I think we have known each other long enough to drop the 'Mr.'") :—

"2 BRADMORE ROAD, OXFORD,
"*November* 5, 1882.

". . . I read your letter with great pleasure, and thank you very much for it. Your friendly interest in my various essays I value highly. I have really worked hard for now many years at these prose essays, and it is a real encouragement to hear such good things said of them by the strongest and most original of young English poets. It will be a singular pleasure to me to be connected, in a sense, in your book on Rossetti, with one I admired so greatly. I wish the book all the success both the subject and the writer deserve.

"You encourage me to do what I have sometimes thought of doing, when I have got on a little further with the work I have actually on hand, namely, to complete the various series of which the papers I have printed in the *Fortnightly*, &c., are parts. The list you sent me is complete with the exception of an article on Coleridge in the *Westminster* of January 1866, with much of which, both as to matter and manner, I should now be greatly dissatisfied. That

article is concerned with S. T. C.'s prose; but, corrected, might be put alongside of the criticism on his verse which I made for Ward's *English Poets*. I can only say that should you finish the paper you speak of on these essays, your critical approval will be of great service to me with the reading public.

"As to the paper on Giorgione which I read to you in manuscript, I find I have by me a second copy of the proof, which I have revised and sent by this post, and hope you will kindly accept. It was reprinted some time ago, when I thought of collecting that and other papers into a volume. I am pleased to hear that you remember with so much pleasure your visit to Oxford, and hope you will come for a longer stay in term time early next year.

"At the end of this month I hope to leave for seven weeks in Italy, chiefly at Rome, where I have never yet been. We went to Cornwall for our summer holiday; but though that country is certainly very singular and beautiful, I found there not a tithe of the stimulus to one's imagination which I have sometimes experienced in quite unrenowned places abroad. . . ."

The copy of the Giorgione essay alluded to in this letter was one of several essays printed at the Clarendon Press in Oxford at Pater's own cost. I asked him once why, particularly as his was so clear and beautiful a handwriting, he went to this heavy expense when he did not mean to publish (and in some instances the type was distributed after a few copies had been printed); to which he replied that though he could, and did, revise often and scrupulously in manuscript, he could never adequately disengage his material from the intellectual light in which it had been conceived, until he saw it in the vivid and unsparing actuality of type. This copy, besides its autograph inscription and textual corrections, bears the circular stamp of the Clarendon Press, November 12, 1878; so it was printed three years before I heard it from manuscript, and more than ten years before it was published in book form along with other papers. As its pagination is from page 157 to page 184, its author must have had quite a large volume printed at the Clarendon Press.

Much as I value this early Giorgione copy, and *The Child of the House*, and each of the books given me on publication, my chief

treasure is the bound copy of the proofs of *Marius the Epicurean.* I had these proofs for some weeks before publication, and so had the additional pleasure of a thorough familiarity with one of the finest, and perhaps the most distinctive of the prose works of the Victorian era, before the less fortunate public knew anything of it. *Marius* had been begun, and in part written, long before Walter Pater went to Rome, in 1882, for the first time ; but it was not till the summer of 1883 that he wrote it as it now stands—wrote and rewrote, with infinite loving care for every idea, for every phrase, for each sentence, each epithet, each little word or mark of punctuation.

One of the earliest reviews of *Marius the Epicurean* was that which appeared in *The Athenæum* as the leading article, some seven to eight columns in length. Besides this, I wrote also a longer article upon the book in the now defunct magazine, *Time.* My *Athenæum* review appeared on the last day of February, and on March 1 Pater wrote as follows :—

"2 BRADMORE ROAD, OXFORD.

". . . I have read your article in *The Athenæum* with very real pleasure ; feeling

criticism at once so independent and so sympathetic to be a reward for all the long labours the book has cost me. You seem to me to have struck a note of criticism not merely pleasant, but judicious; and there are one or two important points—literary ones—on which you have said precisely what I should have wished, and thought it important for me to have said. I thank you sincerely for your friendly work; also for your letter [about *Marius*], and the other article, which I shall look forward to, and greatly value. I was much pleased also, that Mrs. Sharp had been so much interested in my writing. It is always a sign to me that I have to some extent succeeded in my literary aim when I gain the approval of accomplished women.

"I should be glad, and feel it a great compliment, to have *Marius* translated into German, on whatever terms your friend likes; provided of course, that Macmillan approves. I will ask him his views on this point.

"As regards the ethical drift of *Marius*, I should like to talk to you, if you were here. I *did* mean it to be more anti-Epicurean than it has struck you as being. In one way, however, I am glad that you have

mistaken me a little on this point, as I had some fears that I might seem to be pleading for a formal thesis of 'parti pris.' Be assured how cheering your praise—praise from so genuine and accomplished a fellow-workman—has been to me. Such recognition is especially a help to one whose work is so exclusively personal and solitary as the kind of literary work which I feel I can do best must be. . . ."

From a later passage in this letter—ultimately of so purely personal an interest that its reproduction here would be unwarrantable—it is evident that Pater had carefully read through the book after its publication, to find his fastidious taste offended by one or two little flaws. For, not content with the revised proofs he had given me, he wrote, "I have told the Macmillans to send you a properly bound copy of *Marius*, with only a few misprints."

When I went to stay with him in the late spring of 1884, when Oxford was looking its loveliest, we had many long talks about *Marius* and the new Cyrenaicism, and on all implied in what it has become the vogue to call the new Hedonism.

More and more Walter Pater sought a

rarer atmosphere of beauty—outward beauty, and the beauty of the inner life. His ideals of conduct were Spartan rather than what in so loosely called Epicurean; austerity in clear, lucid, wind-swept thought; austerity in the expression of that thought, even when wrought by it to the white heat of creative emotion, but an austerity that came from the reserve force of perfect and scrupulous mastery, and from no timidity or coldness or sterility of deep feeling; and austerity in life.

How well I remember one evening in the meadows by the Cherwell! It was a still, golden sunset. Already the dew had begun to fall, and the air was heavy with the almost too poignant fragrance of the meadowsweet. I had made a remark about the way some people were haunted by dream fragrances, and instanced queen-of the-meadow, as we call it in Scotland, in my own case. Pater replied that certain flowers affected his imagination so keenly that he could not smell them with pleasure; and that while the white jonquil, the gardenia, and the syringa actually gave him pain, the meadowsweet generally gave him a sudden fugitive sense of distant pastures, and twilit eves, and remote scattered hamlets.

"On an evening like this," he added, "there is too much of it. It is the fault of nature in England that she runs too much to excess. Well, after all, that is a foolish thing to say. There is always something supremely certain about nature's waywardness."

"You remember Blake—'The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom'?"

"Yes; it is a notable saying, and, like most kindred sayings, is probably half true, though I doubt if in this instance more than partially, or only very occasionally true. Talking of Blake, I never repeat to myself, without a strange and almost terrifying sensation of isolation and long weariness, that couplet of his:

> *Ah, sunflower, weary of time,*
> *Who countest the steps of the sun.*"

This led to my asking him what were his favourite *intimate* passages. I have forgotten, or do not remember with sufficient exactness to record them, what he gave; though I recollect that he placed foremost that noble maxim from Plato: "*Honour the soul; for each man's soul changes, according to the nature of his deeds, for better or worse.*"

Every great writer, he said, had service-

able apothegms on the conduct of art as well as the conduct of life. At that time he was re-reading some of the chief books of two great novelists, more radically than merely racially distinct, Balzac and George Eliot. I asked which writer he found the more stimulating, the more suggestive, the more interesting. Balzac, he replied, he found more interesting, though he thought George Eliot the more suggestive. "But of neither would I speak as stimulating." "Balzac," he resumed, "is full of good things, things well said and worth daily remembrance, as for example this: 'Le travail constant est la loi de l'art comme celle de la vie.'"

"A little while ago you said," I interpolated, "that Keats was unquestionably right when he wrote that Invention was the pole-star of Poetry. Would you say the same in the instance of every other art?"

"No doubt, no doubt; only one must be sure one knows exactly what one means by Invention. An admirable French critic has said this for us: 'L'Invention, qualité première et base de toutes les autres, dans les opérations des beaux-arts.' And by the way, bear this, from the same source, ever in mind: 'Il y a dans la composition deux

écueils à éviter, *le trop peu d'art, et le trop d'art.*' "

It was on this occasion, also, I remember, that, on my asking him what he, personally, considered the most memorable passage in George Eliot, he surprised me by saying, after a brief while for reflection, that it was the remark put into Piero di Cosimo's mouth, in *Romola :* " The only passionate life is in form and colour."

His interest in Piero di Cosimo, and Bazzi, and a few other rare and distinctive figures of mediæval Italy, was, I may add, singularly keen. There were two strangenesses, if I may use the word, which always appealed to him strongly : the strangeness that lies in familiarity, and the strangeness of the unusual, the remote, the mysterious, the wild. He loved the vicarious life. His own was serenely quiet and uneventful, but he thrilled with excitement when a foreign element, of altogether alien circumstance, entered it, whether this intruder was a living person or only a mental actuality. He was like those early Italian or Flemish painters of whom he speaks in one of his essays, " who, just because their minds were full of heavenly visions, passed, some of them, the better part of sixty years in quiet,

systematic industry." As he says of Wordsworth, "there was in his own character a certain contentment, a sort of religious placidity, seldom found united with a sensibility like his. . . . His life is not divided by profoundly felt incidents; its changes are almost wholly inward, and it falls into broad, untroubled spaces. This placid life matured in him an unusual, innate sensibility to natural sights and sounds, the flower and its shadow on the stone, the cuckoo and its echo."

It is his apprehension of, his insight into, this subtle, profoundly intimate second-life in every manifestation of human life and nature, of the warm shadow as well as of the sunlit flower, of the wandering voice as well as of the spring harbinger, that is one secret of the immediate appeal of Walter Pater's work to all who not only love what is beautiful, wheresoever and howsoever embodied, but also, as a Celtic saying has it, "look at the thing that is behind the thing."

An apprehension, an insight in some degree akin, must be in the reader who would understand Walter Pater the man as well as Walter Pater the writer and thinker. There are few more autobiographical writers,

though almost nowhere does he openly limn autobiographical details. Only those lovers of his work who have read, and read closely, lovingly, and intimately, all he has written, can understand the man. He is one of those authors of whom there can never be any biography away from his writings. The real man is a very different one from the Mr. Rose of *The New Republic*, from "the mere conjurer of words and phrases" of Mr. Freeman, from "the demoralising moraliser" of the late Master of Balliol, from "the preacher of a remote and exclusive æstheticism" of those who seldom read and never understood him, from the sophisticated, cold, and humanly indifferent exponent or advocate of "art for art's sake alone." In no writer of our time is there more tenderness; more loving heed of human struggle, aspiration, failure, heroic effort, high achievement; more profound understanding of "the thing that is behind the thing;" above all, a keener, a more alive, a more swift and comprehensive sympathy. If those who have read one or two of the purely art essays only will take up the paper on Charles Lamb or the deeply significant and penetrative study of Wordsworth (surely the most genuinely critical,

the most sympathetic and rightly understanding, of all estimates of Wordsworth), they will speedily hear the heartbeat of one who was a man as other clean-hearted, clean-minded, clean-living men are, and a writer of supreme distinction only "by grace of God."

Though there are few so direct autobiographical indications as may be found in *The Child of the House* (essentially, and to some extent in actual detail, a record of the author's child-life), or as the statement in the Lamb essay that it was in a wood in the neighbourhood of London that, as a child, he heard the cuckoo for the first time, the inner life of Walter Pater is written throughout each of his books, woven "like gold thread" through almost every page, though perhaps most closely and revealingly in *Marius the Epicurean*. That *Marius* is largely himself would be indubitable even were there no personal testimony to support the evidence. I remember, when he read *Marius* to me in manuscript, that the passage at page 136 (first edition), beginning, "It seemed at first as if his care for poetry had passed away . . . to be replaced by the literature of thought," was admitted by him to be—as again at pages 103, 169, and

elsewhere—directly autobiographical. This is the passage wherein occur two phrases now famous : " a severe intellectual meditation, the salt of poetry," and " spontaneous surrender to the dominion of the outward impressions." He had the same horror of snakes and creeping things of which his young Epicurean was so painfully conscious. I remember one occasion when, at Oxford, a small party of us had gone down-stream, to reach a wood of which Pater was fond in the first hot days of late spring. He was walking with my wife, when suddenly she saw him start, grow paler than his wont, and abruptly hurry forward with averted head. The cause of this perturbation was that, to the right of the pathway, a large " earth adder," or " slow-worm," lay dead or dying. This aversion was excited even by inanimate representations of snakes. Once, when he was visiting us in London, his gaze was attracted by the gleaming of the lamplight upon a circular ornament my wife wore round her neck. It was a flexible silver serpent, made of over a thousand little silver scales, the work of a Florentine mechanic, which I had brought home from Italy. In response to his inquiry, she unloosed it and handed it to him ; but as she

did so, it writhed about her arm as though alive. Pater drew back, startled, nor would he touch or look at it, beautiful as the exquisitely minute workmanship was; and indeed, so uneasy was he, so evidently perturbed that she should wear anything so "barbaric," that, laughingly, she agreed not to replace it, but safely to lock it up in its morocco case again.

Keenly, too, he had that vague dread of impending evil which perturbed Marius when, on his way to Rome, he climbed the gloomy, precipitous slopes of Urbs-Vetus; that "sense of some unexplored evil ever dogging his footsteps" (page 24); that "recurrent sense of some obscure danger beyond the mere danger of death—vaguer than that, and by so much the more terrible" (page 124); that dread of which he writes (page 178), "His elaborate philosophy had not put beneath his feet the terror of mere bodily evil, much less of 'inexorable fate and the noise of greedy Acheron.'" He had a great dislike of walking along the base of dark and rugged slopes, or beneath any impendent rock. When, a few years ago, he came to reside for the most part in London, he hoped that this apprehension would depart, or never be evoked. For a

time, London gave him a fresh and pleasant stimulus; but later, it began to weary, to perturb, and at last to allure him into even deeper despondencies than his wont. It was with a welcome sense of home-coming that, not long ago, he returned to Oxford as his permanent place of abode. But of his gloom, so far as his literary work is affected by it, the aptest thing that can be said is a passage in his own essay on Charles Lamb: "The gloom is always there, though restrained always in expression, and not always realised either for himself or his readers; and it gives to those lighter matters on the surface of life and literature, among which he for the most part moved, a wonderful play of expression, as if at any moment these light words and fancies might pierce very far into the deeper hearts of things."

Aside from *Marius the Epicurean*, there is a radical mistake on the part of those who affirm that Pater is, after all, but a subtle and seductive writer on art; meaning the arts of painting and sculpture. It is true that, from his first able essay, that on Winckelmann, to those on *The School of Giorgione* and *The Marbles of Ægina*, he is the profoundest, and generally the most

trustworthy of art critics ; but—and again, apart from the creative quality informing each of these essays, making them not only interpretations, but works of art—he is, of course, much more than this. His volume of studies of contemporary poetry and prose, and kindred themes, is alone sufficient to base an enduring reputation upon.

As of the brilliant Flavian who so won the heart of Marius when he left sea-girt Luna for Pisa, we might say of Walter Pater : " What care for style ! What patience of execution ! What research for the significant tones of ancient idiom—*sonantia verba et antiqua !* What stately and regular word-building,—*gravis et decora constructio !* " But, invariably, we have to note also that ever " the happy phrase of sentence is really modelled upon a cleanly finished structure of scrupulous thought."

Nothing irritated Pater more than to be called a mere stylist. He was a thinker first, and a rare and distinguished stylist by virtue of his thought ; for, after all, style is simply the rainbow light created by the thought, and is pure, transparent, precise, and beautiful, or is intermittent, incoherent, crudely interfused, even as is the thought.

Of his more directly or frankly imaginative work, his Imaginary Portraits, from the early *Child of the House* to the latest, the narrative of *Emuald Uthwart*, of *Gaston de Latour*, of *Brother Apollyon*, I have not now space to speak, nor indeed is this the occasion. But once again I must say that those who would know Walter Pater must read all he has written. In that serene, quiet, austere, yet passionate nature of his, so eminently Teutonic, so distinctively northern, there was, strange to say, a strain of Latin savagery. It found startling expression in the bloody tragedy of the sacrifice of *Denys l'Auxerrois*, and, in his latest published writing, in the strange and terrifying death of the boy *Hyacinth*.

Let me, rather, end this article—so slight and inadequate, I am painfully aware—with two noble passages, more truly characteristic of Walter Pater than any of the generally perverted art-for-art's-sake dicta so often quoted from his earlier writings, severed from their illuminating context. The first is that which concludes the earliest of his critical studies, that on Winckelmann:

"And what does the spirit need in the face of modern life? The sense of freedom. That naïve, rough sense of freedom which supposes man's will to be limited, if at all,

only by a will stronger than his, he can never have again. . . . The chief factor in the thoughts of the modern mind concerning itself is the intricacy, the universality, of natural law, even in the moral order. For us, necessity is not, as of old, a sort of mythological personage without us, with whom we can do warfare; it is a magic web, woven through and through us, like that magnetic system of which modern science speaks, penetrating us with a network subtler than our subtlest nerves, yet bearing in it the central forces of the world. Can art represent men and women in these bewildering toils so as to give the spirit at least an equivalent for the sense of freedom? . . . Natural laws we shall never modify, embarrass us as they may; but there is still something in the nobler or less noble attitude with which we watch their fatal combinations. In the romances of Goethe and Victor Hugo, in some excellent work done *after* them, this entanglement, this network of law, becomes the tragic situation in which certain groups of noble men and women work out for themselves a supreme *dénouement.* Who, if he saw through all, would fret against the chain of circumstance which endows one at the end with those great experiences?"

As this is from the first, so let the second be from the last of those memorable critical studies, that on Style, written in 1888 :

" It is on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends, as *The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Les Misérables,* the English Bible, are great art. Given the conditions I have tried to explain as constituting good art : then, if it be devoted further to the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other, or to such presentment of new or old truth about ourselves and our relation to the world as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here, or immediately, as with Dante, to the glory of God, it will be also great art ; if, over and above those qualities I summed up as mind and soul,—that colour and mystic perfume, and that reasonable structure—it has something of the soul of humanity in it, and finds its logical, its architectural place in the great structure of human life."

1894.

"MARIUS THE EPICUREAN"

THE last words of Gautama-Buddha, when, sitting under the Sâl-tree, he prepared for his imminent advent into Nirvana, were, "Beware of the illusions of matter." Marius, in whose imaginary biography Walter Pater has embodied all that is highest and finest in Epicureanism, would recognise these so-called illusions as the only criteria of truth, rendering himself up, as he strove from the first to do, in a complete surrender "to the dominion of outward impressions."

It is the narration of the sensations and ideas of a late disciple of the son of Neocles, of one whose life is cast in that fascinating period of Roman history when Paganism really died under the philosophically universal toleration of Marcus Aurelius, that Pater has set himself to accomplish; and it is only giving expression to a palpable truth to say that he has fulfilled his purpose with a sympathetic thoroughness which could be equalled by no living writer. On its own merits this work would challenge

widespread attention, doubly so from the fact that its author (as it seems to the writer) is the chief living exponent of the really essential part of that doctrine which close upon twenty-two centuries ago, amid the restful pleasures of his Athenian garden, Epicurus promulgated to the listening ears of Hermarchus, his future successor, and of Metrodorus, that beloved and faithful disciple concerning whose children the last recorded utterances of the Gargettian sage were spoken to Idomeneus, "If you would prove yourself worthy, take care of the children of Metrodorus."

Certainly, ardent discipleship did not pass away with the decease of the famous philosopher, or even with the natural end of Hermarchus, Colotes, Philodemus, and others little removed from the master in point of years. As an actually vital philosophic system the teaching of Epicurus was accepted, though in gradually attenuating degree, for over six hundred years, finding, as it did, devoted adherents even so late as in the third century after Christ. At long intervals, and in diverse countries, it ever and again appears as if the spirit of the founder of the philosophy of Sensation found rebirth—as in France midway and

during the latter half of the seventeenth century, when Gassendi, the rival of Descartes, proved anew indisputably in his *Philosophiæ Epicuri Syntagma* the possibility of uniting Epicurean principles with a high code of morals; when La Rochefoucauld published his philosophic maxims for the conduct of life, and when St. Evremond lived freely and wrote worthily; or, again, as in the France of a later day, when Helvetius preached his doctrine of Sensation (*Sensibilité*) as the means of knowledge, and of self-satisfaction as the end of life, having his own philosophic calm put to the test by the public burning of his great work *De l'Esprit;* as in England by Jeremy Bentham and one or two others, and lastly, and most effectively of all by Walter Pater.*

* With Pater's name should be coupled that of Richard Jefferies—a true Epicurean in the best sense of the term, as may be gathered from the following words, taken from one of Mr. Jefferies' most characteristic productions: "The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live, so that the longer we can stay among these things, so much the more is snatched from inevitable time. . . . These are the only hours that are not wasted—these hours that absorb the soul and fill it with beauty. This is real life, and all else is illusion, or mere endurance.

It is not the present purpose of the writer to discuss the question of the merits and demerits of the Epicurean philosophy; he will content himself with saying that never has it been represented with greater fidelity in its weakness as in its strength, than in these two volumes by Walter Pater, where it may be apprehended in as enticing an aspect as Cicero (in reality a bitter opponent to Epicureanism) shows it in the first book of his *De Finibus*. The Epicureanism of *Marius* is that of the master, more than that of Aristippus and the Cyrenaics, still more than that of Timocrates * and other apostates from the pure teachings of the founder. It may or may not be the case, as Mr. Lecky says, that Epicureanism, while logically compatible with a very high degree of virtue, has a practical tendency towards vice; but it is undeniably the case that men of fine nature may live up to and within its central doctrine and its limitations and yet suffer no deterioration of nature. The question is not does such a nature deteriorate, but rather does it attain to anything like the same spiritual development which it might by a sterner, a less select philosophy of life have

* *Diogenes Laërtius*, Bk. x.

otherwise reached? But a "Cyrenaic" without flaw was Marius. Epicurus, at the end of one of his definitions of his scheme of life, adds concerning his ideal man "that sometimes he will die for his friend." In this also, by no means characteristic of the Epicureans as a body, does Marius approach his ideal prototype, for he ultimately meets the solution to his many questionings through an act of generous self-sacrifice.

Marius is a true Hedonist, and, accordingly, he indulges in no vain *pursuit* of pleasure. For, after all, the true Hedonism is neither more nor less than cultured receptivity, openness to all thrilling or pleasant associations, avoidance of all that is mean and painful. This Hedonism, Epicureanism, or by whatever name it may be called, does not prevent or seek to prevent due attention to and performance of the ordinary daily duties of life; but it would teach us, where possible, to throw around these some glamour of beauty or significance, or at any rate not to let them interfere with our serenity more than we can avoid. For, as Epicurus himself has declared, pleasure, in the ordinary sense of the word, is not the

end of a wise man's life, but health, ease, serenity (ὑγίεια, ἀπονία, ἀταραξία). Concerning those minor observances of daily life, it should be with us as it was with Marius: "Those simple gifts, like other objects equally trivial—bread, oil, wine, milk—had regained for him, by their use in such religious service, that poetic and, as it were, moral significance which surely belongs to all the means of our daily life, could we but break through the veil of our familiarity with things by no means vulgar in themselves." And again: "He was acquiring what it is ever the chief function of all higher education to teach — a system or art, namely, of so relieving the ideal or poetic traits, the elements of distinction, in our everyday life, of so exclusively living in them, that the unadorned remainder of it, the mere drift and *débris* of life, becomes as though it were not."

While to the question, What is the criterion of truth? Epicurus replies *Sensation*, αἴσθησις, Walter Pater would add that for the ideal life one must possess two qualities, serenity of spirit and contemplative insight. The value of finely balanced receptivity to Sensation cannot well be

over-estimated: at its highest development it will prevent vain regret and vague anticipation—it will serve as the most effectual protest against the mere narrow conception of means and ends in life. As Walter Pater says, in his fine essay on Wordsworth, "the higher morality might well endeavour rather to draw men's attention from the conception of means and ends in life altogether"—and again, against the predominance of machinery in life (*i.e.*, against the conception of means and ends as a comprehensive conception of life as a whole) all that is really great in art and poetry is a continual protest.

To witness with appropriate emotion the great spectacle of life, life in its widest and most comprehensive significance, is, says Walter Pater, in the essay already alluded to, the aim of all culture. Moreover, "that the end of life is not action, but contemplation, *being* as distinct from *doing*, a certain disposition of the mind, is in some shape or other the principle of all the higher morality. In poetry, as in art, if you enter into their true spirit at all, you touch this principle in part; these, by their very sterility, are a type of beholding for the

mere joy of beholding. To treat life in the spirit of art is to make life a thing in which means and ends are identified. This, then, is the true moral significance of art and poetry, . . . impassioned contemplation."

Two extracts from *Marius the Epicurean* will further serve to illustrate the author's position :

To keep the eye clear by a sort of exquisite personal alacrity and cleanliness, extending even to his dwelling-place ; to discriminate, ever more and more exactly, select form and colour in things from what was less select ; to meditate much on beautiful visible objects, on objects more especially connected with the period of youth—on children at play in the morning, the trees in early spring, on young animals, on the fashions and amusements of young men ; to keep ever by him if it were but a single choice flower, a graceful animal or sea-shell, as a token and representative of the whole kingdom of such things ; to avoid jealously, on his way through the world, everything repugnant to sight ; and, should any circumstance tempt him to a general converse in the range of such objects, to disentangle himself from that circumstance at any cost of place, money, or opportunity ; such were, in brief outline, the duties recognised, the rights demanded, in this new formula of life. . . . Not pleasure, but fulness, completeness of life generally, was the practical idea to which this anti-metaphysical metaphysic really pointed. And towards such a

full or complete life, a life of various yet select sensation, the most direct and effective auxiliary must be, in a word, insight. Liberty of soul, freedom from all the partial and misrepresentative doctrine which does but relieve one element in our experience at the cost of another; freedom from all the embarrassment of regret for the past, and calculation on the future; all that would be but preliminary to the real business of education—insight, insight through culture, into all that the present moment holds in trust for us, as we stand so briefly in its presence. From that theory of *life as the end of life*, followed, as a practical consequence, the desirableness of refining all the instruments of inward and outward intuition, of developing all their capacities, of testing and exercising oneself in them, till one's whole nature should become a complex medium of reception, towards the vision—the beatific vision, if one really cared to make it such—of our actual experience in the world. Not the conveyance of an abstract body of truths or principles would be the aim of the right education of oneself, or of another, but the conveyance of an art, an art in some degree peculiar and special to each individual, with the modifications, that is, due to his peculiar constitution, and the circumstances of his growth, inasmuch as no one of us is "like another, all in all." . . .

"In Italy all natural things are woven through and through with gold thread, even the cypress revealing it among the folds of its blackness. And it is with gold dust or gold thread that these Venetian painters

seem to work, spinning its fine filaments through the solemn human flesh, out away into the white plastered walls of the thatched huts."

These words, which occur in one of Pater's most characteristic and delightful essays—that on the *School of Giorgione*—are peculiarly applicable to this his latest production, a work not only of great value and importance in itself, but written with all that delicate charm and reserved grace of style wherein the author is surpassed by none. Fine filaments of gold, utterances of subtle beauty, are every here and there to be found amidst the general excellence : literally filaments of verbal gold, for the very word occurs not less often than at least some score of times, giving a vague pleasure, leaving, as it were, a faint aroma, not more perceptible than some specially sweet odour in a many-flowered garden. Yet neither this nor any other characteristic word or expression is ever unduly accentuated, ever more obtrusive, for instance, than the subdued glint of a single ruddy hair here and there in the tresses of some *Biondina* of Veronese or Titian. This, of course, is only what is to be expected of a writer who indubitably ranks as one of the chief

masters of English prose. There are others —notably one great example—who can, or do, write with more brilliant eloquence; but, after all, eloquence of a strongly pronounced type belongs more to oratory than to literature. Walter Pater is one of those who, by temperament and perhaps also by direct choice, prefer quietude to excitement, depth and subtle harmony of tone to great brilliancy of colour, reserve to unstinted plenitude. What most affects him pleasantly would seem to be the element of repose, and disturbingly that of excessive emphasis; while the quality—as may be inferred from what has been already quoted —upon which he sets the highest value is that of serenity. Meditation—that severe intellectual meditation which Walter Pater somewhere in this book speaks of as the salt of poetry—and the most fitting expression thereof, are never in these volumes dissociated. As with the imaginary compositions of Marius—to whom words are almost sacred, so full of deep significance and hidden beauties are they—each happy phrase or sentence is really modelled upon a cleanly finished structure of scrupulous thought; as the author has himself said of Wordsworth, "his words are themselves

thought and feeling: not eloquent or musical words merely, but that sort of creative language which carries the reality of what it depicts directly to the consciousness."

THOMAS HARDY AND HIS NOVELS

(1892)

THAT the author of *The Return of the Native* has equalled if not surpassed that masterpiece is proof of the greatness of his place among contemporary novelists. It is a rank, however, as yet far from being conceded, though *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* has apparently done more to bring about a true recognition of the author than the whole range of his writings from the early and anonymous *Desperate Remedies*, in 1871, to his *Group of Noble Dames*, in 1890. No one can approach English fiction critically and fail to perceive that Thomas Hardy is, at his best, one of the most remarkable novelists whom England has produced; yet we are confronted by the fact that his popularity, although of steady growth, is altogether disproportionate to his merits, and that even the immense swing by which he has recently been carried to the front place is

due in no slight degree to causes independent of the literary quality and value of his work.

First and foremost, Thomas Hardy is a profound realist. I admit, that to me, the realism of Mr. Howells is thin and that of Mr. Henry James superficial compared with that of the author of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders*, and *Wessex Tales*. Again, his robustness of thought and speech does not appeal to most readers. They dislike him as crudely natural, even as they dislike the strong smell of the earth, the reckless byplay and fierce activities of the energies of nature, the salutary rudeness of bleak weather, rain, and the moil of muddy ways. It is possible to conceive of a woman having produced *Madame Bovary*, but not *Salammbo*; of having composed *Une Page d'Amour* or even *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret*, but not *Germinal* or *La Terre*; even with all its author's intense masculinity, of having written *Diana of the Crossways*; but it is impossible to think of the author of *The Return of the Native* or *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as a woman. Mr. Hardy is not only the most English of all English writers since Shakespeare, but he is the most

essentially masculine, is masculine almost to a fault. The manner of his expression being in accord with the nature of his genius, his style is unattractive to many, for it has much of the massive serenity, the large air, the austere dignity of nature herself. Of all modern novelists he is, or was till very recently, least read and least appreciated by women. This is strange, as no writer of our time has shown a more profound sense of the charm to men of women as women, a deeper understanding of women's nature or the nature of many women, and a more thorough grasp of the enormous influence of women, through both her strength and her weaknesses, in the economy of human life. But it is, I suspect, and as has already been hinted, not only women in general, but a large section of intellectually effeminate men, who resent this very attitude in Thomas Hardy. "Why cannot he give us a type of flawless womanhood?" is a question I have seen in print and heard used again and again. Alas! the painter of Bathsheba and Eustacia and Tess is not the supreme power.

I have noticed also that many persons of each sex are held at a distance by certain essential qualities of Hardy's genius. It is

inevitable as the pathway of the winds, that are supposed to blow whence and whither they will, or as the tread of the avenger through Greek tragedy. It is as sombre as the aspect of Egdon Heath, while equally alive with sunshine, and fragrance, and the quick pulse of super-abundant life. It is as quiet, unobtrusive, and pervasive as the tide, and has, below all the brightness and merry shimmer, the profound melancholy of the ocean. If one were to read sequently this writer's books, from the earliest to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, one would gain at last an overwhelming sense of the blind way of destiny, of the pathetic futility of human effort, of the pitiless impartiality of the laws of nature. For Hardy brings home to the reader a sense of profound sadness. Without ever unduly obtruding himself as the theologian or the philosopher, he touches the deepest chords of spiritual life, and having wrought his subtle music therefrom, turns away with a loving, sorrowful regret at all the by-play of existence beneath such dim darkness behind, above, and beyond. Yet to speak of him as a pessimistic writer would be misleading because inadequate. He does not preach pessimism, for he has the saving

grace of having no "ism" to support or to exemplify. He is tolerant and patient, seeing at once the good and the weakness in all. In a word, the pessimism of which so many complain is a revelation rather than an exposition. Characteristically enough, it is seldom that he directly writes in a strain of sadness. Life, movement, humour, and the endless play of the forces of nature, and her innumerable and ever changing aspects, afford him more than he reveals his intimate sense of the insoluble mystery of existence, of our unguided way across a trackless plain of whose lost frontiers there is no resemblance, and whose horizons are seen of none. It is this steadfast austerity which has stood between him and so large a portion of the reading public.

Of less importance than his genuine realism or than his characteristic if half-observed irony, but still a noteworthy factor in the matter of Thomas Hardy's acceptance of the public, is his style, or to be more exact, certain idiosyncrasies of style. Though the most exclusively and natively English of all the great novelists of the Victorian age, he is in point of diction the most Latinical writer we have had since

Dryden and Milton. This is characteristic of the Celtic Briton, and not the "English Englishman." And yet, so far as is known, Hardy is of Old Saxon or Anglo-Danish stock. In this respect he is to be classed with two other writers who are both markedly given to a strongly Latinised diction—George Meredith and Robert Louis Stevenson.

Perhaps one must know something of Wessex in order fully to enjoy Thomas Hardy's novels. Certainly to those familiar with the south-western counties there is as little exaggerated in his chronicle of the doings and sayings of the natives as in his descriptions of the general and particular features of the country-side, from the mystic barrows beyond Egdon Heath on the north to where, on the south, the Channel waves splash at the feet of the little town "sacred to the memory" of the trumpet-major. Hardy's own qualities of humour, shrewdness, and quaintness have not led him to pervert the homely speech of the country-folk into a diction impossible or at least improbable. What he has done is to give, for the most part, only the quintessential part of it. In this sense, and this sense only, can he be held to account for

straining or overcolouring his material. It is thus, no doubt, that so many of his most careful readers note the Shakepearean quality of so much of his peasant speech; for unquestionably Shakespeare drew his Touchstones and Audreys from life—and the labouring folk of Wessex of to-day differ wondrous little in all essential respects from their ancestors of Elizabethan, Stuart, or Georgian times. Wise words don't come from a fool in whatever degree of social life he moves; and *vice versâ*, when naturally shrewd and vigorous minds express themselves, they do so aptly whether they be as cultured as Swithin St. Cleeve and Lady Constantine, as "ordinary" as Gabriel Oak or John Loveday, as insignificant socially as Tess Durbeyfield or Marty South or Fancy Day, as "low" as Diggory the reddelman or the for-ever perspiring Reuben Dewy. For the most part the Wessex of Hardy is a land of woodland and pasture, here rising into grassy uplands and even hills, here sinking into long, fertile, verdurous valleys, here dark with oak and beech leaves of the New Forest, here bare with the vast heaths and moors which give so great a portion of it a character so unlike that of the shires to the north and east.

The villages, too, are just as they were in the times of our forefathers.

Thomas Hardy himself resides in the heart of the "five-countied Wessex." His home is a large red-brick house built after his own design, situated on the rise of a long upland sweep to the east of Dorchester. A vast perspective is before one from almost any one of the windows of the house, rolling downs, acres of arable land and pastures, upland ranges, and dark belts of woodland, with, valley-ward, the white gleam of the Frome meandering among the daisy lands and through and past ancient Dorchester. Far away to the right is the hill-top monument to his kinsman of old, Admiral Hardy "of glorious renown"; to the south-west are the broken ridges of that extraordinary freak of nature (and toil of man) known as "Maiden Castle." In front of the house itself stretches away an immense swelling meadow, some three thousand acres in extent, the largest in England. I cannot swear to the acreage, but answer for the vaguer statement. The house is known as "Max Gate," the old name of the portion of the upland whereon it is built, and of the small hamlet near, though it was at one time the intention of

the owner to call his place "Conquer Barrow," after the tree-covered mound which rises to the north-east just beyond his garden walls. Not only is Mr. Hardy thus in the best possible position for the novelist of Wessex, within easy reach as he is of any part of the whole region brought so vividly near to us in *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Woodlanders*, in *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, but he is in what is to him, with his scientific and antiquarian as well as artistic and literary tastes, a profoundly interesting country. Dorchester, itself a great Roman encampment and fortress in the days of Constantine, and the whole region around, are as full of "remains" Roman and Anglo-Saxon as any locality in western Europe.

"Among the few features of agricultural Europe which retain an appearance but little modified by the lapse of centuries may be reckoned the high, grassy, and furzy downs, coombs, or ewe-leases, as they are indifferently called, that fill a large area of certain counties in the south and south-west." So begins the story of *The Three Strangers*, in *Wessex Tales*. If the Londoner or visitor to our "province of houses" tire

of the inevitable urban hurry and worry, he could do no better than take a leisurely walking-trip among those "high grassy and furzy downs, coombs, or ewe-leases." He will find them and the homely, ignorant, yet shrewd and often highly intelligent and even original people who dwell by them just as described by Mr. Hardy. He will gain enjoyment and renewed vigour of body, and find that it is not "Continental travel" alone that enlarges the mind. Parochialism is easier to carry about with one than even one's portmanteau. But for those who cannot wayfare into Wessex, let me recommend a mental voyage with Mr. Hardy as guide and companion. One cannot but be stronger and saner and healthier and every way better for such an experience. To those who already know all he has to tell us, Wessex is a haunted land, to which it is ever a rare pleasure to turn, whether in fact or vicariously. And there is endless company —from such wrecks of man's high estate as Thomas Leaf or Granfer Castle or Christian Bathsheba Everdene, Eustacia Vye, Marty South, Tess Durbeyfield, Gabriel Oak, John Loveday, or Clym Yeobright. This Wessex of Thomas Hardy is, to lovers of his work, but another Wilderness Bottom

green and fragrant and winsome, from whose "thickets of dream" comes enchantment as sweet and welcome as that "loud, musical, liquid voice" which Dick Dewy and Fancy Day heard by the copses on their wedding day.

Mr. Hardy was born in Dorset in 1840. After an education which comprised a good classical and scientific training, though he was at no university, he began life as an architect. He resided in London from 1862 to 1867, from 1870 to 1872, and from 1878 to 1881; for the rest he has lived mostly in Dorset. His comparatively brief sojourns in Italy and France have left almost no trace upon his work. His first printed literary production was an essay on coloured brick architecture, written with so much technical knowledge and in so creditable a style that the author was awarded the medal of the "Institute of Architects." Prior to 1870 he wrote, with this exception, nothing of any importance, and the most industrious and unprincipled resurrector would be hard pushed to rake up against this author any *juvenilia*, except perhaps a signed sketch of a few pages contributed to *Chambers' Magazine* late in the sixties. But in 1870 he decided to see

what he could do as a novelist. At this date he recognised neither his true bent in fiction nor the great advantage of the material which since his early boyhood he had unconsciously accumulated. At the same time, both from choice and from instinct, he depicted scenery and delineated types of character more or less familiar to him; and though it would be foolish to claim for his first book any high place in contemporary fiction, it is not to be passed over in the cavalier fashion adopted by many newspaper critics. In the first place *Desperate Remedies* has originality in more ways than one, an originality more obvious in 1871 than twenty years later, no doubt; in the next it is of particular importance to every critic of Mr. Hardy's collective work, for in it is much that is suggestive, much that goes to substantiate the statement that from the first a continuous vein of inspiration has sustained the novelist, a vein as clearly recognisable as it is distinctly individual.

In 1872 another novel appeared without the author's name, though acknowledged to be by the author of *Desperate Remedies*. *Under the Greenwood Tree* was subtitled *A rural painting of the Dutch School*, and here

we have unmistakably the hand of a master. To this day *Under the Greenwood Tree* remains one of Thomas Hardy's most distinctive achievements. It seems to me to stand alone as much now as at the time when it appeared. From first to last it is admirable, though it has no plot to speak of, and is, in a word, nothing more than a series of life-like studies of man and nature connected by a thread of narrative. But where can we find its like? Where has anything more absolutely English been done? Where, since the time of Shakespeare, do we encounter such vivid fidelity, such Rembrandtesque setting of homely things in the picturesque aspect that is none the less true because seen quintessentially? In his next book Mr. Hardy made a more definite bid for success with the novel-reading public. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) was a title likely to appeal to the subscribers to circulating-libraries, and as a matter of fact the book has some vogue. Though it has many notable things in it, and as a story is a distinct advance upon any previous tale from the same pen, it is not one of the author's important books. At the same time Elfrida Swancourt is one of Hardy's most distinctive

creations. It is commonly understood that of all his heroines she is the best liked by women. But in *Far from the Madding Crowd* a far wider success was won. This book made its author one of the foremost novelists of his day, and still is the most popular of all his romances. Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene are now as familiar names in our ears as those of almost any personages in Scott, Thackeray, or Dickens. The whole art of the author can be studied in this novel. No one is at once more vital and more reserved than he; no one more great and vigorous and blithely humorous, and yet more profoundly impressed by the tragic pathos and mystery of our "why and wherefore." The pathos, almost invariably unobtrusive, is as natural and genuine as the humour. It is of a kind that has no kinship with sentimentality, but is as it were the twilight and moonlight of a strong, vigorous life. More than once this chronicle of the country-side rises to a high pitch of dramatic intensity. A hint as to the motif of the book, as indeed of all Thomas Hardy's work, might be found in that pregnant sentence in one of the early chapters, "Love is a possible strength in an actual weakness."

Fine, however, as is *Far from the Madding Crowd*, it is not his masterpiece. That was written some four years later. But before the publication in '78 of *The Return of the Native* there appeared the novel called *The Hand of Ethelberta*. Public opinion is still strangely divided about this book. There are readers who think it one of the author's cleverest productions, and there are more who miss in it the peculiar quality which enhances for them the value of such works as *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The first of these three, one of the greatest works of fiction in our time, was by no means at first hailed as a masterpiece, though in this instance the public proved wiser than the critics. This story of Clym Yeobright, Eustacia Vye, of so many others of all degrees from passionate Wildeve and winsome Thomasin and the homely reddelman, Diggory Venn, to Grandfer Cantle and Christian, and the heathside company who meet at The Quiet Woman inn and elsewhere, is one of the most moving and memorable novels in our language.

The Trumpet Major, which chronologically was produced next in order, was for many years and possibly still is a much more

popular novel. True, the period dealt with is a more remote one, and the ordinary novel reader is apt not to give his or her vote for a story wherein the hero is finally left out in the cold; yet the events are of so stirring a kind and the narrative is so full of vivid and picturesque detail that John Loveday has probably a larger circle of friends than any other of Hardy's male characters, with the possible exception of Gabriel Oak and Clym Yeobright. If the book have not the tragic intensity of *The Return of the Native*, the nervous movement and youthful energy of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the austere impressiveness of *The Woodlanders*, or the glow and passionate humanity of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, it has a serene and welcome charm of its own, the quiet sundown light of a bright autumnal day. As unlike *The Trumpet Major* as either of its two most notable predecessors are the two volumes which came next, *A Laodicean* in 1881 and *Two on a Tower* in 1882. In my judgment *A Laodicean* is the least successful of all Thomas Hardy's novels. It seems even to lack vitality. *Two on a Tower*, on the other hand, is alive from first to last, and though not in what may be called his permanent manner,

it is a novel of singular wit, charm, skill, and grace. Yet even here the best things are said by "the common chorus," and probably as many readers enjoy the remarks of Hezekiah Biles, Sammy Blore, Nat Chapman, and Haymoss Fry, as of Lady Constantine and Swithin St. Cleeve.

Four years elapsed between the publication of *Two on a Tower* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, though in this period were written two or three of the remarkable short stories which later on were issued under the collective title of *Wessex Tales*. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is, I have heard, looked upon by booksellers as the least popular of Thomas Hardy's books. This is not quite easy to understand. Certainly it is not so well constructed and is in a sober tone throughout, and, what perhaps signifies much, there is less humour in it than in most of the other chronicles of country life in Wessex. On the other hand, Michael Henchard, the mayor, is one of Hardy's most noteworthy creations.

In the *Wessex Tales*, again, we find the same qualities which have ensured the success of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and its kindred. These stories are admirable, and in vigour, picturesqueness, humour, and

potent charm, seem to me much beyond the later series of stories collectively called *A Group of Noble Dames*. One can, for several reasons, imagine this opinion being challenged by the author himself, for he must have had a new and welcome pleasure in writing the charming "little histories" of these mostly frail Wessex dames of high degree. But surely in the "groups" there is nothing to equal, much less to surpass, the finest of the three Wessex tales—*The Three Strangers*, *The Withered Arm*, and *Interlopers at the Knap*. What an admirable story the last named is! How much of it one would like to quote! I know nothing of its kind finer than *The Three Strangers*. It stands out among short stories by great writers of our time much in the same way as *Wandering Willy's Tale*, among the brief essays in fiction of an earlier period. It has all the best qualities of the best Netherland art, and is just what we might expect from Rembrandt were he to come among us again and take up the pen instead of the brush or the etching needle.

But before the issue in book-form of the *Wessex Tales* there appeared in 1887 one of the most notable of all Thomas Hardy's

works. It has always been a puzzle to me why *The Woodlanders* seems comparatively so little known. One may ask a score of people which of Thomas Hardy's novels they have read, and probably not more than three or four will have any first-hand knowledge of this masterly and beautiful study. It is as absolutely the author's own as *The Return of the Native* or as *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, for though his individuality is keenly marked throughout all his books, it is most dominant in these. The purport of this story is to exhibit "the unfulfilled intention which makes life what it is." It is a somewhat sombre tale, and there are scenes in it, as in *Tess*, which seem to have given offence to those possibly worthy but stupid and blundering people who constitute themselves the champions of Mrs. Grundy and the exponents of that silly old lady's views; but to arrive at an estimate of Thomas Hardy's place in contemporary literature and to leave *The Woodlanders* unread, would be like a similar estimate of Mr. Meredith without consideration of, say, *The Egoist*, or *Diana of the Crossways*. This nobly wrought book has something of the effect of night upon one, a sense of largeness and vast quiescence

beyond all personal fret and weariness, of "night, that strange personality, which within walls brings ominous introspectiveness and self distrust, but under open sky banishes such subjective niceties as too trivial for thought."

Nevertheless, when we come at last to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* we have before us the most mature and, on the whole, the most powerful expression of the author's genius. I have read several parts of the book again and again, and have read the story as a whole twice, and in so doing I have felt as though all of Hardy's works that preceded it were in some sort a clearing of the ground—more or less brilliant heralds, let me say rather, of this superb achievement. The romance has the power, the intensity, the inevitableness, and above all the warm humanity of the great dramas, ancient and modern. It is so homely a subject, and deals so simply with simple things of common life in a remote English county, that its effect upon the mind is all the more reason for our wonder and admiration. I can well believe what I heard a distinguished author declare, that no man, and certainly no woman, could read this book with sympathy and not thenceforth

be of broader mind and more charitable and catholic spirit.

Tess herself is as *living* a woman as there is in fiction; but there is embodied in her also something that neither she nor Angel Clair nor any one ever guessed—the typical strength and weakness of an immense, perhaps preponderating number of women. Whatever is best in Thomas Hardy's work is to be found in this page from life—humour, pathos, tragedy, marvellous descriptive faculty, and that transforming magic through all, for which there is no other word than the much abused term "genius." There are scenes in *Tess* which one cannot but believe will represent the high-water mark of our later Victorian fiction, and there are episodes which must surely touch the hearts and influence the minds of those who come after us almost as profoundly as they do our own. In depictive art there is nothing in the range of modern fiction, not even of the narrative of the wooing of Lucy and Richard Feverel by the river side, to surpass the supremely beautiful description of the morning meetings of Angel and Tess during the height of the milking season at Talbothay's Farm, daily meetings in that strange and solemn

interval, the twilight of the morning, in the violet or pink dawn. Here we have the very spirit of romance, and here we have English prose of the noblest kind.

Every reader of Thomas Hardy's novels will differ as to the relative rank that ought to be given to each book. A consensus of opinion as to which are his three greatest works would be interesting and suggestive. I would advance a claim for pre-eminence in behalf of *The Return of the Native*, *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In these three books it seems to me that we have the highest development of a rare literary temperament, the finest and largest utterance of genius that can no longer be gainsaid as such. Thereafter (*Under the Greenwood Tree* not being considered as a novel, but rather as a sequence of rustic studies) would come *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the finest of *The Wessex Tales*, and, though not quite with them, *The Trumpet Major*.

There is one quality which Thomas Hardy has far in excess of any other English novelist, that of the intimate sense of the complex interrelation of man and nature. There, again, he stands alone as an exponent of the epical method. He is the sole living

Englishman of whom I know who can write as Zola does at his best; who could do and has done writing so far beyond all the fret and fume of contemporary opinion as the close of that Titanic masterpiece *Germinal* or even of *La Terre.* Hardy is an incomparably finer artist than Zola, and at the same time in intensity of concentration is the only man who approaches that great and much misunderstood writer. Yet, at his highest even, Zola has given us little of the commanding beauty of Hardy's speech at its best. No one can ever forget the solemn procession of "inspired" words at the close of *La Terre* or *Germinal;* but while they have the charm of vast perspectives seen from the dusty highway of life, Hardy's finest utterances exercise the spell of a not less real though a more remote realm of romance. One writer is a man who can see things only at his feet or else afar, the other a man whose clear and serene gaze takes all in, in just proportions. No living man has given us more memorable pictures than of "the dewy morn" meetings of Tess and Angel Clair, already alluded to, or of Marty South and Giles Winterborne walking silently together in the chill lonely hour before a winter-day dawn, "where gray

shades, material and mental, are so very gray. And yet, looked at in a certain way, their lonely courses formed no detached design at all, but were part of the pattern in the great web of human doings then weaving in both hemispheres, from the White Sea to Cape Horn." It is somewhat sadly significant that it is the poet and clear-eyed, saner, and more deeply observant writer who penned that profoundly pessimistic sentence in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. "It is then (where 'the constraint of day and the suspense of night neutralise each other') that the plight of being alive becomes attenuated to its least possible dimensions." Is this to be Thomas Hardy's final word on the mystery of human life ?

GEORGE MEREDITH

AN ESTIMATE OF HIS WORK IN PROSE AND VERSE

(1899)

AFTER many years of general indifference, George Meredith has come into his kingdom. To-day he stands foremost in English letters. None disputes his place as our keenest critic of social life; admittedly he is a great writer, with a power over the well-springs of tears and laughter, of irony and tragedy, beyond that of any contemporary. He has, moreover, that intimate sense of romance, which, striking as it does through the common ways and familiar routine of life, carries with it an air so convincing that none may gainsay its winsome charm. From first to last, his outlook is at once the most human and searching and the most spiritual and far reaching.

As romancist, he who disengages the living spirit of youth; as the realist, he who

limns the intimate self as well as the mobile features, the mien and manner of actuality; as the comedian, he who looks across the tragi-comedy of life and smiles at its exquisite incongruities; as the tragedian, he who looks across the same tragi-comedy, and reflects, as a mirror reflecting shadows, the mystery and dark significance of the unknown, and that terror and despair and sadness of ours which are its ministers; and as the poet of the Joy of Earth, of the triumphant Hope of the Spirit, George Meredith is not only a prince of letters, but exercises over the younger generation an influence as fortunate as it is profound.

True, there are the defects of his high qualities wherewith to reckon. His strength is often accompanied by an impetuosity which, with a great number of would-be readers, defeats its own end—not a reinless vehemence, still less a hurried habit of mind, but a controlled impetuosity whereby this magician of words bewilders less swift and agile minds, less nimble understandings. It is, perhaps, in his later poetry more than in his prose that overmuch he delivers himself to his delight in words and subtle but difficult diction—and in verse, as is obvious, any obscurity is more swiftly apparent, and more

perilous. There are times when this wholly characteristic and native manner degenerates into mannerism; but with all deference to those who plead, and in the main wisely, for a habitual simplicity, and who resent Meredith's peculiarities, it surely must be admitted that these difficulties and obscurities have been greatly exaggerated. It is certainly not the case that they are due to wilful affectation. Any one who has the honour of knowing Meredith is aware that he writes as to the manner born; that his phrasings are as natural to him as the "Aye, aye, sir!" of the sailor or the "yes, m' lud!" of the barrister, and that, speaking generally, his work is but the reflex of his mind, of the subtlest, most distinguished and variegated literary temperament of our time. How far from arrogance, or the common conceit of the lesser scribe, George Meredith stands, is revealed in a noble sonnet, where even the subtle use of "we" and "I" is eminently indicative:

Assured of worthiness, we do not dread
Competitors; we rather give them hail
And greeting in the lists where we may fail;
Must, if we bear an aim beyond the head!
My betters are my masters: purely fed,
By their sustainment I likewise shall scale

Some rocky steps between the mount and vale ;
Meantime the mark I have and I will wed.
So that I draw the breath of finer air,
Station is nought, nor footways laurel-strewn ;
Nor rivals tightly belted for the race,
Good speed to them ! My place is here or there ;
My pride is that among them I have place ;
And thus I keep this instrument in tune.

From first to last, George Meredith has drawn this breath of finer air of which he speaks ; from first to last he has kept his instrument in tune.

It would be easy to dwell upon the unquestionable defects in style, upon the not infrequent lapses from that inward discretion which is the soul of style, of this great writer. But these lie apparent to one and all, if to some grotesquely exaggerated. It is more fitting to turn towards the infinitely greater measure of noble worth, of brilliant comedy, of illuminative insight, of exquisite romance, of intimate knowledge of men and women and a no less profound intimacy with nature, and to the ever varying revelation of an ever genial and catholic wisdom. It may, however, be as well to add that he or she who would begin the study of George Meredith's writings should certainly not in the first instance take up, say, *One of our Conquerors*, or, in verse, the *Odes in*

Contribution to the Song of French History. These in due course.

George Meredith, born in Hampshire on February 12, 1828, began his literary career early. His first appearance in print was with a poem, *Chillianwallah*, in *Chambers' Journal*, in July 1849, and his first book, the now exceedingly scarce *Poems*, appeared two years later. Nothing is more amazing than his maturity in prose. Before he was thirty he had written *The Shaving of Shagpat*, *Farina*, and (to this day his most popular, and by many considered his finest romance) *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel.* The first two are, perhaps, the most brilliant and finished works of their kind ever produced by a young writer: the third is a masterpiece of fiction, already one of the classics of the English language, and admittedly the inspiration of much of the truest romance that has been written since. Robert Louis Stevenson was wont to speak of it as the finest expression of the romantic spirit in contemporary fiction, meaning, of course, the romance of familiar life, not of perilous adventure and hair-breadth escapes.

If it be true what Coleridge says in his *Aids to Reflection*, that exclusive of the

abstract sciences the largest and worthiest portion of our knowledge consists in aphorisms, and that the greatest of men is but an aphorism, then truly George Meredith, the prince of aphorists, is the greatest of contemporaries. These wonderful aphorisms of his, however, are not by any means merely *jeux d'esprit*, brilliant coruscations of an electric wit: they are that, but they are much more—for they are born of closest observation of life, profound meditation, and inward wisdom. A wisely made selection of "the wit and wisdom of George Meredith," would reveal him not only as the keenest observer but as the profoundest and sanest thinker of our time. He has ever had one aim, the impassioned quest of truth.

O sir, the truth, the truth! is't in the skies,
Or in the grass, or in this heart of ours?
But O the truth, the truth! the many eyes
That look on it! the diverse things they see,
According to their thirst for fruit or flowers!
Pass on; it is the truth seek we.

When we come to the difficult question as to which is the best, or even which are the best, of George Meredith's novels, each must answer only for himself. The present writer would have it that the three most masterly

books are *Rhoda Fleming*, *The Egoist*, and *Beauchamp's Career*, and that those which at all times he can read with ever new delight, in a word his favourites, are *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *The Egoist*, *Diana of the Crossways*, and, speaking personally rather than critically, *The Amazing Marriage*. There can be little question, I fancy, that *The Egoist* stands foremost in intellectual power. It is the most searchingly brilliant book in the language. It is equally easy to understand why *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *Diana of the Crossways* are the most widely popular. In literary beauty, perhaps *Vittoria* is the most sustained in excellence of picturesque and vivid style. In every one of these books is a practically inexhaustible store of wisdom, poignant insight, illuminating wit, and the inexhaustible sanity of a supreme gift of humour.

I wonder how many marked copies of *Diana of the Crossways* are in existence. Every one I know who owns the book, has special passages marked for remembrance, suggestiveness, stimulus. For a readily understandable reason it appeals to women in particular; doubtless because here more luminously and continuously than in any other of his books, George Meredith shows

his deep sympathy with, and comprehension of, the nature of women. Here are a few passages worthy of note:

"What a woman thinks of women is the test of her nature."

"He had by nature a tarnishing eye that cast discoloration."

"The young who avoid the region of romance escape the title of fool at the cost of a celestial crown."

"To have the sense of the eternal in life is a short flight for the soul. To have had it is the soul's vitality."

"Gossip is a beast of prey that does not wait for the death of the creature it devours."

"She was a lady of incisive features, bound in stale parchment. Complexion she had none, but she had spotlessness of skin, and sons and daughters just resembling her, like cheaper editions of a precious quarto of a perished type."

"Why she married him she never told. Possibly in amazement at herself she forgot the specific reason."

And this pre-eminently characteristic phrase: "Philosophy bids us see that we are not so pretty as rose-pink, nor so repulsive as dirty-drab; and that instead of everlastingly shifting those barren aspects,

the sight of ourselves is wholesome, bearable, fructifying, finally a delight."

Everywhere there is the same convincing wisdom of insight and observation. Meredith has been called the supreme interpreter of women; he is not less notable as a true elder brother to all men who think as well as do. On that ever moot question of what women are to men, what wiser saying than this in *The Egoist:* "Women have us back to the condition of primitive man, or they shoot us higher than the topmost star. But it is as we please; the poet's Lesbia, the poet's Beatrice. They are to us what we hold of best or worst within."

It is not only in what are admittedly his greatest novels, that his intellectual wealth is distributed with the same royal largesse. In *The Tragic Comedians,* in the too laboured *One of Our Conquerors,* in the infinitely winsome *Amazing Marriage,* in a word in everything from *Farina* and *The Shaving of Shagpat,* to *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* and *The House on the Beach,* there is the ceaseless record of the keenest intelligence of our epoch. The strength in all is spiritual strength. As he says in *The Tragic Comedians,* "it is the soul which does things in life; the rest is vapour."

As a poet Meredith appeals to two classes of readers; to those who love poetry for its beauty, and to those who love it for its rarefied and difficult heights where only strong-winged intellects can soar or sustain their flight. But in all probability his most enduring work in verse will be that wherein the vision of beauty, or rather the faculty of seeing and saying in beauty what revelation or sudden glimpse of all beauty has been perceived, is the overmastering characteristic rather than those poems which are mainly an allure or appeal to the intellect. And here it is, it seems to me, as to others who love his earlier poetry, that he stands far higher than is commonly recognised. There is no more moving love-tragedy in verse in the language than his *Modern Love;* no more splendid and barbaric chant than the *Nuptials of Attila;* and I know of no nature poems more beautiful and more convincing, both in music and in essential vision and atmosphere. What lovely music in that passionate lyrical rhapsody, *Love in the Valley*, something of whose magic retains in even a few severed lines:

Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry:
Fair as in image my seraph love appears

Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids :
Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears.
Could I find a place to be alone with heaven,
I would speak my heart out : heaven is my need.
Every woodland tree is flushing like the dogwood,
Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like the reed.
Flushing like the dogwood crimson in October ;
Streaming like the flag-reed South-West blown ;
Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted whitebeam ;
All seem to know what is for heaven alone.

The Lark Ascending, *The South-West Wind*, *Autumn Even-song*, *The Woods of Westermain*, and a score other matchless lyrics and longer poems . . . are their names not familiar to all who love beautiful verse ? What living poet has written more exquisitely than in these lines from one of the lesser known poems (*Grandfather Bridgeman*):

The day was a van-bird of summer ; the robin still piped, but the blue
A warm and dreary palace with voices of larks ringing through,
Looked down as if wistfully eyeing the blossoms that fell from its lap ;
A day to sweeten the juices, a day to quicken the sap.
All round the shadowy orchard sloped meadows in gold, and the dear
Shy violets breathed their hearts out—the maiden breath of the year.

Surely verse like this is the justification of his own fine saying : " the art of the pen is to arouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye ; because our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description. That is why the poets who spring imagination with a word or a phrase, paint lasting pictures."

Although much of George Meredith's poetry, as most of his prose, is in the conventional sense impersonal, in so far as it reflects his spiritual and intellectual rather than his actual life of the day and hour, there are many glimpses of the latter. Perhaps none of his shorter poems is at once more pleasantly intimate and at the same time characteristically fine in individuality of observation and touch than the little lyric called *Autumn Even-song*, where the woodlands, " the yellow hill," the steel-gleaming river, the " valley-cottage " with its warm light, are those which are daily familiar to the eyes and heart of the great writer.

The long cloud edged with streaming gray
Soars from the west ;
The red leaf mounts with it away.
Showing the nest
A blot among the branches bare :
There is a cry of outcasts in the air.

Swift little breezes, darting chill,
Part down the lake;
A crow flies from the yellow hill,
And in its wake
A baffled line of labouring rooks;
Steel-surfaced to the light the river looks.

Pale the rain-rutted roadways shine
In the green light,
Behind the cedar and the pine:
Come, thundering night!
Blacken broad earth with hoards of storm!
For me yon valley-cottage beckons warm.

But it is probably by *Modern Love* that Meredith has won his way to the laurel-wreath of his fellows in poetry. "This great processional poem," as Mr. Swinburne has called it, tells in fifty stanzaic poems of a sonnet-kind (sonnets essentially, in compression, self-completeness, and unity of beauty, idea, and effect—though not technically so) the story or the tragic mischance of love that might have grown to finest issues but for the piteous inward fatality which incurred ruin on both sides. *Modern Love* was published at a memorable period in the history of English poetry: four years after William Morris' first and, in some ways, most remarkable volume, and one year later than Rossetti's first book (*The Early Italian Poets*) and Swinburne's first book. It is

doubtful if there be any single modern poem which has had so profound an influence in moulding the spiritual temper of the strongest and finest minds among the younger generation. There must be many who concur with the present writer in ranking *Modern Love* and Rossetti's *House of Life* as among the very finest legacies of poetic genius left to us in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

For those who do not know *Modern Love*, I may quote two of the wonderful series: the first for its flawless beauty; the second for its deep humanity, its profound indication of what is most characteristic in the genius of this fearless explorer into "Earth's great venture, man." (Both are given as in the version of the Collected Edition.)

XLVII.

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye:
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side;
The hour became her husband and my bride.
Love that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood

Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love that had robbed us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave:
Where I have seen across the twilight wave . . .
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

XLIII.

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like,
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave!
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;
Here when the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight
Of those ribb'd wind-streaks running into white.
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,
I never could have made it half so sure,
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid
The full-waked sense; or, failing that, degrade!
'Tis morning: but no morning can restore
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
We are betrayed by what is false within.

Perhaps the finest of George Meredith's longer lyrical poems is the noble *Hymn to Colour*. It is the work of a poet of the highest imagination: it is alive in every line, in every image, in every uplifted thought: it has an austere beauty, a grave ecstasy, such as characterises Wordsworth's greatest poem, the *Ode to Duty*; and in it is

the concentrated knowledge and spiritual vision of a long and noble life. I may fittingly end this short appreciation with quotation of the last stanza, with its magnificent close, animate with the profoundest spiritual hope we have.

The song had ceased ; my vision with the song.
Then of those Shadows, which one made descent
Beside me I knew not ; but Life ere long
Came on me in the public ways and bent
Eyes deeper than of old : Death met I too.
And saw the dawn glow through.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

(1901)

FORTY years ago the keener-sighted among the critics of the day recognised that a new poet had sounded a fresh if admittedly an unequal note in the music of English verse. To-day *The Queen-Mother* and *Rosamund* are little read; partly, no doubt, because of the rarity of the slim volume which has long been out of print. But within five years of its publication a common recognition agreed that English Poetry was enriched by a new and potent genius; a poet for whom one of the highest contemporary places was certain, and who might well prove to be of the few who do not pass with their period and vogue but are for time and literature. For in 1865 *Atalanta in Calydon* was published.

More than thirty-five years have passed since the appearance of this lyrical drama. It is a period wherein the mature genius of Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Rossetti, William Morris, gave royally to

our literature: wherein the brilliant later Victorian poetry flowered in unequalled fertility. Nothing of all this accomplishment better stands the test of time, change and comparative criticism than Swinburne's early masterpiece.

New things, and never this best thing again;
Seasons and song, but no song more like mine.

That this masterpiece should be the work of youth, of a writer in his "twenties," is a surprise to which we can never become accustomed.

Few of our great writers, either in prose or verse, have been born in London. Two notable instances, however, are those of Robert Browning and Algernon Charles Swinburne. But whereas Browning was in all respects a Londoner and the child of Londoners, it was a mere chance that the younger poet was not born in the North Country, in the Northumberland of his people. In that North-Sea province the Swinburnes are an old-established family; even so far back as the time of Henry III. one Sir William de Swinburne was a Northumbrian to be reckoned with. The name is probably one of the oldest of Northumbrian clan-names: unquestionably

the Swinburnes of Swinburne belonged to the native noblesse. In the time of Edward II. the direct line ended with Adam de Swinburne: and after a lapse we hear of his kinsman, Sir William, but of Swinburne Castle no more. The family seat is now, as it has so long been, Capheaton Castle: there the present head of the family, Sir John Swinburne, resides: and there and in the neighbourhood, his cousin, Algernon Charles Swinburne, spent much of his boyhood.

The poet's father, the late Admiral Charles Swinburne, was the second son of Sir John Edward Swinburne: he married Lady Henrietta Jane, daughter of the third Earl of Ashburnham: and their eldest child, born in London on April 5, 1837, is the subject of the present memoir. As the Ashburnham family is also of pre-Conquest days, Swinburne may certainly claim to be of the oldest blood in the country.

Of the boyhood and early youth of the poet little is known, except to a limited circle of friends. Much of it was spent in an intimate, at times an impassioned communion with nature, and in particular the sensitive and imaginative boy was early subject to the spell of the wind and the sea, the two elemental forces which are

echoed, reflected, and interpreted throughout his poetry. Above all other poets of our country, or of any country, Swinburne is the poet of the sea. The sound and colour of the moving wave live in almost every poem he has given us. . . .

> *The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime*
> *The supreme heart of music deep as time,*
> *And in her spirit strong*
> *The spirit of all imaginable song.**

In his earliest prose writing—his impassioned rejoinder to the hostile outcry against *Poems and Ballads*—Swinburne alludes to Sappho's poetic fragments as "akin to fire and air, being themselves 'all air and fire': other element there is none in them." Of his own work, it might well be said that the sound and beauty of the sea, the voice and prophesying of the wind, are the elemental and dominant forces.

And since allusion has been made to his prose writings let me give here a passage from the Essay on Wordsworth and Byron (*Miscellanies*) which might be written of his own achievement in poetry:

> The test of the highest poetry is that it eludes all tests. Poetry in which there is no element at

* Loch Torridon. (*Astrophel.*)

once perceptible and indefinable by any reader or hearer of any poetic instinct may have every other good quality . . . it is not poetry—above all, it is not lyric poetry—of the first water. There must be something in the mere progress and resonance of the words, some secret in the very motion and cadence of the lines, inexplicable by the most sympathetic acuteness of criticism. Analysis may be able to explain how the colours of this flower of poetry are created and combined, but never by what process its odour is produced.

For the poet . . . for every artist, but perhaps for the poet above all . . . there is no period so important, no education so vital and enduring, as the period between the merging of childhood into boyhood and the merging of boyhood into manhood, as the education learned at first hand, in idle freedom, under the tutelage of the wind and the sun. In this early wisdom, the boy-poet (for he began to compose verse while yet a child) learned deeply, and, as his work shows, unforgettably. Possibly too it was during the long pony-rides of his boyhood in Northumberland that the young Swinburne first came to dwell upon the contrast between the character and fate of Queen Elizabeth of England and the character and fate of Queen Mary of Scotland: for in the little village of Cambo,

at the top of the mile-long ascent from Wallington, the inn of the Two Queens had a swinging signboard on whose south side was depicted the face of Elizabeth and on whose north "the proud eyes" of the Queen o' Scots.

More, too, than from any tutor or "schooling" he learned from his mother much that was to influence him, and notably his love of Italy, its language, literature, and history. Shelley, Keats, Byron, Landor, Browning, Swinburne, each differing in so much, have shown themselves at one in a common love; but none save the sixth knew and loved Italy and the Italian genius in boyhood. Lady Henrietta Ashburnham had been educated in Florence, and then and later spent much of her life there, and her love was doubtless the torch that lit the flame in her son's mind which reached to so great a height in *Songs Before Sunrise* and the *Songs of Two Nations.*

To William Bell Scott, had he been as capable with the brush and etching-needle as with the pen, every lover of our literature would be indebted: for it is to him we owe the earliest but unfortunately grotesquely exaggerated portrait of Swinburne as a young man, *i.e.* in 1860, when he was

twenty-two, and had just published his first book. Of this portrait Scott writes in his *Notes ;*

> In 1860, when his first drama was published, I painted a small portrait of him in oil (afterwards etched). He used to come in and live with us in Newcastle, and when I was out or engaged he was to be seen lying before the fire with a mass of books surrounding him like the ruins of a fortification, all of which he had read, and could quote or criticise correctly and acutely many years after. This portrait (of himself) used to arrest him long afterwards, when he visited me, as if it was new to him. He was delighted to find it had some resemblance to what he called his portrait in the National Gallery. This was the head of Galeazzo Malatesta in the picture of the Battle of Sant' Egidio by Uccello, which certainly was not merely the same type, but was at this time exceedingly like him.

A good portrait of the poet, and at the same time a beautiful painting, is the "head" by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, painted in the early sixties. Here, with some allowance for Rossetti's very individual vision and method, is the best early likeness we have of the author of *Atalanta in Calydon*, after the remarkable portrait made about this time by G. F. Watts. It should be added that another excellent early likeness is in the stooping head of a picture by

Rossetti now in the posession of Mr. Watts-Dunton. There is also a "hinted" portrait in Rossetti's well-known drawing of Mary Magdalene at the Door of Simon the Pharisee.

From Eton Algernon Charles Swinburne went to Oxford. There is no published record of his career at Balliol. Rumour says that he was diligent in all intellectual efforts save those conventionally required of him: a variation adds that despite his familiarity with Greek and Latin he was "ploughed" because he failed in "Scripture": at any rate he departed from Oxford without taking his degree. He left the University, however, with the knowledge that he had powers beyond those of other men, and that he had it in him to become a great poet: and he left it rich in the promise of life, for he had already made the intimate acquaintance of three men who were to be lifelong friends as well as rivals in genius, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (who was then painting the frescoes on the walls of the "Union"), William Morris, and Edward Burne-Jones.

The influence of these friendships is unmistakable in the early work of Algernon Swinburne. It would have been impossible

for any imaginative and responsive nature not to be influenced by Rossetti, and it is to Rossetti above all others that the younger poet owed that turning towards essential romance in life and art which gave so rich a glow to the *Poems and Ballads*. In another phase of poetic thought and artistry, Morris exercised only a lesser, if perhaps a more immediate and obvious influence. It is as evident in *Poems and Ballads*, as that of Browning is in *Rosamund*. Something of the young poet's indebtedness to the young painter Burne-Jones may be inferred from the circumstance of the dedication of the more famous volume, in stanzas not only of great beauty but of singular aptness. . .

In a land of clear colours and stories,
In a region of shadowless hours,
Where earth has a garment of glories,
And a murmur of musical flowers ;
In woods where the spring half uncovers
The flush of her amorous face,
By the waters that listen for lovers,
For these is there place ?

* * * * *

Though the world of your hands be more gracious
And lovelier in lordship of things
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious
Warm heaven of her imminent wings,

Let them enter unfledged and nigh fainting
For the love of old loves and lost times ;
And receive in your palace of painting
This revel of rhymes.

From Oxford Algernon Swinburne went for a brief while to London, and then passed some time at his father's beautiful place in the Isle of Wight, East Dene near Bonchurch, on the seaward slope of St. Boniface Down. In Bonchurch graveyard are the graves of the poet's father and mother: but for other reasons also East Dene and its lovely neighbourhood are sacred to Swinburne. Between Bonchurch and the western side of Ventnor is one of the loveliest coast-tracts in England, and here the young poet spent many of his happiest days. A relative by marriage, Sir Henry Gordon (who had married the poet's aunt, Lady Mary Ashburnham), had a beautiful house and grounds on the Undercliff between St. Catherine's Point and Blackgang Chine: and here, and at East Dene, by the pine-shadowed rocky slopes and grassy hollows of that sunny sea-washed region, many of the poems long so familiar to us were written. One of these, in flawless music, *The Forsaken Garden*, was inspired by and written near Old Bonchurch.

In the same year that he left Oxford Swinburne went abroad, to the Italy he already loved so well: and here he made a new memorable friendship. After Victor Hugo no contemporary had more of his reverence and admiration than Walter Savage Landor. His visit to the old poet at his villa on Fiesole was, for the younger, one of the chief events at the outset of his literary career: nor did he ever waver in the allegiance so signally expressed in the dedication of the first mature work of his genius, *Atalanta in Calydon*. To this visit we owe the fine quatrains which will be found in that volume, with their significant lines, "the youngest to the oldest singer, that England bore."

On his return to London Swinburne took his place as one of the most striking and interesting personalities in what was by far the most significant and fascinating literary group then leagued by common sympathies and ideals. At Oxford his two chief friends had been Burne-Jones and John Nichol: but now he saw little of the painter who was afterwards to become so famous, and Nichol had returned to Scotland, shortly to become the youngest University professor in the North. This

remarkable man never fulfilled the rare promise of his Oxford days: for though he attained eminence both as a poet and critic, and as Professor of Literature at Glasgow had from the first session of his long career a notable influence, he lacked just the something that differentiates the most brilliant intellect from the creative imagination. But at Oxford it was commonly believed that of the younger generation of that day no one was more likely to achieve fame than the brilliant young Scot, with his fiery "Berserker" nature and his natural impulse of leadership. It was Nichol who founded and edited a college magazine, *Undergraduate Papers*, now so extremely rare that only a few copies are known to exist. Its literary value, however, has been grotesquely overrated. It is, of course, interesting to note that so early as in 1857 the future author of *Tristram of Lyonesse* was occupied, as a theme for his imagination, with the story of Queen Iseult: but in the twenty-five tercets which appeared under John Nichol's editorship there are at most only some half-dozen lines which reveal the poet, and these might as well have been written by Nichol or any other of the young men who at that time were under the spell of

the newcomers, Rossetti and Morris. Nor is more than a passing notice called for of Swinburne's first piece of imaginative prose —the short tale called *Dead Love* which with a charming illustration by Lawless appeared in *Once-A-Week* in October 1862. This piece of quaint mediævalism in the manner of William Morris's short stories of Arthurian Chivalry was afterwards reprinted in London in 1864, but is now so rare that only three copies of the original edition are known to exist.

But all this, with other minor "*Undergraduate*" contributions, amounted to no more than the "cacoëthes scribendi" of the ordinary literature-loving undergraduate. What is of interest is that before Swinburne left Oxford he had already begun to write verse with beauty, distinction, and the first unmistakable notes of a music that he has made his own. *The Queen-Mother* and *Rosamund* are youthful productions, but in *Chastelard* we have the evidence of a genius as unique as potent. Swinburne has himself put on record (in his Notes on the character of Queen Mary) that he wrote *Chastelard* in the last year of his life as an undergraduate.

On his return from Italy, full of en-

thusiasm for Landor and more than ever captivated by the spirit of freedom animating his heroes Mazzini, Aurelio Saffi, and Victor Hugo, Swinburne settled in London. For a time he shared with Rossetti and George Meredith a house overlooking the Thames: though of one co-tenant he saw very little, for Meredith was seldom at Chatham House, and as for the other, his own habits and those of Rossetti differed so much that the two friends, though much in sympathy, had little actual communion. It was at this time that Rossetti painted the beautiful portrait to which allusion has already been made: and in the face of the young poet, as delineated by his friend and compeer, it is impossible to ignore the look of an exceptional individuality and of conscious power. When this brief co-partnery ended, the youngest of the three friends occupied rooms elsewhere in London; in North Crescent, Great James Street for a considerable time, and later in Guilford Street; varying residence in town with occasional visits to Holmwood near Reading (whither the family home, after the death of his father, had been moved), or to the East Coast, or to the shores of Normandy—where once (at Etretat) he had a narrow

escape from drowning, having in one of his adventurous swims been caught in a dangerous current and saved by some fishermen when almost at the last gasp—an event recorded in the poem entitled *Ex Voto*.

Through Burne-Jones the young poet made another friendship, with G. F. Watts, afterwards to become so famous as a painter and then already accepted as a master; and to this we owe the best-known (and by some friends considered the most like) of all portraits of Swinburne.

After the publication of *Bothwell* in 1874 and of *Erechtheus* in 1876 the poet's health gave way under the stress of his too strenuous life, and shortly after the publication of the second series of *Poems and Ballads* (1878) he decided to leave London and settle in some quiet region within reach of and yet sufficiently remote from the metropolis. Too shaken in health to undertake this alone, he was accompanied by his devoted friend, Theodore Watts, already the foremost literary critic of his day (Rossetti's "friend of friends"—to introduce here, with adequate excuse I hope, the poet-painter's generous phrase concerning the man to whom of all others he certainly had most reason to be indebted),

and in due time, under his later-assumed surname of Watts-Dunton, to become so well-known as the author of the romance of *Aylwin* and as the poet of *The Coming of Love*. Theodore Watts fixed upon a house with a long garden, called "The Pines," on Putney Hill near Wimbledon Common; and there, for the last twenty-two years, the two friends, each with a name so high in contemporary letters, have contentedly lived.

When Swinburne left Oxford all his friends knew that to no ordinary ambition he united powers of a kind which were to justify the faith of men like Rossetti and Morris. It was not till 1860, when he was in his twenty-third year, however, that he published his first book, comprising the two dramas, *The Queen-Mother* and *Rosamund*. The book has long been out of print, and the author has never cared to reissue it. In both dramas there are continuous pages of fine rhetoric and many passages of true poetry, but there is also much of immaturity both in conception and execution. The book deserved cordial recognition, for it was unquestionably remarkable as the work of so young a man.

The Queen-Mother of the first play is

Catherine de' Medici, and the scene of the tragedy is in Paris at the period of the Massacre of the Innocents. Possibly it was during his study of the history and personages of this time that the author became fascinated by the character and tragic fate of Mary Stuart: though as the idea of a play on the fate of Chastelard had occurred to him in early youth it is as probable that the drama of *The Queen-Mother* was a later outgrowth. As it stands, *The Queen-Mother* is almost of the nature of a prelude to the great dramatic cycle of Mary Stuart to which Swinburne gave the best years of his early and middle manhood.

The Queen-Mother and Rosamund was "affectionately inscribed to Dante Gabriel Rossetti." I remember Rossetti's telling me what pleasure he had in this first book of his friend, and how George Meredith said to him impatiently, "Wait till he mounts his own horse, and then you'll see how he'll ride—further than any of us foresees, I'll be bound."

Swinburne had already begun to feel dissatisfied with "falling into line" with Morris and Rossetti, and at no time was discipleship to Tennyson or Browning

possible for him. A new departure, and in more directions than one, was silently being prepared, but it was not till 1865, when he was twenty-seven, that he published *Atalanta in Calydon* and at once took his place as one of the foremost poets of the Victorian age. But meanwhile he had also written, or in these intervening years wrote, some of the shorter poems which were afterwards to become so famous when issued in *Poems and Ballads*. Rossetti, Morris, Burne-Jones and others had copies of several, and the rumour of their magical music got about, and the small English public that is curious about new beautiful things in the art of words began to speak of "this young poet Swinburne." Two of these pieces, for instance, *Laus Veneris* and the *Hymn to Proserpine*, were certainly written not later than 1862, for W. Bell Scott has given in a few vivid lines a picture of the author in connection with these poems. About Christmas in 1682, he writes, he and his wife and a friend were going "to the wild sea-coast at Tynemouth," from Wallington, for a holiday, and were just about to start when "A. C. S. suddenly appeared, having posted from Morpeth early that morning." So the friends went

to the then unfrequented Tynemouth sea-coast, and it was on the long dunes and sands by the sea that the young poet recited in his peculiar chanting voice the sonorous *Hymn to Proserpine* and the not less musical quatrains of the *Laus Veneris*—" with the breaking waves running the whole length of the long level sands towards Cullercoats, and sounding like far-off acclamations."

So though no book succeeded the first volume of 1860 until the appearance of *Atalanta* in 1865, the poet had been at work upon three books which were to take a permanent place in English literature—*Atalanta in Calydon*, *Chastelard*, and *Poems and Ballads*.

Besides the short tale, *Dead Love*, Swinburne published in 1864, but not under his name nor in a book for which he was responsible, a very strange poem or dramatic allegory, *The Pilgrimage of Pleasure*. This was contributed to the fifth chapter of a friend's romance entitled *The Children of the Chapel* (where, also, are other fragmentary pieces by the same pen), but it has never been reprinted by the author. From reperusal of the copy before me I imagine *The Pilgrimage of Pleasure* to have been inspired by Calderon's *Los Encantos*

de la Culpa, or Fitzgerald's translation of it, but it might quite well be that the English poet had at that time never read Calderon either in the original or in translation. The *personæ* are Pleasure, Youth, Life, Discretion, Gluttony, Vain Delight, Sapience and Death: and the metrical narrative is correspondingly strange and unexpected. The style for the most part is archaic, the metrical invention peculiar and effective. "Gluttony" has a Rabelaisian exuberance which is enhanced by his gloating delight in old savoury names of "delicates and delights." But as there is space for brief quotation only, the following will give some idea of the movement of this all but unknown poem of the master whose every collected line is familiar to his admirers.

YOUTH.

Away from me, thou Sapience, thou noddy, thou green fool!
What ween ye I be as a little child in school?
Ye are as an old crone that mooneth by a fire,
A bob with a chestnut is all thine heart's desire.
I am in mine habit like to Bacchus the high god,
I reck not a rush of thy rede nor of thy rod.

LIFE.

Bethink thee, good Youth, and take Sapience to thy wife,
For but a little while hath a man delight of Life.

I am as a flame that lighteth thee one hour ;
She hath fruit enow, I have but a fleeting flower.

* * * *

YOUTH.

My sweet life and lady, my love and mine heart's lief,
One kiss of your fair sweet mouth it slayeth all men's grief,
One sight of your goodly eyes it bringeth all men ease.

GLUTTONY.

Ow, I would I had a manchet or a piece of cheese !

VAIN DELIGHT.

Lo, where lurketh a lurdan that is kinsman of mine ;
Ho, Gluttony, I wis ye are drunken without wine.

YOUTH.

We have gone by many lands, and many glorious ways,
And yet have we not found this Pleasure all these days.
Sometimes a lightening all about her have we seen,
A glittering of her garments among the fields green ;
Sometimes the waving of her hair that is right sweet,
A lifting of her eyelids, or a shining of her feet,
Or either in sleeping or in walking have we heard
A rustling of raiment or a whispering of a word,
Or a noise of pleasant water running over a waste place,
Yet have I not beheld her, nor known her very face.

When in 1865 Swinburne published *Atalanta in Calydon* he passed at once, as already

said, to the front rank of living poets. In this superb achievement he revealed a mastery of metre unequalled since Shelley and Coleridge, and with a wider and surer range and more sustained power than shown even by the greatest of our lyrical poets. Dedicated to Landor, in lines of pure and beautiful Greek, the whole volume has that harmonious completeness which is part of its high destiny. It had a welcome which few works of enduring value receive at first; and though naturally the "general reading public" did not care one way or the other, and but for the insistent talk and discussion concerning the new writer would have ignored the new masterpiece as it would, if left to its own instinct, ignore all other beautiful work, there were sufficient readers to give the book even from the publisher's standpoint an extraordinary success. No doubt this was in no small degree brought about by the emphatic and splendid eulogy of so influential a critic as Monckton Milnes, whose prompt article on *Atalanta* in the *Edinburgh Review* had an effect at once far reaching and immediate.

When the *Prometheus Unbound* was given to English literature it was realised by the few who then understood the new wealth

of beauty, that the language had been proved a more wonderful instrument than even its masters had foreseen. Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge gave it that elasticity and grace which Tennyson carried to ultra-refinement and Swinburne to unequalled metrical variety and beauty. But *Atalanta* stands as unique as does the *Prometheus*. There is no music like it in English poetry. In variety of metrical invention it is unsurpassed in any language, and yet there is no sense of experimental effort, no sense of incongruity or strain, no sense of the fortuitous or hap-hazard. The music is as inevitable and natural as the song of thrush or nightingale, and if as incalculable as the wind, owes not less than the wind to an imperative law. There is not a page of *Atalanta* that could be wished away. The blank verse is a triumph in a language which had known the magic use of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Milton and Shelley. The lyrical measures are like nothing that preceded them in English, and have never been approached by any later writer. Perfect beauty in part is revealed as perfect beauty in the whole. In all that makes great poetry *Atalanta in Calydon* stands as perhaps the supreme instance in modern literature.

It is, however, a mistake to say, as is often said, that this noble drama is a modern example of the Greek genius. *Atalanta in Calydon* is not a Greek drama, but a drama on a Greek theme by an English poet, inspired by love and knowledge of the Sophoclean drama. Even in *Erechtheus*, which more closely follows the Sophoclean model, Swinburne is not a Greek, but an English poet inspired by the Greek ideal and Greek beauty. Throughout all his work, from *Rosamund* to *Locrine*, from *Chastelard* to the *Tale of Balen*, he reveals himself to be as essentially English as Shakespeare or Milton. Many of his contemporaries have written on Greek themes in the Greek manner—as understood, or as feasible now, and in English—but with the possible exception of the one rare achievement of Leicester Warren (the late Lord De Tabley) not one has even approached the Greek originals upon which they have been modelled. Doubtless Walter Savage Landor was the last who could have achieved the all but impossible. Keats, for all his sunny paganism, was not a Greek: perhaps just because of this—for no stranger misconception exists than the idea that "sunny paganism" stands

for the Greek mind. The Greek genius was the sanest the world has known; and sanity includes joyousness and "sunny paganism;" but it also includes the piercing vision which will not be baffled and the austere sadness which is the inevitable colour of thought. There is indeed much "paganism" in *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Poems and Ballads*, but it can hardly be called "sunny." The beautiful lines entitled *A Lamentation* more truly represent the spirit of sad world-wisdom and bitter weariness, which animate Swinburne's earlier work, than the anything but sunny however debonair "revel of rhymes" on Faustine and Fragoletta, on Felise and Dolores.

The tragic beauty of the legend of Althæa and her son Meleager, of the scourge sent by Artemis and of the heroism of Atalanta, the hunting of the terrible boar of Calydon, and the untoward slaying of Toxeus and Plexippus by Meleager with the swift-following doom involved—all this is lifted from the vague beauty of dimly outlined legend into the actual beauty of rounded and complete, of harmonious and consummate art. Although *Erechtheus* was not written till ten years later (and published

in 1876) it must always be considered along with *Atalanta*. Here we have the mature intellectual expression of that Hellenic enchantment of which the earlier drama was the mature rhythmic expression. To superb diction the poet unites an almost terrible force and passion. Here, too, the choruses are magnificent, from that famous one which begins

Who shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten them

to the matchless Oreithyia chorus beginning

Out of the north wind grief came forth,
And the shining of a sword out of the sea.

And yet *Erechtheus* has never had, perhaps never can have, either the spell over the love or the spell over the imagination exercised by its predecessor. Doubtless this is because of its remoteness from ordinary human emotion. The drama might have been written by an abstract intelligence, uninfluenced by ordinary human claims and needs. Presumably the poet did not realise this, since he dedicated the tragedy to his mother: and it is more than probable that he ranks it higher, and considers it with more pleasure even, than

Atalanta. The music is so gravely noble, the construction and technical excellence so unsurpassable in kind, the poetry so alive with the flame of genius, that, for a few, *Erechtheus* will always have a place apart, an achievement on the remote heights of literature. But, for most readers, it is too surcharged with the terror of the irretrievable and the relentless, too given over to the cold unappeasable pitilessness of the divine powers who do the will of fate: in it rises too loudly and insistently "the confluent surge of loud calamities" of which Erechtheus speaks in that wonderful opening declamation whose dominant note is

> *And what they will is more than our desire,*
> *And their desire is more than what we will.*
> *For no man's will and no desire of man's*
> *Shall stand as doth a god's will. . . . .*

I do not think it is too much to say that since Sophocles no such fate-surcharged dramatic verse, on the Greek model and in the Greek tradition, has been written as, for example, the pages from where the Herald of Eumolpus enters with

> *Old men, grey borderers on the march of death*

to the advent of the Athenian Messenger with

High things of strong-souled men that loved their land

after the close of the magnificent chorus beginning

Many loves of many a mood and many a kind
Fill the life of man, and mould the secret mind. . .

Atalanta appeared early in 1865. Before the year was out, *Chastelard* (which, as will be remembered, was written or at least begun in the author's last year as an undergraduate at Oxford) was also published. The two dramas are as different as two works in dramatic form could be. The difference is not, as often averred, between the work of the romanticist and that of the classicist. The "classicism" of *Atalanta* does not hide the "romanticism" of the author. It was not an old-world Greek but a modern "romanticist" who wrote

When the hounds of Spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil and all the pain—

The difference lies in the choice of model: in the selection of the Shakespearean method and manner instead of the Sophoclean method and manner. With the one the poet had a freer play for his unequalled metrical invention: with the other a more intimate and familiar method of development of his dramatic conception.

There is no modern dramatic trilogy that in length, sustained power, and continuity of beauty can be compared with the trilogy of Mary of Scotland—*Chastelard*, *Bothwell*, and *Mary Stuart*. Of these, the most difficult achievement is the third: the most sustained and powerful the second: the most beautiful, the first. Even if Swinburne had never written another line on the subject of Mary Stuart, *Chastelard* would retain its place as one of the finest of modern poetic plays. Certainly it is not a masterpiece of the front rank like *Atalanta*, but it is none the less a masterly achievement with a beauty beyond that of any dramatic poem by any of Swinburne's contemporaries. This tragedy of the love of the poet Chastelard for a woman who could not possibly be true to one man, or true even to love, has an eternal significance. Chastelard wins us by his dauntless passion

for the beautiful Queen o' Scots, his defiance of death and contempt for all else that life can offer if it does not offer the supreme passion, and by his heroism of lealty to a false love: Mary commands our reluctant allegiance by her exquisite womanhood, her beauty, her youth, her high destiny and our knowledge of her tragic fate: and that other impressive "secondary personage," Mary Beaton, compels our sorrowful and pitying love. Everything turns upon the truth and loyalty of one woman. But Chastelard is a poet, and reckless of life and all save love, and Mary is one of those women who lie by instinct and of necessity—

I know her ways of loving, all of them:
A sweet soft way the first is; afterward
It burns and bites like fire; the end of that,
Charred dust and eyelids bitten through with smoke.

So Chastelard is heroically true to love and to his lover, and Mary for all her talk of truth and honour shows herself in her attitude towards the man to whom she has given her love both a coward and traitor. So intense is her self-sophistication that she remains unable to realise her perfidy, and thus the last irony is added to the

bitter tragi-comedy of her love-story. Even when, smitten by an unusual remorse, she obtains a reprieve to save the life of her lover, she remembers that her "fair name" might be further hurt if he should live, and so she comes ignobly to his cell to reclaim the reprieve, trusting to his loyalty of love even when he knows the full measure of her cowardice and falsehood. But Chastelard has known her far better than she could ever know him, and has already destroyed the document that was to give him freedom and life. With one lover's kisses on her lips she turns to another, and then, and later when "true love" ended on the scaffold, and the usher cried "make way for my lord of Bothwell next the queen," "laughed graciously." It is the eternal comedy of the poet and his mistress.

Bothwell is the longest play in the language. It is impossible for the stage, and is inevitably wearisome at times even as a drama for the mind. But it is wearisome only as life is wearisome, and has the same rhythmic swaying between the low levels and the high, the like monotonies and surprises, the like littlenesses and tragical miscarriages. Only, it differs in this, that it is without either the broad humour whose exaggeration

is farce, or the refined humour whose smile is comedy. It is a masterpiece on a colossal scale, but has to share the fate of colossal masterpieces, and be read only by students and enthusiasts. In parts it contains some of Swinburne's finest dramatic writing. The trilogy covers, in its period of composition, nearly twenty years, for though *Chastelard* was not published till 1865, it was a text revised from an earlier version, written before *Atalanta in Calydon*. *Bothwell* appeared in 1874, and *Mary Stuart* in 1881. Apart from the infinite beauty and charm of these plays considered as poetry, they have a deep interest as an historical interpretation, by a student profoundly versed in the complicated chronicles which deal with the problems of Scottish and English history at the period in question: and a perhaps deeper and more abiding interest for the psychologist, in the evolution of Mary's character, of her inward and outer life.

The year after the publication of *Chastelard* saw the issue of *Poems and Ballads*. Many of the poems had been written some years earlier (*Faustine*, for example, was printed in the *Spectator* in 1862, and, as we have already seen, *Laus Veneris* and the

Hymn to Proserpine were in that year recited to a friend): perhaps nearly all had been written when *Atalanta* appeared in 1865. In that year, the small literary public which "read" hailed Swinburne as a young poet of extraordinary promise and achievement: in 1866 the same public, or the major part, and the vast public beyond which followed as it ever follows any lead skilfully given to it, heaped anger and abuse upon the head of the brilliant offender against the conventionalities so dearly treasured. Where Swinburne had been welcomed he was now solemnly banned, when not metaphorically threatened with the doom of St. Stephen. No defence that has appeared has the convincing force of Swinburne's own famous defence. At this date, it seems enough to say that while the outcry was largely foolish where not hypocritical, and sometimes malicious where not foolish, there was enough basis to give hostility a definite ground to take up whence to proclaim anathema: and to add that for some pages, for some poems or parts of poems, the best thing would have been a remorseless blue pencil. But it is commonly overlooked that the defects calling for the blue pencil were defects of

immature judgment in art, not of "public morality."

This is neither the time nor place for the reopening of a controversy unlikely to afford persuasion to the public of any time or conviction to the artist of any period. A gulf separates the mental world wherein a few minds think and act, and the mental world wherein the many alternate between stagnation and a blind following. No controversies, no arguments, no persuasions, can ever be but temporary bridges which the next generation will overflood and bear away.

Nor can I enter here on a critical estimate of the *Poems and Ballads* and the *Songs Before Sunrise*. So for the present it must suffice to say that by common consent no volume of lyrical poetry such as *Poems and Ballads* has appeared in English, nor is like to appear again: that it has a music of its own absolutely unequalled and unapproached: and that among much of a loveliness, novelty, and charm beyond belief for those who do not know the book, there are poems which only a proudly reckless youth would write and only a youthful judgment include.

With the *Poems and Ballads* in 1866, and

the *Songs Before Sunrise* five years later, Algernon Charles Swinburne took the place that no other poet had been worthy to occupy since Shelley's death.

If one were to divide Swinburne's poetical career into two main periods, the first would end in 1881, with the publication of *Mary Stuart.* This period would comprise (after the "prelude" of the two early and immature plays) *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Erechtheus, Poems and Ballads,* the second series of *Poems and Ballads* (1878), *Songs Before Sunrise, Songs of Two Nations, Songs of the Springtides, Studies in Song,* and the great trilogy (1866–1881) of *Chastelard, Bothwell,* and *Mary Stuart.*

The second period would comprise the part dramatic, part narrative, wholly lyrical *Tristram of Lyonesse,* one of the great works of the poet; the powerful drama of *Marino Faliero; Locrine,* so dramatic and moving; the modern but surely far from convincing play *The Sisters;* the picturesque versified Arthurian narrative, *The Tale of Balen;* and the recent *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards;* with, for lyrical collections, the *Century of Roundels, A Midsummer Holiday,* the third series of

Poems and Ballads, and *Astrophel*, one of Mr. Swinburne's finest books.

The period, however, which ends with the close of the trilogy of Mary Stuart and with the most noble elegiac poem written since *Adonais*, will to many seem the great period. This much may certainly be granted, that if Mr. Swinburne had written no dramatic verse after the conclusion of the Mary trilogy and no lyrical verse after the *Ave atque vale*, which throws so splendid a glow over the second series of *Poems and Ballads*, his fame and place would be no less and no lower than they are to-day, and would, so far as contemporary judgment can foretell, stand assured against any change or chance of the literary fates.

But it is still the indiscriminating vogue with the generality of reviewers to aver that there is nothing of the old magic in Swinburne's later poetry. I think it would be difficult to name any living poet whose work reveals more of essential poetry than is to be found in these later writings. This is not to compare one period with another, or one masterpiece and one gathering of song with another masterpiece and another gathering of song. If there are some who

would say "we have 'the real Swinburne' in *Atalanta* and *Poems and Ballads*," there are others who would make the same affirmation of *Tristram of Lyonesse* and *Astrophel* or *Studies in Song*. Recently I saw it stated that we might look in vain for any later verse by this poet which had any thought behind it or had anything of the old "pantheistic fervour and spiritual absorption of *Hertha*." The statement was not, and is not, worth refutation, but one would like to know if the writer had read *The Nympholept*, that splendid and strangely ignored nature-poem which once and for all should do away with the like foolish misstatements.

Apart from the nobly ordered verse of *A Nympholept*, what charm of music, simple and sweet, in *The Mill-Garden* and *A Haven*, in *Heartsease Country* and *An Old Saying*; * poems which should, I think, sufficiently meet the assertions of those readers and critics who aver that in his later period Swinburne has lost his old secret and can interest still but no longer charm.

* The beautiful little song *Love laid his sleepless head*, though interpolated in this section, belongs to the earlier period.

Swinburne's lifelong passion for the sea, a passion that might well be called adoration, has permeated his poetry so widely and deeply that on almost every page of lyrical writing we smell the salt savour or hear the surge of the wave or the long sigh of many waters. Swinburne is the one poet of the sea: the one poet to whom throughout his life the sea has been a passion and a dream, a bride and a comrade, the "wild brother" of humanity and the mirror of Fate, the beginning and the end, the image of life and the countenance of death. We feel to be wholly true of him that intense obsession, that pantheistic ecstasy, which lives in lines such as

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside.

I understand that *Songs of the Springtides* is one of the least known of Swinburne's writings. It ought to be known intimately to every lover of his poetry. Possibly more than any other of his books it affords, in glimpses, that direct autobiographical revelation which is rare in this poet's work. The three long lyrical compositions of which

the volume consists are *Thalassius*, *On the Cliffs*, and *The Garden of Cymodoce*. They contain some of Swinburne's loveliest lines. Than the first there is no single poem more characteristic of the author, and for this and its autobiographical significance, it would but for its length have been given here. Behind the veil of *Thalassius* is the poetic self of the poet, as behind the veil of *Alastor* is the poetic self of Shelley. All the lines from "High things the high song taught him" are a true revelation of the author of *Songs Before Sunrise* and of much else that falls into line with that famous echoing the voice of freedom, the cry of revolution.

For sheer genius in the wedding of "sound and sense" what contemporary poet could have written the superb Bacchanalian passage, or that other of tempest: or who else could have written the lovely episode where the young Thalassius goes seaward, to the

Dense water-walls and clear dusk waterways . . .
The deep divine dark dayshine of the sea—

In the beautiful poem *On the Cliffs* the author discloses, what every intimate reader of his work must have discerned, his

passionate sympathy with Sappho. In *Ave atque Vale*, and in the Latin and English poems to Catullus, and in *On the Cliffs* he has himself revealed what lovers of his strange muse knew, that his poetic kindred are Sappho, Catullus, and Baudelaire—as again (in the frank and memorable twenty-sixth stanza of *In the Bay*) with Marlowe and Shelley: that though so different from each in achievement, whether known fragmentarily or fully, he is allied in spirit and genius to these masters of beauty. Much of the poem is bathed in a lovely light of "pale pure colour"

Too dim for green and luminous for grey,

and it reads as though dreamed and written when

Between the moondawn and the sundown here
The twilight hangs half starless. . . .

The Garden of Cymodoce is more obscure on first perusal. Through it moves an air of that ancient incommunicable sorrow which finds an echo in one of its lines,

The wail over the world of all that weep.

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

(1903)

SOME eight years ago a little book appeared entitled *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours.* This book was received not only with the respect due to a poet whose earlier writings had won him a distinguished minor place, but with a cordial recognition that by it English poetry had been enriched. Here, it was realised, was a man who had something to say that was worth saying and was said in a new way. True, some of Eugene Lee-Hamilton's critics had recognised this from the first, since the publication of *Gods, Saints, and Men,* in 1880 ; and others had come to see in succeeding volumes the justification of the praise and confidence of the few who had welcomed a new writer of distinction. It was not, however, till the appearance of *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours* that anything like justice was done to the rare merits of the author. Perhaps in some degree this was due to aroused sympathy : sympathy

with what rumour hinted of a life of tragical suffering bravely borne, enhanced by the corroborative evidence of the writings themselves. Casual critics had complained of the emphasised note of personal loss, personal despair, without recognising that the author was not adopting a pose, but was sincerely giving expression to a bitter truth. Nor, again, had these commentators known the work in its proper proportions: they had seen certain features in exaggerated relief, they discerned nothing of the artistic equipoise which rendered the poet's verse variegated in charm as well as in sombre power, in delicate beauty as well as in the weird and fantastic, the despairing and the tragical. A critic complained once, in an essay on pessimism in modern poetry, that all the writers of Lee-Hamilton's way of thought were hopeless pessimists, in part at least, because they could never see life in its happy minor moods, or recognise that delicacy of thought and lightness of touch could, in art, go as far, or further, than "a sad strenuousness." The proposition thus put is not true or relevant, but merely vague and inconsequently assertive. To see life in its happy minor moods is a spiritual faculty that may quite well co-exist with an

intellectual inability to accept every vicissitude of human destiny as plain evidence of divine care and love: and a poet can blithely rejoice in the sweet natural world, or happily live and move in the world of the imagination, even if the primary dogmas of the Church are a dead letter to him. As to any inevitable quality in intellectual pessimism tending to dissociation from delicacy of thought and lightness of touch, there is certainly no more than the like inevitable quality in optimism tending to association with the terrible and painful: these directions are matters of temperament, of individual outlook, not of theory as to life's limitations and destinies. Darley was a pessimist and unhappy in his life and circumstances, but no English poet has surpassed him in the delicacy of his vision of the imaginative world of fairyland and the greenwood life, or equalled him in lightness of touch. Thomas Hardy is a pessimist, in the current use of the word at least; but no contemporary has given us a more charming and humorous and convincingly vivid portrayal of human life than the author of *Under the Greenwood Tree*. And, it might well be asked, who among living poets has given us so delightful and delicately

sure a revelation of the "fairy" world, from the characteristic English standpoint at any rate, as Lee-Hamilton has done in poems such as, for example, the two sonnets of *The Death of Puck* in *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours?*

I

I fear that Puck is dead—it is so long
Since men last saw him—dead with all the rest
Of that sweet elfin crew that made their nest
In hollow nuts, where hazels sing their song;
Dead and for ever, like the antique throng
The elves replaced; the Dryad that you guessed
Behind the leaves; the Naiad weed-bedressed;
The leaf-eared Faun that loved to lead you wrong.

Tell me, thou hopping Robin, hast thou met
A little man, no bigger than thyself,
Whom they call Puck, where woodland bells are wet?

Tell me, thou Wood-Mouse, hast thou seen an elf
Whom they call Puck, and is he seated yet,
Capped with a snail-shell, on his mushroom shelf?

II

The Robin gave three hops, and chirped, and said:
"Yes, I knew Puck, and loved him; though I trow
He mimicked oft my whistle chuckling low;
Yes, I knew cousin Puck, but he is dead.
We found him lying on his mushroom bed—
The wren and I—half covered up with snow,
As we were hopping where the berries grow.
We think he died of cold. Aye, Puck is fled."

And then the Wood-Mouse said : " We made the Mole
Dig him a little grave beneath the moss,
And four big Dormice placed him in a hole ;

The Squirrel made with sticks a little cross ;
Puck was a Christian elf, and had a soul ;
And all we velvet-jackets mourn his loss."

This is the same poet who elsewhere (in *The New Medusa*) reveals his personal tragedy in lines such as :

What work I do, I do with numbed, chained hand,
With scanty light, and seeing ill the whole,
And each small part, once traced, must changeless stand
Beyond control—

or newly conveys the more impersonal world-sorrow at the loss of ancient faith, as in the fine sonnet *Idle Charon* which opens the volume entitled *Apollo and Marsyas* :

The shores of Styx are lone for evermore,
And not one shadowy form upon the steep
Looms through the dust, far as the eye can sweep,
To call the ferry over as of yore ;
But tintless rushes all about the shore
Have hemmed the old boat in, where, locked in sleep,
Hoar-bearded Charon lies ; while pale weeds creep
With tightening grasp all round the unused oar.
For in the world of life strange rumours run

That now the Soul departs not with the breath,
But that the Body and the Soul are one ;
And in the loved one's mouth now, after death,
The widow puts no obol, nor the son,
To pay the ferry in the world beneath.

Eugene Lee-Hamilton was born in London, in January 1845, and was still in infancy when his father died. His mother was a woman of marked individuality and of exceptional mental powers, so that it was natural that she should prefer to educate her child herself. This was the more fortunate for her son in so far that he was not tied down to the routine of schooling in one place, because Mrs. Lee-Hamilton enjoyed and believed in the value of varied experience of "places, men, and things" abroad. Thus the early years of Eugene Lee-Hamilton were mainly spent in France and Germany. When nineteen he went to Oriel College, Oxford, and in the same year (1864) took the Taylorian Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literature: an excellent proof that he had not suffered by maternal education in lieu of the usual school routine. By many passages and allusions in the poet's early *Poems and Transcripts* and other volumes, it is clear that this Oxford period was the happiest

in his life. In addition to exceptional mental powers, he had good health and enjoyed all out-door life, and the ambition to excel was the salt to the pleasant savour of youth. When he left Oxford, it was to enter (in 1869) the Diplomatic Service. Eugene began mature life along two lines of development : the line of diplomacy, and the line of study and a severe intellectual training. Perhaps it was during the early period of this dual strain that the first symptoms of nature's warning that he was incurring an excess of nervous expenditure revealed themselves : if so, they were too slight to attract any particular notice. After six months' hard work at the Foreign Office, he was attached to the British Embassy at Paris, one of the primary reasons for his appointment being his proficiency as a French linguist, and his interest in and considerable knowledge of French life. Life at the Embassy, always interesting, became an exciting experience at the outbreak of the Franco-German War. The work, however, now involved a greatly enhanced strain, and as the young student-diplomatist was not so strong as he looked, he began slowly to suffer in minor but harassing ways. In all, he served three years under

our Ambassador, Lord Lyons, and accompanied the Embassy to Tours, Bordeaux, and Versailles in its respective domiciliary changes during the war. Possibly, if the young diplomatist could have had a long rest after his arduous labours during the Franco-German War, he might have avoided a break-down which was becoming almost inevitable, though its imminence or seriousness was unrecognised by himself or others. It was with relief, however, that in 1873 he found himself appointed to our Legation at Lisbon, under Sir Charles Murray.

At first the change to a warmer climate, and to a new and picturesque environment, effected some good to failing health. Then, rapidly, the first dread symptoms of a cerebro-spinal disease revealed themselves. The young diplomatist's career was at an end. Not long after his resignation and departure from Lisbon, he himself realised that all his hopes and ambitions were doomed to frustration. By this time, in a semi-paralysed condition, he was now an acknowledged sufferer from the same dread and agonising disease which had kept Heine on his mattress-grave for so many weary years till death released the poet from his martyrdom. In a brief while from the first

definite collapse (in 1874), all hope was practically abandoned. It seemed but a question of time, of physical endurance, and moral courage.

All the published poetic work of Eugene Lee-Hamilton (with the slight exception of his share in *Forest Notes*) was accomplished within the twenty years, from 1874 to 1894, when, practically paralysed, always in pain, and for years in a continuous martyrdom of acute suffering and nervous agony, he endured with a latent vitality and an undaunted courage what almost seemed beyond human courage or vitality to meet.

It is the knowledge of this dreadful suffering and all of bitter regret, disillusion, and relinquishment involved, which gives his poetry in general, and the *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours* in particular, so poignant an accent. How, in the circumstances, so much fine work was achieved may well astonish us: the accomplishment of the finer portion might seem incredible if the method and manner of composition were fully realised. Let it suffice to say that for a long period Lee-Hamilton's suffering was too acute to enable him to be read to; conversations, messages, letters, had to be condensed into a few essential words; even

the poetry he so loved had to be read to him at long intervals, and often had to be limited to a couple of lines at a time. In dictation of his own poetry he was almost as restricted. At one time he could not have dictated the whole of a sonnet straightway; for a considerable period a line or two at a time had to suffice. Twenty years of the maturity of a man's life, from thirty to fifty; think of it! . . . of all that is involved, of all that it means! . . . and this, too, without hope of recovery, and with likelihood of enhanced suffering. Yet in these twenty years the poet never despaired in the sense of turning his face to the wall and refusing further terms with life. Volume after volume came from him, and not only original verse, but a careful and scholarly metrical translation of Dante, in itself a heavy labour even for the time and energy of an enthusiast unencumbered in health and circumstance. Truly, Heine's brother of the mattress-grave endured and lived by poetry alone. It was this inward life, this indwelling spirit, this star in the mind which kept despair at bay, and gave a few rare moments of solace and beauty to the weary round of the wingless hours. He has himself said better than

any other can say what Poetry meant to him :

I think the Fairies to my christening came ;
But they were wicked sprites and envious elves ;
Who brought me gall, as bitter as themselves,
In tiny tankards wrought with fairy flame.
They wished me love of books—each little dame—
With power to read no book upon my shelves ;
Fair limbs—for palsy ; Dead-Sea fruits by twelves ;
And every bitter blessing you can name.

But one good Elf there was ; and she let fall
A single drop of Poesy's wine of gold
In every little tankard full of gall.

So year by year, as woes and pains grow old,
The little golden drop is in them all ;
But bitterer is the cup than can be told.

We may fairly contrast this poetry, this attitude, with that of other poets of "gloom and sorrow and sadness," with whom Eugene Lee-Hamilton has with only partial justice been classed. One of the greatest poets of Italy won the sympathy of the reading world by the sincerity and uniformity of his lamentations upon the evil of life : and though not even the lyrical genius and powerful intellect of Leopardi can now recall his retreated fame across the borders of youth and hope, there was a

time when his poetry of lamentation was held to be justified by the weariness, ill-health, and shattered energies which from early manhood accompanied his disappointed and brief life. But none, surely, could say that the English poet had not endured a bitterer destiny, yet with a far greater dignity in reticence of personal lament. No contemporary writer has suffered more; but where do we find the embittered hatred and scorn of life so characteristic of many of those who have known the hard way? He bears no ill-will to those of happier fortunes: he curses no gods: and if he is sad in mind and sick at heart, if the tragical and poignant and pathetic appeal to him as themes oftener than a perfect sanity would adjudge right, that, surely, is but natural. In the Italy where he has spent most of his life, and knows so well despite restricted opportunities, there are poets who have outdone the prophets in anathema and bewailing, without a tenth part of the justification of Eugene Lee-Hamilton. Read not only the great Carducci in his sombre moments, but Mario Rapisardi, the representative poet of the south; or Arturo Graf, the typical pessimist of that northern Italy which has become so Germanised;

or Ada Negri, the author of *Fatalita* and *Tempeste*, books which have had a wide sale and a wider and deeper influence, and wherein the cry of revolt and the snarl against life become hysterical through sheer intensity. Then turn to even so sad a book as *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours*. What serenity in suffering, what dignity in pain, what control over bitterness! How insincere much of Baudelaire appears in this contrast, how crude the savage banalities of *Maldoror;* how rhetorical even the sombre verse of the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*. In one respect at least, Eugene Lee-Hamilton and the late Philip Bourke Marston should be remembered together: for these two poets of lifelong suffering and loss have ever, to use an old-fashioned phrase, been gentlemen in their sorrow.

To return to the poet's career subsequent to his collapse after his retirement from the diplomatic service. From Lisbon he went to Florence, to the home of his mother, who had remarried some ten years after her first husband's death. Here, with Mrs. Paget, as she now was, and with his half-sister Violet Paget, later to become so well known as Vernon Lee, he spent the

ensuing twenty years in the circumstances indicated, and with only a few brief summer changes (then, as in his ordinary "airings" in Florence, having to be conveyed on a wheeled bed) to Siena, or the Bagni di Lucca.

During the first three years of his painful and disabling malady, Lee-Hamilton revised some of his youthful productions in verse, and, having selected and amplified, published his first volume, *Poems and Transcripts*. This was in 1878, and from that date the author continuously devoted himself to the art he has loved and so well served. His early book is interesting as a prelude: all the author's qualities are foreshadowed, if sometimes dimly. It reveals an indifferent accomplishment in technique, but the poet-touch is often evident and convincing. Even if the volume had not appeared at a time when the cult of deft metrical artifice was absorbing the attention of poets and critics, it is certain that *Poems and Transcripts* could have had no great measure of success. Yet one may turn to the book with pleasure, though the author has travelled a long way in the twenty-five years which have passed since its publication.

Two years later (1880) the poet's second volume appeared. *Gods, Saints, and Man* showed an unmistakable advance. It was evident that a new craftsman in dramatic verse, in the dramatic ballad and lyrical narrative, had entered the lists. The touch was still unequal, the art often interspaced with disillusioning phrase, or dragged by the prosaic clay of the overworn or colourless word, the jejune epithet. But it was a poet and not merely a verse-writer who challenged criticism. And this, in itself a distinction, was still more manifest in *The New Medusa* and *Apollo and Marsyas*, published respectively in 1882 and 1884. If in the later of these two volumes is no ballad to surpass in dramatic intensity *The Raft* in the earlier, the narrative and ballad poems show a more scrupulous art and compelling power. Their author loves a terrible subject as a gourmet loves a delicacy: it is the rich food and strong wine most beloved of his imagination. In *Sister Mary of the Plague*, in this 1884 volume, he has a theme which has the demerit of fundamental unreality, but the merit of intensely dramatic possibility. This theme is one which might easily be

treated repulsively, but which Lee-Hamilton has rendered in beauty, and as to whose imaginative reality he convinces us. But if in this tale of a vampire-woman to whom the enormity of her hidden life and frightful destiny are accidentally revealed, a revelation met not only with despair but with spiritual abhorrence, the poet has succeeded where most would fail, he has not always the like good fortune. Personally I find the flaws in workmanship more obvious in these dramatic narratives and ballads than in his sonnets, where the discipline of the form has for this poet ever exercised a salutary influence. Perhaps his finest achievement in this kind is the vivid dramatic narrative, *Abraham Carew*, a Puritan fanatic who has wilfully murdered his only and dearly loved daughter under the terrible obsession of the idea that the sacrifice is required of him by the Almighty. It is refreshing to turn from sombre and tragical studies such as *Sister Mary of the Plague*, *Abraham Carew*, *The Wonder of the World*, *Ipsissimus*, and others, to a romantic ballad so strong and spirited as *Hunting the King* (based on the historic episode of Drouet's night-ride to Varennes). Yet even in the volume containing these noteworthy ballads

and dramatic poems, the most memorable part is not that which comprises them, but that where a score of sonnets reveal a surer inspiration and a finer technique. As in *The New Medusa* one after a time recalls only vaguely *The Raft* and other strenuous compositions, one remembers sonnet after sonnet. One of these, *Sea-Shell Murmurs*, is already accepted as one of the finest contemporary achievements in its kind—and none the less because that the central image is familiar: the more, indeed, from the triumph of imparting to an outworn poetic symbol a new life and a new beauty.

A genuine if limited success came to Lee-Hamilton with the publication in 1888 of his *Imaginary Sonnets*, despite its equivocal title. Here, in truth, it was realised, was a poet who had won the right to be considered seriously. On the other hand, his next volume, the poetic drama called *The Fountain of Youth*, though containing some of the poet's finest passages, and with the advantage of one of those deep-based themes which ignite the imagination of all of us, was almost ignored by the reading public. It is difficult to understand why this fine book failed to win wider

appreciation than it did. The fault cannot lie wholly with the might-be readers, or with the critics—several of whom spoke of it highly. Probably the reason in part lies in that monotony in handling which characterises many of the author's narrative poems; and in the like tendency to wed fine and commonplace lines and passages in an incompatible union. Possibly the real reason is that "the reader" does not wish to be led to any Fountain of Youth, even if by Ponce da Leon himself (the author's "hero"), unless it be to a revelation of hope. The fountains of disillusion are dreaded by most of us.

Three years later, in 1894, Eugene Lee-Hamilton's finest book, with its beautiful and appropriate title *Sonnets of the Wingless Hours*, convinced even those who had hitherto shown indifference, that here was a true and fine poet with an utterance all his own, an inspiration that none could gainsay, and a gift of beauty worthy indeed of welcome. The collection was not, it is true, of wholly new poetry: many of the sonnets had already appeared in earlier volumes. But here, it was realised, was brought together the most unalloyed ore that the poet had to offer: old and

new, the collection was at once unique, beautiful, and convincing.

From 1874 to 1894—in these twenty years the poet had never stirred from his wheeled bed. In these twenty years he had endured suffering so continuous and hopeless as to be all but unendurable—and in pain and difficulty, often only line by line, sometimes literally only by a word or two at a time, had dictated all these volumes. For many weeks in each year, at one time for many sequent months, he could see even his intimate friends only at rare intervals and for the briefest periods. It would not be seemly to enlarge upon this long martyrdom: it is enough to indicate out of what steadfastness of will and heroism of endurance these books came to be.

Then at last the miraculous happened. Early in the twenty-first year of this prolonged half-life, when he had almost reached the age of fifty, the sufferer began to realise that his disease was on the wane. At first this seemed impossible: then it was feared as a prelude to a worse collapse: finally hope became almost a certainty. Before the summer had passed the invalid arose, restored to new life. True, it took

him months to learn to walk again, and even when he could dispense with an attendant and was once more able to go out into the light of day and rejoice in freedom of movement and the rapture of recovered energies, many more months elapsed before he could trust himself to the normal activities of the life he had seen pass from him twenty years back.

Thereafter recovery to health became complete, though of course without the elasticity and vigour of men who had reached the same age without sufferings and in fortunate circumstances. Eugene Lee-Hamilton travelled much. In 1897 he visited America, and returned "a new man." In Rome (for Italy was his adopted country, and he could not live away from it) he met the lady whom in 1898 he married —the Scottish novelist, Annie E. Holdsworth, author of *Joanna Traill, Spinster; The Years that the Locust hath Eaten;* &c., &c. In 1899 many friends of both delighted in a charming little volume of poetry, entitled *Forest Notes,* wherein husband and wife had collaborated, each giving of their best and freshest, and content to merge their forest notes into one woodland song.

No more of biography would be fitting here than to add that two years ago Mr. and Mrs. Lee-Hamilton settled in a charming old villa at San Gervasio outside Florence, on the hill-road to Fiesole: and that with renewed life the poet has again given himself to the Muse he served so well in the years of suffering and lethargy—the lethargy that, as he says in one of the lyrics in *The Fountain of Youth*, "deadened unthinkable pain."

In order to understand Eugene Lee-Hamilton's work, and properly to estimate it, one must know the conditions which shaped and the circumstances which coloured its growth. So far as practicable this has been indicated in the present note. For a fuller understanding of the mind and spirit of the poet one must look to the poems themselves, and particularly to the sonnets, naturally so much more a personal expression than the dramatic ballads and narrative poems, or than the "imaginary sonnets"—*i.e.*, sonnets imagined to be addressed from some historic individual to another, or to living or inanimate objects, or to an abstraction, or from some creation of the poetic imagination to another, as *Carmagnola to the Republic of Venice* and

Chastelard to Mary Stuart, as *Cardinal Wolsey to his Hound* and *Lady Jane Grey to the Flowers and Birds*, as *Michael Angelo to his Statue of Day* and *Alexander Selkirk to his Shadow*, as *Balboa to the Pacific* and *Henry I. to the Sea*, as *Venus to Tannhauser* and *Faustus to Helen of Troy*. Above all, the reader will find what Maeterlinck calls both the outward fatality and the inward destiny, in many of the sonnets contained in *The Wingless Hours*. So simple and vivid is this poetic autobiography that few readers could fail to grasp the essential features of the author's life, and of the brave, unselfish, and truly poetic spirit which has uplifted it.

And this brings me to a point that has from the first been in my mind. No work of art can in the long run be estimated in connection with the maker's circumstances or suffering. Work in any of the arts is excellent, good, mediocre, poor, or bad: we may know the conditional reasons: we may be biassed in sympathy: but we must judge only by the achievement. There can be no greater literary fallacy than to believe that Leopardi's poetry owes what is enduring in it to the pathos of his brief and sorrowful life; that Heine's lyrics are unforgettable

because of his mattress-grave; that the odes of Keats are more to be treasured by us because he died young and was derided by an influential critic; that the poems of Shelley are sweeter because he was of the stricken hearts, and was drowned in early manhood; or that the songs of Burns, or the lyrics of Poe, are supreme in kind because of the tragical circumstances in the lives of both poets. The essential part of the poetry of Leopardi, Heine, Keats, Shelley, Burns, Poe, is wholly independent of what has been called the pathetic fallacy. Each of these great artists would inevitably refuse to take any other standpoint. Imagine Keats admiring the verse of a writer because he was blind or was a victim to consumption, or Heine enduring lyrics on the ground that the author was paralysed or had died untimely through a broken heart!

It is not, therefore, on account of what the author has suffered in body and endured in spirit that I would say, "Read: for here is verse wonderful as having been written in circumstances of almost intolerable hardship: verse moving and beautiful because the solace of a fine mind in a prolonged martyrdom of pain and

hopelessness." That would be to do an injustice to the author's fine achievement. I would say first and foremost, "Read: for here is true poetry." The rest is incidental. It is right that we should be biassed by sympathy, and inevitable that the atmosphere wherein we approach should be coloured by that sympathy and an admiring pity; but when we come to the consideration of any work of the imagination, we have to judge of it solely by its conformity with or inability to fulfil these laws. Sorrow and suffering have given their colour to these "little children of pain." We feel their pain the more acutely because we know they are neither imagined through dramatic sympathy nor clad in rhetoric. Each is a personal utterance. But each is more than a statement, however pathetic in fact and moving in sentiment: each is a poem, by virtue of that life which the poet can give only when his emotion becomes rhythmical, and when his art controls that rhythm and compels it to an ordered excellence. Were it not so, these sonnets would merely be exclamatory. They might win our sympathy, they could not win our minds: they might persuade us to pity, they could not charm us with

beauty. Look, for example, at the first sonnet one may perchance see: *Lost Years.* A little less of discipline, and the octave would resolve itself into prose: already the ear revolts against the metallic iterance of "went"; but, suddenly, the poetry of the idea and the poetry of the idea's expression becomes one:

And now my manhood goes where goes the song
Of captive birds, the cry of crippled things:
It goes where goes the day that unused dies.

In some of those chosen sonnets the infelicitous, because not the convincing or unconsciously satisfying word, leads perilously near disillusion. Others have an all but flawless beauty; and we hardly realise whether we are the more moved by the beauty of the poet's thought, and the sadness whence the thought arises a lovely phantom, or by the hushed air and ordered loveliness of the sonnet itself—as, for example, that entitled *Twilight:*

A sudden pang contracts the heart of Day,
As fades the glory of the sunken sun.
The bats replace the swallows one by one;
The cries of playing children die away.
Like one in pain, a bell begins to sway:
A few white oxen, from their labour done,
Pass ghostly through the dusk: the crone that spun
Outside her door, turns in; and all grows grey.

And still I lie, as I all day have lain,
Here in this garden, thinking of the time
Before the years of helplessness and pain,

Or playing with the fringes of a rhyme,
Until the yellow moon, amid her train
Of throbbing stars, appears o'er yonder lime.

It is this pictorial and imaginative vision which animates all Eugene Lee-Hamilton's best work. Take an historical episode such as that selected by him for one of his "Imaginary Sonnets"—the drowning of the prince in *The White Ship*. The theme is one hackneyed by many a balladist and poet: but see how new it is become by virtue of this poet's personal vision in union with dramatic insight:

. . . Let one wide wave
Now sweep this land, and make a single grave
For King and people. Let the wild gull skim
Where now is England: and the sea-fish swim
In every drowned cathedral's vaulted nave,
As in a green and pillar'd ocean cave.
* * * * *
And if the shuddering pilot ventures there
And sees their pinnacles, like rocks to shun,
Above the waves, and green with tidal hair—
Then let him whisper. . . .

Let this brief appreciation end with a sonnet given now not only because of its beauty, but as characteristic of the lofty

moral standpoint of all the personal writings of Eugene Lee-Hamilton :

WINE OF OMAR KHAYYAM

He rode the flame-winged dragon-steed of Thought
Through Space and Darkness, seeking Heaven and Hell ;
And searched the farthest stars where souls might dwell
To find God's justice : and in vain he sought.

Then, looking on the dusk-eyed girl who brought
His dream-filled wine beside his garden-well,
He said : "Her kiss ; the wine-jug's drowsy spell ;
Bulbul ; the roses ; death ; . . . all else is naught :

So drink till that."—What drink, because the abyss
Of nothing waits ? because there is for man
But one swift hour of consciousness and light ?

No.—Just because we have no life but this,
Turn it to use ; be noble while you can ;
Search, help, create ; then pass into the night.

THE HOTEL OF THE BEAUTIFUL STAR

"WHERE do you live?" is a question habitually asked by companionable tramps, chance vagrants, and other homeless folk, blown like drifting leaves through the thoroughfares, the myriad streets, along the wide suburban roads, by the bridges, into the parks of the Great City.

The answer is, in effect, "At the Sign of the Moon," "Gas-lamp Lodging," "Bridge Hotel," "The Star Inn," or—for among the homeless there are poets (as well as adapters of the phrase of their Parisian kindred)—"The Hotel of the Beautiful Star." These frequenters are often themselves called "stars." A "star" is a man who "lodges free."

No one knows how many homeless folk seek such shelter as is to be had o' nights in London. I have asked at Scotland Yard and of good authorities, but every estimate is guess-work, for no one man

can tell what is happening each night throughout this vast nation of London. I am inclined to accept as approximately near the facts the opinion of a police inspector of my acquaintance who has had altogether exceptional experience, not only as a metropolitan constable, but as a member of the separate force known as the river police. After much consideration, he said he would reckon on an average of from fifteen to twenty thousand homeless folk nightly in London during the months from May till September; about five or six thousand in the late autumn and the early spring; and anywhere between two and five thousand in the winter, the average falling to its lowest—a thousand, more or less, according to the weather—in January.

"Some time ago," he said, "I heard this very question mooted at a kind of slum congress. A gentleman declared that the common estimate of homeless London was grossly exaggerated. He said that, except in the hot midsummer nights, there were never more than a few groups of people in the parks, a score waifs and strays on certain thoroughfares where seats are to be had here and there—as in the Bayswater

Road, under the shadow of the trees, close alongside the iron railings of Kensington Gardens; another score, perhaps, along the Embankment and at the different bridges —at most, a hundred or so in all. I was about to speak, when a Salvation Major got up and read some notes. He took the breath away from some of the good folk there. When he had done, he said that it was only Whitechapel and the east of London he was speaking of, and that he could double or treble his figures by including central and southern London, leaving aside the bridges and parks and the whole mass of squares and gardens and quiet roads from the Marble Arch to Hampstead Heath—which itself, in summer, he added, was never without a large contingent of bush-sleepers. He wound up by suggesting that the gentleman who had discredited a large estimate should come with him on his night rounds for a week. So at that I got up too, and told what I knew about the swarm of folk—a mongrel lot, I'm bound to say, what with the Portugee mixture [*a generalism for a mixed foreign population*] and Malays and Chinese and them slippery coolies—along the riverbanks from London Bridge or above it.

all the way down to near Tilbury. In some of the old warehouses and sheds they lie like rats, many of them below beams. I couldn't give notes like the Salvation-Army Major, but I could see that even what I could tell was an amazing surprise to all there."

In summer, of course, and especially in early summer, one can best study the idiosyncrasies of this wandering and uncertain tribe of the unfortunate, the wretched, the idle, and the merely migratory. It is surprising how large a number is comprised in the last class. It was not till I understood this that the great discrepancy between August and July, the two hottest months, became explicable. Why the migrants in August should be far fewer than those in May and June and July is because of the great and ever-growing demand in the home counties for orchard-work and all manner of farm-labour. In scores of ways, indeed, there is employment for more labourers than there are applicants, and in August there is, in every class, a far greater exodus from London than in any other season. Thousands of tramps, wicker-workers, tinkers, an immense motley of indiscriminate trades

and no trades,* pour from the city in all directions. It is said there is not a gipsy habitual tramp, or "Walker Esquire" in London in August. Again, as a result, there is the relief in the congestion of lodging-houses, and in consequent lowered terms.

At one time it was a great delight to the present writer to wander about nocturnal London, and in all regions, from Eel-Pie Island up Richmond way, as far down-Thames as Rosherville and Gravesend; from the great commons of Wimbledon and Blackheath to those of Parliament Hill and Hampstead Heath; from these, alas! gruesome deceptive names in the east and north-east, Cambridge Heath, London Fields, Hackney Downs, and Green Lanes, to Brook Green in the west (where there is not much green and no brook), and to a drear locality rejoicing now in a new name, St. Quintin

* Some of these "lines" are peculiar—such as "the white-mice line," "the parrakeet or paroquet line," "the false-hair line," "artificial teeth," "spectacles," "Persian and tailless kittens," "bull-pups," and in fact almost every imaginable commodity, from the "real lace" and the as "real ostrich feathers" lines to stomach cordials and (awful thought) the "black-pudding line."

Park, hitherto known as Wormwood Scrubbs. These were the outlying gardens of that vast hostelry "The Hotel of the Beautiful Star." Little need to wander there, however, except for variety and curiosity; for the inner purlieus include the many parks, and, above all, Hyde Park, and the multitude of squares and "places," with a host of equally forbidden yet surreptitiously attainable public, private, conspicuous, secret, possible, and "impossible" havens for the shelterless.

At all times, too, the river and the riverside had an extraordinary fascination. By its banks many "stars" set and rise in another than the scientific or poetic sense.

The Thames below Richmond is not beautiful in the conventional meaning of the word, but the artist delights in its aspects at all seasons. By night it has a subtle and potent effect on the imagination, and under the influence of moonlight it can take on a beauty or a mysterious strangeness which, once realised, is irresistible. The nights of May and June are the loveliest. It is then the hayboats come down—great bargelike sloops laden close to the water with their fragrant burdens—and with

brick-red sails shining like dull bronze in the after-glow or in the dazzle of the moonshine. I remember the fascination these summer visitors used to have for Rossetti, the front rooms of whose fine old house in Cheyne Walk looked on the river. It was a sight of which he never tired. One night he told me a delightful story, though whether exaggerated by one of his sudden whimsical extravaganzas or literally true I was at first doubtful. It appeared that he had been watching a great "hoy" coming down stream, and was admiring the magnificent effect of the full moon on the curves of the river and on the hay-laden boat, when to his horror he saw the skipper and mate of the craft run forward, drag a man from under the thatch of hay, and fling him into the water. It took a good deal to make the famous painter-poet leave what was practically his hermitage, but what had just happened was too much for him, so he rushed from his house and across the broad roadway to Cheyne Embankment. A little crowd had already collected and was watching curiously—as Rossetti thought, with callous indifference—the sturdy approach of the unfortunate swimmer against tide or current, or both. In reply

to Rossetti's indignant exclamations, a bystander remarked, "Oh, you needn't worry yourself, guv'nor; it's only a bush-sleeper comin' in to Lunnon by way of a free bed o' hay. When they're found out they're allus chucked like that—that is, arter they makes their choice." "What choice?" Rossetti asked. "It's like this, guv'nor. Says skipper to you like, 'You take your choice an' have a thorough beltin' an' a run-in at the end o't, or over you go out o' this'—an' in nine cases out o' ten, arter a bit of scuffle fust, per'aps, the cove has a free bath gratis for nothin.'"

Meanwhile the bush-sleeper had been dragged out of the water, and stood dripping and disconsolate as a half-drowned rat. Rossetti was moved to compassion, and told the man to follow him, which he did, and soon had warmth again both within and without. Afterwards he was shown up into the dim studio, and it must have seemed a strange, uncanny place to this waif from a world more remote from that in which Rossetti lived than from the every-day life of five hundred years ago. The painter-poet was amused by his disreputable guest, for here there was no question of virtue struggling with adversity.

The man was a ne'er-do-well, and frankly admitted it. No, he said, he could not reconcile himself to sleeping indoors, particularly in summer. Where did he sleep, then? Oh, anywhere: sometimes in a yard, sometimes under the trees in a square, to reach which he had surreptitiously and unseen to climb the railings; sometimes in an empty or new house, or in unfinished buildings; sometimes on the Embankment seats, on river-side craft, on moored steamboats, on wharves. "An' you don't pay nuthin' at the Sign of the Bunch o' Stars, neither," he added, "an' that suits me down to the ground, not havin' too much o' the shiny to waste on sich like things as boardin'-houses, to say nuthin' o' the sharks as keeps them."

On a recent occasion Rossetti had been told about the "Hotel of the Beautiful Star," and he was delighted with the name and what he heard of its associations, and of its Paris equivalent, "L'Hôtel de la Belle Etoile."

But if the midsummer nights are loveliest, the nocturnal midwinter Thames is often more wonderful. Mention of Rossetti recalls to me a wonderful sight in January (I think in 1880, but possibly in 1881),

when the Thames opposite his house at Chelsea was more like the Neva in spring than our sedate London stream. Great masses and boulders of ice came crashing down the river, grinding at the piers and bridges, and sometimes huddling and leaping and falling back like a herd of stampeded cattle. The papers had a very strange story at that time about a "bush-sleeper." The man had crept on board a straw-laden barge, but during the night the extreme cold had wakened him, and he had apparently realised that it was better to tramp homeless ashore than lie where he was and be frozen. In trying to slink along a narrow gangway, slippery with the frost, he must have lost his footing, and as he fell his head struck a mass of ice rearing above-stream like a buffalo in a flying herd, and from this he rolled back on a huge slab that went sailing down stream. About this time it had begun to snow. Next morning, far below the Pool, though I forget exactly where, the great slab grounded. Some men noticed a strange moulding on the surface, and when they swept away the snow they found a man frozen hard to the ice-block, lying as though asleep, or rather as though a carven monument on a tomb,

face upwards, and on his back, with the hands and arms lying listlessly idle by his side.

But it is not all tragic—I mean the fate of those who have to lodge for a night or two, or for many nights, at the Hotel of the Beautiful Star. Let me tell a story I know at first hand, though I must not only withhold the name but slightly alter the details, yet in nothing essential. One mild March night, some years ago—for even March does sometimes give us a spell of mild hours, though this may be mocked as a fantastical glorification of our English spring—I was on Primrose Hill about midnight. This eminence—it is no more, and to call it a hill is but a cockney flattery—overlooks Regent's Park on the north side. I was given to mounting its grassy slope occasionally o' nights, partly for the sake of the scintillating view on fine evenings and the sealike mass of the foliage of Regent's Park, and the Zoological Gardens, and partly for the free play of air at that relatively high and uncontaminated spot of smoky London. It used to be a favourite resort on warm June and July nights for those who preferred a couch on the soft grass to a weary tramp of the pavements

or the hard mercies of a stone seat or iron-clamped wooden bench. I have seen more than a score of sleepers, apart from the many couples who lingered long and late on that rather bare and prosaic *Mons Amoris*. There was a phrase among the many medical students and other budding youth of all sorts and conditions who lodged in Albert Street and Park Street and the neighbourhood, the significance of which none mistook. When one remarked that he "was not having his letters regular" at the moment, as he was putting up at the Primrose, we all knew just where that inn was, and understood why the postman did not call of a morning.

Well, on that March night, after I had sat at the summit for a bit, and had my fill of what I had come to see, I was slowly making my way downward, when abruptly I went headlong over a recumbent figure. The blasphemy which ensued was peculiar; it was that of a bargee in the refined voice of a girl. An apology put matters right, and a hearty laugh induced a sudden camaraderie. My companion sat up, and asked me if I too were "on the green." On hearing that I was not, in his sense, he said "Lucky you," and asked if perchance

I had cigarettes on me. I had a pipe and some tobacco; but this would not do, it seemed. "A low taste," he observed, with a wave of his hand. "When you come to see me, you must either bring cigarettes with you or smoke mine."

"So," I answered, "after all, you're no more putting up at the Primrose than I am!"

"Excuse me. I am not a liar. I have already said, or implied, that I am putting up, as you have it, in these very quarters."

"What about your house and cigarettes?"

"First, let me tell you one thing. You may not be inclined to believe it, but I have genius. In the next, I have prospects. In the third, I know the pangs, but I may add also the blessed sureties, of love. Fourthly, the rest follows: that in due course I shall have a fit habitation *and* cigarettes; and fifthly, if you will permit me to say so, it will be a pleasure to me, when I know your name, to welcome you at that house, to introduce you to my wife, and to offer you my cigarettes."

I was delighted and amused with my companion, whom I took to be a genial and harmless crank. I had occasion, how-

ever, to change my mind before long: my acquaintance was in no sense a crank, but a remarkably true critic and prophet.

Having compared notes, we fraternised further, and I proposed an adjournment to my "diggings." On the way thither my new friend informed me, to my surprise —for he seemed neat and clean in his dress and person, though obviously his clothes, and those tell-tale articles the boots, were beyond the stage of barter "at the sign of the Three Golden Balls" —that he had been homeless and shelterless for more than a week—for nine days, he declared, after some calculation. He had put up at the Hotel of the Beautiful Star in Hyde Park till the east wind had set in. Then he had tried the sheltered havens at Bridge Hotel, but only on one night succeeded in securing a seat on the wind side. He had tried Regent's Park, but had to walk to and fro till dawn to keep his circulation going. For two nights he had managed to creep behind a large stack of hay in some open stables in Albany Street. Then the weather had become milder. He had been promised a walking-on part at the small Park Theatre in Camden

Town, but one cannot get a room on the head of a promise.

"So I thought of the 'Star Inn' once more," he added, "and ultimately decided to try my luck at the Primrose."

To make a long story short, my friend remained all night with me, contentedly and indeed gladly exchanging the grassy sods of the Star Inn for my hardly luxurious but relatively comfortable sofa.

I had imagined from his allusion to the Park Theatre that the handsome youth was an actor or would-be actor. I was mistaken, for I learned that he was a clever writer, and a painter of excelling promise. I do not mean that he told me this, though some of it was vaguely hinted and some I inferred from his talk. I ascertained it in a few days. An extraordinary series of mischances and ill luck had pursued him. However, in less than a month from the date of our meeting he was making from five to ten pounds a week by his admirable drawings for a popular periodical and by his various journalistic contributions. Soon after that I went abroad. On my return from Italy, some six months later, I found that my friend had gone to Paris. Hearing that he had relinquished his paying artistic

and literary connections, I feared that some strain of irreconcilable bohemianism had broken out in him again, and I was only half reassured when I learned that he was painting very hard but in absolute isolation. Well, to come to the point, he sold a picture at the Salon the ensuing May ; had a bigger success in Munich, and then in London, and finally an "arrived" success at the next Salon again. My work took me there on the *jour de vernissage*, and to my great pleasure, just as I was about to leave, I came suddenly upon my friend. I had already been admiring his two beautiful pictures, one of them a portrait of great loveliness, but he would hear of nothing about these, but only of myself. In a few minutes, I found myself in the usual little "voiture à deux places," and being driven rapidly in a northerly direction. Within half an hour thereafter I had seen "the fit habitation," smoked the first of many later cigarettes provided by my host, and been introduced to his charming wife, the beautiful original of the portrait. I had already had convincing proof of the genius.

"All too charming to be true," doubtless many will exclaim, or to the like effect. Only, it happens to be true.

But this, all the same, is the "Prince Charming" side of the tragi-comedy of the Hotel of the Beautiful Star. It is very rare that one of the sons of fortune finds himself a lodger in that barren accommodation; still rarer that so dramatically swift a change occurs between starvation and homelessness on the one hand, and affluence and fame on the other; and rarest of all that "a real genius" (and particularly one who candidly admits it!) is of this sad company. Yet, it is not to be wondered at—rather the opposite way were the record all one-sided, all of sadness and misfortune or of idleness and folly—that in the course of many years' nocturnal peregrinations in a great city like London one should meet the brilliant exception once in a way. Even the Star Inn has its occasional princes. In these wanderings I have encountered many unusual as well as interesting types, heard many strange tellings as well as far too many narratives of a sad uniformity in misfortune, a dull monotony of wreckage. There I have found life much the same as I have found it in other circles in London, or in Rome, New York, the South Seas, the Australian desert, among the boulevardiers of Paris,

or the Arabs of the Sahara. Moreover, it is easy in London, as in New York, to get into a specific region at will. One can pursue the French outlander in Soho; the Italian, Hatton Garden way; the Russian Jew, beyond Houndsditch; the Chinaman, the Malay, the coolie, each in his own habitat. There is a place of strange tales where I have studied much; but this must be frequented, for a like purpose, in summer, or on fine autumn afternoons; for otherwise one does not find communicative, or even in evidence at all, the broken old French count or Italian cavaliere, the wistful-eyed, hollow-cheeked foreigner who suns himself on the seats in the small grass-laid heart of Leicester Square, under the unspeakably commonplace and affected statue of Shakespeare—"mais voilà, mon grand maître," as an old French playwright, a refugee from Paris, said to me once, ignoring the already admitted fact that he had never read a line of "ce divin Williams," as his countrymen sometimes have it.

But of these I have written elsewhere. What I want now to speak of is neither of the night wanderers nor of the brilliant, sordid, picturesque, vivid, tumultuous, or

furtive life and aspects of London streets by night—though these have a wonderful fascination at times, and at certain hours and places, as at dusk or in a moonlight night, or in a faint fog, the dome of St. Paul's, the Tower, Somerset House from the river, the Houses of Parliament, Waterloo Bridge, the great serpentine sweep of the Embankment—not of those nor these do I want to speak now, but of the unexpected in nocturnal London scenery.

For that is as characteristic of London as the crowded Strand, Fleet Street, with its ceaseless under-throb of the mightiest newspaper pulse in the world, the thronged gin-palaces and music-halls, the endless swinging this way and that of countless hansoms and omnibuses, the unparalleled marketings of Covent Garden by flaring torch and spurting gas-jet, the perpetual dismal idleness of suburban roads, the restless flow at all hours along thoroughfares such as Tottenham Court or Seven Sisters Road, Piccadilly Circus ("Siren Corner, Hell Road"), ablaze like a maelstrom into which pour Regent Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, Coventry Street, and the Haymarket, and the long, continual surge of Piccadilly itself.

And what and where is this unexpected scenery? Well, come away from all that brilliant, pulsating London, from all that commonplace Suburbia; come away even from the tramp who lodges at "Gas-lamp Inn" on London Bridge, or "At the Sign of the Moon" on the Embankment, and follow the loafing or unfortunate nightfarer into the special purlieus of the Hotel of the Beautiful Star. But no—let us leave this motley company, and the furtively unobtrusive "battalion of the unjustly fallen," as poor James Thomson of the *City of Dreadful Night* called the unfortunate, the outcast, and the bewildered and baffled homeless. For, it should be said, tramps and vagrants cannot well go into closed and guarded parks, or float like barn-owls over the river-reaches.

For there are places where the night farer can take his rest untroubled, and where in the summer he does. There are tracts of Hyde Park where the cry of the constable is not heard in the land, nor the warning note of the keen-eyed park-ranger. After dark, on those mid-summer nights, in many wide spaces of Hyde Park and Regent's Park (as of remoter Hampstead Heath and Wimbledon Common), the moon-

light falls alike on clusters of still sheep and on scattered dusky shapes that are men and women.

The real unexpected in London is what we do not readily associate with a great metropolis: serenity, quietude, silence, space, beauty—a beauty as of the remote country, a spaciousness as of the desert, a silence as of ocean in calm. Here, perhaps, is wherein lies the deepest fascination of nocturnal London. One may cross Waterloo Bridge at midnight, and think of the stream of living eyes that one poor tortured dweller in the *City of Dreadful Night* was wont to see—nothing but hurrying, eddying, eyes; or of how the Romany Rye bartered there with a strange woman in the dusk; or one may stand on London Bridge and think of Hood's sad lyric of her who drifted, and of her thousand sisters who have since drifted beneath it; or of Rossetti's picture of *Found*, and those who are sometimes found there but always too late; or of Wordsworth's noble sonnet, filled with the vast silence and ineffable dignity of the sleeping city at daybreak:

Silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky.

But one can escape the floating populace of the bridge and the more or less trite, even when beautiful, literary association, by going further afield. Literally "afield" at first, if we pass by Tyburn Gate or go towards that vast region of Suburbia which once was a great forest called St. John's Wood, reaching from what now is Marylebone to the confines of Middlesex.

On a hot night in July, when travelling thunders have been loosening long sudden avalanches of wind through a barren desert of stagnant air, I have lain below a hawthorn-bush in Regent's Park, and dreamed I was far from London. For, harsh in the silence, came the same restless cry of cranes I had heard in the shallow Moorish waters beyond Tunis; then, bewilderingly, rose the screams of the great-skua and the cormorant, recalling twilit shores in the wave-washed north; then, savagely, the aow-aow-aow of a wolf, the sullen, snarling howl of the jungle tiger, or, abruptly, the sickeningly near roar of a hunger or heat-maddened lion. But I was in London, after all; and the finch sitting in the hawthorn over her second brood did not stir, nor did the little cluster of sheep, like gray boulders cropping above the grass,

edge further from the elm shadows into moonlit safety. I had forgotten where I was, and had been startled; where I lay was within a few yards of the enclosed trees of the Zoological Gardens, a brief distance from the lion-houses and the great open-air enclosures of the tigers and panthers.

On another occasion I was with a friend—a Kensington Gardens ranger—and after closure-hour wandered idly through the vast glades and silent avenues where the Palace Gardens trend to Hyde Park. That May evening I had heard the wood-doves calling amid the green twilight of the oaks, the thrush and blackbird fluting mellowly from sycamore and plane, the rooks cawing over the bare tops of the tapering elms, the sudden, strident clamour of the mallard in his dashing flight to the water. As the shadows deepened, white moths fluttered between the lower branches. Amid the tall limes the black-cap tried over his shadow-dance song. Suddenly, from the dense leafy wilderness of a gigantic beech, a nightingale broke into stuttering short cries, and then, as with a recovering in-drawn breath, was still a moment, and in another moment flooded the dusk with little rippling cries and up-caught ecstasies

of a rapt oblivious trouble. The moon rode yellowly above the prairie of Hyde Park, as we walked past the fountains, so rococo, and yet so charming in their fantasticality, and in the moonshine so beautiful and suggestive of old Italian romance. Slowly we strolled down the western bank of the Long Water, hearing the coot and sheldrake call from the remoter shallows of the Serpentine. Robins and long-tailed tits rustled among the lilacs, dewily fragrant. Before a spray of laburnum, of a delicate dripping gold in the moonlight, two great ghostly moths danced fantastically. Suddenly a harsh screaming came from the rhododendron forest on the opposite bank. A whir—wish—whir-r-r-r, and first one peacock, then another, then another, rose, and with majestic meteoric flight swept with their vast, dusky fans in a long curve, one billow-like ascent again, then to sink cloudily amid the branches of the elms where they love to roost. That night I could not leave this far-remote wilderness of wild life and natural beauty. Yet, it was London. Long after midnight I crossed the dim prairie-land of Hyde Park, now passing huddled sheep, now a huddled figure below an oak or on the open grass. Never till then had I

realised adequately this less strange of the two great silences of London : the solitary centre of Hyde Park and the solitary stillness round the Bank of England, "in the heart of the world."

In the grey daybreak I passed the dim vapour-dappled mere of St. James's Park, and saw the Whitehall palaces looming in a new stately beauty. A little later, at a sweep of the Embankment, while the sea-birds were fluttering sidelong up stream from the marshes, and filling the air with a strenuous viking-music, ringing clarionlike through the City of Mist, as London in her few breathless moments of poetry so truly is, my gaze was caught by a sudden golden flashing light. It was the first shaft of sunrise breaking against the great gold cross of St. Paul's. The Hotel of the Beautiful Star was closed for another day.

1901.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE critical and reminiscent papers, herein gathered together, spread over a period of eighteen years, from 1884 to 1902. The volume is largely autobiographic inasmuch as it records the impressions and memories concerning writers of that date with whom William Sharp was in touch; all more or less his intimate friends, with the exception of Matthew Arnold whom he met but thrice.

The memorial paper on Philip Bourke Marston was written in 1887 as a Preface to the blind poet's *For a Song's Sake;* the appreciation of Browning forms part of the last chapter of my husband's monograph on Browning in *The Great Writers Series.* The opening paper on Matthew Arnold is a portion of an Introduction written for a selection of that writer's poems issued in the *Canterbury Series;* to the same Series belongs the collection of the Poems of Eugene Lee-Hamilton, for which William Sharp wrote the Biographical Study; and it is to Messrs. Walter Scott Ltd., the publishers

of these four volumes, that I am indebted for permission to herein include their prefaces.

The review of *Marius the Epicurean* was printed in *Time*, 1885; the *Personal Reminiscences of Walter Pater* and *Some Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti* appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, the former in December 1894, the latter in June 1895, and *Rossetti in Prose and Verse* in the March number of *The National Review*, 1887.

The article on the novels of Thomas Hardy was written for *The Forum* in 1892, prior to the publication of *Jude the Obscure;* and that on *George Meredith: an Estimate of his work in Prose and Verse*, appeared simultaneously in *Good Words* and in *The New York Times, Saturday Review* (July 1, 1899). The appreciation of Sir Edward Burne-Jones was contributed to *The Fortnightly Review* in August 1898, shortly after the death of that painter; and the essay on Swinburne was written to preface a selection of that poet's work, arranged by William Sharp, and published in 1901 in the Tauchnitz Collection of British Authors. Although *The Hotel of the Beautiful Star*—of which two-thirds were printed in *Harper's*, October 1900—differs in character from the

other contents of this book, I have included it because it is reminiscent of the author himself and shows a side of his nature that I have scarcely touched upon in my *Memoir* of him, but may I think be of interest to his readers.

I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the courtesy of the Editors of the above-named Periodicals, through which I am enabled to include these autobiographic papers in the present volume of the selected writings of William Sharp.

ELIZABETH A. SHARP.

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